Botanic News

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, MELBOURNE INC.

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AUTUMN 2003

Extracts from the RBG Annual Report 2001/02

The Royal Botanic Gardens Board Victoria administers RBG Melbourne, RBG Cranbourne, the Herbarium and the Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology, (ARCUE) whose office is based at the University of Melbourne.

For the first time more than two million people visited the RBGM, a 3.8 per cent increase from 2001/02. Visitor numbers at Cranbourne were steady at 70,000. The staff profile at 30 June 2002 shows a total of 230 (136 female, 94 male: 136 full time, 29 part time and 63 casual). This represents an increase of 16 over the financial year. RBG also employs three contract apprentices.

The Report highlights a number of major achievements for the year:
RBG's *Policy for Conservation of Plant Biodiversity*, which addressed all facets of the Gardens' activities, was developed and implemented.

As part of the final stage of the restoration of the Old Melbourne Observatory, two permanent exhibitions — *Shooting the Stars* and *Transits, Tea and Trigonometry* — were installed in the Astrograph, South Equatorial and Photoheliograph houses. The exhibitions, which were complemented by a variety of visitor and curriculum based education programs, focus on the aspirations and achievements of 19th Century science at the Observatory.

Construction of the *Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden* began in 2002, after the completion of the landscape plans late in 2001. This environmental education garden will provide an interactive and hands-on experience for children of all ages and abilities. The project, which is supported by a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation, will be completed in 2004.

Volumes 3 and 4 of the *Horticultural Flora of South Eastern Australia* were released and the writing of volume 5 was completed. The work, a guide to cultivated plants of south-eastern Australia, both native and exotic, has been written in non-technical language with appeal to a wide range of readers. All areas of *remnant vegetation* on 20 local government areas were identified, classified and mapped by research scientists at ARCUE. This information is critical for the ecologically sound management of Victoria's indigenous plants and animals and was part of a collaborative mapping project with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Funding over three years was allocated for the design and construction of the first 11 hectares of the *Australian Garden at RBG Cranbourne*. The Garden will be a large public garden celebrating Australia's remarkable plant life in an artistic setting. The first 11 hectares is expected to open in 2005.

Considerable progress was made in addressing the problem of managing the Grey-headed Flying-fox population and RBGM is now implementing an integrated strategy involving the creation of an alternative roosting site for the colony.

The entire RBG Melbourne was included on the *State's Heritage Register*, ensuring its protection for future generations.

The Herbarium has become a major partner in *Australia's Virtual Herbarium*, a large-scale collaborative project that will give online access via a central internet site to the six million plant specimens held in Australia's eight main herbaria.

Construction of a *propagation glasshouse and preparation room* for the hygienic processing of seeds and cuttings has been completed. Funding was provided by the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Inc. Trust Fund.

The report also reveals the impressive range of research and publication undertaken by RBG staff, the array of public programs developed to enhance both the visitor's and the student's understanding and appreciation of plants, and the increasing reliance of RBG on commercial activities to generate revenue.

Bronwen Merrett

Growing Friends Autumn Sale
Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 March

From the President

In spite of the uncertainty existing in world politics at the moment, may I wish all members a happy and fulfilling New Year. Our thoughts are also with any of our members and their friends who may have been directly, or indirectly, affected by bushfires and drought.

One of my first duties as your new President was to attend a very happy and well-organised Christmas Dinner at the Lyceum Club, where we were entertained by after-dinner speaker Elaine Canty (pictured, right), Deputy Chair of the RBG Board, and where I met some more Members of the Friends.

I read the 'Rat House' article in the summer *Botanic News* with so much interest that I went to look at the area. It is now fenced off and has become a holding yard for plant stock for the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. What a history has been contained in that little block of land!

Some members may also have observed the work being carried out on the Theatre and Observatory lawns. This is part of the *Water Works, Water Wise* project that the Friends have funded for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. A very full explanation of the current work can be found in the Director's Report on page 14/15 of this Newsletter and makes very interesting and heartening reading. Because the project is so worthwhile, a flyer has been enclosed with this Newsletter, enabling members to make donations to help further this enterprise.

I was intrigued to meet the presidents of both the Sydney and Christchurch Friends groups in January. It was interesting to share ideas and to hear of the common problems our organisations face. These include attracting members, particularly younger ones, and the concern that the gardens which we all support and love could always benefit from a few more dollars.

This is the 150th anniversary year of the establishment of the Herbarium. The Friends will be very proud to be associated with the launch of Helen Cohn's book *Novelty to Rarity—a History of the National Herbarium of Victoria* which the Friends have funded. The year will be marked with a series of celebratory events that we eagerly anticipate.

I look forward to meeting some of our newer members at the Newcomers' Welcome on 19 March (see this page for details) and hope that all Members will publicise and support the functions planned by our Activities Committee. Bring a friend with you and enjoy yourselves as other Members have on past occasions.

Irwin Newman

Elaine Canty pictured at the Friends' Christmas Dinner.
Photo by Meg Miller

NEW MEMBERS' WELCOME
Wednesday 19 March at 5.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Invitations will soon be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our next 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering. We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to the Friends. After a glass of wine and savouries we will present a short information slide show, a welcome by the Director of the Gardens, and brief talks by our committee leaders. Following this the Voluntary Guides will take you on a guided tour of the Gardens.

All those who have joined the Friends since our last Welcome, and those who have already requested an invitation to an evening Welcome, will automatically receive an invitation. If you have not been able to attend a previous New Members' Welcome and would like to come this time, you are warmly invited as well, so please call our office (9650 6398) and we'll make sure to add your name to our guest list for this Welcome.

Autumn Activities

THE HISTORY OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND ITS EXPRESSION IN THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, MELBOURNE

Illustrated talk by Andrew Laidlaw, RBG Landscape Architect
Wednesday 12 March at 10.15am for 11.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

The work and vision of Andrew Laidlaw are vital to the Royal Botanic Gardens. Through the history of landscaping within the Gardens, Andrew will discuss pre-European history (why this site, and what was here), the early years (referring to Arthur, Dallachy, von Mueller and Guilfoyle), the middle years, the Master Plan (the agreed vision) and current projects.

Andrew has a diploma from Burnley College, a degree from RMIT and the preliminary year of Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Melbourne. He has been Landscape Architect at the Royal Botanic Gardens for five years. Previously he had his own practice, lectured at Burnley College and appeared on *Gardening Australia* as well as many radio gardening programs.

Refreshments will be served prior to the talk.
Cost incl. GST: $17 Friends: $12
RSVP by Friday 7 March on booking form.

UP THE AMAZON WITHOUT A PADDLE

Illustrated talk by Sarah Guest
Tuesday 18 March at 10.30am for 11.00 am.
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Sarah Guest as a speaker is always witty, informative and stimulating. The Friends are delighted to welcome Sarah back, and we look forward to hearing about her latest adventure. Sarah visited the Amazon in the company of Sir Iain Prance, a world renowned expert on this area and, amongst other things, a former director of Kew Gardens. Her talk will touch on the plants, people, history, social conditions and environmental values of areas within 'easy' reach of Manaus and Belem. The talk will be illustrated with slides that Sarah took on her Amazon adventure.

Morning tea will be served before the talk
Please book early to avoid disappointment.
Cost incl. GST: $17 Friends $12
RSVP by Tuesday 11 March on booking form.

WESTERN VISIONS . BUS TRIP

Thursday 27 March. Leaving at 9.15am sharp from outside Theatre Complex, Arts Centre, returning about 5.00pm

An early Autumn tour of dramatic new landscapes, a Botanic Garden being rejuvenated, a (nearly) hidden treasure of indigenous low-rainfall flora, an extensive scenic lakeland setting of native plants and birdlife, and a succulent treat.

We will have the company of one of our Members to help identify birds, and will:

- travel to historic Williamstown Botanic Gardens (established in 1856) for a talk by the head gardener, Philip Goode, on its restoration;
- walk around Newport Lakes, an urban bushland oasis teeming with native flora and birdlife, guided by park ranger Suzie Inglis;
- visit *Basaltica*, an arid garden/botanical collection with talks by notable botanical artist Helene Wild and habitat trust secretary Elio Comello, manager of this garden treasure;
- inspect a marvellous coastal vista spanning many kilometres of seascape and ancient volcanic regions cradling our city of Melbourne, with Suzie Inglis as guide. This area includes Laverton Creek Explosives Reserve with Edwardian garden and house, and the Cheetham wetlands at the Altona tip redevelopment site.

The Williamstown-Altona region's masterplan for contiguous parkland and natural reserves is achieving remarkable results, and will be illustrated. The tour will reveal much to impress in a fast-changing area whose potential is being realised by far-sighted citizens.

BYO picnic lunch and binoculars. Morning tea will be provided.
Cost incl. GST: $30 Friends $25
RSVP by Tuesday 18 March on booking form.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE

For those who made enquiries at the office regarding this course, we will be in contact in the near future with final details.

If you haven't already registered your interest, please ring the Friends' office on 9650 6398.

LANDSCAPING WITH ROSES

Illustrated Talk by Barry Johnson
Tuesday 29 April at 6.15pm for 7pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Barry Johnson is a keen horticulturist with interests not only in roses but also in camellias, and plants in general. He is an active member in his local garden club at Ivanhoe, and is currently the President of Camellias Victoria. He has established his own landscaping business — 'Hearts Content'. Barry was awarded the John Pascoe Fawkner Medal by the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria.

But on to roses: Barry joined the Rose Society of Victoria in 1984, was elected to Council in 1986 and served as President for 11 years. In addition he has served two terms as the President of the National Rose Society of Australia. Barry is a keen photographer and uses his skill to good effect in the rose garden. He is a regular contributor to gardening magazines and to the Australian Rose Annual.

Combining all these skills, Barry will talk to us about Landscaping with Roses, a subject close to his heart, and illustrate it with his beautiful slides. Following on from our Delbard rose morning and Diana Fickling's talk last year, this promises to be another wonderful Friends' 'Rose' event.

Refreshments will be served before the talk.
Cost incl. GST: $17 Friends: $12
RSVP by Tuesday 22 April on booking form.

AUTUMN INSIDERS' QUARTERLY WALK AND DEMONSTRATION OF AN ARRANGEMENT USING FOLIAGE, FRUITS AND BERRIES

Tuesday 13 May, leaving at 10.00am sharp from Gate Lodge

Enjoy the changing hues of the plant world on our Quarterly Insiders' Walk through the Royal Botanic Gardens as the colourful Autumn pigments are unveiled before leaf fall. A Voluntary Guide will help us enjoy the attractive seasonal vistas, show us plants that produce spectacular berries and other Autumn highlights.

On our return to Gate Lodge there will be a demonstration on how to put together a flower arrangement using colourful foliage, fruits and berries. Morning tea will be served during the demonstration.

Numbers are limited so book early to avoid disappointment.
Cost incl. GST: $15 Friends $10
RSVP by Tuesday 6 May on booking form.

PLANTING DESIGN, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN AT RBG CRANBOURNE

Illustrated Talk by Paul Thompson
Thursday 22 May at 5.15pm for 6.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Paul Thompson, one of Australia's foremost and innovative landscape designers and specialist in planting design, is the co-designer of the Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, with Landscape Architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean. The same team designed the Forest Gully at the Museum and Birrarung Mar. Paul will compare the differences of the planting design of the Museum, Birrarung Mar and the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and their relevance to the domestic garden.

This broad experience has just been expressed in his latest book, **Australian Planting Design**, which sets a new standard for an Australian design "that belongs to the land, and more suitable to the environment of tomorrow". It will raise the awareness of every reader — professional, student or enthusiast — to all elements that help designers make decisions.

Refreshments will be served before the talk
Cost incl. GST: $17 Friends: $12
RSVP by Monday 19 May on booking form.

AUTUMN IN THE CITY: BISHOPSCOURT AND THE FITZROY GARDENS

Tuesday 27 May at 9.45am
Meet at Bishopscourt,
120 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne

Bishopscourt is one of the oldest properties in East Melbourne and has been the official residence of the Anglican Bishop, later Archbishop, of Melbourne since 1853. It is the last intact urban estate within the City of Melbourne. Each resident Bishop or Archbishop and their families have enjoyed the garden and many have made their own contribution to the garden. Bishopscourt is included on the Victorian Heritage Register and 18 trees are included on the citation.

Since July 2001 the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) have conducted working bees, and grants and donations from Heritage Victoria, the RACV Foundation, AGHS, Diggers Seeds and Total Plant Solutions have enabled much work to be done. Our tour will be led by Helen Page, Victorian Chair

of AGHS. Morning tea will be served at the conclusion of the tour in the garden, where Helen will be available to answer any questions.

We will then cross the road to the Fitzroy Gardens, rich in history, and which includes Ola Cohn's carving of a 300 year old red gum, Cook's Cottage, Tudor Village, along with many statues and fountains. The Conservatory will turn the heat up for a cool Melbourne with its display of Poinsettias and tropical plants. Included in our visit will be a Conservatory tour plus a Nursery Tour.

Numbers are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.
Cost incl. GST: $20 Friends: $15
RSVP by Tuesday 20th May on booking form.

GOURMET GARDENS OF MARGARET RIVER, WILDFLOWERS AND FORESTS OF THE SOUTH

7-DAY WESTERN AUSTRALIA BUS TOUR FROM SATURDAY 4 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2003

(OPTIONAL 10-DAY TOUR INCLUDES 3 NIGHTS IN PERTH)

Join us for seven days of the finer things in life — beautiful gardens, historic homes, wild flowers and magnificent scenery. This holiday is at a leisurely pace and includes gourmet food and wine, the best arts and crafts, plus excellent accommodation.

Please see the separate flyer enclosed with this newsletter for itinerary and further details about the trip and how to book.

If Members are in Canberra early this year, take a side trip to the ***Australian National Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre*** *to see the exhibition* The Plant Underworld, *featuring the ANBG Cryptogam Collections. These plants—lichens and bryophytes—produce neither flowers nor seeds, but exhibit amazing diversity. Well worth a look.*

The exhibition continues until 3 May.

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Conservation Series
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Water Conservation for your Backyard
Wednesday 26 March, 6.00–7.30pm

Water is a precious resource — how can you conserve it, and still have a great looking garden? Explore ways to prepare your garden for future water restrictions with tips from the experts.

Join us for a drink from 6.00pm
Cost incl. GST: $6.60 adult $4.40 concession
Bookings essential on 03 9252 2429

De-tox your Garden
Wednesday 30 April, 6.00–7.30pm

Do you want to reduce the use of chemicals in your garden, and find out about responsible alternatives to minimise environmental impacts on your backyard? Then join Mary Trigger (Project Manager, Sustainable Gardening Australia), Paul Gibson Roy (Burnley College and Bulleen Art and Garden), and Jackie Steel (Bulleen Art and Garden) to find out about the exciting new *Sustainable Gardening Australia* project.

Join us for a drink from 6pm.
Cost incl. GST: $6.60 adult $4.40 concession
Bookings essential on 03 9252 2429

Sustaining Biodiversity in the Suburbs
Wednesday 28 May, 6.00-7.30pm

How can you attract and sustain biodiversity in your backyard and local area? Join Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne ecologist, Dr Kirsten Parris to discuss the role garden owners can take to preserve plants and animals in urban areas.

Join us for a drink from 6.00pm.
Cost incl. GST: $6.60 adult $4.40 concession
Bookings essential on 03 9252 2429

Garden Thugs: from backyard to bush
Wednesday 25 June, 6.00-7.30pm

Some garden thugs (environmental weeds) may be lurking in your backyard! Join us to find out the impact of weeds on bushland, wetlands and native fauna, and about the attractive alternatives that can minimise the impact of your garden on surrounding natural areas.

Join us for a drink from 6.00pm.
Cost incl. GST: $6.60 adult $4.40 concession
Bookings essential on 03 9252 2429

GROWING FRIENDS

Preparations are well under way for the 2003 Autumn Sale scheduled for 29 and 30 March. ***Extra help from members not involved with the Growing Friends on a weekly basis is always most welcome at the sale. Areas of need for both days are at the checkout, raffle ticket sales and assistance with catering for the fulltime workers . Please phone the office on 9650 6398 if you could spare a couple of hours.***

As part of on-going maintenance, the RBG gardeners lifted roses from a rose bed and the Growing Friends obtained a selection of hybrid tea and miniature roses as a result. Among the hybrid teas are Sybil Hypkin, Accolade, Apricot Delight, Sun King and Elizabeth Harkness, mostly in 43cm(17 inch) and a few in 25cm (10 inch) pots, and growing vigorously. The miniatures are 'fairy roses' in 25cm pots. All these roses are available for sale now to Friends of the RBG every Friday morning at the Growing Friends' Nursery behind Nursery Lodge from 10.00am to 1.00pm, except for the two weeks before the sale (when our catalogue is prepared) and the week after (when we draw breath).

Some of the bulbs raised before the Spring Sale have developed and will be offered at the Autumn Sale. These include *Urgenia maritimus* and *Sprekelia formosissimum* (Jacobean or Aztec Lily).

Staff of the RBG and the Growing Friends are recording the success rate of striking cuttings taken at various times from new and old wood. The information is necessary to complement standard data taken from similar research in the colder Northern Hemisphere. Adjusting for hemisphere is fairly straightforward. Extrapolating to our somewhat quirky 'Mediterranean' climate is hazardous so this reseach is essential. Repeating a previously successful, largely unscientific method may lead to continued success but is not guaranteed to do so. It would appear that success depends on a large number of factors, whereas failure may be attributed to as few as one! Together with meticulous attention to the cleanliness of the propagating environment and better control of the temperature and humidity regimes during propagation, the Melbourne-based data being amassed are already partly responsible for a significant improvement in the strike rate.

Working with the group continues to be a learning experience for all concerned. The knowledge base within the Growing Friends can only be described as encyclopedic. Access to this knowledge and the nature of the work performed each Friday is an attraction for members. Trish Wheelahan has recently joined us. She comes with considerable skills in biochemistry, and adds work with the Growing Friends to the responsibilities of a young family. There is a wide range of backgrounds from which Growing Friends come. One currently pressing need is for a couple of people with computer skills; if you are on the waiting list for the Growing Friends and have such skills, please let the convener know.

Colin Herbert, Convener

WHY SUCCULENTS?

Succulents are a very diverse and rewarding group of plants. They require little water, maintenance or space and can live for years with virtually no food in the poorest of gravelly soils or in pots. Most like full sun although a few, including Gasterias and Haworthias, thrive in shade. They are ideal for small gardens and drought conditions.

In addition to being very accommodating plants succulents offer an extraordinary range of size, colour and form that provide an exciting palette to the gardener. Foliage colours range from deep rich green (*Echeveria* 'Emerald Ripple') through mid green (*Aeonium arboreum*) to a pale pastel blue-green (*E. elegans* or *globulosa*), pale blue (*E. glauca*) to almost white (*Senecio haworthoides*).

Leaves come in all shapes and sizes. They can be tinted, patterned, textured or spiked. Some are long, thin and strap-like (*Agave stricta* and *Cheamaloe africana*), while others are stumpy little triangles (*Aloe variegata*). The leaf ends may take the form of an arch (compare *Echeveria* with *Sempervivum*) while the edges may be crenellate (*E. imbricata*), scalloped (*Kalanchoe*) or saw toothed (Aloe).

Echeveria derenbergii and *E.* 'Violet Queen' are mostly pastel blue green but with leaf tips blushing to a soft pink or violet. In other species the leaf tips are a rich orange (*E. agavoides*), red (*E. pulvinata*), a deep maroon (*Sempervivum tectorum*), purplish black (*Aeonium* 'Schwartzkopf') or bronze (*A. atropurpureum*) Many species have distinctively patterned leaves, such as horizontal banding (*Haworthia attenuata*), white dots (*H. coarctata*), an edging of bright yellow teeth (*Aloe mitriformis*) or a pale emerald stipple (*Gasteria bicolor*) Others have leaves covered in soft downy 'fur' (*Echeveria setosa*), or a fine white powder (*Cotyledon undulata*). *Agaves* have severe sharp spikes at the leaf tip.

This is a small sample of the delights to be found in the family Crassulaceae. Succulents are easily propagated from offsets and can also readily be struck from a stem, single leaf or flower stalk. And so a collection begins. You are welcome to come to the Nursery to enjoy some of these plants, or look for them at the Growing Friends' Autumn sale on 29 and 30 March.

Don Allison

Botanical Illustrators

Dianne Emery's Term 2 classes
will commence the week beginning 5 May:
Tuesdays 6.15pm-8.45pm;
Wednesdays 10.00am-12.30pm and 12.30pm-3.00pm; Fridays 10.30am-1.30pm;
Saturdays 1.00pm-3.30pm (conducted by Mali Moir)

One-day workshop:
An Introduction to Botanical Art

Wednesday 23 April from 10.00am to 4.00pm.
All materials provided. Morning and afternoon tea included. BYO lunch.
Cost incl. GST: $85 Friends: $75
For more information please contact Dianne Emery on 9523 5397.

BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATORS QUARTERLY MEETING
TREES with Dolores Skowronski-Malloni
Tuesday 13 May at 10.00am for 10.30am

Dolores will tell us about her project depicting some of the historic old trees growing in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Her painting of the Cedar of Lebanon on the Hopetoun Lawn was purchased for the State Botanical Collection at the *Art of Botanical Illustration* 2000 exhibition, and it was used for the Friends' Christmas card in December 2002.

She will discuss how she tackles the problem of painting big trees, showing branches, seeds and flowers including the whole tree, her way of designing the page, and media used. She will show us some recently-completed work and other paintings in progress.

Morning tea will be served before the talk.
Cost incl. GST: $5.50. Pay on the day.
RSVP to Friends' office on 9650 6398.

WHIRLYBIRDS
The Whirling Room Studio is home to a group of Botanical Illustrators who meet weekly to work together in an informal group. Any Botanical Illustrator who is a Friend is welcome to come along and work in this supportive atmosphere, sharing ideas and technical information, painting techniques, design etc.

For further information, contact Miriam Blight on 9583 6098.

CD-ROMs of *The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition 2002:*
There are still some CD-ROMs of the Catalogue of this exhibition available for purchase at $10 each plus $1 for postage and packing. Please contact the office on 03 9650 6398 or email friends@frbgmelb.org.au

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GREETING CARDS
Many Members will remember the beautiful Christmas Cards released late last year featuring Dolores Skowronski-Malloni's beautiful illustration of *Cedrus libani*. We still have a limited number of these cards available in a blank format which would be ideal for any occasion.
Cost: $10 per pack of six.

THE ILLUSTRATED GARDEN

This project was established in 2001 by artist members of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens to create a permanent illustrated record, or florilegium, of selected plants growing in the RBG Melbourne. Our 21st century florilegium is held digitally and photographically by the Friends. The first product of *The Illustrated Garden* was our very successful 2002 Christmas card depicting the *Cedrus libani* on the Oak Lawn, painted by Dolores Skowronski-Malloni. At the sixth *Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition in 2002, six illustrations were chosen to add to our collection. We will feature one of these paintings and the artist, in this and subsequent issues of *Botanic News*.

This issue's painting is *Liriodendron tulipifera* (the Tulip Tree), Family: Magnoliaceae (pictured).

Photo by Greg Hoxley

This tall deciduous tree, slow to flower, is native to the eastern seaboard of the USA. The tulip-shaped green and orange flowers emerge in spring when the dried fruiting body remains on the bare branches after the golden leaves of autumn are shed. The Royal

Botanic Gardens has a Liriodendron Bed near the Tecoma Pavilion on the Eastern Lawn,a fine specimen by the link path opposite the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden and another below the Hopetoun Lawn above the path to the Plant Craft Cottage.

A chance meeting in the late 1980s with Celia Rosser, famous for her depiction of the genus Banksia, introduced botanical artist Mary Gregory to an art form which immediately fascinated her. Mary joined Anita Barley's class at Burnley Horticultural College. Eventually, with a group of fellow students, they became the founding members of the Botanical Illustrator's group that staged the first *Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition in 1992 at the National Herbarium. Mary has exhibited at all subsequent exhibitions. In 1997 she exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society's Exhibition in London, receiving the Society's coveted silver gilt medal.. Mary likes to depict the various stages of a plant's life, as in two paintings purchased by the Gardens for the State Botanical Collection housed in the Herbarium, *Agathis robusta* and *Brachychiton acerifolius*.

Rita Parkinson

A STAFF PROFILE: CHRIS JENEK

Photo by Meg Miller

How did a Polish student of literature, Latin and linguistics become a horticulturalist in Australia? In my brief interview with Chris Jenek I sat fascinated by the story of his life and work.

Born in Poland, Chris grew up in a musical family of pianists and a violinist. While studying literature at university in Poland, he met his future wife Anna. In 1990, in the fourth year of a five-year degree, Chris and Anna visited relatives in London. These relatives had Australian citizenship and were working on a project in London. In order to have their visitors' visas to the UK extended, Anna and Chris applied for Australian residency. To their surprise their applications were successful and they came to Australia intending to work, save, and return to Poland to live.

On arrival, Chris enrolled in English at Box Hill TAFE and sat an exam to enable him to study art. He passed, but soon realised he did not have the resources to build a good portfolio. He had long been fascinated by popular science, particularly biology, and studying horticulture seemed a more practical choice. By 1994 Chris had graduated from Burnley and Anna had qualified in accountancy. Chris worked in hydroponics and was soon travelling Victoria advising on the application of hydroponics to tomato growing. He continued this work until two and a half years ago. By this time Chris and Anna were married with two children, Alex and Ada, and they decided to return to Poland to live. Two weeks after arrival they discovered how at home they had been enjoying the Australian life style. Considering the opportunities Australia could offer the children, Chris and Anna decided to return.

Chris applied for the position he currently holds in the RBG Nursery. Responsible for plant propagation by division, he is heavily involved in producing plants for the Children's Garden. He also looks after the orchid house, the bromeliads, the cacti and succulents and the bulb collection. His favourites are the cacti and succulents with their strong shapes, forms and textures, "spectacular in their simplicity and their ability to thrive on such limited amounts of water — the essential component of life." Although having favourites, Chris appreciates and admires all plants, believing each has a use or purpose.

The scientific aspect of horticulture has a special attraction for Chris. At the RBG the opportunity for research and exploring beyond his comfort zone has enabled him to acquire tissue culture techniques with the objective of propagating some of the more difficult plants. He is encouraged and excited by results so far.

Chris is optimistic that the results of some of his experiments with mushrooms and other mycelia may be exploited for education and horticulture in the Children's Garden. The Growing Friends are very fortunate to enjoy Chris' regular thoughtful input and assistance with cuttings and propagation for their Spring and Autumn sales.

Chris' interests are diverse. He achieved his black belt in karate, although a knee injury from a motor bike accident halted further participation. He enjoys music, appreciating classical music as "pure, pristine, perfect," but mostly enjoys jazz, particularly that of the 1950s and 60s. Most of Chris and Anna's leisure is spent with Alex and Ada — flying kites in the park, in playgrounds and at the beach. At the moment pursuit of their interests in art, theatre and bushwalking is limited until their children grow a little older.

It is interesting to reflect on how chance played such a part in bringing Chris to the RBG.

Carolyn Tomkins

THERE'S LOTS IN A NAME!

I love knowing the botanical names of plants. Not only do they tell me what sort of a plant it is — something that common names do not always do — but often they also tell me something about how the plant grows, the shape of its leaves, its colour or its history.

Knowing where a plant comes from can give clues to its native habitat and climatic conditions — although because of variations within regions, further detail is often required — and can assist us to provide the correct growing conditions to ensure our success with that plant. It also provides an insight into the plant's history, usually where it was first collected. This history can be embedded in the plant's name, such as with *Wisteria sinensis*, the Chinese Wisteria.

Plants such as *Elegia capensis* (an ornamental grass), *Cunonia capensis* (Butter Knife Bush), *Calodendrum capense* (Cape Chestnut) originate in the area around the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa.
Sanguinaria canadensis (Bloodroot) and *Aquilegia canadensis*.(American Wild Columbine) *Acer pensylvanicum* (Moosewood), *Zauschneria californica* (Californian Fuschia), *Juniperus virginiana* (Pencil Cedar) E. USA, *Lonicera americana (*Honeysuckle*)* are all plants from North America.
Lysichiton camtschatcensis (Skunk Cabbage), *Fritillaria camtschatcensis* (Fritillary) are from the Kamchatka Peninsula and surrounds — referring to Siberia.
Astelia chathamica comes, not surprisingly, from the Chatham Islands.

Iris sibirica (Siberian Iris) and *Nepeta sibirica* (Catmint) as could be expected, come from Siberia. *Clematis napaulensis*, and *Potentilla nepalensis* come from the Himalayas. *Clematis tibetiana* subsp. *vernayi* is from Nepal and Tibet.

Many plants from China have 'chinensis' — or a variation such as sinensis (above) — in their name. *Actinidia deliciosa* (Chinese Gooseberry), *Loropetalum chinense* (Fringe Flower) are examples. *Pieris japonica* (Lily of the Valley Bush), *Camellia japonica*, *Cryptomeria japonica* (Dwarf Japanese Cedar) are three of the many plants from Japan. *Parrotia persica* (Persian Ironwood) is from the region of Caucasus and Persia, while *Omphalodes cappadocica* (Navelwort) is from Turkey.

The term 'australis' refers to the Southern Hemisphere and 'australiensis' means 'of or belonging to Australia', so we find *Asplenium australasicum* (bird's nest fern) from the southern regions of Australia, *Kingia australis* (Grass Tree) and *Livistona australis* (Cabbage tree palm) from Australia and *Roaulia australis* from New Zealand. However, *Brunfelsia australis* (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) originates in tropical America.
Phoenix canariensis (Canary Island Date Palm) originates in the Canary Islands.
Lantana montevidensis (Trailing Lantana) comes from Uruguay.
Reinwardtia indica (Linum) comes from India and China.
Olea europaea (Fruiting Olive) Mediterranean region and *Euonymus europaeus* (Spindle Tree) are European species.

But of course, no system is foolproof, and to stop us getting too proud of ourselves there is *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (Arum Lily), which comes from Africa, but *Adiantum aethiopicum* (Maidenhair fern) that is a pan tropical plant and found in all Australian states. There is also *Pieris formosa* that originates from China and the Himalayas, but *Dicentra formosa* (Wild Bleeding Heart) comes from North America.

We know that *Bougainvillea peruviana* is from South America but *Scilla peruviana* actually comes from the west Mediterranean. I have heard two versions of the origin of its name. One is that it was the name of the ship on which it arrived, and the other from Phillips and Rix who claim that Linnaeus thought it came from Peru.

And just so we don't get too complacent there is always *Iris germanica* that originates in Katmandu.

Terri Kay

GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

We moved into our house approximately forty years ago when the garden was just a privet hedge and a huge Atlantic Cedar (*Cedrus atlanticus*), now just memories.

Attracting native birds by growing Australian plants was then the fashion, so I started growing tube stock of eucalypts (some now corymbias), melaleucas, hakeas, baeckias (now babingtonias and ochrospermas), casuarinas (now allocasuarinas) and the lovely *Brachychiton acerifolius* (Illawarra Flame Tree) and *B. rupestris* (Queensland Bottle Tree); you name it, we grew it.

We are now seriously overgrown, as these tiny-tubed plants have become rather large, especially the eucalypts which tend to drop heavy branches unexpectedly.

I began collecting rare plants when my neighbour, the late Jack Seaton, a foundation member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants, inspired me and we

had many trips to Roger Elliot's Australflora Nursery, Schubert's Nursery and Boddy's Nursery and many other small nurseries known to Jack. I still have some of these treasures. Of course Jack had his own collection, and when he died I contacted Allan Gardiner of the Royal Botanic Gardens' Nursery to offer Jack's rare Australian plants; Allan and his team came promptly to collect them.

This made me think of joining the Friends of the RBG. The next issue of their newsletter mentioned the Growing Friends.

Gillian Kirk with the help of her husband Neil, Dale McDonnell and Lydia Bartlett as treasurer were the first organisers of the Growing Friends. Gillian and Neil who were guides and orchid enthusiasts had recently handed the reins to Lydia, a bulb enthusiast, whom I phoned. Lydia discouraged me even though I had modestly told her that I knew a little about Australian plants.

I fronted up anyway (this was before we had a waiting list) and I was totally out of my depth. That I had not heard of 99 per cent of the plants in the nursery became immediately obvious.

Lydia suggested I start an Australian section using the plants left over from the Growing Friends' second sale, which had included stock surplus to the needs of the new Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne. Despite my own gardening experience I soon found there was an enormous amount to learn in setting up the section. It started in 1992 and is now flourishing. Carolyn Tomkins, June Cherrey and I have often in the past been accused of trying to take over our nursery. These damned Aussies!

Come and see our range of unusual Australian plants, many bird attracting, and drought and frost resistant, ones that don't look like twiggy heath myrtles and look like neurotics (syn. exotics).

And possums ignore them.

Linda Floyd

Bush Seasons: *An Affectionate Record of a Tiny Bushland.* Joan Semmons.
Hyland House 2002. rrp $49.95

This is a lovingly observed 'diary' of a year of the changing vegetation and animal life in a small scrap of remnant vegetation near Alexandra in Victoria. It graphically demonstrates the huge diversity of animal and plant life that can exist in any small area of land and, by extension, the huge value of such areas.

The 'diary' comprises information gathered over a number of years, during lengthy walks. The author's illustrations in both watercolour and pencil accompany the detailed descriptions of both the native — such as the Common Brown Grass (*Agrostis avenacea*) of December to the tall Greenhood Orchid (*Pterostylis melagramma*) of September — and the exotic plants including fungi. She also documents and illustrates the life cycles of the various visiting insects, butterflies and birds. All plant descriptions are written in very accessible language and provide information about their growing habits and conditions, as well as their place in the ecology and their use — such as by indigenous people. Together these drawings and descriptions give the book an immediacy and the bushland a real life and existence.

The book transformed this piece of bush into an enchanting and exciting botanical experience and made me want to rush out into the nearby nature reserve with pen and paper and start observing and documenting.

Terri Kay

Seeds of Concern*: The Genetic Manipulation of Plants.* David R. Murray
UNSW, December 2002. rrp $34.95

Seeds of Concern should interest anyone who has ever asked themselves any questions about genetic engineering such as 'How is it done?'; 'What are the advantages?'; 'How does it affect the plant?'; 'Can it do any harm to the environment?'; 'Who benefits?'. In this book David Murray, an Australian scientist and conservationist, provides readers with a tool-kit for understanding the debate around genetically modified plants and how they affect society.

In language aimed at the non-scientist — and including extensive glossary and reference lists — David Murray explains the biology of cells and how genetic manipulation is carried out. He outlines the various methodologies and their respective success and reliability rates, and then proceeds to discuss the real impacts of genetically modified crops such as the need for increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and the non-chemical solutions to these problems.

The debate is presented even-handedly and addresses situations where plant modification could have real benefits, such as enabling plants to take up currently unavailable phosphorous in the soil, as well as those where it would prove deleterious. David Murray also raises the negative environmental impacts of monocultures and the overuse of synthetic fertilisers. Embedded throughout is a discussion of multinational chemical companies and how they stand to benefit from this technology, while recognising the need in some cases for intellectual property arrangements.

All in all this book provides food for thought and certainly answers the questions that are commonly asked when genetic modification of plants is under discussion.

Terri Kay

BOTANIC BIRDS

Summer is drawing to a close and the long drought is still with us. Despite this challenge, the Gardens look superb!

It is amazing what careful and judicious watering can accomplish when it is a fact that the RBG has decreased its water consumption by about 40 per cent in the last five years. Record numbers of people are flocking to the Gardens and so are the birds. The lush conditions provide a supermarket of nectar, insects, manna, fruit and berries. Everything a diverse range of birds could wish for.

All the regular breeding species have had a successful year with the notable exception of the swans. Hardly a cygnet to be seen. Why? There are plenty on Albert Park Lake.

A pair of Little Falcons have nested near "E" Gate. Spotted Pardalotes are in their usual spot in the rockery above Dog Flat. Sacred Kingfishers have drilled a nest hole in a palm tree near Long Island and although their nest wasn't seen, a pair of Pied Butcherbirds were seen feeding three young near Oak Lawn. Finally a pair of those notorious nest robbers, Pied Currawongs, were seen feeding young near the Eucalyptus Lawn.

There was great excitement when a male Satin Flycatcher was seen by a *Brunch with the Birds* group one Sunday morning. This is the first recorded sighting of this species in the Gardens known to the authors. If any reader also saw this bird or knows of any previous sighting the authors would be grateful to hear from you. During this 1-1/2 hour walk 45 species of birds were seen.

The Little Grassbirds now regularly seen and heard at Long Island are hopefully a pair. It will be interesting to see if they nest in the years to come.

The changes to the habitat at Long Island have had a most beneficial effect as far as the Gardens are concerned. This also applies to the bird population. It is almost 'standing room only' on the Island on occasions and the increase in species is most interesting. The native flora, fauna and visitors to the gardens have all benefited from this imaginative venture.

David Plant and Tony Delves

Friends inspecting early renovation work on Long Island bird habitat. Plantings emphasised native grasses and shrubbery to attract and protect the birds.

COURTYARDS AND TINY SPACES

Last winter, landscape architect John Patrick gave an illustrated talk on courtyards and tiny spaces. Following are some of the tips John suggested for creating small gardens.

* Good planning is essential and every square metre is important. As space is critical, do not break it up. Precise, clean and crisp geometric lines are preferable.
* Large foliage tends to overwhelm a small space. Choose plants whose foliage relates to each other.
* Think about what a tree will contribute for 12 months of the year. Every plant chosen must have more than one quality.
* Trees with cross axes at different levels give a subtle suggestion of a division of the space. Changes in levels can be very useful when designing small spaces.
* Large-growing trees do not need to be rejected as they can be pruned. Alternatively they can be enjoyed and then replaced when they are too big.
* Avoid banks of rocks and think retaining walls.
* Paving can provide a year-round decoration where a mix of flowers is not possible.
* A small courtyard is not the place for a seasonal display. Cottage gardens are less successful in small spaces. A few well-chosen species are needed to present a unified effect. The result will often be less successful if you want one of this, one of that and another of 'a must-have favourite!

Heather Ironmonger

ANOTHER AUSTRALIAN TRIUMPH AT THE R. H. S. LONDON

Another FRBG Melbourne artist, Helen Fitzgerald, has recently returned from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) London Exhibition in November 2002 where she was awarded a gold medal.

Helen said: "It is a wonderful honour to participate in such a prestigious show as the RHS and to be able to continue what almost seems to be a tradition of Australian artists receiving high accolades overseas."

Helen exhibited eight paintings of eucalypts and was delighted to hear so many visitors at the exhibition express very keen interest in eucalypts. Many visitors to the RHD exhibition were growing different varieties in their gardens in the UK. In Wales there is a special interest in a collection of Australian flora which has recently been started at the National Botanical Garden on Wales in Carmarthen.

Visitors to the RHS exhibition were once again amazed and delighted that artists like Helen were willing to come so far to exhibit in London. She was the only Australian artist: there were three from Japan and the remainder were from the UK. Helen said that meeting others who were so interested in botanical art was inspiring, and she is continuing to correspond with gardeners and artists overseas as a result of the exhibition.

Eucalyptus tetraptera, *one of the eight beautiful paintings Helen displayed at the RHS London Exhibition.*

FROM THE MEMBERS

DIANA FICKLING: HERITAGE ROSES AND COMPANION PLANTING

Mueller Hall was abuzz with gathered Friends and the heady scent of roses collected from the garden of Diana Fickling to illustrate her talk on heritage roses in mid-November.

As usual, the Catering Committee provided delicious refreshments to welcome Friends. Diana started her talk with an interesting account of the long history of the rose and its cultivation and use by different civilisations, such as representation in art and use in medicine. Diana highlighted the romance which has always followed the rose, and its mystique that is shared by few other blooms. It was interesting to learn how species roses from around the world were hybridised over time to produce the group of roses known today as Heritage roses.

This introduction was then illustrated with a collection of slides taken by Diana. These not only depicted the different groups of heritage roses, but also gave us enticing glimpses of Diana's picturesque garden in Glen Waverley and other beautiful gardens she has visited. Diana's artistic prowess doesn't stop with her garden design — it extends to photography.

Diana then made her way to the display of beautiful blooms she had brought from her garden, and described the attributes and growth habits of those specimens. Amongst this collection was a bloom from the *Rosa* 'Fantin-Latour' bush which had started Diana's love affair with heritage roses: it looked perfect set in a silver vase that had been a wedding present to her grandmother.

The talk was rounded off with suggestions for, and samples of, companion plants which Diana has used to enhance the heritage roses in her garden.

Diana's talk was infused with her bright, warm personality and a good measure of her infectious humour, which carried through the lively question time at the end of this inspiring presentation.

Margaret and Meredith Bryant

Maureen Hart, of the Friends' catering committee, and Diana Fickling with some of the roses from Diana's garden.

DELIGHTFULLY ORIENTAL

Knowledge of plants and their uses is as old as time itself so what better idea than to combine the two with a fascinating walk and talk with Terry Smyth, curator of the RBG's Southern Chinese Collection and Susan Purdy, artist and photographer, accompanied by her dog, 'Little'. This was a wonderful meeting of minds, each displaying a totally different perspective relating to Chinese plants.

The event coincided almost to the day with Terry's first setting out ten years ago, aided by funds from the Friends, on the first of her seed-gathering trips to China. Some of us will remember with what awe and pleasure we watched her subsequent slide presentation when reporting back. So it was on this occasion as she re-presented some of the original series, adding many slides taken on later trips as the bonds between the Yunnan Kunming Botanic Gardens and our own have been maintained. It was quite tantalising to watch scenes of such beauty in the high mountain reaches, that Terry described as the most beautiful places she has ever seen. Extreme measures are needed now to preserve these threatened areas that contain the largest number of indigenous species anywhere in the world.

Susan had not been aware of the RBG's Southern Chinese collection until introduced to it by a relative. It was also only comparatively recently that she learned that her great-grandmother was Chinese. This motivated her towards a new interest in Chinese culture, especially Chinese art, in which nature plays such a large part. Susan revealed a whole new concept to photographing plants, by making a photo gram, where the plants are placed on photographic paper and exposed to light. No camera is used. The finished picture looks very much like an X-ray, revealing the inner soul of the plant. Susan then gives these pictures added dimension and meaning by adding small Chinese woodcuts, relating their story to the specific plant in a very modern and fascinating way. She and Terry have been working together for twelve months, using plants from the Southern Chinese collection, selecting a new plant for each photo gram and covering all seasons and various stages of growth. We saw some of these works in a slide presentation by Susan.

After the talk and slides we went for a walk through the Gardens with Terry and Susan. We saw and heard how the Chinese utilise plants like *Trachycarpus fortunei*, the Windmill Palm. The fibre from its trunk can be intricately woven to make beautiful hand brooms, or toys such as the mountain goat we were shown. Even the bamboo sheaths that protect emerging new shoots are not wasted. These can be made into shoes and tied to the feet with *Trachycarpus* fronds. We were able to ask numerous questions and hear about the intricacies of managing the plant collection here in Melbourne.

Plants, used medicinally by the Chinese, are as age old as the ancient civilisation and many people, including students of Naturopathy, come to the Southern Chinese Collection just to see these plants growing, rather than in the dried form usually seen in herbal medicine. How fortunate that Melbourne's climate is similar to that from which the Collection derives and that there is a garden in which these plants are properly cherished by the staff.

Meg Bentley and Dorothy Smith

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Weather patterns in mind, you will undoubtedly agree that the current Friends' *Water Works, Water Wise* project with the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne has become a visionary example of productive collaboration and a valuable legacy for the Gardens. Thank you for your support.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the extraordinary voluntary work undertaken by so many Members. The Friends enjoy a loyal and vital membership based on the contribution of time and resources given by so many talented and dedicated people.

You may have noted that one of the principal purposes of the Friends is "to provide educational and other activities for Members". Many of the activities organised during 2002 were quickly booked out, indicating their increasing popularity and media exposure—the calendar was jam-packed with educational and social activities. Members gain prior notice of the scheduled lectures, functions, events, courses, tours and classes through their copy of *Botanic News*. Book early during 2003, particularly for the Members Only activities.

Have you visited the Growing Friends' Nursery? As a Member, you are able to purchase plants each Friday prior to the public sales in Spring and Autumn (on presentation of your membership card). It's a buzz of activity in the Nursery on Fridays, but the venture is worthwhile for all avid gardeners.

The Growing Friends are currently developing a gift voucher scheme for use at our nursery. A future *Botanic News* will contain more detail but in the meantime, if you need to give a gift before the Autumn sale, visit the Nursery to purchase a voucher.

If you have any suggestions for improving membership benefits, please let us know and we will endeavour to ascertain their feasibility.

Happy New Year to all Members and remember: 'Spread the Word'.

Pamela J Eames, Convener

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

Flying Foxes

The numbers of Grey-headed Flying-foxes roosting in RBG Melbourne during spring and early summer have been more than double those at the same time last year. In February, the roosting population totalled 28,000 animals. Drought and bushfires may have contributed to these dramatic increases. Nevertheless, these population levels continue to be unsustainable and further threaten the survival of Fern Gully and nearby parts of the Gardens.

As announced in 2002, the Victorian Government is seeking to deal with this problem by adopting a management plan that protects the Royal Botanic Gardens while providing for the needs of the Flying-foxes elsewhere in Melbourne.

The Royal Botanic Gardens is collaborating with the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria and the City of Banyule to establish a new colony for the Flying-foxes at Horseshoe Bend on the Yarra River. To attract as many animals as possible to leave the Gardens, the alternative site is being made attractive using captive Flying-foxes, decoys in surrounding trees, colony sounds, leaf litter (smells), artificial roosts and plantings and irrigation to improve the habitat.

We are also about to commence concerted efforts to disturb the bats roosting in the Gardens using a variety of loud noises, visual stimuli, and other deterrents to encourage them to move to the more appealing surroundings at Horseshoe Bend. The dispersal methods rely on the result of trials conducted by ARCUE research staff in the Gardens, and also on the techniques and experience gained from interstate deterrent and relocation programs. Care is being taken with the welfare of the animals.

Relocation of Flying-foxes has never been attempted before on this scale, and we may have to wait a while to judge the outcome of the program soon to begin. Further disturbance and deterrence campaigns using modified or different methods may be necessary, and it could be a year or two before the overall results are clear. Throughout this program of adaptive management, though, we will remain focussed on our primary goal of safe-guarding Melbourne's world-renowned botanic gardens.

Water Restrictions

As all local gardeners know, Stage 1 water restrictions were declared for Melbourne in November 2002. These impose strict limits on the use of manual and automatic systems for watering gardens, among other watering controls. RBG Melbourne has received exemption from the Stage 1 restrictions from South East Water; however we have continued to apply our wise water use practices with even greater caution. Except for a very few limited needs, we are undertaking all our irrigation at night, and we are working hard to reduce our water consumption whenever possible.

Our exemption has been granted because of the historical and scientific significance of the plant collections at RBG Melbourne, and in recognition of our role as an industry leader in water conservation. An active water conservation program has been in place for several years, and since the installation of the Automatic Irrigation System (AIS) in 1994 we have reduced our water consumption by more than 40%. The recent funding from the Friends is enabling us to improve the efficiency of the AIS, while extending its coverage to Theatre Lawn beside Gate Lodge. Irrigation work on Theatre Lawn was completed in January, followed by turf renovation work. To minimise the watering requirements of the area it has been planted with Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*), a warm-season grass that requires 25-30 per cent less water than the Perennial Rye Grass previously used.

In addition to more effective irrigation methods, key factors in reducing our water consumption have been the extensive use of mulch on gardens, and increasing emphasis on drought tolerant or low water use plantings. In special areas, such as the Water Conservation Garden which has been sponsored for several years by South East Water, we provide examples to visitors of the variety and attractiveness of such plants, and also information on water conservation through talks by staff members and Fact Sheets.

National Herbarium of Victoria's Sesquicentennial Celebrations

Sunday 26 January, 2003, marked the sesquicentennial anniversary of Ferdinand von Mueller's appointment as Government Botanist, and the founding of the National Herbarium of Victoria (NHV). Significantly, this also marked the beginning of systematic botany within Australia, Mueller being the only professional botanist working in the country at that time.

The RBG will be celebrating NHV's 150 years of achievement with a program of activities for the public and professional botanists. Highlights of the program are:

Informative displays in the Visitor Centre throughout the year.

15-20 May: Second National Fungimap Conference at Rawson (175km NE of Melbourne), hosted by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens.

19 September - 12 October: a public exhibition of botanical art highlighting many of the treasures — old and recent — from the State Botanical Collection.

29 September to 3 October: a joint conference celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Herbarium and of systematic botany in Australia, to be held under the auspices of the Royal Botanic Gardens, the School of Botany at the University of Melbourne, the Australian Systematic Botany Society, and the Australasian Mycological Society.

Launch (date to be set) of *Novelty to Rarity - a History of the National Herbarium of Victoria* written by Helen Cohn, the Royal Botanic Gardens Librarian.

4-9 October: Seventh Australasian Bryophyte Workshop at Rawson, in conjunction with a workshop being held by the Australian Mycological Society, with both supported by the Royal Botanic Gardens.

November (TBC): first performances of *Blue Gum Baron*, a new work of music theatre about the life and loves of Ferdinand Mueller himself, held in Mueller Hall.

Further details will be available closer to each event. I hope to see you all there.

New Minister

Following the 2002 State election, a significant restructure of Government departments was announced. The former Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) was reorganised to create two new departments: the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and the Department of Primary Industries.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment takes on the environmental functions of the former NRE, with the Minister for Environment and Water, the Hon. John Thwaites MP, appointed as the lead minister. As such, the Royal Botanic Gardens Board is now responsible to Minister Thwaites. We look forward to working with both the Minister and the new department.

Australian Garden

The Australian Garden has made significant progress over recent months, with Registrations of Interest (ROI) sought from potential landscape contractors late last year, and further requests for ROI to be advertised early this year for building works. Full-scale plant production commenced in December 2002, with 215 advanced *Melaleuca* and *Callitris* temporarily located in the Marsh Garden while awaiting transplantation into the Australian Garden later this year. The implementation of the Marketing and Communications Plan has continued, with Tourism Victoria showing keen interest in our new developments. Significant effort has also focused on the development of a draft Interpretation Plan for the Australian Garden, with the identification of key messages and themes.

Philip Moors
Director

THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

In December groups of Friends visited the Johnston Collection in East Melbourne. This collection is the legacy of the late W. R. Johnston, an antique dealer who specialised in Georgian, Regency and Louis XV fine and decorative arts, and who bequeathed his astonishing collection to the people of Victoria. The will stipulated that the Collection be used for educational purposes and that the furniture constantly be moved around. The Management Trust is aided by a group of Friends of the Johnston Collection and by various interested people who are privileged to redecorate the rooms during the year according to various festivals, special events and nature's seasons. In this way the collection is maintained as a living display.

As visitors, we were entertained with many fascinating stories of the Johnston family, the times in which Bill Johnston collected and the histories of various pieces in the collection. Bill Johnston's favourite relaxing area was quite small, especially for a very tall, well-built man, and his favourite chair for relaxation looks decidedly uncomfortable by today's standards. It was interesting to hear of comments from Bill's neighbours about such a big man handling delicate china with such finesse and to hear of, and see, the cup which reportedly sparked his interest in collecting items of such beauty.

This visit in December showed a house decorated in the style of the period with Christmas ornaments, trinkets and food styles exactly as might have been experienced in Georgian and Regency times. It was marvellous to enjoy the attention to detail such decoration involved and to gain an insight into the customs of the time. Thank you, Activities Committee, for the opportunity to enjoy this collection.

Meg Miller

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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.

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FRIENDS' BENEFITS

The Gardens Shops offer 10 per cent discount on Members' purchases over $20.

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

Gills Nurseries (all branches)
1 Centre Rd, East Brighton
390 Balcombe Rd, Beaumaris
cnr Bay/Graham Sts, Port Melb.
589 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
5% off plants only

Berna Park Nursery
cnr Park Rd/Paul St, Cheltenham.
5% discount on plants

Bulleen Art and Garden
6 Manningham Rd West, Bulleen
10% off plants, 5% off other goods

Town and Country Gardens
1280 Malvern Rd, Malvern
24 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn
10% off plants over $20 only.

Holmesglen Nursery
585 Waverley Rd, Glen Waverley
5% off everything

The Gardeners Corner Store
190-192 New St, Brighton
10% off all plants

Collectors Corner
Springvale Rd, Keysborough
10% off all plants

Kew Nursery
Cnr High & Gladstone Sts, Kew
10% off all plants

Burwood Garden Patch
1418 Toorak Rd, Burwood
10% discount

Garden of Eden Nursery
33 Ferrars St, Albert Park
10% off everything

The Cottage Garden Nursery
Cnr Macedon Ave/ Doncaster Rd
North Balwyn. 10% discount,
also 8 punnets for $22 (GST incl)

The Arts Bookshop
1067 High St, Armadale

Banksia Hill B & B
RMB 5349, Horsham, 3401
10% discount on accommodation

Feldspar at Trentham B&B, via Daylesford. Ph: 5424 1821
10% discount on accommodation

Killarney Cottage B&B Sorrento
Ph: 5984 1970
10% discount on accommodation

Blackwood Lane Gallery
24 Blackwood Lane, Gembrook
10% off paintings, prints and commissions

Botanical Creations
122 Grange Rd, Glenhuntly
Disc. on mthly Garden Club items

CRANBOURNE FRIENDS

ANNUAL DINNER

The Cranbourne Friends will hold their Annual Dinner on Saturday 3 May at 6.30pm. The guest speaker will be highly regarded botanist, Dr Stephen Hopper, CEO of Kings Park in Perth. Bookings for the dinner may be made through Brenna Waller on 5990 2200.

CRANBOURNE QUILT

A feature of the Annual Dinner will be the quilt donated by Carlene Gosbell, which guests will be able to view on the night. The quilt is 650 cm square, depicting Australian native plants and Aboriginal prints, and will be raffled from the dinner until August 2003. Tickets will be $1 each, in books of 10, and proceeds go to the Friends of the RBG Cranbourne.

ADVANCE NOTICE

The popular Winter Lecture Series will be repeated this year. Mark the dates in your diary, and watch for more details in the Winter edition of *Botanic News*.

Sunday 15 June—Cranbourne;
Sunday 13 July—Narre Warren;
Sunday 24 August—Frankston.
Contact RBG Cranbourne on 5990 2200 for further details.