

Waterfall Way

Moving on, we arrive at the waterfall, an enormous cascade of water over one of Kells Bay many cliff faces. Plants here are afforded protection from the ever-present winds by a wood of oak, holly, larch, Scot's pine and giant firs.

New Zealanders abound here like the Kauri pine, *Agathis australis*, a monkey-puzzle relative (Araucariaceae), once common on New Zealand's North Island and now all but eliminated. A few great giants survive today and are all that are left to remind us of the great forests that existed before Captain Cook's arrival. The strange celery-topped pines grow here too including *Phyllocladus trichomanoides* var. *alpinus*, whose frond-like leaves are actually cladodes or flattened branchlets. They also extend into Tasmania, and Kells has several young trees of the Tasmanian endemic *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*. Equally interesting is the low-growing conifer *Halocarpus bidwillii*, the bog or mountain pine. A member of the podocarp family (Podocarpaceae), it favours damp mountainous areas in its native New Zealand and is very common on the South Island, particularly on Arthur's Pass. Appropriately, the areas beneath are planted with more kiwi natives like the mountain astelia, *Astelia nervosa*, whose silvery leaves contrast well with the pinnate fronds of *Blechnum novae-zelandiae*, whose fronds may reach up to 2 m (6.5 ft) long.

Near the top of the waterfall, two species of delicate filmy fern from New Zealand and Australia are thriving. *Leptopteris hymenophylloides*, the single crepe fern and *Leptopteris superba*, the Prince of Wales feathers, are allied to the native filmy ferns *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* already growing at Kells. They are exacting in their needs and generally difficult to grow in drier areas.

The Bog Walk

From the waterfall, visitors continue their way onto the Big Walk where they meet a young King Billy pine, *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, a Tasmanian endemic named for William Lanne (also known as King Billy or William Laney), who was the last full-blooded Tasmanian aboriginal man. Lanne died in 1869, and because of his scientific interest, several parts of his body were stolen while in a morgue, and again after his burial, a macabre ending to an aboriginal race. His namesake, the King Billy pine is facing an equally bleak future, as over one third of its native habitat was lost due to fires during the 20th century, a sad fate for this noble, long-lived tree.

Thus concludes our tour of Kells Bay Gardens. The selection of plants in this account is purely the choice of the author and it is by no means a comprehensive catalogue of the entire collection. Gardens are changing evolving places and no doubt a tour in twenty years' time will focus a quite different selection of taxa, though I hope those mentioned here give a good impression of the rarity of this exciting and ever-expanding exotic collection. Moreover, Kells is a place to return to time and time again. It's an old garden, given a new lease of life. Many of the plants mentioned are relatively young and it will be worth returning on a frequent basis to watch them grow to maturity and see what new discoveries join them.

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