**Sunday** for international attendees was a free day in Auckland. Many folks arrived on overnight flights on Sunday morning. It was rain all day, so a few of us opted for a pair of indoor activities in the Auckland Domain Park area where there is an old greenhouse conservatory (Wintergardens Conservatory) that is over 100 years old (ca. 1921) and the Auckland Museum. Wintergardens Conservatory consisted of two greenhouses (one temperate and one tropical) separated by a courtyard pool. The museum concentrates on natural history, Pacific Island history and one floor is a war memorial.

Sunday evening was the opening reception in the hotel. This is always a nice event to greet old friends and become acquainted with new ones. It is an experience I always look forward to each year.

**Monday** the group took a morning ferry from Auckland to Waiheke Island. This is a popular tourist area for the scenery and the many wineries and vineyards. We visited Christie Ralphs Nourish Gardens - a small cut flower grower and vineyard. It was a pleasant visit. We followed this with a visit to Allpress Olives where we had an olive oil tasting – an interesting choice for this wine region. Panoramic views from the property were very nice. The highlight of the Waiheke Island visit was lunch at the Batch where we had a wine sampling accompanied by a seemingly endless Charcuterie board. The afternoon was spent with a walk-through Nikau Forest where we saw mature coastal vegetation including large Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), red matipo (*Myrsine australis*) and kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*) before a beach visit.

**Tuesday**, we explored western Auckland, including the Mt. Eden area where there are views of the entire city of Auckland from the extinct volcano’s rim. It was a full morning of nursery visits. One was a small nursery with mostly hand labor for propagation and transplanting while the other was a modern greenhouse/nursery with automated cylinder seeders, a large, controlled environment germination room and a large outdoor area with traveling booms. One outdoor area was filled with lettuce seedlings while in a contrast, the other was mass production of New Zealand native plants for conservation plantings. In the afternoon, we toured Van Liers Nursery **-** a large greenhouse producer of indoor plants and cut flowers. The indoor plant division includes the Lifestyle Botanics line of pot plants. Not surprisingly, their major cut flower crop was roses, but they also grew baby’s breath, alstroemeria, tweedia, dahlia, and statice. The rest of the afternoon was on Muirwai Beach, also called the wild west coast iron sand beach. Great beach visit highlighted by the nesting gannet bird community with hundreds of birds. Numerous coastal New Zealand plants were encountered along the beach including species of *Muehlenbeckia, Pittosporum, Piper, Pseudopanax,* and *Salicornia*.

**Wednesday** was our visit to the Auckland Botanical Gardens. Off and on rain again, but nice weather for seeing plants. I was not sure if I would have enough time in the botanic garden, so I opted to “escape” the group and walk through the New Zealand native plant garden with Terry Hatcher who is a retired nursery person with a wealth of plant knowledge. It was great. One of my goals on this New Zealand visit was to see and photograph one of the small-leaved *Gunnera* species again. We found *Gunnera densiflora*. Most people are familiar with the very large leaf *Gunnera* species from Central America that are seen in European and U.S. gardens and are surprised to find that there are more *Gunnera* species in New Zealand and none are over a few inches tall. The tour group visited the garden’s nursery and then had to quickly tour the gardens before we left. The rest of the day consisted of nursery visits. At Ardmore Nursery, we saw a robotic spray machine with a spray shield to use in a nursery row. After lunch, we visited the well-known Rainbow Park Nursery that includes modern greenhouse production of bedding and pot plants as well as tropical trees.

**Thursday** included a long visit to the Hamilton Botanic Gardens. It is the most visited garden in New Zealand. We had a guided tour of the numerous themed enclosed gardens that highlights a visit to the gardens. These include small garden rooms that included an Italian Renaissance Garden, Indian Char Bagh Garden, English Tudor Garden, Japanese Garden of Contemplation, and two favorites for the tour group – the Egyptian Garden and the Surrealistic Garden. It also includes a very novel native Māori Food Garden. We had lunch at Daltons, a large supplier of commercial substrate. Before lunch, we had a “bus window” tour of the composting and mixing facilities. Our final day’s visit was getting on the last day’s tour of Hobbiton. Hobbiton is where the Hobbit and Trilogy movie sequences of the Shire were filmed. It was a memorable visit and it did not disappoint. It included a visit inside a Hobbit’s home and drinks in the Green Dragon Inn before departing.

On **Friday**, we started by visiting Palmer’s Garden Center. On the last several international tours, garden centers have been popular visits that allow participants to leisurely walk and talk while getting an idea of the palette of plants available to local gardeners. This was a nice morning visit. We then moved on to an innovative avocado grower. Disease and other factors have reduced New Zealand avocado production and the grower at Saltus Avocados was producing their plants under plastic tunnels to by-pass these issues. Next there was an afternoon walk along the beach in the “Mount” area before dinner.

**Saturday**, we traveled to Treeline Nursery, where they grew native plants for revegetation and conservation plantings. It was a very nice small specialty nursery. We saw a number of nurseries that grew native plants. Although this is kind of a specialty nursery in the U.S. is in the minority of nurseries, native New Zealand plant nurseries are more mainstream for a couple of reasons. First, New Zealand has a small population, and it would be easy to saturate the nursery market. Secondly, it has a sensitive island ecology where exotic invasive species can be problematic, and plants are in demand for revegetation and conservation plantings. The other interesting dichotomy is that with an emphasis on native plants, the New Zealand island is covered with forestry plantings of exotic species, particularly Monterey pine, to satisfy the strong export industry for forestry products. This leads to our next visit to Timberlands Nursery that specializes in producing seedings for forest plantings. This was very interesting for me to reconnect with a nursery manager I had met years ago in South Africa and to see how well they are doing producing clonal Monterey pine from cuttings. The afternoon was spent in Rotorua. We visited a Māori village (Whakarewarewa) for a tour of the hot springs, geysers and lunch. This was followed up by a visit to Wai-O-Tapu thermal area to see the hot sulfur pools, geysers and mud pools. We finished with a visit to Haka Falls before getting to the Hotel in Taupo.