

Autumn 2008

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS of the ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

FEATURE: Royal Talbot Rehab. Centre
Sensory Garden. pp 4 and 5

Growing Friends Plant Sale
12 and 13 April

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are already well into 2008 with much to look forward to and enjoy. As always the Events Committee has been organising a varied range of activities – no easy task when the differing interests of our Members are taken into account. Convener of the Committee, Christine Harris, is standing down after a year in that position and two years as co-convener. She carried a very heavy work-load with thoughtfulness and skill and I would like to extend to her our appreciation and thanks for all that she has done. Her replacement will be announced in due course.

At the Friends' Annual General Meeting in November, John Goodwin was elected to Council. We are delighted to welcome him and look forward to working with him. For information about John see elsewhere on this page. As well, I refer you to pages 14 and 15 for biographical notes on other Council Members not featured in the 'Memories' section of the last issue of *Botanic News*.

I do hope that many Members took the opportunity late last year to visit the *Hidden in Plain View – the forgotten flora* touring exhibition. Australia's *forgotten flora* are the non-vascular plants – the liverworts, hornworts, mosses, lichens and fungi – of which many people are unaware or know very little about but which are so important in the world's ecosystems. Botanical illustrations, living and dried plant specimens, historical and contemporary writing, and artifacts which included the microscope of Baron Ferdinand

von Mueller, Victoria's first Government Botanist 1853-1896 and first Director of the Botanic Gardens, were brought together in this beautiful, fascinating and informative exhibition. I congratulate all those who were involved in its curation. The RBG Curators, Pina Milne, Teresa Lebel and Karen Beckmann, have asked me to pass on their sincere thanks and appreciation to the 20 Members of the Friends and our staff who so enthusiastically assisted them in so many ways with the Exhibition. During 2008 the exhibition will be displayed at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra (13 March-9 June) and the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston (16 August-16 November). In 2009 it will go to Geelong (25 February-8 April) and the Museum of Economic Botany, Adelaide (5 June-30 September). It is well worth seeking out if you haven't already seen it.

Don't forget the Growing Friends' Autumn Sale on 12 and 13 April – your support is greatly valued.

Janet Thomson

Spring in Greece: Corfu/Epirus/Delphi

1/5/08 to 24/5/08

This exceptional tour itinerary has been designed by Caroline Davies and David Martin in consultation with The Friends.

May is a perfect time to visit this part of Greece witnessing the peak of spring flowering, particularly in the higher regions.

For further information:
Caroline Davies Garden Tours,
Tel/fax 03 9827 6944



Photo: Cathy Trinca



Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Inc.

Don't forget the Friends of the Orange Botanic Gardens Inc. will host the next Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Conference from 4-6 April 2008. The Conference, *Passion Bears Fruit*, will address several themes: the Value of Volunteering, Event Management, Maintaining a Friends' Group and Sponsorship and Fundraising.

These Association conferences are a wonderful way of meeting like-minded people. Don't miss out on an interesting weekend coupled with a visit to a beautiful part of NSW.

For further information, please call the Friends' Office 9650 6398 or visit the Association website: www.friendsbotanicgardens.org



Photo: Meg Miller

John Goodwin joined the Friends in November 2004 and initially became interested in giving his time as a volunteer by helping at our half yearly Growing Friends' Plant Sales.

With his previous banking experiences and associated administrative skills he has also been happy to assist the administration staff in a review of the office layout and procedures which will continue over the coming months.

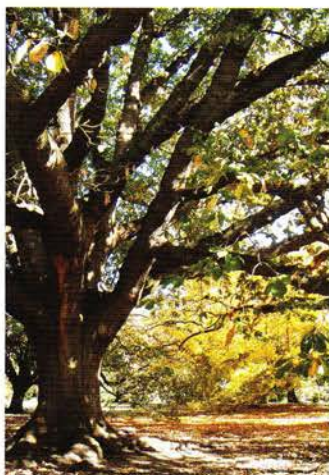
John comes to the Council with a great depth of knowledge and energy, taking on the role of Volunteers Convener.

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

Contents

Feature	4
Illustrators	4
Events	6
Growing Friends	9
From the Members	10
Gardens	12
Council Members	14

Front cover: *Nymphaea* Lake in 2004
Back cover: *Bougainvillea*
Below: Lady Loch Oak before and
after disaster
Photos by Jennifer Marshall



Australian Garden

The Australian Garden recently won yet more prestigious awards: this time in the annual landscape design awards of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA). There is great competition for these awards because they identify the very best landscape projects in the State each year. The AG won three awards:

AILA Victoria Award in Landscape Architecture (the top award overall).

AILA Victoria Award for Excellence in Design.

Merit Award for The Future Garden.

The judges commented "The Australian Garden at Cranbourne is an outstanding example of a landscape architectural project that through its powerful design strategies amplifies the quintessential nature of Australian landscapes ... The layers of educative and creative storytelling imbued throughout the project will be a catalyst for progressive change within the minds of all who visit and will enhance the understanding and appreciation of our unique Australian landscape."

Urban Initiatives Pty Ltd has completed design development and documentation for the Woodland Picnic Area, the family recreation zone that forms part of the Australian Garden Stage 2 Project, and tenders for its construction have been called. Construction is due to begin by mid-2008.

From 2-6 April, the Australian Garden will form part of the 'savewater! Alliance' collaborative display at the

Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS) at the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens. The theme for the display is 'Green gardens without drinking water'. MIFGS again promises to be a hive of activity and an excellent opportunity to promote the uniqueness of the Garden.

Lady Loch Oak

On 15 November 2007 the Lady Loch Oak (*Quercus canariensis*) on the Oak Lawn split in two and half the tree crashed to the ground, exactly 118 years after it was planted in 1889 by Elizabeth Loch, wife of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch. The remaining portion was fatally damaged and has been removed. Arboricultural staff do not consider that drought was a factor in the tree's loss, though strong wind storms over recent years probably contributed to weakness in the trunk. The loss of the Lady Loch has left an enormous gap in the Oak Lawn – the tree was 22m high and its canopy measured 46m across its widest point. Timber from the trunk has been kept for future use in craft or furniture products, and nursery staff have grafted 24 cuttings from the tree onto English Oak (*Quercus robur*) rootstock. We've also obtained three seedlings descended from the Lady Loch Oak. Bill Funk has donated the seedlings raised from acorns produced by a now-mature oak, itself grown from an acorn collected from the tree some 20 years ago. We will grow on both sets for eventual planting in the Gardens.

Guilfoyle's 'Volcano' Reservoir

In the 1880s William Guilfoyle constructed a reservoir on the highest ground in the RBG Melbourne, close to the Anderson Street boundary about 100m north of D Gate. The reservoir is in the shape of a volcano, with its 'crater' lined with bluestone blocks. When filled it holds approximately one megalitre of water. The area around the reservoir has never been open to public access.

This site was identified in the RBG Melbourne Master Plan as having great potential for redevelopment and landscaping to provide access for visitors. In addition, in recent years we have recognised that the reservoir can once again be utilised for storing and reticulating water (eg harvested stormwater) for irrigating nearby plant collections – history will be repeating itself! Andrew Laidlaw, RBG Landscape Architect, has completed plans for this redevelopment, and Peter Symes, Senior Curator, has incorporated water management initiatives into these plans.

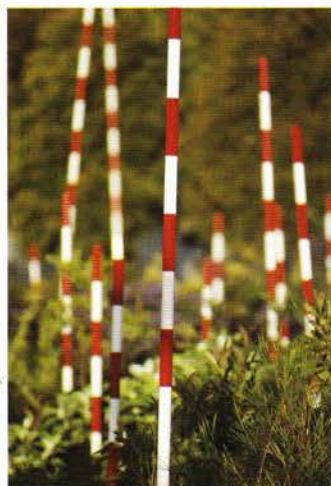
This preparatory work has been generously supported by Martyn and Louise Myer, and recently we were delighted to receive a most generous grant of \$1.2 million over three years from The Myer Foundation towards the delivery of this exciting project. Some further fundraising will be undertaken to complete the project's budget. Design documentation and tendering will occur over the next 3-4 months, with

landscaping and construction expected to begin in the second half of 2008.

Plant Sciences Master Plan

The Plant Sciences and Biodiversity Division has prepared a new Master Plan for the period 2008-2012. The plan moves the Division away from individually focused research to a whole-of-Division approach based around three science themes: *Victoria's Biodiversity: Past, Present, Future*; *Origin of the Australian Biota*; and *Biodiversity Services*. These theme areas integrate staff expertise in horticulture, the taxonomy of native and cultivated plants, systematics (particularly cryptogamic, fungal and molecular), and plant conservation. They also provide an integrated and multi-disciplinary foundation for future plant sciences programs and foster excellence in the quality of our research and in the curation of the collections in the National Herbarium.

Philip Moors



The AILA merit award - winning Future Garden at Cranbourne.

Classes

Term 2 will start in the week beginning Monday 28 April. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays (two sessions each day) and Fridays (one three-hour session)

2.5hr classes: \$255 (incl GST)
Friends \$215 (incl GST)
3hr classes: \$295 (incl GST)
Friends \$255 (incl GST)

For further information on classes contact the Friends' office, 9650 6398.

Whirlybirds

The Whirlybirds group of botanical artists meet every Tuesday to paint and exchange ideas. Following the success of our project illustrating the oaks growing in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, we have now commenced working on eucalypts. Any member of the Friends is welcome to join us, either to pursue their own botanical art interests or select a eucalypt to illustrate.

Our meetings recommenced on Tuesday 5 February. If you would like to join us on Tuesdays in the Whirling Room Studio, please contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532 to learn more.

Below: Quinces, painted by Sydney artist Beverley Allen



Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday 11 March at 10.00 for 10.30am in the Whirling Room
Cost: \$5.50. Pay on the day
RSVP Friends' office, 9650 6398

Rita Parkinson will talk to us about her experiences with tempera painting on gesso bases, and the historical background to this form of art. She will demonstrate the method used, and will also bring some examples of tempera work.

Botanica 2008: The Fruits of Our Labour IN SYDNEY'S ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

4-20 April 2008, 10.00am-4.00pm
Entry is free.

The Sydney Friends of The Gardens' *Botanica* exhibition will, for the first time since its inception, present a national showcase of works by some of Australia's best and most-respected botanical artists.

All works in *Botanica 2008: The Fruits of Our Labour* are being offered for sale, with proceeds going to support the Friends of the Gardens and The Botanic Gardens Trust.

The Royal Talbot Hospital Friends' Sensory Garden: where nature helps to heal



Those of us who enjoy gardening understand the value and benefit of being immersed in the garden. Whether it is planting, watering, or sitting under a shade tree enjoying a cup of tea, we can feel both relaxed and energised by spending time in the garden.

The Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre provides intensive rehabilitation for people with a wide range of conditions, including spinal and brain injuries and strokes, who have endured life-changing illnesses and injuries. They and their families are stressed both physically and emotionally.

So in 2003, with this understanding, I began to 'play in the garden' with the desire to change a barren, uninviting area surrounded by stark buildings into a beautiful garden that would benefit our patients. Dreamed big, started small!

The sensory garden (top, right) is based on a low water use, lower maintenance but high

FEATURE

impact principle. It focuses largely on differing foliage colour, texture and shapes, with splashes of flowers at varying times of the year. The plant selection is a mixture of native and exotics including succulents, grasses, herbs, iris, fruit trees, deciduous and evergreens. The garden is filled with a variety of sights, sounds, smells, taste and textural experiences and has proved to be a drought-resilient garden that survives largely on rain-fall with no irrigation system.

There are different areas for people to wander through. The large Golden Ash tree (pic 2, right) provides a wonderful shaded area to sit under in summer. 'Herb Alley' (pic 3, right) has herbs and fragrant plants either in pots or in the ground, and the different height levels enable access for those in wheelchairs. Pots of herbs include curry herb, mint and parsley and fragrant and textural plants include lamb's ears, geranium, peppermint, rosemary, and Heliotrope. Signs encourage people to "eat me" or "smell me". 'The Inner Sanctuary' is another area that provides a quiet peaceful space for privacy and contemplation.

Throughout the garden art pieces and ornaments such as the rainbow wall, (bottom pic, right) steel dragonflies, statues, water features, and even a large bird's nest, add to the sense of discovery on meandering through.

The garden area is also utilised as part of the Centre's Horticultural Therapy Program which complements existing traditional therapies and uses gardening-related activities to assist with achieving our patients' rehabilitation goals. By undertaking activities that patients see as purposeful and non-threatening, it is possible to work on improving their health. Such activities include propagating, watering, weeding,

planting, and fertilising. For some patients we may focus on strengthening their arms, balance or hand control following a stroke, or on planning or memory skills following a brain injury. For many patients involved in the program, gardening was a previous leisure activity. It is therefore a natural progression for this to be part of their rehabilitation in the hospital setting. It provides patients with a means of improving their health and they realise they'll be able to continue gardening when they return home.

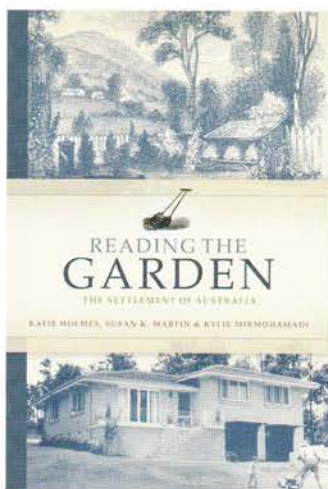
The establishment of the garden wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of donors and what is encouraging is that, through such generosity, the patients' time in hospital has been significantly improved. The biggest success is that the gardens continue to provide enjoyment, relaxation and healing for the patients, their families and visitors and the hospital staff.

This garden is a place to escape the trials and turbulence of our lives, where we can stop, relax, reflect and regenerate our inner being ... in essence, it can be our sanctuary.

Steven Wells

(Steven Wells, a Member of the FRBG and past Growing Friend, is a Clinical Nurse Specialist, horticulturist and horticultural therapist at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. Steven's photographs are featured.)





Reading and Writing the Garden

ILLUSTRATED TALK
In conjunction with
Australian Garden History Society

Thursday 13 March, 6.00 for 6.30pm

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$20 Friends & AGHS \$15

RSVP by Tuesday 11 March

on enclosed booking form or download
a booking form from the Events page
on our website:

www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Please join us for a glass of wine and
savories before the talk.

Whether it be a small plot in
the backyard of an inner urban
home or the sprawling botanic
garden of a capital city,
Australians have long desired a
patch of dirt to plough or enjoy.

In *Reading the Garden*,
Katie Holmes, Susan K. Martin
and Kylie Mirmohamadi,
explore our deep affection for
gardens and gardening, and
illuminate their numerous
meanings and uses from
European settlement to the late
Twentieth Century.

More than just a pastime,
garden-making helps people
create 'home' and an identity in
a new place. Our gardens may
preserve the memory of a loved
one, feed the family and
beautify our surrounds.

In *Reading the Garden*, new
ways of seeing Australian
history and culture – memory
and belonging; domestication
and civilization; nationalism
and identity are woven into a
compelling narrative around
gardens and landscape.



Gardens of Normandy

**ILLUSTRATED TALK BY
JOHN PATRICK**

Tuesday 18 March, 6.00 for 6.30pm

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$20 Friends \$15

RSVP by Friday 14 March

on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:

www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Please join us for a glass of wine and
savories before the talk.

John Patrick's first overseas
trip as an 18 year old was to
Normandy and until 2007 he
hadn't revisited it in nearly 40
years. Doing so was a journey of
delights, not only for the
gardens but also for food, art,
architecture and the splendid
Normandy landscape and
seascapes so brilliantly captured
by Bourdin and Monet.

High rainfall and splendid
fertile soils combine to make
Normandy a gardener's paradise.

On his recent trip, John
visited gardens by Jekyll and
Lutyens and by Russell Page as
well as those of enthusiastic
French amateur gardeners.
While some of the gardens such
as Monet's Giverny will be
familiar, others might be
known by reputation.

John considers the Normandy
gardens to be the most exciting,
as a group, that he's had the good
fortune to visit. Come along
and make your own judgement.



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
and welcoming you to the
Friends. After savories and a
glass of wine we will present a
short slide show, a welcome by
the Director of the Gardens,
and brief talks by our
committee conveners.

Following this, 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
most welcome to call our office
(9650 6398) and we'll make
sure your name is included.



Autumn Guided Visit to the Growing Friends' Nursery

Friday 28 March at 10.30am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 26 March
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Bookings essential as numbers
will be limited

Our Autumn Nursery Visit is the last chance to purchase from the full range of plants on offer before the Autumn Plant Sale. The nursery currently holds a wide selection of suitable material for the home garden, so now is the time to find out where it is located.

This morning is especially suitable for new Members and for others not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of our Growing Friends' Nursery. We will meet at Gate Lodge for

a brief morning tea and to meet some fellow plant-loving members. You will then be guided down to the Growing Friends' nursery (open Friday mornings to Members Only), for a brief overview of the nursery and to make purchases.

If you are travelling by public transport (or by car) and plan to buy a number of plants think about bringing your shopping jeep or market trolley to carry your purchases home.



Australian Succulent Plants

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY A PASSIONATE PLANTSMAN

Thursday 17 April, 10.00 for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$20 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 11 April
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Join us for morning tea before the talk

Attila Kapitany returns to impart his great knowledge of, and passion for, the very diverse world of the most water wise of plants: cacti and succulents. Whilst these plants have always had devotees, today their popularity has soared with the recognition of changed climatic conditions worldwide.

Attila will reveal the still somewhat unknown and under-appreciated Australian native succulents, many of which are

not conspicuously succulent. He will also show native plants from all over Australia, many rarely seen before.

While he spoke on a similar subject years ago, this talk will be full of surprises, embracing much of the rich content of Attila's new book about the intriguing *Australian Succulent Plants*. This hardbound text, with 728 colour plates, will be available for sale along with some excellent plants.



Autumn Insiders' Walk: WALK AROUND THE LAKE

Wednesday 23 April at 10.00 am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$10 MEMBERS ONLY
Payment must accompany booking as this is a limited number event
RSVP by Friday 18 April
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Join us for morning tea and an information session at Gate Lodge before the walk.

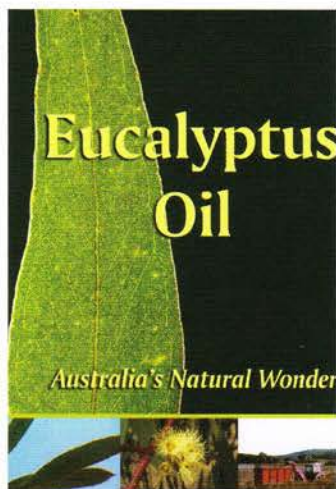
Join the Friends for a walk around the Royal Botanic Gardens' beautiful Ornamental Lake in all its autumn glory.

Learn something of the way the early citizens of Melbourne enjoyed the very first garden areas in this precinct.

See some of the historic trees and structures adjoining the Lake.

Discover the history of the Lake itself, its islands and the story of how it was developed to its present form.

Marvel at the constantly changing views and glimpse some of the abundant wildlife in this part of the Gardens while also learning about significant plants near the Lake shores.



The Magic of Eucalyptus

ILLUSTRATED TALK AND INTERACTIVE SESSION BY TEGAN ABBOTT

Thursday 8 May at 10.00 for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$20 Friends \$15
(includes a small gift for everyone)
RSVP by Friday 2 May
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Please join us for morning tea
before the talk

This illustrated talk by Tegan Abbott will inform us of the history and production of eucalyptus oil and the many uses of this magical substance, some of which date back to the First Fleet.

Eucalyptus oil has always featured as a part of Tegan's life and she is a passionate advocate of this wonderful Australian product. From an early age she has been involved in every aspect of its production in her family's company.

With her father, Peter Abbott, Tegan has recently published the ground-breaking book *Eucalyptus Oil: Australia's Natural Wonder*.

As part of her talk, Tegan will present a range of uniquely fragranced eucalyptus oils to demonstrate the distinct scents of different species.

This will be a great opportunity to smell the differences for yourself and try out some of the many products that contain eucalyptus oil.



Autumn 'Talking Plants' Morning:

AUTUMN FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH ROBYN TYMMS

Friday 16 May at 10.00am
Meet at Domain House
on Dallas Brooks Drive
Cost: \$15 Friends \$10
RSVP by Wednesday 7 May
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

The Autumn Talking Plants theme will be 'Autumn Fruit and Floral Arrangements'.

Robyn Tymms produces the beautiful floral arrangements seen at Friends' events (the arrangement at left was created for the Friends' AGM in November 2007). She will have on display a large amount of autumnal material and will show us how to put together a seasonal arrangement.

All those attending are invited to bring a piece of a

favourite plant (autumnal and suitable for floral arrangement if possible) to show and share.

The morning will be an informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening. It will be held in Domain House, with refreshments served during the morning. There will be no Growing Friends' Nursery visit after this morning due to renovations at the Nursery site but, weather permitting, we suggest a stroll through the Gardens.



Autumn Fit Friends Ramble:

CITY AND TOWN HALL

Tuesday 27 May at 9.30am sharp
Meet under the 'Waltzing Matilda' clock at Melbourne Central
Cost: \$20 ...Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 16 May
on enclosed booking form, or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
The Town Hall needs prior notification of people attending, so numbers will be limited and bookings essential.

After meeting under the clock we will walk through Melbourne Central and then into the State Library. We will visit the La Trobe Reading Room, one of the Library's most spectacular heritage spaces, with three levels of graceful balconies rising majestically towards the domed ceiling.

Upon leaving the Library we will wander around QV Square and investigate the facades along Lonsdale Street. Little lanes will lead us through

Chinatown with its intriguing buildings, restaurants and shops. Morning tea will be at our own expense on the way. We will then go on to the Town Hall where we will have a conducted tour of this icon of our city.

The ramble will finish after we explore the area around the town hall following the tour, leaving us with the opportunity for further shopping and/or lunch before returning home.

GROWING FRIENDS

The Growing Friends took the Summer's last day of almost moderate weather to celebrate Christmas together, with lunch on the Oak Lawn. The party was cut short by heavy rain, but Michael Hare managed to take our photograph just in time. Despite the welcome deluge, our stock has suffered badly in the early January heat. To stem the losses we hope to set up extra shade areas in the nursery, so many plants will be saved from being scorched.

By the time of publication, the Growing Friends will have marked their 20th anniversary. We are very privileged to have two original members still active in the nursery. Gillian Kirk is an early starter most Fridays throughout the year. She supervises the care and development of the cuttings when they first come into the nursery from the RBG glasshouses. A small group works most Fridays with one of the RBG gardeners to pot up cuttings taken from carefully chosen plants in the Gardens that morning. The Growing Friends are in constant debt to Dermot Molloy, the gardener in charge of the RBG glasshouses, who

oversees the cuttings' growth in the glasshouses until they develop roots. Then he proudly wheels the pots up to our nursery, where each plant receives an accession number and has its details recorded in the database. Gillian then takes over and sees the tiny plants into suitable small pots, to start their life as nursery sale stock.

The other original member of the group is the much loved and respected Lydia Bartlett. Lydia was still the nursery manager when I joined three years ago. This role has passed on to Robyn Leszczynski, perhaps our youngest member, but Lydia frequently brings along rare and unusual plants from her own garden, making for an often fascinating morning tea when we have 'Show and Tell'. Membership of the group remained very stable during 2007, with only one member retiring (to move to Western Australia).

Over summer the nursery has been generously supported by the RBG Water Management team: Peter Symes, Dermot Molloy and David Robbins. The Friends are most grateful to the team and to the Gardens' administration for including

the Growing Friends' nursery in the Gardens' water arrangements. The gardeners have replaced the original irrigation system with reduced-pressure water delivery and entirely new spray heads and stalks. Without this work and support, summer stock losses would have been far worse.

Most important of all, by the time you receive this magazine, there will only be around five weeks until the Autumn Plant Sale which will be held on Saturday 12 April from 10.00am to 4.00pm and Sunday 13 April from 10.00am to 3.00 pm.

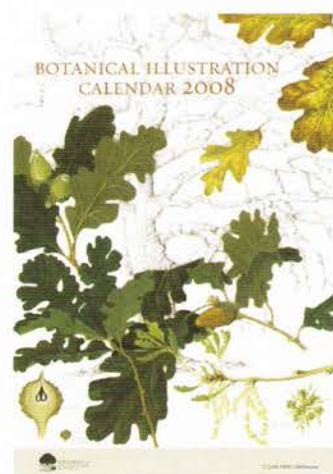
Volunteers for the sales tent should contact the Friends' office on 9650 6398.

The sale is a little later than in recent years because of the very early Easter in 2008, so prepare your garden beds for your mid-April purchases!

At the last Spring Sale we were most happy to welcome an enthusiastic group of garden lovers from Benalla. They hired a bus to come down to the Royal Botanic Gardens on the Sunday of the sale, to coincide with the Spring Open Day. We much appreciated their custom and they enjoyed selecting plants from our more unusual

Botanic Gardens-based stock before lunching in the Tearooms and going on some Open Day activities. There was even enough space in the bus to fit all their plant purchases! Other country Friends could copy this good idea and relax while being driven. A variation for the Autumn Sale could be a visit to the sale followed by a booked Guided Walk.

Juliana Horsfall



There are still some copies of our lovely historic calendar available from the office at \$5.00 plus \$2.50 postage. Don't miss out! An order form can be downloaded from our website, or simply contact the Friends' office on 9650 6398.

Photo: Michael Hare



FROM THE MEMBERS

Gardens, Art and Houses of the Southern Highlands

Air and coach tour
31 October – 4 November 2007

Thirty-six Members of the Friends travelled to Sydney for a tour of Southern Highlands gardens in the lush forested area around Bowral.

Our first stop was *Greyladies*, Mittagong, on the slopes of Mt Gibraltar. Standing in the restrained garden of tussock grasses, sedge and *Xanthorrhoea*, we looked down on huge ancient eucalypts and wonderful views of distant mountains. Inside the house, many windows let in light and the views. We ate lunch near the huge modern dream kitchen and I enjoyed seeing three beautiful botanical paintings by Susannah Blaxill on the walls.

Quindalup, Bowral: this garden began in 1973 in a six-acre cow paddock surrounded by stands of *Eucalyptus radiata* ssp. *robertsonii*. Now huge lawns house rare and unusual trees and a feature is a Seventeenth Century Moghul pavilion of handcarved teak.

On to *Craigieburn Resort*, Bowral, our accommodation for the next four nights. Originally built in 1887 as a private residence, it became a country retreat in 1909, now recently refurbished and extended. The old garden has many lovely roses and old trees and the 90-acre property has its own nine-hole golf course and lake.

Day 2 saw us at *Gowan Brae*, Burradoo – the first time the garden opened to the public. The owners were launching their own rose ‘Gowan Brae’, a strong, tall mid-pink,

delicately perfumed and almost thornless rose – we could see it on pillars near the house. In 1992 the garden was created from a pony paddock at the back of the house. Now there are wide perennial borders of roses, shrubs and a few annuals surrounding a croquet lawn and, at the back, a delightful woodland walk under the trees.

Green Briar Park, Bowral: this 114-acre overgrazed property was bought in 1985 and a large garden park and vineyard were established – we entered via the wine cellar and tasted their wines. Many mature gums, *E. elata*, *E. viminalis* and *E. fastigiata*, were used as focal points, with English-styled gardens around. We walked through a gazebo covered with *Wisteria longissima* and white evergreen dogwoods nearby, to a white garden with roses and white Grecian statues, then to a bronze fountain surrounded by *Rosa rugosa alba*, and a view to the mountains. We lunched in the shade with a glass of their wine.

Moidart, Bowral, was built in 1935 and is still owned by the same family. There is a sunken rose garden with lavenders surrounded by hedges, and long curving walks with old trees, rhododendron and azaleas and unusual plants.

Day 3: *Retford Park*, Bowral, built in 1887. James Fairfax bought the house and 20 acres in 1964. The oldest garden was in front with old peonies, agapanthus and big old trees including a huge bunya pine. It was a very big Victorian house painted soft pink and, inside, wonderful

paintings, furniture, sculptures and Donald Friend murals. Outside – a Guilford Bell-designed pool pavilion and swimming pool with Clement Meadmore and Donald Friend sculptures surrounded by big trees and a ‘stilt hedge’ of lime trees surrounding the emu yard. There was also a special dog cemetery with brass plates where dogs of family and friends were buried.

We visited Bowral township and some of the group went to the Bradman Museum.

Prittlewell, Fitzroy Falls/Robertson: the two-acre garden was commenced in 1991 on the site of an old dairy farm with some old trees. A lake was excavated and the topsoil used to elevate the house block with a drystone ha-ha wall in front. A grove of *Betula papyrifera* was underplanted with periwinkles and bulbs. Lattice fencing enclosed the vegetable and herb garden and the David Austin roses. A spring meandered down to the lake with massed perennials on its banks. Two metal sheep sculptures were sheltered by the trees. The Japanese tea garden had water trickling into a pool surrounded by maples and small plants. Altogether a most attractive and restful garden!

Laureldale, Robertson: a 100-year-old timber cottage surrounded by old English laurels. There were fields of agapanthus (sold commercially), and lovely roses including ‘Rosendorf Sparrieshoop’ and *Rosa mutabilis*. The lawns were planted with deciduous trees for shade, including Manchurian and silver pears, tulip trees, golden and Chinese elms and claret



FROM THE MEMBERS

LETTERS

ashes, allowing views to the Kangaloon Hills. Group plantings of *E. fastigata* were made on the boundaries, to link with the landscape beyond.

Day 4: *Yarrawa*, Burrawong. (sculpture bottom left). A lovely garden, but the views were hidden by rain and fog. When the property was bought in 1993 most of the original rainforest had disappeared, so many indigenous lilly pilly, cedar, sassafras and coachwood were replanted and now make shelter for exotic shrubs and perennials. An *Escallonia* hedge divides the native area from the formal garden. *Milton Park*, Bowral (pictured centre): lunch here, built in 1910 – originally a stud cattle farm and now a luxurious Country House Hotel. Most of the garden was developed in the 1930s to late '40s, halted during WWII, when much of the land was used for vegetable production. By old weeping beeches, ashes and elms, Caucasian firs, golden elms and oaks are many garden rooms with rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and unusual plants. Steps lead to a 1930s stone lap pool – the earliest heated swimming pool in Australia – surrounded by rhododendrons.

Dragon Farm, Wildes Meadow: an 1890s house, with a lovely garden with clipped mounds of *teucrium* and lavenders, huge beds of roses, lilliums, peonies, iris, lilacs, and lots of bulbs. The long drive is now planted with *Platanus x hispanica* to create a tunnel effect and the old fence replaced with post and rail to enhance the rural look. A very foggy and damp place!

Day 5: *Red Cow Farm*, Sutton Forest (*Meconopsis*, pictured top left). Old roses and scented cottage perennials grow around the restored white cottage which is enclosed by a high stone wall, while the vegetable garden is protected by a *Rosa rugosa* hedge and various lavenders. The monastery garden layout is based on a Celtic cross with a central well and a large white winged angel statue. Wonderful flower beds lead to the lake and bog garden (created from a swampy area) with pollarded willows, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Pinus nigra* and more. A beech walk leads to a hazelnut grove underplanted with perennials.

Chinoiserie, Mittagong: this garden was commenced in 1998 from a bare block and specialises in tree peonies, herbaceous borders and roses and unusual perennials such as *Romneya*, *Stipa gigantea* and foxtail lilies.

Our trip finished with lunch outside at the Sturt Craft Centre, Mittagong, surrounded by attractive gardens. Sturt commenced in 1941 and operates as a centre for the promotion of contemporary craft with workshops, studios, gallery, shop and café. We saw examples of glass, jewellery and paintings, and I noticed cards for sale by some of our RBG Melbourne botanical artists.

An hour's drive back to Sydney for the plane home, and the end of a very happy trip to see some of the finest gardens in the Southern Highlands. Thank you, Caroline Davies and David Martin for looking after us so well.

Judy Jarman

Dear Friends of the RBG

I did enjoy David Howard's lecture – as always with your events it was beautifully managed and an experience for the inner person. Thank you for inviting me.

It is probably a mark of a good lecture that there are still questions waiting to be asked (I am still wondering how much land is used to dispose of the royal sewage!)

Congratulations – and thank you.

Sarah Guest

15 November 2007

Editor's note: Many other participants have reported their enjoyment of this lecture series, indicating that the collaborative efforts of the Sydney Friends of the Gardens and the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne were richly rewarded. Special mention must be made of the work of FRBG Melbourne's Susie Brookes and Ben Divall of the NGV. In addition, we would like to thank the following sponsors who supported the venture: Crabtree & Evelyn Gardening Australia Multicrop (Aust) P/L Organic Crop Protectants P/L Scotts Products P/L Seasol International P/L Simon Johnson

Dear Janet, Virginia, Helen, and Meg,

Just wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know that my time in your beautiful city of Melbourne is just about over. My husband's work calls us earlier than planned, and we leave for Germany at the end of this month.

Thank you so much for your friendliness, welcoming attitude and opportunities to participate in supporting the Friends and the Gardens. I will miss the feeling of being included in the professional and warm organization that you have created.

Wishing you all the best in your efforts to support the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

Sincerely,

Judy Dunbar

Sun, Jan 27, 2008

Editor's note: Many Friends will miss Judy, who not only helped with the proof-reading of *Botanic News*, was a Helping Hands volunteer at the E Gate Lodge garden but also trained as a Voluntary Guide in the few months she lived in Melbourne.

David Howard (left) enjoying a visit to the Australian Garden at Cranbourne with Jason Davenport. Photo: Susie Brookes



Notes from the Gardens



Photo: Richard Barley

One of the old oaks at Blenheim Palace, UK, with an inquisitive young visitor.

I am sitting in front of an old oak desk – it belonged to my mother, and before her, to my grandfather, who was an Anglican minister. He no doubt composed many sermons sitting just as I am (though with somewhat more ink and paper, and a bit less electronic hum and clickety-clack of the keyboard). I'm not sure who owned the desk before him, though it looks to have been around for a long time. Who knows what correspondence may have been composed on it: matters of business, affairs of the heart, bread-and-butter letters, artfully crafted sonnets, or contributions to the local botanic gardens chronicle. All of those and perhaps much more may have flowed from the desk, from the hands and minds of successive owners and generations.

That's the thing about oak. It symbolises all that is stable, traditional and long-lasting. Oak is the timber of preference

when the notion of reliability and durability is needed, either in practical terms or as an analogy for other less ligneous subjects. It was oak that timbered the hulls of sailing ships over the centuries, as they sailed towards new worlds, or perhaps towards old enemies. Oak beams support buildings that have seen not just one or two, but maybe even five or six centuries.

I recall the great thrill of seeing a hand-split oak beam centuries old at Great Dixter in Sussex, where the two excavated halves of a cuckoo's nest could be seen in the two enormous oak beams. Cast your eye over the countryside in Britain and you will find many examples of oaks that have been putting their best foot forward for literally hundreds of years. Some are intertwined with the very historical fabric of the country. For example, the oak in which Bonnie Prince Charlie hid when he was trying to make his way north (or perhaps south) to protect or claim what was apparently rightfully his, and was being pursued by folk not to be counted on the Bonnie teamsheet. I suspect that one could put up with a night up in a tree every now and then, but it might be best to avoid making it a frequent habit, for the sake of a good night's sleep. All that arboreal accommodation may have counted against him in the final analysis, when a quick mind and a nimble body may have meant the difference between waving a sceptre or being hoist with his own petard. (Just a short historical note here: I always thought that being hoist with your own

petard' was akin to being impaled on a sharp object from your own armory. Not so, as I now understand. The 'petard' is a French word, which generally refers to the explosive charge used to breach a fortified wall, but which comes from the word *péter* – to break wind, or to explode. This really adds a whole new value to the term in my view. Being hoist with one's own petard now conjures an image guaranteed to have any twelve year old boy giggling for hours. I digress, however.)

I seem to recall having any number of oaks pointed out as being 'the oak that Bonnie Prince Charlie hid in' during brief travels abroad. I suppose the fact that some of them were in Britain is comforting. I read somewhere recently about some sharpened oak stakes dating from the period of Roman occupation of Britain, found still in place in the River Thames. They had been driven into the silt as a little surprise for enemy horsemen (and for the horses themselves, no doubt) by the local lads. The staggering thing is that the stakes are still solid, and sharp, almost two millennia later.

In the parkland of Blenheim Palace, the seat of the Duke of Marlborough near Oxford, one can still see venerable oaks which are maybe five hundred years old. They are senescent, in decline, and their trunks form sculptural shapes across the pastoral landscape. They live on, nevertheless, and I have no doubt that they could tell a tale or two ... if, of course, oaks could speak.

These trees are mostly English Oak (*Quercus robur*).

There are many other species of oak in the northern hemisphere – both deciduous and evergreen. Many are ideally suited to growth in Melbourne, particularly those from 'mediterranean' climates.

Here at the Gardens in Melbourne, no less than anywhere else, we have respected oaks for their tradition and longevity as much as the next person. Some of our trees are the oldest of their species in Australia, and some are the largest. The furthest thing from our minds would be that one of our most prized oaks – the one known as 'Lady Loch's Oak' (an Algerian Oak, *Quercus canariensis*) would fail so suddenly and completely. We might look suspiciously at some species of tree known for their impromptu collapses or overwhelming urges to go horizontal, but – "Dash it," we say to ourselves, "on the oak we can rely".

It is particularly hard to fathom that such a tree would fall apart when it appeared to have such a wonderful framework of supporting limbs resting on the ground. Many times I nodded to the structure of this tree when showing a visitor around the Gardens, and I drew their attention to its intelligent design. "Others may fail", I would say in an imperious tone, "but not this one". Most recently I made this pronouncement on Tuesday 13 November. I recall the date, because on Thursday 15 November, in the middle of a calm sunny morning, the tree split down the middle.

There was no outward sign that the tree would fail. Even

on inspection of its interior, there was not much to provide a clue, except that there was a huge mass of timber in the canopy, and most of it emanated from one general area of branch unions on the trunk. Perhaps if one was designing a large tree from scratch, this wouldn't be the blueprint to follow, with the benefit of hindsight. The equations of mass, gravity, leverage, torque, and the various other Mysterious Forces which I suspect were covered in the Physics classes when my attention was momentarily diverted, came into play. It's still a little hard to believe that it happened, to be honest.

According to our records, Lady Loch, who was the wife of the then Governor of Victoria Sir Henry Loch, planted the tree on 15th November, 1889. Yes, it is spooky that the tree chose the very same date 118 years later to fail. The date was significant for the Lochs, as it was their last day in office at Government House. They departed on that very day for Sir Henry's new posting as Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa, after a service at the not-yet-completed St Paul's Cathedral, where he struck the first note on the new tenor bell. The very readable reference, *Victoria's Colonial Governors 1839-1900* (McCaughy *et al.*, 1993) provides a detailed insight into that period which was regarded (together with the following period of Governorship by the Earl of Hopetoun) as the peak of high colonial society.

We earlier lost a couple of other oaks during the storm of February 2005, when some inches (that is many millimetres to the decimally proficient) of rain fell in one day, accompanied by gale-force winds from the south-west. Curiously, the two oaks which were blown over were the same species – the Mossy Cup Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). Why these two fell over at the same time, and no others did is another mystery. Suffice to say that we haven't leapt forward to plant another of this species to replace them.

There are many other oaks from which to choose replacements. The mossy cups (the 'cup' in which the acorn sits) from this species and its cousin *Q. macrolepis* were planted here and there in Victoria to supply the mossy cups for their tannin content, which was used in tanning hides.

Around the countryside the traveller can still find small plantations of these oaks, planted for this very purpose. One plantation that springs to mind is at Winter's Flat, on the outskirts of Castlemaine.

One of the more obscure uses of oak arose in mediaeval times. It was found that ink for drawing or writing was produced within the growing buds of oaks in spring, when they were infested by a particular wasp, which punctured a home for her eggs in the growing tip of the bud. The oak responded by producing nut-like galls as a defence to the infestation, and within the galls is the makings of a very dark indelible ink.

And with ink, of course, we return to the grandfather's desk. We aim to have as much as possible of the timber from the fallen 'Lady Loch Oak' utilised in the crafting of items of furniture or other pieces of artwork ... so perhaps in another 118 years someone will be scratching away on a piece of paper on a desk made from that very tree, and who knows what the topic of their writings might be. Gazing at my crystal ball, I see a youngish man forming the title *Botanic News – Winter 2125*.

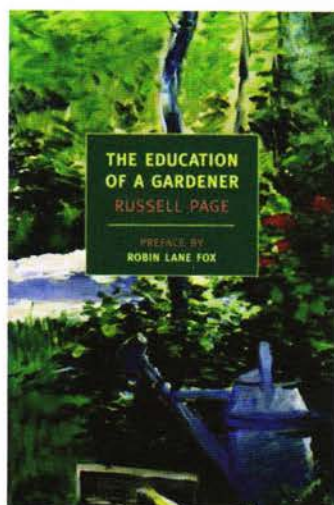
With regard to the 'Lady Loch Oak', we will plant a replacement of that species,

because our quick-thinking Nursery staff were able to collect some cutting material from the tree shortly after its demise, and some hasty grafting was carried out. We have also received a donation of some seedling material which originates from the parent tree so we have both bases covered, thankfully.

Footnote: Readers will of course be aware that the Friends has an excellent calendar for 2008 featuring oaks from the RBGM Collection, as illustrated by a variety of members of the Botanical Illustrators' group.

Richard Barley





The Education of a Gardener
Russell Page
New York Review of Books
RRP \$37.95 from Brunswick
Street Bookstore

If you have not as yet read Russell Page's *The Education of a Gardener*, you are in for a real treat!

Russell Page was one of the pre-eminent garden designers of the 20th Century. He designed gardens and outdoor spaces throughout Europe and the Americas. A man without a garden of his own, he operated on a scale that someone with a small inner city block can barely imagine. He worked for the rich and famous, including the Duke of Windsor at his various Paris properties and also designed displays and pavilions for large international exhibitions. This book provides a glimpse into the world of huge estates, vast gardens, extensive pavilions and magical grottos - as well the extensive staffs (and their various skills) that were required to keep them going.

Russell Page states that his aims were to leave a place more beautiful than he found it, and

in the process understand the point of view of others.

In *The Education of a Gardener* he has provided us with a meditation on how to do it. 'How to' appreciate the geography of a site. 'How to' create vistas. 'How to' provide visual interest through structure and then plantings. 'How to' understand the environment. In addition he includes the traps for young players.

He describes on page 293 what he does: "Somewhere in a spoiled or even incomplete or even plain ugly garden lurks the *genius loci*. Like the detective in a thriller I have to decide from the data surrounding me, which are the right clues to follow up, what I can suppress and what veils the true character of that particular place". He lets the reader into his thought processes, and how he considers the relationship between the different elements of the site. He explains the effects he wants to create through the use of water and hedges, or stonework and ornamentation. Along the way the process of garden designing becomes explicit. The reader sees that it is not always easy to find the correct answers and create that apparently effortless magic.

It is almost like taking Garden Design 101. Each chapter could be a very detailed and interesting lecture. Reading this book focuses the mind and sharpens the eye.

This book was first published in 1962, reprinted in 1983 and then again in 1994. It is still available and well worth finding

Terri Kay.



Catherine Trinca, a keen home gardener, has qualifications in both Botany and Horticulture, and was employed in computer related areas for nearly 10 years.

An enthusiastic and very active member of the Council of the Friends since 1997, past convener of the Events Committee, and current convener of the Membership and Promotions Committee, Catherine is also a Vice President and a member of the Finance Committee.



Vice-President Dr Richard Kirsner is a bio-medical engineer whose career has encompassed various research and academic appointments including twenty years as Director of a department at St Vincent's hospital. His work with both international and local professional bodies, organising conferences and on editorial boards has given him wide experience in working with diverse groups of people. Richard's knowledge of Information Technology has greatly benefited the Friends.



Richard Smith joined the Friends in June 2000 and was elected Secretary in November 2001. His background was in public administration, human resource management and as General Manager for Australia Post operations throughout Victoria and Tasmania. During his more than six years as Secretary Richard has served three Presidents and helped steer the Friends' organisation through a period of significant change and growth.

COUNCIL MEMBERS



Maurice Castro joined the Friends' Council as Treasurer in 2002. His qualifications and background are in economics, accounting and insurance. Maurice has worked in private enterprise and in the public sector in senior positions in the Treasury, the Industry Commission and Australia Post from which he retired as head of Strategic Planning. Maurice's contribution to the introduction of financial and business policies ensures that the Friends can continue to support the Gardens effectively.



With a lifelong interest in plants and gardens, Judy Jarman joined the Friends in 1987, then the Botanical Illustrators Group when it was formed in 1990. She has been a member of the organising committee of the biennial *Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibitions since its inception in 1992.

As a Physiotherapist in the public sector, Judy gained valuable experience working with people. She has represented the Botanical Illustrators at Council meetings for several years.

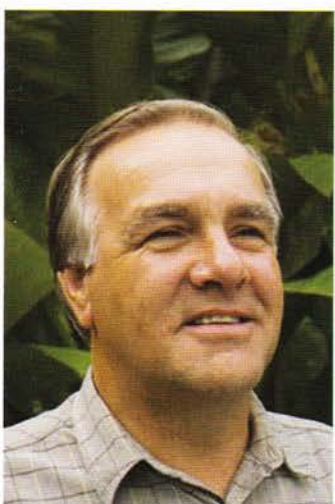


Susan Brookes studied restoration and conservation of ceramics in England and worked in this field for twenty years. She also studied horticulture at Burnley; her primary interest being plants and their use in garden making. Susan has been an enthusiastic member of the Friends' Council since 2001 and is a past co-convenor of the Events Committee. In 2007 she was responsible for organizing the Melbourne part of the David Howard Lectures.



Peter Kelly was a solicitor in commercial and competition law. Following his retirement in 2002, he joined the Growing Friends where, he says, he has relished the challenge of starting as a beginner in a new field.

Peter was elected to the Council 14 months ago where his legal experience has proved invaluable. His other current activities include acting as a director of a philanthropic foundation and as a trustee of a charitable trust.



John Hawker, a Churchill Fellow, has been a horticulturist with Heritage Victoria since 1995. Previously he was a Project Officer, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne from 1982-1990 and managed the Rejuvenation of Provincial Botanic Gardens project as part of Victoria's 150th celebrations. John has participated in plant surveys of more than 130 historic gardens and since 1982 has assisted the National Trust with the development and management of the Register of Significant Trees of Victoria.



David Plant was a wool buyer by profession who, following the collapse of the wool market in 1960 began a new career in real estate. He joined the Friends in 1994 and the Friends' Council in December 1996. Since then he has convened the Garden Seats and Shop sub-committees, the 25th Anniversary committee and has served a term as Vice President. David's lifelong interest in birds led to his producing the first census of birds in the RBG, where he is now a Voluntary Guide.

NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

PLEASE PRINT

Name(s)

(Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Dr)

Address

Postcode

Telephone: ()

Email:

I wish to apply for membership in the following category

☐ **Household** **\$63**
(Two adults living at same address. Please state name of second person)

☐ **Individual (within 50km of the GPO)** **\$43**

☐ **Interstate, Overseas, Country, Pensioner*, Student* (full-time)** **\$31.50**
(*state pension number / student number and educational institution)

☐ **Life/Group Memberships/Bequests/Wills**
Please send me details

Trust Fund DONATIONS

(Tax deductible over \$2.00, receipt issued)

TOTAL ENCLOSED

\$

\$

Cheque/Money order enclosed OR please charge my

Visa

Mastercard

..... / /

..... /

Signature

Expiry Date

Please make cheques payable to Friends of RBG and post to:
Friends of RBG, Gate Lodge, 100 Birdwood Ave, Melbourne 3004

Age Group

☐ Under 25

☐ 25-39

☐ 40-59

☐ 60 and over

How did you hear of the Friends of RBG?

Subscription rates as at 1/1/07. Rates subject to annual review. ABN 43 438 335 331



FRIENDS of the
ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS
MELBOURNE INC.

BOTANIC NEWS

BOTANIC NEWS is produced quarterly for Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Inc. which was formed to stimulate further interest in the Gardens and the National Herbarium and to support and assist them whenever possible.

Patron

Prof. David de Kretser AC
Governor of Victoria

President

Janet Thomson

Vice-Presidents

Catherine Trinca
Dr. Richard Kirsner

Secretary

Richard Smith

Treasurer

Maurice Castro

Immediate Past President

Irwin Newman

Council

Susan Brookes
John Goodwin
John Hawker
Judy Jarman
Peter Kelly
Dr. Philip Moors
David Plant
Sir Ninian Stephen

Editor

Meg Miller

COMMITTEE CONVENERS

Events

TBA

Botanical Illustrators

Edyta Hoxley

Growing Friends

Juliana Horstall

Membership and Promotions

Catherine Trinca

Volunteers

John Goodwin

FRIENDS' OFFICE

Virginia Henderson
Helen Fahey
Jackie Courmadias
Gate Lodge
100 Birdwood Avenue
Melbourne Vic 3004
Tel: (03) 9650 6398
Fax: (03) 9650 7723

Email:

friends@rbgmelb.org.au

Website:

www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Print Post Approved

PP 345842/10025

A12827T

ISSN 0817-0650

Printed on 50 per cent
Australian recycled paper

Printer

PrintGroup Australia

ADVERTISING

Single DL and A4 inserts will be accepted in Botanic News at a rate of \$550 and \$650 (including GST) respectively. For ease of handling, DL size is preferred. Multiple sheets - POA Advertising material requires the approval of the editorial committee. Contact the Friends' office 9650 6398 for details.

