

Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Number 1, July 1982

FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

I am delighted to welcome the newly formed Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens and to give them my full support in sharing the various activities which have been arranged for the months ahead.

It has taken more than five generations to develop the Gardens, and their sesquicentenary will fall due in 1996. It is a milestone in the history of the Gardens to develop an open supportive group for young and old.

The Friends will co-ordinate your special help, if it is in the form of skills, time or funding. Tasks will range from sorting seeds and mounting Herbarium specimens to surveys of visitors. Financial help will be needed to develop specific projects such as the restoration of Guilfoyle's conservatory or mounting special botanical expeditions.

The Friends opens up new Botanic challenges for us all to express our love and concern for Melbourne's Botanic Gardens. To be a Friend is a reward in itself but there are other benefits such as lectures, guided tours, special visits and events. Those who heard Professor Carrick Chambers' recent lecture on the Cranbourne Annexe will have experienced the excitement and anticipation for this new project, and I hope to see as many of you as possible at the Cranbourne excursion in August.

I am very pleased to thank Mrs. Beth Higgs, our founding Convenor, and her equally enthusiastic supporting team for making the Friends Group the real and tangible expression of a concept that extends the vision of Sayce and Guilfoyle even further into the future and for Friends to come.

David Churchill
Director and Government Botanist



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

FROM THE CONVENOR

Even though we have not yet held a public membership drive, it is already apparent that many Victorians do care deeply about the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and National Herbarium. The establishment of the Cranbourne Annexe has increased the scope of the Gardens in an exciting way.

Working closely with the Director, Dr. Churchill, and the staff, there is much we as Friends can do and so many benefits flowing from our involvement. Some of the proposed activities are outlined in this, our first, newsletter. I urge you to "spread the word" - by far the most successful means of gaining new members.

Our application for membership with the Australian Federation of Friends of Museums and Galleries has been accepted, a well deserved recognition, we think, of the importance of our Gardens and Herbarium. This means automatic affiliation with the world body and offers advantages both to the group and to individual members.

The charter, governing the operation of the Friends, is being prepared by Mr. Michael Black, Q.C. and will be completed in the near future.

Friends support the Royal Botanic Gardens and National Herbarium through their membership, by stimulating interest and reflecting public opinion and the needs of the community.

Thank you for your enthusiasm,

Beth Higgs
Convenor

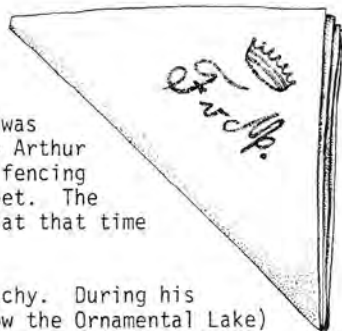


INTERIM STEERING COMMITTEE

Mr. Michael Black, Q.C.
Miss Jean Carter
Mr. Martin Carlson
Mrs. Beth Higgs
Mrs. Golda Isaac
Mrs. Jill Jones
Mr. Frank Mahlab
Mr. Andrew Moore
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Mrs. Susan Higgs - Membership Secretary

Dr. David Churchill - Ex Officio
Ms. Eve Almond - Liaison Officer, Royal Botanic Gardens

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BOTANIC GARDENS



The present site for the Melbourne Botanic Gardens was chosen in 1845. The first Superintendent, Mr. John Arthur took up his duties the following year and began by fencing off 2 hectares on the lower slopes of Anderson Street. The four *Ulmus procera*, English Elm, planted by Arthur at that time are still flourishing on the Tennyson Lawn.

Arthur died in 1849 and was succeeded by John Dallachy. During his term of office, a scenic walk around the Lagoon (now the Ornamental Lake) was constructed and the area around the present "A" gate laid out with beds and paths.

In 1853 a young German, Dr. F. J. H. Mueller (later Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller) took up the newly created post of Government Botanist for the infant Colony of Victoria. Mueller had trained as a chemist but he also held a PhD in botany and found the new continent, with its largely unknown flora, an exciting challenge. Within a month of arriving in Melbourne, Mueller left again on the first of his many extensive plant collecting trips. His enthusiasm and dedication were outstanding, he was to become the greatest systematic botanist Australia has ever known.

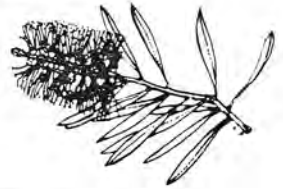
Mueller was appointed Director of the Botanic Gardens in 1857. In keeping with European styles, he planned a landscape crossed with formal narrow paths, lined with specimen trees. The emphasis was on scientific order with few open spaces. Mueller tried a large number of European and native plants for their economic and medicinal potential and thousands of seedlings were grown for distribution throughout the Colony.

However, by 1873, it was obvious that Mueller's vision of the Gardens as a scientific and educational institute did not meet the general public's demands. After a Government Inquiry, Mueller was replaced as Director, by W. R. Guilfoyle, although he remained as Government Botanist until his death in 1896.

It is largely due to Guilfoyle's efforts that Melbourne now has one of the finest English landscape gardens in the world. Over 30 years Guilfoyle completely re-organized the Gardens. He was influenced by a landscape design for the whole of the Domain proposed by Joseph Sayce. The formal paths and beds were replaced with wide curving walks, sweeping lawns and irregularly shaped beds - all designed to produce superb views. Many semi-mature trees were re-located, even during summer, an outstanding horticultural achievement. The Fern Gully was constructed around an old water course and became a favourite refuge from the summer heat. It was not until the Yarra River was straightened in the 1890's that Guilfoyle was able to realize his final design for the Lagoon as an Ornamental Lake - a central feature to focus the visitors' attention. Guilfoyle also introduced colour and texture into the landscape with the mass bedding of flowers, in the "gardenesque" style. Although many of the display beds of annuals have gone, the Gardens are



essentially as Guilfoyle left them on his retirement in 1909. Successive Directors have been primarily interested in consolidating the master design.



The major development in recent years has been the establishment of an Annexe at Cranbourne, south-east of Melbourne. The sandy heathland is ideally suited to the growing of native plants. The Annexe, purchased with assistance of trust funds formed with bequests from Miss M.M. Gibson, now covers more than 300 hectares. It is hoped that it will be open to the general public in the not too distant future.



Ellis Stones Rockery, one of the newer landscape features in the Gardens.

FRIENDS HEADQUARTERS

You will be delighted to know that the Friends will have a home. Rooms have been set aside in the Astronomer's Residence (the two storied red brick building near LaTrobe's Cottage). The house is largely unfurnished at the moment and we urgently need the loan of a large table and chairs for the Friends meeting room. Please ring Beth Higgs, 850 5908, if you can help.

Bridgestone Australia Pty.Ltd. have generously donated rubber underlay for the Astronomer's Residence. A small quantity of carpet has also been obtained for the meeting room and Bridgestone's gift will enable this carpet to be laid in the near future. We greatly appreciate their practical support.



The Royal Botanic Gardens in South Yarra, Melbourne, have the distinction of being the most beautiful of their kind in the Southern Hemisphere and perhaps the world.....

Edward Hyams & William McQuilty

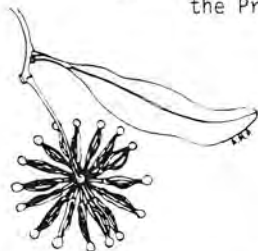
Great Botanical Gardens of the World, Nelson, London, 1969.

Did you know that the tallest tree in the Gardens is a *Taxodium mucronatum*, Mexican or Bald Cypress at the edge of the Fern Gully? The tree is 36.3 metres in height.

LATE WINTER AND EARLY SPRING IN THE GARDENS



The banks of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias, make late winter and early spring two of the most colourful of all seasons in the Gardens. The Australian Border also comes alive with colour. One of the most spectacular of all the native trees in flower at this time is the *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, Firewheel Tree, from the rainforests of Queensland and New South Wales. The species produces a mass of red wheel-like flower clusters, on the old wood behind the leaves. The best example is on the southern side of the Princess Lawn, adjacent to the path.



*Stenocarpus
sinuatus*

Other interesting and perhaps less well known plants include *Luculia grandifolia*, a highly fragrant shrub with large dark green leaves and pure white flowers. From the mountains of Bhutan, this species requires shelter from the hot sun. It can be seen at the southern end of the Tropical Glasshouse.

Not too far from there on the north east corner of the nursery yard, visitors will find the *Ilex cornuta*, Horned Holly, with its mass of orange-red berries.

Salvia leucantha, Mexican Sage, is an ideal shrub for open positions. Situated on the southern side of the triangle north of the Eastern Lawn, this plant has sprays of purple velvety flowers throughout winter and early spring.

The *Alberta magna* is also spectacular at this time. This evergreen tree from South Africa bears red tubular flowers in clusters towards the end of the growing shoots. After the flowers fall the red calyx persists for several months.

Opposite the *Alberta magna* is a *Luculia gratissima* Pink Swar. This quick growing species comes from the Himalayas and produces clusters of fragrant pink flowers on the ends of the previous seasons growth.



HELP!!!

The Herbarium needs helpers. Already some of our members are enjoying the experience of mounting botanic specimens under supervision. A roster is being drawn up. If you would like to join this group, please ring Helen Wisdom on 592 0308, from the beginning of August.

We would also greatly appreciate help in producing this newsletter. We are planning a quarterly production and so the next one will not be until early November. Please contact Beth Higgs, 850 5908, if you can assist.



GUIDED TOURS

Friends are advised that trained Voluntary Guides are available to take groups, large or small, around the Gardens. Should you wish to participate in a tour, or make a group booking, ring Connie Hoffman, 370 5713.



SPECIAL BENEFITS TO FRIENDS

The Committee is pleased to announce that Fryer's Nursery, 589 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, has agreed to offer special discounts to Friends on the production of their membership card.



OPEN DAY AT THE PLANT CRAFT COTTAGE

The Plant Craft Cottage near "H Gate", Alexander Avenue, is holding an Open Day on Tuesday, 12th October, 10am - 3.30pm. There will be a display of work, articles for sale and guided tours of the Gardens. For further information, please contact Fred Leishman, 232 7710.



FAMILY DAY

A "Gum-nut" Family Picnic in the Botanic Gardens is being planned for Sunday, 24th October. There will be activities for children aged 4 - 12 years, including mural paintings, collage work and a nature trail. Help would be appreciated from older children. The activities will be centred in the National Herbarium which will be open 11.0am - 3.0pm.



Please bring your own picnics.

We will be also conducting a membership drive in the Gardens on this day and need members to man specific points. Please contact Sue Higgs, 261 838, if you can spare some time or require further details of the day.



VISIT TO "MAWALLOK"

We have been invited to visit the historic garden of "Mawallok", designed by W.R. Guilfoyle, at Beaufort on Tuesday, 16th November. As arrangements need to be finalised before the next issue of the newsletter, it is suggested that you set this date aside now. We are planning to travel by coach, leaving the Herbarium at 9.39am. The cost will be \$12.00 and you will need to bring your own picnic lunch.

RSVP 6th November, Beth Higgs, 850 5908
Jill Jones, 240 1583

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

8th August Visit to Cranbourne Annexe
24th October Family Day in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.
9th November Public Lecture at the National Herbarium of Victoria.
Speaker - Mr. John Patrick
16th November Visit to "Mawallok", Beaufort.



SUBSCRIPTION REMINDERS

The Renewal Date for subscriptions is 1st March, 1983. This also applies to Friends who are Plant Craft Cottage members.

All membership enquiries should be addressed to:

Membership Secretary,
Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens,
Melbourne,
c/- National Herbarium of Victoria,
Birdwood Avenue,
SOUTH YARRA. VIC. 3141.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Annual Subscription Rates	-	Family Member	\$15.00
		Individual Member	\$10.00
		Pensioner, Student	\$5.00
		Country Member.	

Name

Address

.....

Postcode

Telephone

Enclosed is a cheque/postal notes for \$.....being the annual subscription as a member to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Signed

Date

Please make cheque/postal note payable to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.