

COROKIA DEATH AND RESURRECTION!

Guild member and National Collection holder of Corokia, Mona Abboud has some new additions after summer and winter losses, and a new book!

The summer of 2022 was a challenging time to garden and constant watering became a necessity. Despite the watering, I lost two of my precious corokias to the drought. Some people think that all drought-tolerant plants should withstand indefinite periods without water. We as human beings can survive thirty days without food I am told, which doesn't mean that we would choose to do so. Plants are the same as far as water is concerned.

The winter of 2022-23 then proved to be particularly brutal, and many gardeners lost treasured plants all over the country. New Zealand plants were decimated, even in the Home Counties. At RHS Garden Wisley, in the 'alternative to box' area in the walled garden, all the Corokia perished. Thankfully, quite a few survived in other areas of the site.


The unknown seedlings when they arrived last summer


The donated seedlings in December 2023

As proof of their continued interest in this genus, the Wisley team have planted up a whole area with the *Corokia cotoneaster* cultivar 'Maori Green'. Some corokias at RHS Garden Hyde Hall succumbed as well. And my friend Paul Boosey of County Park Nursery in Hampshire lost most of his New Zealand plant collection including corokias in the same winter.

However, sometimes after death there is resurrection. Paul called me last summer to give me unexpected news. He had discovered sixty tiny Corokia seedlings growing in the gravel area of his nursery. He had potted them all up, and said I could have them all. They were of unknown parentage, and considering the number of Corokia species and cultivars he had growing on his site at any given time, some of the seedlings will probably turn out to become quite distinctive cultivars.

Needless to say, I rushed over to pick them up, and have been looking after them ever since. When I acquired them, they were no bigger than an inch or so, but now, more than six months later, some of them are already more than six inches tall. Through the natural selection process some of the weaker plants have died, but at this point about fifty are still alive. Hopefully half that number will reach adulthood, and constitute the new generation of this genus. To their number I can add ten of my own Corokia cultivars which have seeded themselves in my own garden, including the named *Corokia* × *virgata* 'Mona's Magic' which is now more than one metre tall. Some of these new cultivars are now growing in the new site I acquired in 2022. A new garden for a new generation of Corokia!

***Branching Out*: The creation of a sustainable garden extension is out now, available from monasgarden.co.uk**