



A million daffodils in bloom

The magnificent Otaihuna Lodge will open its doors to thousands of visitors this Daffodil Day to showcase its stunning gardens and raise money for cancer. The tradition that began 81 years ago at New Zealand's largest historic property has been revived to celebrate the magic of these extraordinary gardens in spring and provide the public with a sneak-peek of the grounds of the luxury seven-suite lodge.

Current owners, Hall Cannon and Miles Refo, rekindled the event in 2006 when they bought the Lodge. The original owner, Parliamentarian Sir Heaton Rhodes and his wife Jessie, established the open day in 1928 at their impressive home in Tai Tapu, 20 minutes from Christchurch, to showcase the gardens designed by A.E. Lowe, who had trained at London's famous Kew Gardens.

Mr Cannon and Mr Refo undertook an impressive restoration of the 12ha grounds and 1895 homestead and took great pleasure in reviving what was one of the most important events in the local calendar.

"It really is magnificent when the daffodils bloom on the Great Lawn each spring," Mr Cannon said. "We estimate there could be as many as a million bulbs there today. Sir Heaton Rhodes was quite a gardening enthusiast and is credited with establishing one of the first daffodil collections in the country. Following the first planting of bulbs in the late 1800s thousands more have been planted. That certainly makes this one of New Zealand's biggest daffodil fields and it is most likely the nation's oldest, having been created well over a century ago."

Visitors on Daffodil Day can also taste the wonderful cuisine of Otaihuna Lodge's Executive Chef Jimmy McIntyre with fingerfoods and coffee and tea on offer.

"One of the other extraordinary aspects of our gardens is the potager garden and orchard, from which we source as much of our own produce as possible, all organically grown," Mr Cannon said. "Visitors can also join guided garden tours to explore the Monet-style lily pond, the windmill-shaped Dutch garden, and the frog pond." There will also be gardening demonstrations and live entertainment..

Otaihuna Lodge will open on September 12 from 10am to 4pm. Tickets are NZ\$15 for adults and \$5 for children (cash only) at the gate. A donation will be made to the NZ Cancer Society from the sale of every ticket. The last Daffodil Day event raised more than \$8000 for the Society.