

# The constant gardener

For those of us dedicated to the ongoing pursuit of the perfect garden, there is no better place to while away a few blissful hours than at Napier's Missionview Gardens and Wild Roses Café.

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It's a beautiful warm sunny autumn day in Napier and time to start thinking about getting the garden in order. There's always plenty of work to be done so the garden can hunker down over winter. Time to get inspired about how the garden will bud and bloom next spring and where better to get advice than from one of Napier's most creative and inspiring garden entrepreneurs, Liz Moss at Missionview Gardens.

On this glorious day I visited Missionview and was totally bowled over by what I found here. This is not any old garden centre; it's an extra-ordinary experience that enlivens all the senses. Walking under the arch of clematis between the veiled garden cherubs I emerged into what felt like a quaint Mediterranean alfresco setting.

There dotted amongst the trees and plants were scores of tables and chairs full of chattering people soaking up the autumn sun, drinking coffee and eating deliciously, colourful looking cakes. Wild Roses Café blends in as part of the landscape, and out of the busy home style kitchen comes the most amazing food.

It's Mothers' Day this coming weekend and preparations are well underway. This is obviously the place to bring mum for lunch. The cake fridge is laden with scrumptious looking cakes and slices of so many colours; it's worth a visit just to view it. "Customers come in and head straight for the cake fridge!" said Liz, "They are not interested in being served until they have decided on their cake of the day."

Outside we sit among the plants. It was cooler this morning but Liz had made sure that on all the chairs were cushions (and if it happens to be a cold day she has warm blankets so customers can wrap up yet still enjoy the outdoors). There is plenty of birdlife all around as a tui sings near by and blackbirds and thrushes happily hop unafraid right up to the tables. The muffin I chose is quite exquisite and simply melts in the mouth.

It's a very enjoyable moment and what would normally be treated as a 'retail visit' feels like you are sitting in someone's lovely garden just for enjoyment and with no pressure to buy. This is very reflective of Liz's passion to create concepts that other people can envisage for their own homes. "My heart is to change people's opinions of an environment," said Liz.

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> The expansion with the café is an extension of Liz's philosophy on life. Here, man's love of nature mixed with his love of food is the perfect combination. She chats to everyone as if she knows them all, taking the time to ensure their comfort and needs are met.

The youngest of seven children, Liz knows how to work hard to be recognised and succeed. She has put in well over 10 years dedication to Missionview after setting out with her initial vision. "When I bought the business there was no stock as it had become a cemetery for plants," she recalls. All the new stock Liz bought was wiped out by frost in the first year, so she knows the difficulties and complexities that garden centres are faced with.

Yet Liz has succeeded. "Success is not about luck. It's not about falling on your feet. It's taking an opportunity, running with your vision and working hard. Somewhere amongst all this," she says waving across at the abundance of healthy plants and foliage, "I fulfilled my dream!" That is an amazing achievement in itself.

Over the years Liz's vision went through a number of changes to evolve to what Missionview is now. The gift shop introduced a new dimension alongside gardening and lured many customers with the array of beautiful

giftware and jewellery. Then came the Gallery with photos, paintings and even furniture. But it's the café that is the 'icing on the cake', so to speak, for the total experience.

The latest venture Liz is working on is creating 'concept gardens'. For instance she has created an Italian look with topiaries, ivy candelabras and chandeliers. Inside the Gallery it's the 'South of France' with oak tables and chairs, French dressers and gorgeous French urns. Everything can be hired out to create the same look in customers' homes or at a venue for special events from a small birthday event to a wedding.

Not only does Liz give advice she also follows through in creating the complete 'garden room' for the whole event. These 'venue sets' she has created at Missionview are to motivate others and then Liz can recreate them to suit peoples individual needs.

It's all very inspiring. I now have so many ideas in my mind that I am impatient to take my purchases home and get started on my own garden creation. And as I leave Liz reminds me in her wise and endearing way, "It's all about having a vision!"

**Above:**  
Morning tea at Wild Roses  
Café...you'll love it.

[www.missionviewgardens.co.nz](http://www.missionviewgardens.co.nz)



*This page:  
There is so much on offer from  
cherubs to chocolate cake.  
Simply a heavenly experience  
for everyone.*

