



Autumn 2009

# BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS *of the* ROYAL BOTANIC  
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

## FEATURE

Scholarship Study Tour

## GROWING FRIENDS'

PLANT SALE

2 and 3 May



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

A very special occasion was celebrated in February – the 100th birthday of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. On behalf of the Friends, I extend our warmest best wishes and birthday greetings to Dame Elisabeth who is Patron of the Royal Botanic Gardens and a very supportive Friend.

Our congratulations go to Jayne Salmon, President of the Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, a member of the Melbourne Friends since 1988, a voluntary guide in the Melbourne and Geelong Gardens and a former President of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens. Jayne was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community of Geelong through the Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Such recognition is richly deserved as Jayne has not only worked tirelessly and with great tenacity on behalf of the Geelong Gardens, but has also made a significant contribution to creating a greater awareness in local government and botanic gardens circles of the value of, and necessity for, botanic gardens' Friends groups, to whom she provided support and advice over the years.

Accolades also to all those involved in the splendid *Art of Botanical Illustration 2008* exhibition held last November – the artists whose very beautiful works were on display and the Botanical Illustrator's Committee, convened by Edyta Hoxley, which worked so hard to make it all happen. The time commitment, planning and hard work needed to organise such an exhibition is enormous and we thank everyone involved. 69 of

the 170 works on display were sold returning an interim profit of \$38,000, a lower figure than anticipated, no doubt due to the current economic climate.

Late last year the Friends' Council was very pleased to approve two grants totalling \$100,325 for the RBG. A grant of \$70,225 will complete the funding required to implement the redevelopment of Guilfoyle's Volcano, which is the reservoir created by William Guilfoyle in 1876. The Volcano is an historic feature of the RBG Melbourne landscape, which has been hidden from public view behind fences and thick vegetation for over 100 years in the south-eastern corner of the Gardens. A smaller grant of \$30,100 will fund the non-capital works (interpretive signage, education program development, brochures and banners and the design of all related elements) of an interpretive walk that will lead visitors on a pathway between the garden beds and onto the verandah on the northern side of the Herbarium. This walk will enable visitors to view a series of exhibition and interpretive education panels illustrating the Herbarium collections and the scientific work carried out within the Herbarium. The capital works component of the project (\$36,000) is being funded by the Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation.

We're delighted that Marguerite Hancock has joined our wonderful team in the Friends' Office as Administrative Officer, replacing Helen Fahey who left us in November. Marguerite, who has been an active member of the Friends for some years



Photo: Cathy Trinca

and a volunteer at Gate Lodge for the past four years, will be a familiar face to many of you. She feels very much at home in this part of the world: her previous office was in Government House Mews, where she worked as General Secretary of the Women of the University Fund, and, during the 1980s and '90s, she was Secretary to three State Governors' wives. Marguerite has a great interest in vice-regal history, publishing her book, *Colonial Consorts*, in 2001 and more recently completing a PhD thesis on Lady Loch's letters from Victoria 1884–85.

We do hope you will enjoy the rich variety of activities planned for 2009 by the Friends. Some Members will be aware of the tour to New Zealand next November. This promises to be a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the richness of New Zealand's landscapes and beautiful gardens. Further details on page 10. And please don't forget the Growing Friends' sale on 2 and 3 May.

Janet Thomson

## New Members' Welcome

Please join us for the New Members' Welcome at 5.30pm on Wednesday 18 March in Mueller Hall at the National Herbarium. Invitations will be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering.

Drinks and savouries will be served while you mingle and meet other new members. Learn about our wide range of activities in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with conveners of all Friends' groups on hand to provide information. The evening finishes with a special tour of the Gardens conducted by an expert Voluntary Guide.

If you haven't been able to attend a New Members' Welcome before and would like to come this time, you are most welcome. Please ring our office on 9650 6398 and we will make sure your name is included on the list.



# FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

## Contents

Feature	4
Events	7
Growing Friends	10
Illustrators	11
Gardens	12
Book Reviews	14
Artist-in-Residence	15

Front cover: *Passiflora manicata* (Scarlet passionfruit) also known as 'Kiss and Run'.

Back cover: *Nigella* sp.  
Photos: Jennifer Marshall



Photo: Separation Tree Pavilion by Richard Barley



Photo: With thanks to the Herald and Weekly Times

## RBG Patron's 100th Birthday

The Patron of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, DBE, celebrated her 100th birthday on 8 February. We have indeed been fortunate to have Dame Elisabeth's interest, enthusiasm and support for the Gardens over many years. All of us in the RBG 'family' warmly congratulate her on achieving her centenary and on her remarkable contributions to so many Victorian organisations. She epitomises the meaning of community spirit and philanthropy.

Amongst a range of influential associations with the Gardens, Dame Elisabeth was a member of the Maud Gibson Trust between 1961 and 1989, a period during which the Trust drove the establishment and development of RBG Cranbourne. Dame Elisabeth has continued her close interest in activities at Cranbourne, and particularly in the creation of the Australian Garden – which realised one of the Trust's main ambitions in establishing RBG Cranbourne in the first place.

The RBG Board will celebrate Dame Elisabeth's birthday and achievements with her at Gardens House in early March.

## Guilfoyle's Volcano Project

Contractors will soon begin construction at Guilfoyle's Volcano Reservoir near D Gate. A boardwalk around the rim of the Volcano, graded access paths, new landscaping, and extensive new collections of striking low-water plants have

been designed by Andrew Laidlaw and RBG Melbourne horticultural staff. For the first time these developments will provide public access to the reservoir and its views across the Gardens to the city. The interpretive and educational components of the project focus on water conservation, low-water use plants, and sustainable gardening practices. We expect the works to be completed and opened early in 2010.

Renovation of Guilfoyle's Volcano has been made possible by a grant of \$1.2 million from The Myer Foundation, together with a grant of \$70,225 from the Friends and with support from individual donors. The Friends' grant will assist construction and landscaping. We are most grateful for the generous support from the Friends for this project.

The Myer Foundation has also been part of a recent major grant to another RBG Melbourne water project complementing Guilfoyle's Volcano. 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the Foundation and the 75th anniversary of the Sidney Myer Fund. To mark these anniversaries the two trusts established the 2009 Commemorative Grants Program, and 'Working Wetlands' at the Gardens is one of thirteen major projects being supported. This project will raise water levels in the Ornamental Lake and improve water quality by capturing stormwater from nearby streets and biologically treating it with planted wetlands. As part of the scheme, lake water will be recirculated through other water bodies in the Gardens, potentially

including Guilfoyle's Volcano. In November the Commemorative Grants Program announced a grant of \$1 million towards the \$2.2 million cost of the Working Wetlands project. These two grants demonstrate the outstanding philanthropic commitment of The Myer Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund to the Victorian community, and we are most appreciative of this support for the Royal Botanic Gardens.

## Separation Tree Pavilion

Recently completed renovations have given a new lease of life to the Separation Tree Pavilion (pictured left) near A Gate. The shelter has nestled beneath the historic Separation Tree – one of the Gardens' original old River Red Gums – for more than 100 years. Under the guidance of a conservation architect, the pavilion has now received a new shingle roof, had rotted framing timbers and internal moulded linings replaced, been repainted, and had new rustic steps installed. The whole structure was also carefully moved about half a metre to set it further back from the pathway so that delivery trucks are much less likely to hit the edge of its roof – something that had been a problem in the past. The restoration project has been funded by three anonymous local families who have long enjoyed the beauty of the Gardens. Subject to gaining the necessary funding, our next restoration project will be the Fern Gully Pavilion.

*Philip Moors*



## Technical Study Tour

### DIMINISHING WATER RESOURCES – STRATEGIC CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR RBG MELBOURNE.

In September 2008, as the recipient of a Friends' inaugural scholarship, I departed for a sojourn of about 35 days on a technical tour of the USA South-west. Time-zones being what they are (or maybe it is the American penchant for being different from the rest of the world) I was somewhat bemused to actually arrive in San Francisco earlier than I had departed Melbourne. However, this was far better than the other option that staff member Lorna Downey had accidentally discovered for me whilst exploring Google maps. This recommended paddling a kayak across 10,000 kilometres of Pacific Ocean!

About 30,000 km by aeroplane and 4,000 km by car was travelled, visiting many botanic gardens, scientific institutions, public landscapes and businesses throughout California, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona. My aim was to glean a better understanding of how to adapt the RBG heritage landscape to the threat of the gradual warming and drying impacts of climate change in South-east Australia, without losing the essential character of the Gardens. This is a monumental challenge because even if other water sources can be obtained, there are limited management choices to mitigate temperature rise – apart from more appropriate plant selection. Landscape succession such as

this requires a long lead time in planning (50 years or more) in order to avoid a landscape full of dying and dead plants. Specifically, the focus of the technical tour was to explore landscape water management and research, plant selection and living collections management, supportive technology, alternative water sources and water treatment.

It was disappointing to find that most public gardens I visited were not really considering climate change in their landscape planning. This seems to be partly driven by past US politics, although it is also socially and culturally influenced. The early construction of massive water delivery infrastructure in California (similar to the proposed North-south pipeline in Victoria) and relatively cheap water costs appear to have provided these residents with a false sense of security that pervades landscape management. For example, several botanic gardens considered that their current adaptation to climate change was the installation of automated irrigation systems. It was actually quite a contrast to find that while California is probably a world leader in technical support and methodologies for irrigation management (currently applied in irrigation efficiency courses in Australia) that these were not widely practised in public landscapes. Overall, the people I met showed great interest in the water management and climate change adaptation strategies of RBG Melbourne, and a number of them

commented that we were leading many US botanic gardens, even at this early stage of our progress.

Water conservation practices were driven mostly by water pricing and what seemed to be the readiness of people to use plants indigenous to their local areas. New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada appeared to lead California with more active education and price incentives. For example, in California it was not unusual to see sprinklers watering succulents in roadside plantings during the day. An estimate of water costs suggests that Californian residents pay about \$720 per megalitre (ML), whilst Melbourne residents are currently faced with \$1,220/ML. In Arizona, the costs range from \$2,265 to \$3,159/ML with the average household paying about \$1,000 per year for water use alone. In Melbourne, it is estimated that the average household uses water costing about \$400 per person per year.

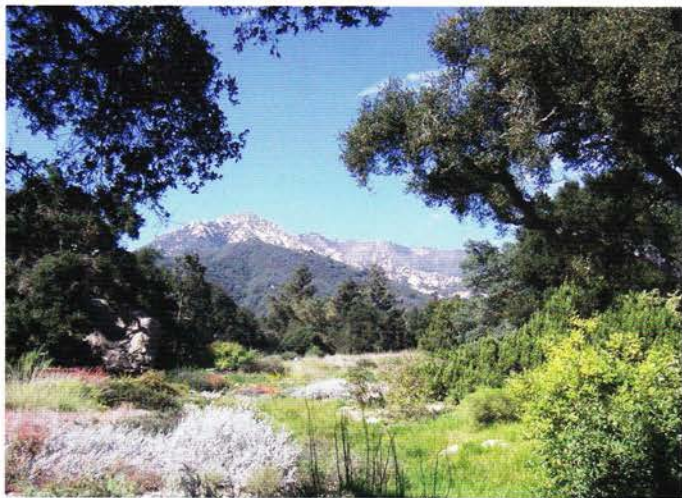
Californian gardens are often dominated by plantings that require significant supplementary irrigation to survive. In the other states I visited, it was more common to see natural landscape plants and other drought tolerant species used in freeway planting, as replacements for lawns and nature strips and as an integral part of landscape designs for living areas.

About 14 formal presentations on the water management and climate change adaptation strategies of the RBG were delivered to employees and the public at the various sites on the tour. Rainbird International provided additional funding for

my airfares and accommodation to enable me to visit Denver Botanic Gardens in Colorado and participate in a 2-3 day industry seminar on efficient water management. The seminar was attended by landscape and irrigation professionals from all over the US, including botanic gardens employees. Denver BG's irrigation specialist, Devin Riles, was my key contact, as we had communicated in the past about irrigation management. At one of the seminars leading into my presentation, Devin enthusiastically credited RBG Melbourne's water management expertise, our web resources and the continuing support we provide to Denver BG as a key element in their sourcing of about \$US2.7 million to improve their irrigation practices.

I was surprised to see that many Australian plants are now being used in US botanic gardens and this made me consider plant selection for hotter, drier climates. In Mediterranean climates such as California there is a marked period when there is no summer rainfall – often for several months. This led me to reflect on which other species in natural habitats back in Australia could potentially tolerate these dry summer climates. The other discovery that made me think differently about plant selection was finding that the Sonoran desert in Arizona was similar to a sub-tropical forest about 10,000 years ago, and that some plants had adapted to their current desert habitats. This made me wonder if many other subtropical species have





*The Santa Ynez Mountains and Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens*



*The Springs Reserve and its innovative architecture.*



*Cactus display in the Saguaro National Park, Tucson, Arizona*

the same adaptability and reasonable tolerance to drought in addition to their normal preference for warm conditions. There is a whole world of plant species to explore in this context, and many would contribute to a Guilfoylean landscape such as the RBG.

The difficult challenge of identifying climates that parallel Melbourne's current and projected conditions was reinforced by this tour. There are so many complexities and variables involved that expert local knowledge of specific plant tolerances is required. One of the important benefits of the tour was meeting so many plants people who were very knowledgeable about their local species and the living collections they managed. My own plant knowledge was certainly given a long overdue boost!

Choosing highlights is difficult, but three sites were outstanding:

- Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens for its rich display of Californian flora (about 6,000 taxa), a focus on plant conservation and the 'borrowed landscapes' of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the enthusiasm and plant knowledge of its Director of Horticulture, Andrew Wyatt. His communication and support were continuous from the early days of planning this visit. In addition, SBBG seemed to be the most proactive in developing irrigation management expertise (along with Denver Botanic Gardens).

- The Springs Preserve in Las Vegas, Nevada, was probably the most inspiring site

with its vision for sustainability and public education. These gardens successfully integrate amazing architecture, a museum, zoo, dry contrived gardens and natural landscapes. All waste water on site was recycled for irrigation (required as they sometimes get less than a half - inch of rain per annum) and toilet flushing purposes. A huge solar array over the car park provided about 70–80 per cent of the site's power needs. Solar energy was also used for heating and cooling the buildings. 'Environmentally friendly' building materials were a key feature of building construction and furnishings.

- Another site with some similarities, but with its own distinct character, was the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum situated within the stunning Saguaro National Park in Tucson, Arizona. This site had a stronger focus on plant collections, while having also included animal and natural history exhibits. It was sobering to find that beavers and otters existed in Arizona's rivers a hundred years ago. These rivers have now disappeared into dry gravel beds because of man's insatiable demand for groundwater ('bore water' in US terminology) in the region. There is a huge range of Agaves on display at this site along with a broad palette of arid-adapted plant species. The Sonoran Desert reminded me of the central Australian landscape, although instead of emergent Eucalypts or Acacias, Saguaro cacti and Mesquite dominated the skyline.

Travelling overseas for the first time in my life was



certainly a challenging experience, including trying to organise what could only be considered an ambitious itinerary. However, the generous hospitality of American colleagues, the richness of the different landscapes I saw, and the realisation of what had been achieved, have all helped me to grow both personally and professionally.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens for their continued support of my career at the RBG, and specifically my professional development through the Friends' Scholarship that will help the RBG adapt to the threats of climate change.

Further, I would like to thank (amongst many): Andrew Laidlaw, Richard Barley, Rodger Elliot, John Patrick and John Rayner who dared me to try, and reinforced my resolve!

*Peter Symes,  
Curator, Environmental  
Horticulture.*



*California roadside planting*



*Saguaro National Park*



*Denver Botanical Gardens*



## Trip to Mildura and Surrounding Area

### QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND

Friday 5 – Monday 8 June 2009.

Cost: \$575 will include all meals, accommodation, admissions, etc. This trip is for Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and Melbourne. Non-members will need to join one of the two Friends' groups to be eligible.

Would you like to come with the Friends of the Royal Botanic

Gardens Cranbourne Inc. on a four-day bus trip to Mildura?

We will be visiting the Pink Lakes and Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, Trust for Nature's Ned's Corner and much more! We will be led by Rodger and Gwen Elliot so you can be assured of four days full of interest.

For further information and a booking form contact [helenpage@bigpond.com](mailto:helenpage@bigpond.com) Phone 03 9817 2003 or 0418 546 979.



## Highgrove and Gardens of Scotland

4 – 19 August 2009

Price \$8990 Twin Share  
Land content only

Friends of The Gardens in Sydney are revisiting their successful trip of 2008 to the UK including Highgrove, Prince Charles' private estate. The tour takes in the Scottish capital, staying in Edinburgh for four

nights with a very special visit to the Garden of Cosmic Speculation for a day. Highlights include the Alnwick Garden in Northumberland, the Millennium Garden in Norfolk designed by Piet Oudolf, Beth Chatto's garden in Colchester, Westonbirt Arboretum, Kew Gardens and Wisley.

For a detailed itinerary please contact 02 9231 8182 or email [Friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au)





## Flora of South-West Western Australia

### ILLUSTRATED TALK BY SUE McLEAN

Wednesday 25 March at 10.00am  
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium  
COST: \$25 Friends \$15  
RSVP by Friday 20 March  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)  
Please join us for morning tea  
before the talk.

The diversity of plants in south-west Western Australia is one of the most remarkable in the world. Sue and her husband have spent many holidays exploring the south-west, usually starting in the northern sand plains in September and ending in Cape le Grand towards the end of October.

This talk looks at the way the plants in the SW Focal Area have evolved in response to the nutrient-deficient soils and sporadic droughts that beset

the area. Thanks to a good digital camera, the talk is profusely illustrated.



## Autumn Talking Plants Morning

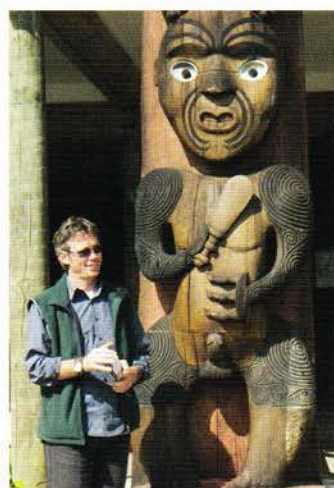
### DAHLIAS TO DAZZLE

Friday 27 March at 10.00am  
Meet at Domain House,  
Dallas Brooks Drive  
COST: \$15 Friends \$10  
RSVP by Wednesday 25 March  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)  
Refreshments will be served during  
the morning

Dahlias are the perfect plant for the hot months with most flowering continuously. They are also ideal for use in floral arrangements. The President of the National Dahlia Society of Victoria will show many beautiful samples of Dahlia flowers and give us some hints on cultivation. All those attending are invited to bring some favourite Dahlia flowers to show and share.

The morning will be held at Domain House and will be an

informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening. It is a wonderful opportunity for new members to meet other members. Refreshments will be served during the morning. Following the discussion there will be the opportunity to visit the Growing Friends' Nursery for plant purchases. Autumn is the perfect time for planting so if planning to make a number of plant purchases don't forget to bring a market trolley.



## New Zealand's Natural Landscapes and Gardens

### ILLUSTRATED TALK

Tuesday 31 March at 6.00 for 6.30pm  
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium  
COST: \$25 Friends \$15  
RSVP by Friday 27 March  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)  
Please join us for a glass of wine and  
savories before the talk

Andrew Laidlaw, Landscape Architect with Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, in association with the Friends, will host a superb 12 day tour to both islands of New Zealand in Spring 2009 with *Australians Studying Abroad*.

The talk will give us a taste of what this trip will encompass, covering a large number of public and private gardens as well as the unique flora and fauna of the rugged

West Coast of the North Island, including mature 1000-year-old Kauri trees. The tour group will also visit the volcanic slopes of Mt Egmont, where a 4,000mm rainfall creates ideal conditions for rhododendrons and their companion plants.

Andrew's talk will be accompanied by fabulous photos taken on previous tours to New Zealand.





## Autumn Fit Friends' Ramble MELBOURNE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS WHOLE DAY EXCURSION

Thursday April 23 at 9.50am sharp  
Meet at North /Rear Gate entrance  
Cost: \$30 Friends \$15  
Note: Price excludes cost of entry as  
this amount varies. Friends of the Zoo  
enjoy free entry!  
RSVP by Friday 17 April on enclosed  
booking form or download a booking  
form from the Events page on our  
website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)

Public Transport: Tram 55 Stop 25;  
Train: Upfield Line Royal Park Station  
BYO Lunch or purchase at the Zoo.

This is a whole day excursion  
at the award-winning  
Melbourne Zoological Gardens  
housing over 300 species from  
around the world. We will walk  
amid lush, tropical African and  
Asian rainforests, environments  
created for the rich wildlife.

Following morning tea at the  
cafe, we meet our first guide at  
10.30am, who will conduct us  
on a behind the scenes tour

through the Nursery and then a  
visit to the Butterfly House. At  
midday, we embark on a tour  
with one of the Horticultural  
Guides. After a picnic lunch  
together at 1.00pm, which can  
be either bought or brought,  
we will meet the gardener who  
tends the Japanese Garden.

We are free to make the  
most of our time afterwards to  
explore or, if under time  
constraints, to leave at any  
stage during the day.



## Sojourns in the Mega South-West (of two of the world's biggest continents)

### ILLUSTRATED TALKS

Wednesday 29 April at 6.00 for 6.30pm  
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium  
COST: \$25 Friends \$15  
RSVP by Monday 27 April  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)  
Please join us for a glass of wine and  
savories before the talk.

Megan Hirst, of the Victorian  
Conservation Seedbank, will  
describe her experiences at  
Kings Park, WA, as an  
inaugural recipient of the RBG  
Friends, Scholarship, and an  
overview of her project:

*Establishing germination proto-  
cols for 50 targeted Victorian  
native vascular plant species.*

Peter Symes, Curator,  
Environmental Horticulture,  
will give an overview of water  
management and landscapes in  
the United States after visiting

many botanic gardens and  
other scientific institutions in  
Arizona, California, Nevada and  
Colorado. The trip was  
supported by an RBG Friends'  
Scholarship for the project  
*Diminishing water resources –  
strategic climate change  
adaptation for RBG Melbourne.*

It is important for Friends to  
hear about where their donations  
go, as well as giving their  
support to the winners as they  
present their results to us.



## Autumn Insiders' Walk THE RARE AND THREATENED SPECIES COLLECTION

Thursday 30 April at 10.00am  
Meet at Domain House  
Dallas Brooks Drive  
Cost: \$15 MEMBERS ONLY  
This is a limited number event.  
RSVP Friday 24 April  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)

This event consists of a talk  
and power-point presentation,  
followed by morning tea at  
Domain House, before setting  
off on a walk to discover some  
of Victoria's rarest plants.  
Find out which plants are  
classified common or rare and  
endangered, the reasons for  
this, and what treasures are to  
be found in the RBG. The *Rare  
and Threatened Species  
Collection* bed is now well  
established and a good tool for  
education in the crucial role of

conservation in helping to  
preserve our natural heritage.

Allow nearly three hours for  
this very informative event,  
which will be led by voluntary  
guides who have made a special  
study of this fascinating topic.





## Autumn Guided Visit

### TO THE GROWING FRIENDS' NURSERY AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS' OWN NURSERY

Friday May 29 at 10.00am  
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)  
COST: \$5 MEMBERS ONLY  
RSVP by Wednesday 27 May  
on enclosed booking form or  
download a booking form from the  
Events page on our website:  
[www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org](http://www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org)  
Bookings essential; numbers limited.

We will gather at Gate Lodge for morning tea and the opportunity to meet other members and like-minded gardeners. The Autumn Guided Nursery Visit will start with a tour of the RBG's own Nursery, to see the seed-raising and propagating area where much of our Growing Friends' plant material is first raised. We will be guided around the Nursery by one of the Gardens' staff.

We will then continue on to the Growing Friend's nursery

to see the potting area, the shade house and plants ready for sale. There will also be the opportunity to buy plants for our own gardens. Don't forget to bring a market trolley or strong carry-bags if shopping is planned.

This visit is particularly suitable for new members and others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of both the RBG's and our Growing Friends' nurseries.



## Natural Landscapes and Gardens of New Zealand

9-20 November 2009  
TOUR PRICE: Land Content Only:  
\$4480pp (twin share);  
\$990 single supp.  
\$4280pp (early bird special, if booked by 31 March 2009)  
12 days: Auckland (4 nights), New Plymouth (3 nights), Christchurch (4 nights).  
Full details are available by contacting  
Australians Studying Abroad  
Tel. 9822 6899  
Freecall: 1800 645 755 (outside Melbourne Metro only)  
Email: [info@asatours.com.au](mailto:info@asatours.com.au)  
Website: [www.asatours.com.au](http://www.asatours.com.au)

*Australians Studying Abroad*, in association with the Friends, is conducting a superb 12 day tour to both islands of New Zealand in Spring 2009. Andrew Laidlaw, Landscape Architect of the RBG Melbourne, will be our host. Andrew has been responsible for many new RBG projects, the most recent of which is the highly acclaimed Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. He is well known outside of

our organisation for his work in both radio and television. Andrew's particular interest in native flora has led him on a number of bushwalking tours to New Zealand's North and South Islands. His current role as a garden designer, coupled with his plant knowledge, will give garden visits a special appeal and allow a deeper appreciation of the gardens visited.

The program will be enhanced by NZ's most important gardeners, including Robert Watson, who will introduce us to the private gardens of Christchurch, and Sir Miles Warren, who will show us his own garden. On Waiheke Island, near Auckland, we will discover a selection of notable contemporary gardens by world renowned Ted Smith, who will accompany us on the day. Trish Bartleet will also show us her original garden designs which display a distinctive New Zealand identity.

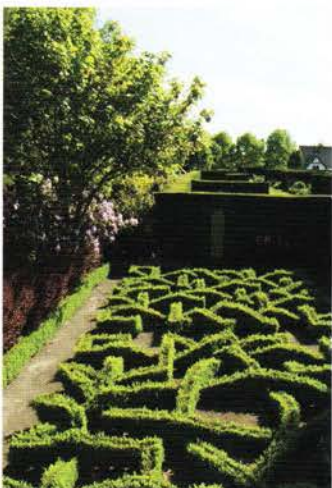
In addition to private gardens of Christchurch and Auckland, we also visit the volcanic slopes of Mt. Egmont

over two days, exploring several gardens including Pukeiti, a 320ha. rainforest abutting the National Park. A local botanist will take us on a walk to observe the progression of plant species and learn about the distinctive vegetation of this stunning park.

In addition to visits to special gardens with natural landscapes, and traditional and formal gardens, the tour will also include a visit to a heritage homestead in Gordonton and a walking tour of historic Christchurch.

### Notes from Gate Lodge

Members are advised that it is now possible, and usually more convenient, to pay for Events bookings by credit card. The booking form has space for credit card details. A minimum of \$10.00 applies.





# GROWING FRIENDS



Abundant plant growth in the Growing Friends' nursery in January.



*Vireya* 'Nuigini Firebird'



*Camellia japonica* 'Hakuhan-Kujaku'

Summer in the Growing Friends' Nursery has been unusually busy. At the time of writing this, the summer weather has been kind to our stock. You might recall my writing last Autumn that the bursts of excessive heat over the New Year period 2007-08 killed many of our plants. This year we have fared much better and the plants are in great shape.

As advised on the front cover, the Autumn Plant Sale is being held on Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 May this year. This is considerably later than the previous few years, but many other organisations had claimed the earlier dates, so that parking and access to our Sale were unavailable. Do put 2 and 3 May in your diaries.

Also, members should keep in mind that any member of the Friends is welcome to come into the Growing Friends' nursery to look and to buy on most Fridays throughout the year. The only times when we are too busy for visitors are for two weeks either side of the two major plant sales each year. Growing Friends are at the nursery from early Fridays until at least 2pm and someone will always be happy to show you around.

If you would like a spectacular feature plant for your garden, courtyard or very large pot, we have just the thing. Since January 2008, the Australian Native section has been cultivating *Doryanthes excelsa*, the Gynea Lily, the red flower stalk of which can reach two metres high! Yes, the very one featured each year in David Jones's Spring Flower display. They are hard to obtain and our stock is looking just ready

to plant. There are a number of good sized plants being offered at special prices. As the leaves of this tussock plant may reach 1.5 metres across, the plant needs space or a very large pot. It is hardy in any well drained site and it is frequently grown in NSW traffic roundabouts showing how tough it really is.

Perhaps you need a showy tough plant for a sunny site, one that can tolerate some dry periods. Either of the eye-catching Native Hibiscus could be for you. *Hibiscus aff. splendens* has large apricot flowers with dark centres and *Hibiscus splendens*, the Pink Hollyhock Tree, has pink flowers with dark red centres. Both these Queensland and NSW plants are fast growing, reaching approximately 3 metres in 18 months. The showy flowers are 12 cm across and are supposedly Spring flowering, but ours are in flower in January and February. Come in and see them as they may still be in flower when you read this newsletter.

Also looking very special is *Vireya* 'Nuigini Firebird'. Its dazzling burst of warm orange flowers is a delight in the midst of this difficult weather. Despite their origins in the subtropics, vireyas, a sub-species of the genus *Rhododendron*, are proving very tough, requiring only a small amount of water. The Growing Friends' nursery collection of vireyas has attracted an increasing number of enthusiasts who eagerly seek them out at our twice-yearly plant sales. *V. 'Nuigini Firebird'* is a medium sized shrub with rich green leaves. It produces a stunning, loose head of nine to



# GROWING FRIENDS

# ILLUSTRATORS

eleven trumpet-shaped, bright orange flowers of approximately 5cm each, held on pale burgundy stems.

Vireyas are proving very garden worthy and the vibrancy of V. 'Nuigini Firebird' makes it a most desirable plant.

In the non-native shrub section, the *Rotheca myricoides* 'Ugandense' is a tough hardy shrub for dry conditions. This plant was formerly called *Clerodendrum ugandense*, and can be seen in the RBG South African bed. Its loose shrubby form can be developed into a small tree, with delicate light blue flowers blooming over an extended period in summer. This is a real show-piece plant, and is currently available for purchase.

Another delightful plant that Rosemary Ball, our camellia section head, has been cultivating for almost two and a half years, is *Camellia japonica* 'Hakuhan-Kujaku'. Its curious and charming lily-like flowers hang from branch tips, like red and white shuttles. The branches have a slender weeping habit and long willow-like leaves. This is another special plant that is just ready to plant out. Don't forget that the well-established camellia is usually very tolerant of drier conditions.

With all these treasures in mind, do come in and see us on a Friday, or come to the plant sale on Saturday 2 May from 10.00am until 4.00pm or Sunday 3 May from 10.00am until 3.00pm.

Juliana Horsfall  
Convener



*Hibiscus aff. splendens*



*Hibiscus splendens*, Pink hollyhock tree



*Doryanthes excelsa*  
Photos: Michael Hare

## Classes

Term 2 will start in the week beginning Monday 27 April.

Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays (two sessions each day - 2.5 hr), Thursdays (one session - 2.5 hr) and Fridays (one 3 hr session).

2.5hr classes: \$255(incl GST)

Friends \$215 (incl GST)

3 hr classes: \$295(incl GST)

Friends \$255 (incl GST)

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



Photo: Craig Myers

## Botanical Illustrators Quarterly Meeting

### EUCALYPTS OF THE GARDENS

Tuesday 17 March at 10.00 for 10.30am in the Whirling Room.

Cost: \$5.50 pay on the day

RSVP: Friends' Office 9650 6398

John Reid, Herbarium Botanist, will talk about the botanical features of various Eucalypts and focus on details we need to include in our paintings. You are invited to show the progress of your work.

Judy Jarman

## Whirlybirds

Following our involvement in *The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition* in November 2008 the Whirlybirds resumed their meetings on 3 February. If you are a member of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens you are welcome to join our botanical illustration group on Tuesdays in the Whirling Room. Contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532 for further information.

## Botanical Illustrators

The Illustrators held their shared Christmas break-up luncheon on 16 December after some great entertainment from two of the artists. Jean Dennis spoke to us about travelling solo in Japan and included some of her funny experiences; her visit to some galleries in London including Shirley Sherwood's new gallery and finally her visit to Boston, USA. Pam McDiarmid (pictured above) then played several musical pieces on her lever harp, which she had made using Mountain Ash and King Billy pine. Pam described how she had made it and how each note was played on the strings and by moving the levers up and down – truly a wonderful finish to our artistic year.

Judy Jarman



How interesting it is to see our world through the eyes of others sometimes. Not literally, of course, as this would be a little difficult to arrange given the current range of tools available in our workshop. I was thinking of the more figurative meaning.

An alien visitor to Victoria, on touring the many wonderful parks and gardens (as they surely would, no matter from which planet they hailed) must be impressed at the sheer number of bandstands or other rotundas that exist. Realising that these structures were by-and-large established for the purpose of band recitals, he or she (or alien other) would draw the conclusion quite sensibly that we are indeed the most musical of races. Why else would we have so many of these structures?

I'm not sure about you, but I could count on one hand the number of times I've witnessed an actual band playing music in one of these buildings. I'd probably still have a finger or two to spare, come to think of it. I am reliably informed that they were a good deal more popular for this purpose in days of yore, when most towns had a veritable feast of bands – pipe bands, brass bands, concert bands and so forth. Municipalities, church groups and sometimes factories or other large-scale employers would have their own bands, so there would have been no shortage of options for the week's musical menu at the local bandstand. The tradition perhaps came from the mining towns of Britain – where the gleam of highly-polished brass shone like a beacon of hope

through the pervading inevitability of working life.

With the passage of time, things have changed. While there are remnants of band culture in some corners of the state, the ambition to be First Cornet or Lead Euphonium in the local brass offering has been overtaken by other distractions. Sad but true. The structures that we see now are a mixture of the old (still in place, with an occasional lick of paint and a little running maintenance) and newer. The newer ones are often the product of the collective energies of a local community services club, seeking to channel their vigour into a Worthy Project. Nothing brings the community's tradespeople and helpers together quite so quickly as the sniff of a rotunda project on the breeze. They gather with a selection of donated materials and a frightening array of electric tools, and before you know it, another rotunda or bandstand has emerged. I suppose one could take the view that the community can more easily identify with the nature of built structures – and conversely, the skills, materials and understanding needed to make significant improvements to the living landscape are far less commonly found.

At this point some simplification is needed. It seems, from exhaustive reference to the literature, that bandstands are any structures built for the purposes of band performances, while rotundas may be bandstands, but are round (hence the name) and usually have a domed roof... so which name should we use from here on? Let's call them pavilions.

It is true that in many cases, the new pavilions in the parks and gardens of Victoria are replacements of older structures of a similar nature, which once stood in place. Some are even exact replicas of the original. In other cases though, it must be said they bear little relevance to past structures, or even current use of the site. At least they tend to have more appeal than that scourge of the 1960s and '70s, the sound stage. These structures were usually constructed from concrete or other civic materials, and had all the visual appeal and landscape sensitivity of a helipad. I'm not sure if they were ever in frequent use, but it would be fair to say that most have exceeded their shelf-life, and in some cases removal activities are in play. Full credit to the engineering departments of the day for using building materials and methods designed to withstand nuclear attack or meteor collision. These are not generally structures that are easily dismantled.

Here in the RBG Melbourne we have been fortunate in having a variety of pavilions or rest houses that have withstood the rigors of time and use, and that provide visitors with opportunities for respite from the searing summer sun or a hastily found refuge from a downpour. The roll-call of current structures includes the Rose Pavilion, Clematis Pavilion, Tecoma Pavilion, William Tell Rest House, Fern Gully Rest House, Separation Tree Rest House and the Lake View Pavilion, not to mention the Temple of the Winds, of course.

We used to have more. The Japanese Creeper Rest House was a rustic shelter situated on the northern corner of the triangle that currently houses the Species and Heritage Rose collection. Down near the Fern Gully, the Palms Rest House was just on the northern side of the path adjacent to the Palm Lawn. The intriguingly-named West Australian Pagoda (apparently made from WA jarrah, and relocated to the Gardens after the 1880 Centennial Exhibition) was located immediately west of the bridge onto Long Island, below the large Monterey Cypress, and by 1908 there was a rotunda or bandstand just to the east of the old Tea House (just up the slope from the site of the current Tea Rooms near the lake). A bandstand was sited on the Eastern Lawn in the 1870s, and this was used for various recitals and 'moonlight concerts'. It was subsequently superseded by the Tecoma Pavilion.

William Guilfoyle reported in 1908 that the Rose Pavillion was 'used only on Hospital Sundays' for band recitals in aid of the hospital charities. By the mid-1900s the use of the Gardens for public concerts was the cause of great concern, due to the damage caused by the enormous crowds. Anecdotally, this led to the concept of construction of a new outdoor public music venue – the Sidney Myer Music Bowl (the grandmother of all sound stages!). The Rose Pavilion was completely restored in 1993, with support from companies associated with Pacific Dunlop Ltd, and a grant from the



# GARDENS

Friends, and stands proud in the landscape near the Hopetoun and Princes' Lawns. The restoration included replacement of the 1960s-styled slate walls with more originally authentic scoria-mounted panels.

Given the rustic nature of some of the Gardens' structures, it's not surprising that many didn't last beyond their century. Wattles cleared from the Yarra's banks were reputedly used (together with other immediately available materials) in construction. A few were demolished in the name of progress (the Tea Rooms Rest House was taken down to allow remodelling of the new Tea Rooms area; the Edwardian-styled 1906 Bougainvillea Rest House was demolished to make way for the somewhat less charming Clematis Shelter). Some were destroyed by fire, the most notable in recent times being the newly-renovated William Tell Rest House, which was reduced to ashes within a few weeks of being reopened in 1994. The fire was so hot that it caused the death of several large trees in the vicinity, including the elm that used to grow in the middle of the path

intersection in front of the rest house. Fortunately, the construction plans were at hand as they had been used during the renovation works, and as the builders and craftspeople had only just packed away their tools, it was the work of the moment to start again. The Separation Tree Rest House (originally called the Tennyson Lawn Rest House) built around 1896, stands below the impressive River Red Gum known as the Separation Tree. This tree has an interesting place in this state's cultural history, for it was in the shade of its canopy that the citizens of the Port Phillip District gathered on 15 November 1850 to celebrate Queen Victoria's proclamation that the state would have its own government, independent of the remote legislature of Sydney, from 1 July 1851. It would appear that after several years of agitation and frustration among the Melbourne population, and some unsuccessful attempts to get the ball rolling with the Government in Sydney, Superintendent of Port Phillip District, Charles Joseph LaTrobe, made direct representations to England, and

the Queen acquiesced. ('Thank goodness' I hear you say.) Our state was named Victoria in her honour. An interesting footnote is that gold was 'officially' discovered in Victoria in June 1851.

It is with great pleasure that we have been able to undertake an extensive restoration of the Separation Tree Rest House in late 2008, through the generosity of several private donors. The restoration has included lifting the structure and moving it approximately 800mm further back from the pathway (to avoid further damage from passing delivery trucks), installation of a new shingle roof, extensive replacement of the supporting structure and new cut-bluestone boulder steps. All of this work was carried out by skilled tradespeople, under the guidance of heritage architects.

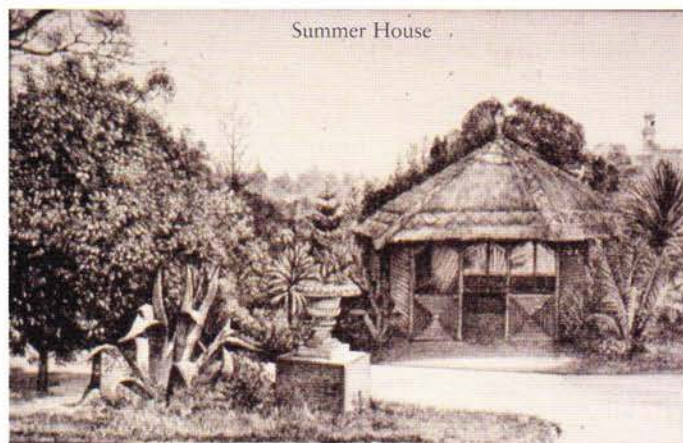
The next pavilion on the refurbishment list is probably the Fern Gully Rest House – another shingle-roofed rustic structure of about the same late-nineteenth century period. You will find it on the west side of the gully, in the shade of the large Montezuma Cypress. It narrowly missed being flattened by the falling debris

from this tree during a violent storm around five years ago, and now sits patiently waiting for a 'makeover' in the modern parlance.

The recent construction of the excellent new 'comfort stations' dispersed around the Gardens has certainly added considerable comfort to the visit of all patrons. Should we perhaps call them 'comfort pavilions'? David Alsop's excellent designs for these buildings combine functionality with sensitivity to the Gardens' style. An often-heard comment is that they appear 'as if they have always been here'.

The pavilions and rest houses are integral features of the Gardens landscape, offering visual interest in addition to their utility. We can also feel comfortable in the knowledge that here, as in so many of the public gardens around this state, we will be so very well placed when the groundswell builds, and the inevitable resurgence in brass (or other) band performances finally takes hold, and the euphonium regains its majestic supremacy!

*Richard Barley*







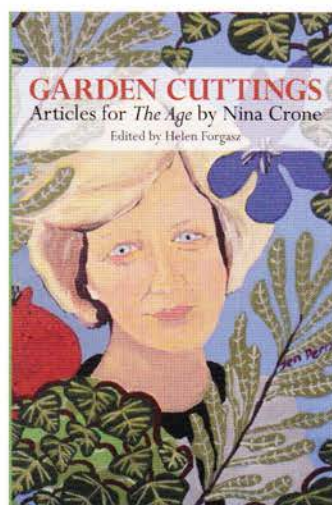
## Banksias

Kevin Collins, Kathy Collins  
and Alex George  
Published by Blooming Books  
RRP \$59.95

Kevin Collins has parlayed his life-long passion for Banksias into Banksia Farm at Mount Barker in Western Australia. There he grows all the 78 known species of this iconic Australian plant. Together with his wife Kathy – who works with him – and Alex George, a botanist, editor and indexer, he has translated his vast knowledge and experience into this book.

All 78 known Banksias are described, photographed and illustrated, including a front cover by artist Celia Rosser. Especially enlightening is the history of their discovery and naming. For those interested in plant biology and classification there is an extensive section which explains their evolution. Information on how to find and grow them and how they have inspired artists and artisans is also included in this comprehensive volume.

Terri Kay



## Garden Cuttings

ARTICLES FOR THE AGE  
BY NINA CRONE

Edited by Helen Forgasz  
Australian Scholarly Publishing,  
RRP: \$45.00 (\$37.50 plus \$7.50  
postage and handling)  
Copies available from Melbourne Girls  
Grammar School Tel.: 9862 9200  
email: marilyn.lowe@mggs.vic.edu.au

Long-term readers of *The Age* may well remember articles by Alison Dalrymple that appeared in the gardening section during the 1980s and '90s. They covered a variety of subjects, but were mainly about individual garden plants and their history, or the great public gardens that the author had visited in Australia and overseas. Most were accompanied by striking black-and-white illustrations drawn by Cam Knuckey.

Given the ephemeral nature of journalism, we must be grateful that Professor Helen Forgasz of Monash University took it upon herself to collect and edit the articles for publication as a book. Professor Forgasz was a friend and former colleague of the author, whose real identity – Alison

Dalrymple being a pseudonym – was Nina Crone, Principal of Melbourne Girls Grammar School from 1975 to 1994. As befits a headmistress, Nina Crone was a well-read, well-travelled, cultured and humorous woman of impressive self-discipline. Gardening was one of her main extra-curricular interests, and during her years at MGGS, she set herself the task of completing an article suitable for the gardening pages of *The Age* every Saturday morning.

These appeared over a fifteen-year period, beginning in 1982, and have been collected by Helen Forgasz and arranged into three sections: 'Plants', 'Gardens' and a miscellany called 'Close to Home'. The articles on plants and their history are especially interesting, written as they were by a born teacher with a strong desire to share fascinating information with her readers.

The book has an attractive and colourful cover and has been well produced by Australian Scholarly Publishing. Unfortunately, there are some obvious typographical errors (such as 'trails of ivory'), which should have been spotted in the editing process. A major omission is the failure to provide an index, surely something to which Miss Crone herself would have objected! These gripes aside, *Garden Cuttings* (such a witty title) is a delightful, informative and inspiring book. The illustrations are superb, and there is the happy surprise of finding one each by Anita and Richard Barley, Anita's under her maiden name of Podwyszynski. Richard's is an

Australian Christmas wreath, beautifully drawn.

*Garden Cuttings* will appeal to gardeners, garden historians, armchair travellers and connoisseurs of fine writing alike. The book is perfect for dipping into and ideal for the bedside table. It is warmly recommended.

Marguerite Hancock

## Gates and Lodges

As you walk around the perimeter of the Melbourne Gardens, starting at the bottom of Anderson Street, the first entry to the gardens is at A Gate. Then, up the hill a bit there are B and C Gates. At the corner of Domain Road and Birdwood Avenue there is D Gate and just before the Works and Growing Friends Nursery entrance is E Gate while F Gate is beside the Herbarium.

Almost as a test to see if you are awake, the next major entrance is Observatory Gate which is opposite the Shrine and leads to the Visitors' Centre, the Observatory Café and the Gardens Shop.

Also starting from the bottom of Anderson Street, near B Gate, there is a lodge called Eastern Lodge. However, the next two lodges at E and F Gates are called, respectively, E Gate Lodge and F Gate Lodge. When you come to Observatory Gate, the lodge there is simply known as Gate Lodge and is the Friends' place of business within the RBG Melbourne structure. As there are also observatory buildings at this site the plain name Gate Lodge avoids (some) confusion. This is where many Friends' events are held.



# ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

## Taiwanese Artist in Residence



Asialink Arts was delighted to announce this year's reciprocal artist in residence from Taipei Artist Village: Ms Su-chen Hsu, from Kaohsiung City, Taiwan. Hsu was hosted by the National Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne from mid-September to mid-December 2008. Her work was developed in collaboration with scientific researchers at the Herbarium and is centred on themes of migration, change, cultural relationships and environmental sustainability.

For Domain House in Melbourne Hsu conceived a multi-layered exhibition that looked at the intersection of these themes. *Plant Matter NeoEden, Melbourne* developed from recent work shown in Taiwan that highlighted the natural greening of Taipei City which occurs when plants grow in adverse urban environments – with little water, light or human encouragement. Her Melbourne exhibition also looked at plants in relation to their environment and the idea of survival under harsh conditions, which resonated strongly with Australia's continuing drought situation. Hsu presented three categories of such plants, each shown in digital print format from specimens she had collected and pressed: plants found in Taipei City's urban environments; rare coastal plants from Northern Taiwan and crops grown by Ami subsistence farmers, one of the indigenous tribal groups in Taiwan who have been displaced from their traditional homelands.

Viewers at her November exhibition were intrigued by the raised effect of her plant samples and the effect of the bi-lingual written history in the digital prints.

Hsu devised a system of exchange to overcome the border restrictions placed on such plants and to draw attention to the global nature of the environmental and cultural issues raised. Prompted by the recent food contamination scare in China, Hsu invited members of the general public and in particular, inner Melbourne's community gardeners, to trade their produce for one of her prints, an exchange that points to the relative safety of these home-grown plants – produced in the urban environment with due consideration to Melbourne's ongoing water restrictions. Each of the vegetable/print swaps was documented with an agreement between the trading partners. Visitors to the exhibition were also invited to contribute anecdotes and information about the new specimens Hsu

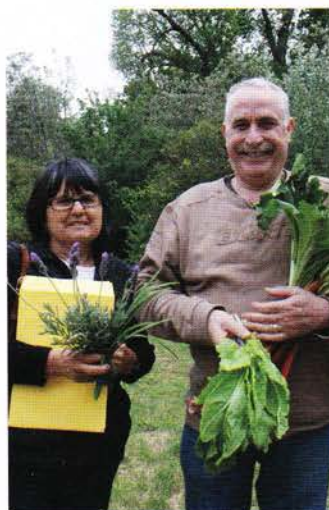
collected during her Melbourne residency – these include plant usage, cultural and historical significance, recipes and other stories.

This was an Asialink/Taipei Artist Village project supported by Taipei Culture Foundation and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Taipei City Government.

Sara Robins



Chives specimen, from Happy New Life Community Garden, North Richmond



From left to right:

Hawthorn Community Members arrived with their vegetables to trade.

Su-chen was in North Richmond's Community Garden

Deer Tree - Paper Mulberry display by Su-chen Hsu

Photos by Su-chen Hsu.



# NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

PLEASE PRINT

Name(s)

(Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Dr)

Address

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Telephone: ( )

Email:

I wish to apply for membership in the following category

☐ **Household** **\$66**  
(Two adults living at same address. Please state name of second person)

☐ **Individual (within 50km of the GPO)** **\$45**

☐ **Interstate, Overseas, Country, Pensioner\*, Student\* (full-time)** **\$33**  
(\*state pension number / student number and educational institution)

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

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(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?

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ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS  
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# 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.

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