



Botanic News

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, MELBOURNE INC.

AUTUMN 1999

FROM THE PRESIDENT

This edition of *Botanic News* marks a new chapter in the history of the Friends. At the end of January the Friends' devoted staff accomplished the fourth move that the Friends' Office has had to make since the Friends was formed in 1982.

This time the move has been to the refurbished Gate Lodge, the former gatekeeper's cottage set at the entrance to Observatory Gate, in the splendidly restored Observatory precinct. The old Observatory and other buildings are rich in history and have now been reclaimed from many years of disuse and decay for use by the Gardens. One of the Observatory buildings housed for over 30 years what was for long the world's largest telescope, the Great Melbourne Telescope, installed there in 1868.

The move involved a deal of planning and a lot of additional work for the Friends' office staff, which they cheerfully accomplished with their customary efficiency. Particular thanks are due to Margaret Howes, who bore the main responsibility of the move and gave to it, as always, her great enthusiasm and customary skills.

Since 1985 the Friends have donated more than half a million dollars in support of projects of the Royal Botanic Gardens; in addition the Friends' Trust Fund has made donations amounting to more than \$80,000. Sometimes these funds produce a visible result, such as the seed house; in many cases they endow fellowships or enable staff to undertake courses or attend conferences. In most cases our funding is provided in response to requests made to the Friends' Council by the RBG Director. Last month two new projects were approved. The first, involving \$15,536, was for final development of the Aboriginal Heritage Walk, including training of guides and marketing. The second, of \$10,000, went towards the documentation and databasing of the important collection of botanical papers, notebooks and photographs donated to the RBG by the family of the late Dr Jim Willis.

A notable event late last year was the impressive exhibition by our Botanical Illustrators in the National Herbarium. Their works were of a very high standard and the exhibition generated great interest. As a result Dianne Emery has had to schedule extra sessions this year to meet the demand for classes.

Last month we congratulated Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Patron of the Gardens and a member of the Friends, on her 90th birthday. We have also sent our congratulations to another garden lover and Friend, Lady Hamer, the wife of our past President, who was made a Member of the Order of Australia in this year's Australia Day Honours in recognition of her service to the community through her contribution to charitable organisations. On 9 April another Friend, the botanic luminary Dr Sophie Ducker, will celebrate her 90th birthday.

We of the Friends received great good news when, after learning of our Secretary Lawrence Cohn's heart surgery in November, we subsequently heard that he was making an excellent recovery. So excellent has it been that he was back in harness for the Friends' Council meeting in February. During Lawrence's absence, Janet Thomson proved a very efficient deputy. Lawrence will turn 80 in June but fortunately for the rest of us there is no retiring age with the Friends.

Ninian Stephen



The Friends' Executive Officer Margaret Howes (right) with Wendy Williams, project officer for the development of the Observatory site, at the handover of Gate Lodge.

Photo: David Plant

AUTUMN ACTIVITIES

**DAY TRIP TO MORNINGTON
PENINSULA, INCLUDING THE
PERFUMED GARDEN, COOLART AND
A PRIVATE GARDEN AT MERRICKS**
Wednesday 17 March

Bus departs from outside the National Gallery, St Kilda Road at 9.00am sharp.

First, we will visit *Mulberry Cottage* in Merricks, a new garden in which the owner, Kerry Kollias, has laboured hard and with flair and imagination. There is a cottage garden near the house and a treed lawn with the mulberry tree from which the house takes its name. There are also herb and vegetable gardens and a range of David Austin and old roses.

The piece de resistance is a gazebo approached by a pathway lined with white roses ready for Kerry's daughter's wedding, whenever she says the word! We are to have morning tea here.

Then on to *The Perfumed Garden* at Moorooduc, a rose nursery owned and run by one of our members, Sophie Adamson. The roses are mainly David Austin varieties and some heritage roses. They are grouped in beds according to colour and look stunning - and it certainly is a perfumed garden. We will have the opportunity to purchase roses here.

After lunch at the Maze Restaurant at Arthurs Seat, we will finish the afternoon at *Coolart* at Somers, a home-stead built by Frederick Grimwade in 1898 and now managed by Parks Victoria. We can inspect the home-stead and walk in the gardens and wetlands. There is a great variety of wildlife including 176 varieties of birds; there's also an audio-visual about the wetlands.

We will return to the National Gallery at 5.00pm.

Cost: \$45 per head includes entry charges, morning tea, lunch and bus with seat belts.

We are limited to one bus.

RSVP by Friday 12 March on enclosed booking form.

**GROWING FRIENDS
AUTUMN SALE**
20 and 21 MARCH
SATURDAY 10.00am - 4.00pm
SUNDAY 10.00am - 3.00pm

Our Autumn Sale will again be held around the Dahlia Bed near E Gate, where the dahlias in full flower should provide a colourful centrepiece. We do not have any of

these types available but we do have tree dahlias in mauves and white, singles and doubles.

The Nursery is almost full. The warm season combined with our automatic watering has been extremely good for growth, and our plants are growing at a great pace. Please look at the enclosed sale leaflet for tempting plant ideas for your garden.

The Nursery will NOT be open on 12, 19 and 26 March while we prepare for the sale and then have a well-earned rest.

The Friends would greatly appreciate offers from anyone able to work for a few hours at the 'checkout', particularly during the busiest sale time on the Saturday morning. Please phone the office if you can help (tel. 9650 6398).

AUTUMN IN THE DANDENONGS
Bus trip to The Basin and Olinda
Tuesday 13 April

Where better to appreciate autumn than in the Dandenongs? Leaving from outside the National Gallery in St Kilda Rd at 9.00am sharp, we'll go first to **GLEN ELBOURNE** at The Basin, described in the City of Knox Heritage Study as 'a regionally significant garden landscape'. Three hectares of exotic 'hill station' plantings are surrounded by natural bushland - mostly tree ferns and majestic Messmate - where TV dramas are shot periodically and wildlife abounds. A pair of Powerful Owls nests in the garden, and a pet peacock is as alert as a guard dog.

Established since the early 1900s, the garden has been neglected in the last 10-15 years and beds are overgrown, but it is being enthusiastically reclaimed by its new owners, Lara and Daniel Schwerdtfeger. Daniel's rewards, as he's removed blackberries, have included the discovery of an art deco swimming pool, lichen-covered stone walls and benches, a waterfall and a rotunda. A network of cleared paths and terraces leads visitors among marvellous maples, tall weeping holly, rhododendrons, mollis azaleas, many conifers and other rare specimens. A huge tulip tree is especially notable. We'll have morning tea at Glen Elbourne.

Our next stop will be **CLOUDEHILL** at Olinda, where we'll inspect gardens and nursery, have a talk from Jeremy Francis and eat our picnic lunch.

Many of the perennials popular today were introduced into Australia by Jeremy, and we'll see some grasses he sourced from Beth Chatto's garden in 1988 that have just come out of quarantine. (Many of the plants in the new RBG perennial border came from Cloudehill.) Herbaceous borders, water features and sculptures ensure that this garden of 20 'rooms' is full of interest.



Jeremy acquired this property and imposed its formal structure in 1992. It was previously the stock plant part of Jim Woolrich's Rangeview Nursery; Keith Purves acquired the adjoining nursery section of the property and has kindly offered to walk us through his garden as well.

The **COMO GARDENS** at The Basin were established by the Chandler family, with a nursery, in 1873. (The famous English oak, listed on the Victorian Register of Significant Trees, was reputedly planted by William and Kate Chandler from an acorn about 1875.) A 1976 display garden of named trees and shrubs retains the Chandler connection following the closure of their nursery in the early 1990s, and the subsequent subdivision of the site.

Since Pat and George Hetrel acquired the 6ha Como Gardens in 1996, many changes have taken place. For instance they have established a large lake, and a small train track runs round the garden. There is a beautiful rainforest walk along one of the creeks. Of special note are retained OPCA collections of prunus and magnolias, and a knobby-kneed *Taxodium distichum*.

BYO lunch (including mug/thermos/drink).

We should return to the National Gallery about 5.30pm.

Cost including bus (with safety belts), morning tea and entrance to the gardens: \$35. We are limited to one bus.

RSVP by Friday 9 April on enclosed booking form.

YOUNG FRIENDS

It has long been our wish to involve our younger members in planning and organising activities of special interest to their age group; now that we are ensconced in Gate Lodge, the time has come. We're thinking of approximately twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings.

We propose to hold a meeting to ask for your ideas and challenge your organising abilities.

Will you please phone 9650 6398 or fax 9650 7723 by Monday 15 March to tell us of a suitable time for you to attend a meeting, (eg. weekday after work; weekday after dinner; or weekend) and leave your daytime phone number; we will return the call.



RBG staff planting the beds at Gate Lodge, with species chosen to tie in with the scale of the broader landscape design on the Observatory site. They include a lilly pilli hedge, euphorbias, yuccas, red flax, strelizias, succulents and grasses.

Photo: Duncan Ironmonger

HORTICULTURE, CHINESE STYLE

Illustrated talk by Terry Smyth

**Wednesday 28 April at 5.30pm for 6.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium**

Financial support from the Friends enabled Terry Smyth to work at Kunming Botanical Garden in Yunnan Province, China, for four months in 1998: this illustrated talk provides an opportunity for Terry to say 'thank you' and to show the Friends how well this money was spent. Not only has the RBG Southern Chinese Collection (which Terry looks after) been greatly enriched by specimens brought back from Yunnan; our investment has paid dividends in assisting botanical projects at the Kunming Garden and in furthering co-operation between the two institutions.

Terry will also touch on the International Horticultural Exposition to be held in Kunming from May to October. Her previous talks have been absorbing, and this one is sure to continue Terry's fine tradition.

Refreshments will be served prior to the talk.

Cost: Friends \$8 Other \$12

RSVP by Monday 26 April on enclosed booking form

.....

RODGER ELLIOT, RBG Board member and immediate Past President of the Cranbourne Friends, has been awarded a 1999 Veitch Gold Medal by the Royal Horticultural Society in London. The award recognises individuals who have helped advance and improve the science and practice of horticulture. Rodger is internationally regarded as an expert on Australian plants and their cultivation.

FROM LAWN TO SHOW GARDEN IN 12 MONTHS

Illustrated talk by Michael McCoy
Thursday 13 May at 8.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Michael McCoy, excellent landscape designer and feature garden writer for *The Age Saturday Extra*, purchased a home in Woodend a year ago and embarked on a personal journey which a friend referred to as 'a great game'. His aim was to transform a quarter-acre lawn containing three mature trees into a romantic garden in full bloom, ready for the Open Garden Scheme, within a year.

Michael admits that the task certainly tested his abilities, particularly as he specified his garden should be low-budget, feature low water usage and require only low maintenance. He feels that plants themselves aren't the limiting factor, being capable of fantastic results in 12 months given good soil preparation and care. However, the garden development demanded a great deal of creativity and ingenuity to meet the challenge.

Michael will talk about both his triumphs and failures from a practical point of view, with slides to illustrate that he has indeed won 'the great game'.

Supper will be served.

Cost: Friends \$10 Others \$12

RSVP by Monday 10 May on enclosed booking form

BACK TO NATURE

A family day with naturalist Alan Reid
At Timelines Field Centre, 260 Burns Road,
Glenburn
Sunday 23 May from 11.00am

Alan Reid, President of the Gould League and a popular 3LO broadcaster, will share the wonders of nature with us on his 400-acre property just north of Kinglake National Park.

He is just establishing an environment centre within a candlebark forest - a place where lay people can be comfortably close to nature. Alan will be bird-banding; will help us identify many different species of fungi that will be at their peak; and give us advice about how to live with wildlife in an urban environment.

We can enjoy beautiful views of the Yea River Valley, follow nature trails (maybe sighting kangaroos and wombats in the bush, or lyrebirds in fern gullies) and observe a great diversity of birds on three large lakes. There's even a platypus to look out for.

Alan has studied wildlife in the locality for 30 years or so, and has recorded 170 bird species. One focus has been to examine how cattle and wildlife can co-exist.

Alan has also rejoiced in the regeneration of native orchids on his property.

This is planned as a self-drive event, but we will try to arrange a lift for Members without cars. The centre is approximately 90 minutes drive from the city. BYO lunch; barbecues are available. The Friends will provide morning tea/coffee/drinks as you arrive.

Directions: For Glenburn, see Melway 510 Q11. Turn right into Burns Road, the second right after Glenburn Service Station, and drive 2.4km to the Timelines Field Centre (on your right). Car parking opposite.

Cost: \$7 per person or \$15 per family group.

RSVP by Wednesday 19 May on enclosed booking form.

CARING FOR TREES

Workshop conducted by Dean Simonsen,
Manager Arboriculture, RBG
Saturday 29 May 9.30am - 11.30am
In the Mess Room, within Nursery Yard between
E and F Gates, Birdwood Avenue

A grant of \$1680 from the Friends enabled three arboricultural staff and the landscape planner to attend seminars by an American tree expert last November. In return, Dean Simonsen will conduct an informal workshop for us about how to select, plant and prune trees.

We'll go behind the scenes to learn of the modern techniques employed by the RBG arborists in caring for the Gardens' trees, and how to adapt this information to home gardens so that our trees remain healthy, safe and long-lived. Dean will advise when and where to go for help if a tree becomes unsafe or unhealthy.

The workshop will begin with a talk, morning tea will be served, and we'll have some on-site instruction.

Participants should bring note pad and pen; there will also be some handouts.

Cost: Friends \$15 Others \$20

RSVP by Wednesday 26 May on enclosed booking form

WARRNAMBOOL CONFERENCE

The annual conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Vic) Inc. sounds a mouthful, but in reality it provides a great opportunity to gain a wider perspective on botanic gardens, hear interesting talks and make friends during tours and social events.

The conferences rotate around the State, and this year's hosts are the Warrnambool Friends. With the title 'The Blooming Western District', the conference will be staged at Flagstaff Hill on the weekend of 17-18 April.

We encourage Melbourne Friends to call our office (9650 6398) for a program, and resolve to attend this very enjoyable event.

Brushes, Paints, Paper, Pencil and Pens

Tuesday 18 May at 10.00am for 10.30am
Whirling Room Studio

The selection and use of the most suitable materials is an essential element in the successful completion of a work of botanical art.

Industry experts in artists' materials will share with you their technical knowledge of the vast array of products available, to allow you to make an informed choice.

10.00am: Morning coffee on arrival

10.30am: Speakers on artists' materials

Cost: Friends \$5 Others \$8

RSVP by Friday 14 May on enclosed booking form

DIANNE EMERY'S BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION CLASSES

This term, classes are being held in the Observatory Building while some maintenance is being undertaken in the Telescope house.

The January beginners' workshops were a great success, with many students subsequently enrolling in term classes. As a result, an extra class is being held on Wednesday afternoons.

Past and present students will be holding a botanical art exhibition at Catanach's Art and Antiques, 1212 High Street, Armadale between 9 April and 1 May.

Second term classes will start at the end of April; the exact date will depend on the move back to the Whirling Room Studio.

For information, phone Dianne Emery on 9523 5397.

Botanic News

Our new masthead features a 'house portrait' of Gate Lodge by Philip Kreveld, and an image of *Stenocarpus sinuatus* (the Firewheel tree) by Richard Barley.

BOTANICAL ART AT RBG SYDNEY

Any Members visiting Sydney in March might like to see BOTANICA, an exhibition and sale of botanical art presented by the Friends of RBG Sydney. It will be held in Lion Gate Lodge between 10.00am and 4.00pm daily from 6 to 21 March. Demonstrations will be given on 6, 13 and 20 March between 2-4pm.

As well as paintings, the exhibition will feature exquisite etched glass with botanical motifs by Melbourne artist Amanda Loudon.

BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATORS WORKSHOPS AND WHIRLYBIRDS

The first of this series was held on Tuesday 9 February in the temporary home of the Observatory Building. Regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month will be held during the year with the group returning to the Whirling Room in the Great Melbourne Telescope Building in April.

The **Whirly Birds** are now whirling happily in the Observatory Building and will remain there for the next two months, except for the third Tuesday in March. Any artist wishing to join them is most welcome and should contact Mary Gregory on 9836 8587.



The life and landscaping genius of William Guilfoyle have been commemorated by a sculpture unveiled in the Gardens on 16 December. The sculpture by Michael Meszaros was commissioned and donated by an anonymous benefactor. This impressive bronze artwork depicts several germinating acorns thrusting up tall shoots – alluding to Guilfoyle's talent for creating life and beauty in garden landscapes, and his love for oaks. Fittingly, the Guilfoyle sculpture stands at the end of the new link path from Observatory Gate, right in front of the Oak Lawn.

Photo: Geoff Hardy

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Since the last *Botanic News* the Office has moved to Gate Lodge. Unfortunately we were required to vacate the Great Melbourne Telescope Building on 29 January before work on Gate Lodge was quite complete. A bizarre result was that the heating had to be turned on for testing on a day when we were already sweltering in 37 degrees! We apologise to Members who were unable to reach us by phone or fax during the first week we were in our new home, before connections were made. The offices are roomier than anticipated, and although we still need to purchase some furniture, we are gradually settling in. Members are welcome to visit us.

Such a move would not have been possible without the assistance of many people. In particular, I would like to thank the office staff, Helen Fahey and Jean Woodger, who came in on their days off to assist with the move. Andrei Christou, a Member and an architect, was most helpful in suggesting an office plan, sourcing good second-hand office furniture and preparing a defects list. Council Members, particularly Louise Coronel, Janet Thomson, David Baumgartner and David Plant, were most supportive and helpful. Also not to be forgotten is Virginia Henderson, the Gardens' receptionist, who took our phone calls during the days it took to reconnect us, and Sebastian's (tel. 9383 6000), who made and installed our blinds in record time, and gave us a discount as well. Many thanks to everyone for a great team effort.

The RBG landscapers are in charge of the front and Birdwood Avenue garden beds around Gate Lodge, but the Friends will be responsible for planting and maintaining gardens on the northern side of the building. This may present an opportunity for two or three Members to form a gardening group; please register your name at the office if you're interested.

Two full busloads had a wonderful day out on the Bellarine Peninsula in January.

A three-storey bluestone winery (now a gallery and shop) was a highlight at Darriwill Farm (below).



Photo: Lesley Clark

Volunteers are still needed:

- * For *reception work* at our new home. By the time you read this we hope to have those who have already volunteered rostered for a half day to assist with answering queries and answering the telephone. More volunteers are required for this work so if you would like to help, please ring.
- * For *cleaning*: If any Member is interested in cleaning our newly renovated offices or knows of someone who would be suitable, please ring. We are proposing a thorough clean, once a week, at a rate and time to be mutually acceptable.

For either task please ring the office on 9650 6398.

- * Does any member have a *vacuum cleaner* in working order which they would like to donate to the Friends? If so please contact us.

Margaret Howes



Photo: Geoff Hardy

(Above) Our host at Pirallia, Felicity Spear (right), with her dog and Jane Calder amid flowering roses and lavender

FRIENDS' SHOP

Dear Friends,

We have sold our way through a mountain of stock. Thank you all for your support; it has been a wonderful three months.

We have had a t-shirt designed for your grandchildren. It says 'Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Australia' It comes in either navy blue or white, and has birds and frogs screened across the front. The white with navy blue screening is especially smart. Sizes 2-10, price \$16.00. If you are going overseas, this same t-shirt in navy and white comes with kangaroo and koala motif. These have been a great success with our overseas visitors.

The beginning of Autumn will see a new shipment of interesting books for your perusal.

Jill Swann

OBSERVATORY GATE

The Premier will officially open Observatory Gate before an invited audience on 10 March. Meanwhile, the Visitor Centre, Gardens Shop and Observatory Café on the Pacific Dunlop Plaza have begun functioning within the last two weeks.

The **Visitor Centre**, staffed by Laura Fahey and Phillip Morrissey, is open between 9.00 and 5.00pm daily, and has taken over from the Herbarium reception desk as the 'front of house' focus for the Gardens. All guided walks are now starting from the Visitor Centre. A new Gardens map and directory is to be available at the beginning of March.

Look out for a living plant as a changing exhibit in the Visitor Centre. Another display space in the Centre will initially feature 'Science under the Southern Sky' - an exhibition highlighting the early efforts of those who plotted the stars and surveyed the land. 'The Night Sky', a weekly guided tour which will include viewings through the great telescopes of the Old Melbourne Observatory, is expected to be introduced in May.

Celebrate the opening with free jazz on Sunday afternoons between 1.00 and 4.00pm for five weeks, beginning on 14 March. Jazztett, Paul Williamson's Hammond Quartet and the Christophe Genoux Quartet will perform on the plaza.

The **Gardens Shop**, open between 10.00am and 5.00pm daily, has introduced some new RBG-branded products.

Observatory Café, situated in the Visitor Centre, will open from 7.00am to 5.00pm, seven days a week, for breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon teas. It offers four dining zones:

- * *Eating in the Kitchen* with grills, wok dishes, noodles, pasta, open sandwiches and snacks
- * *Eating in the Cellar*, where wines, beer and spirits will be served with food in a European atmosphere
- * *Eating in the Open*, with hot and cold drinks, icecreams, baguettes and picnic packs sold from mobile stalls in the courtyard
- * *Eating at Barbecues*, similar to the Japanese tradition of circular seating around the cooking units; marinated meats, fish and vegetables available for you to cook.

The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival is to be launched at the Observatory Café on 11 March - a great publicity coup for this new venture at the Gardens.

Other Moves

- * The Australian Garden History Society has a room in the Friends' Gate Lodge
- * The Voluntary Guides, the Astronomical Society and the Ornamental Plant Collections Association have been relocated to the main Observatory Building
- * RBG's Public Programs and Development Division, including the Education staff, are now housed in the former Astronomer's Residence, now known as Observatory House
- * RBG's Records and Planning staff have moved into Nursery Lodge, adjacent to the Friends' Nursery.
- * The Herbarium Volunteers hope to increase their numbers after moving into the space formerly occupied by the Gardens Shop in the Herbarium building

NOTE: The RBG plant identification service and the plant census will continue to be housed in the Herbarium building, with access during weekdays. An Interactive Voice Response service is to replace a weekend receptionist in the Herbarium as of the first weekend in March.

FRIENDS' BENEFITS

Both the Friends' Shop and the Gardens' Shop offer a 10 per cent discount on members' purchases over \$20.

The following businesses kindly offer discounts to Friends on presentation of their signed current membership cards, which are not transferable.

Gills Nursery (ex Fryers)

589 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn

5% off plants only

Idaho Nurseries

410 Waverley Rd, E. Malvern

10% off plants only

Bulleen Art and Garden

105 Bridge St, Bulleen

5% off seedlings

10% off potted plants

Town and Country Gardens

1280 Malvern Rd, Malvern

10% off everything

The Arts Bookshop

1067 High St, Armadale

Holmesglen College of TAFE

inc. the Vic Schools Nursery

585 Waverley Rd, Glen Wav.

20% off everything

The Gardeners Corner Store

190-192 New St, Brighton

10% off everything

Collectors Corner

Springvale Rd, Keysborough

10% off all plants

Kew Nursery

Cnr High & Gladstone Sts, Kew

10% off all plants

Wolf Tools

675 Canterbury Rd, Surrey Hills

10% discount

Burwood Garden Patch

1418 Toorak Rd, Burwood

10% discount

Green Gables Nursery

1039 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill

10% off all items except specials

Garden of Eden Nursery

33 Ferrars Street, Albert Park

10% discount off everything

The Cottage Garden Nursery

cnr Macedon Ave & Doncaster Rd,

North Balwyn. 10% discount, also

8 punnets for \$20

Banksia Hill B&B

RMB 5349, Horsham, 3401

10% discount on accommodation

*** The Garden Walk**

199 New St, Brighton

10% discount off plants only

* Denotes new addition to list



Botanic News is produced quarterly for the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Inc.

The Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Incorporated has been formed to stimulate further interest in the Gardens and National Herbarium and to support and assist them whenever possible.

Patron:
His Excellency the
Hon. Sir James Gobbo, A.C.
President:
The Rt Hon. Sir Ninian Stephen

Vice Presidents:
Louise Coronel
Heather Ironmonger

Secretary:
Lawrence Cohn

Treasurer:
David Baumgartner
Editor:
Heather Ironmonger

FRIENDS' OFFICE
Margaret Howes
Helen Fahey
Jean Woodger

C/- National Herbarium
Birdwood Avenue
South Yarra Vic 3141
Tel: (03) 9650 6398
Fax: (03) 9650 7723

Print Post Approved
PP 3458420025
ISSN No. 08170-650

Printer:
Gill Miller Press Pty Ltd
110 Franklin Street
Melbourne Vic. 3000

Printed on
100 per cent recycled paper
Australian made.
A12827T

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

Observatory Gate will soon be ready to welcome visitors to a major new entrance to the Royal Botanic Gardens. The Premier will open the project officially on Wednesday 10 March. Before then the finishing touches will be made to the fitting-out of the buildings, and the lawns and gardens will be prepared. The project has been attracting much attention from walkers and joggers on The Tan, and many eager visitors are keen to explore the new attractions!

Last month the Gardens ceased its curation of the Government House grounds, for which we'd been responsible since 1987. The RBG Board decided not to submit a tender when the work was being contracted out.

RBG arboricultural staff have undertaken a detailed assessment of the four English Elms reputedly planted by the Gardens' first curator, John Arthur, in 1846 on what is now Tennyson Lawn. One tree that has shed several major limbs in recent years, and is hazardous to the public, has had to be removed in February and another, roped off because of potential danger, will be removed next summer.

The Cranbourne Friends are to be congratulated on receiving a grant of \$28,000 from the Natural Heritage Trust to enable them to revegetate areas along the southern boundary of RBG Cranbourne. Indigenous species propagated by the Friends in their nursery will be planted.

Parks Victoria, through its Community Grants Scheme, has allocated \$226,000 for four projects at Cranbourne. One involves revegetation and woodland restoration which will complement the Friends' revegetation project. The other three projects are:

upgrading the main entrance to RBG Cranbourne on Ballarto Road East; installing new directional and interpretive signs at the Stringybark Picnic Area (a new signage system has been designed by Brian Sadgrove); and revegetation of the old sandmine site known as the Amphitheatre. Work on all four projects began in January and will be completed by mid-1999.

Terry Smyth has returned to the RBG after four months' secondment to the Kunming Botanical Garden in Yunnan, China. She has gained much knowledge and experience during her secondment, and has made a substantial contribution to the Kunming Botanic Gardens. Her expertise, and the plant material she has collected, (including two species of yellow Camellia) will bring significant benefits to the RBG. She and I are most appreciative of the Friends' grant which made this secondment possible.

Dr Jenny Hart completed her four-month appointment as the 1998 Mueller Fellow in December. She undertook a project developing a computer-based interactive identification key for the alpine herb flora of Victoria, using information from the volumes of *Flora of Victoria*. She has demonstrated the feasibility of such keys for use by the general public, although problems with the software program prevented her fully completing the key. Approximately half of the funding for Dr Hart's fellowship was provided through a grant of \$12,500 from the Friends.

Caroline Pitcher, from Parks Victoria, has been appointed Marketing Manager in the Public Programs and Development Division, and Georgia Symmons has commenced work as Development Officer. She will report to the new Development Manager, whose position is currently being filled.

Philip Moors
Director