



Spring 2004

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS *of the* ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

FEATURE

Weeds - Plants by another name

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Following the redesign of *Botanic News* last year, copies of the 2003 Winter, Spring and Summer editions were entered in the 2004 Museums Australia Publication Design Awards. I am delighted to advise Members that, as a result, the Friends received the Award in the category of Newsletter or Magazine for organisations with less than five employees. Our congratulations go to everyone involved in the redesign process, but in particular to Dianna Wells, who provided us with the new design, Meg Miller, our Editor, and Helen Fahey who has had to come to grips with the complex new computer software to enable *Botanic News* to be produced almost entirely 'in house'. A great deal of hard work has been done and I am so pleased that it has been well rewarded.

At the end of May, Colin Herbert stood down as convener of the Growing Friends. Our warmest thanks go to Colin for his commitment, hard work and enthusiasm in this role. He has been replaced by Pam Eames who, until she took over from Colin, had been the very hard-working convener of our Membership Committee. Attracting new members is always challenging, and Pam met that challenge head-on. Thank you to Lorna Downey who has agreed to take over the challenge.

In May the Friends lost a most distinguished Member, Dr Sophie Ducker, AM, who died at the fine age of 95. Sophie was a very generous and enthusiastic supporter of

the Friends and attended many of our activities. Many Members will remember the scholarly talks she gave over the years and the gingerbread houses she made for our Christmas raffle. She is greatly missed.

Don't forget that the Growing Friends' Spring Sale will be held on 9 and 10 October and the Botanical Illustrators' Exhibition, this year to be held in Domain House, will be on between 6 and 20 November. See pages 14 and 10 respectively for further information about these activities.

A further important date for your diary is the Friends' Christmas Cocktail Party on Wednesday 1 December.

Irwin Newman

Annual General Meeting

The Friends' Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 8 November 2004. If any member is interested in considering nomination for Council, please contact the Friends' Office on 9650 6398. Council members are elected on a rotating basis and this year Irwin Newman (President), David Plant (Vice President), Maurice Castro (Treasurer), John Hawker, Cathy Trinca and Anne Weber (Ordinary Members) are due to retire but may be eligible for re-election as office bearers or as Ordinary Members of Council.

Nominations are to be received by 8 October 2004.



Notes from Gate Lodge

It has been a cold Winter but thankfully at last we have had some rain. However, there's no chance of having had time to feel the cold at Gate Lodge as Winter is always our busiest time. Almost a third of our Members' subscriptions fall due in June so while many have been off sunning themselves in warmer climes or slithering

down to a fine art. It is an appropriate time to say thank you to our regulars – Joan Murphy and Rosemary McMeekin, who make a regular commitment to process the money from subscriptions and activities and Elizabeth Fincher who files the forms away – forming a valuable reference for the office staff.

*it is a time when friendships are forged
and there is a sense of achievement*

down the slopes in the High Country, our loyal volunteers have been beaver away in the Friends' office to process all the Membership renewals. Having said that, it is a time when friendships are forged and there is a sense of achievement in coping with the volume of work.

We hope that you are enjoying your new durable laminated membership cards. These have created added challenges but now we have it

Many other volunteers help with sending out renewals and other similar tasks, keeping staff costs to a minimum, while another group assists with the mailing out of the newsletter and the sorting of envelopes to meet the ever-changing demands of Australia Post.

Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped in the Friends' office – we enjoy your company immensely, and to anyone else who would like to assist, please ring the office on 9650 6398.

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

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Front Cover: Illustration by Marta Salamon of *Telopea speciosissima*, which will feature on the Friends' 2004 Christmas card

Photos: Meg Miller



The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden

The countdown has begun to the opening date for The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden, 23 October 2004, and progress on the site is moving at a rapid pace. The irrigation contractors will return shortly before the opening date to complete the final commissioning of the water features which have been operational during testing and are looking terrific. The Friends' funding of the irrigation system is greatly appreciated.

The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden will be opened by Deputy Premier John Thwaites, who is also Minister for Environment. After the official opening, a range of special opening day activities with child-focussed themes will be available for visitors. The activities will give a taste of the programs planned for this garden.

I look forward to seeing many of the Friends at The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden over the coming months. At this stage, it is envisaged that the garden will be open to the public from 10.00am-4.00pm, Wednesdays to Sundays, with pre-booked education and visitor programs able to use the Garden on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Savewater Awards and More

In May 2004, RBG Melbourne won the Savewater Award in

the Garden Design/Construction category for the Long Island development in the RBG Melbourne lake system. This uses 70-80 per cent less water than similar irrigated sites located elsewhere within RBG Melbourne. This is due to careful selection of indigenous plants suited to the local climate and rainfall, extensive use of mulching, use of an Automatic Irrigation System (which also operates elsewhere in RBGM), and regular water audits. This year's Savewater Award follows on from our success in the 2003 Savewater Awards, in which RBG Melbourne won the Sustainable Garden (Garden Design and Construction) category for the Water Conservation Garden.

Over the past year, it has been wonderful to observe the variety of birds that Long Island and the improved habitat of the RBG Melbourne lake system have attracted to the area. Many of these birds, including the Azure Kingfisher, Clamorous Reed-warblers, Red-rumped Parrots, Mudlarks and Little Grassbirds have rarely or never previously been recorded in RBG Melbourne. The arrival of such birds has created much interest amongst staff and I hope that Members of the Friends will look out for them when walking around the Gardens.

I am also very pleased to report that the irrigation water usage at RBG Melbourne in 2003-04 was the lowest on record, and was 51% less than in 1994-95, the first year that usage was recorded. The ongoing support of the Friends

to expand our Automatic Irrigation System through their *Water Works Water Wise* funding program and continue the water savings is greatly appreciated.

Australian Garden Progress

The amount of work that has taken place at the Australian Garden since the start of the year is really amazing, and it is difficult to believe that the major earthworks began only one year ago.

Recent progress includes finalisation of the design documentation for the Visitor Centre, which was designed by Kerstin Thompson Architects. Construction will commence shortly. The 'behind the scenes' development of the design concept for the Ephemeral Lake Sculpture began recently. An eye-catching feature located on the edge of the Central Sand Garden, it will contextually join the Dry River Bed and the Rockpool Waterway.

Planting of the Eucalypt Walk began at the end of May 2004, aided by Conservation Volunteers Australia through their 'Better Earth' program. The 'Green Reserve' program is also involved, which brings the enthusiastic assistance of volunteers who are currently unable to find paid employment and who wish to assist with conservation work. In addition to staff members, there have been 10 volunteers regularly and busily planting most days since it began. This work is almost finished, and work has begun on the Dry River Bed and Northern Sand Garden.

Friends who are interested in helping to plant the Australian Garden can contact Conservation Volunteers Australia on (03) 9686 5554 or via their website at <http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au>.

World Environment Day

On 4 June 2004, the RBG celebrated World Environment Day. A variety of activities was organised for staff, including planting on Princes Lawn, aquatic planting, walks, and conservation and wildlife discussion forums. This culminated in a huge morning tea which also served as a fundraiser. Proceeds were donated to the Victorian National Parks Association. Staff were also encouraged to leave their cars at home and to find other means of transport to work. The day was a great success and staff plan to celebrate future environmental days.

Bequest Program

In the Autumn 2004 edition of *Botanic News*, I welcomed the recently appointed Bequests Officer, Judy Dunster. Judy has written a Bequest Strategy which is now being implemented. Once new brochures and promotional material have been published, Judy will begin work on other aspects of the Strategy, including establishing pledge and memorial programs. Friends interested in making a bequest to the Gardens or finding out more about these programs are welcome to contact Judy on 9252 2493.

Philip Moors, Director

Katy Sommerville is the Collections Manager for the National Herbarium of Victoria. There are about 1.2 million dried specimens in her care. Katy's aims are to protect, enhance and promote the Collections and maintain them as a useful scientific resource.

Katy grew up in the hills behind Melbourne where her grandparents ran a wholesale plant nursery. During her early years she took her surroundings for granted. She loved the forest and the splendid gardens, assuming such riches surrounded everybody. It was a rude shock for her to travel to the suburbs for secondary schooling and find a rather different environment

who, among other things, mounts specimens and enters specimen information into a large database. She sees the provision of clear guidelines and manageable targets as an important part of her work.

One fascinating but very tedious part of the work performed by Collections staff is the regular rotation of the whole collection through a freezing process of -23°C for seven days to kill any insect populations. These insects sometimes arrive in packing material and, of course, silverfish are a common scourge whose ravages we can all appreciate. When you consider that this process takes about three years to complete, then

The management of the Collections is a changing role

containing large areas of concrete and fewer trees. Her enthusiasm for nature was not dampened, however, and Katy graduated from school to Monash University where she studied Botany. It was a University lecturer who suggested she apply for a Summer position with the Jim Willis Studentship Program at the Herbarium. This placement was so successful that Katy continued work at the Herbarium, taking a brief break while she obtained her honours degree.

In a very few years Katy has co-ordinated the Fungimap project, worked as a Database Officer on the Australia's Virtual Herbarium Project, moved on to the Collections Co-ordinator role and then to her present position. Katy oversees a team of employees

you have some idea of the size of a collection of 1.2 million specimens and the magnitude of the task.

The management of the Collections is a changing role, due in part to the changing environment in which the Herbarium operates. Increased reporting requirements and changes to the regulations governing the Collections occupy much of Katy's time.

The National Herbarium of Victoria is part of a network of Herbaria around the world. Our Herbarium exchanges and loans specimens with these overseas herbaria for use in research by botanists.

Katy says "The international and national laws restricting the transfer of biological materials are becoming both more common and more rigorous. These laws aim to



Photo: Meg Miller

prevent the spread of pests and diseases and protect rare and threatened species through restrictions on their trade. Sometimes this means that only label data or specimen images are available to botanists around the world in place of the specimens themselves."

A restriction in the Herbarium's capacity to loan specimens can have a dramatic effect on the ability of our botanists to conduct their research. As a consequence, Katy spends a lot of time working with Quarantine authorities and overseas Herbaria to make sure that specimens loaned to and from our Herbarium can enter and exit Australia without posing a risk to our native flora and fauna. This co-operation is of paramount importance if we are to look after our world.

Always an active sports-person, Katy met her husband while both were playing soccer, which Katy then played at State level. Currently her district team is fourth on the ladder, which she finds very exciting.

Meg Miller

Weeds – Plants By Another Name

With the greater understanding we are acquiring for our environment, it is now sensible to think about the plants we are growing in our gardens and our management of them. Agapanthus look very bright and beautiful in Summer and are tough enough to survive the drought conditions we have been experiencing. Not only do the flower heads look attractive, but the seed heads with green and drying ovaries make this plant one of the more popular in our gardens. They last a long time, and give us our money's worth at a time when gardening is a very hot and uncomfortable pastime.

Unfortunately, learning to judge when the dried seed cases will open is a skill only few of us develop, with the result that seeds are blown over fences into neighbouring gardens, the nature strip and also our bushland reserves. Because the plants are so robust, they give our native species a huge survival challenge. There are also people who dump the unwanted plant material in the bush, to say nothing of inadvertent spreading of exotic seeds on clothes, shoes, and the undersides of cars and trucks. Some other common plants taking over our bushland include Morning Glory, Arum Lilies and Lantana.

Garden fashions change, and plants once discarded for cultivation suddenly reappear in nurseries and private gardens. Names change or drop out of use for a long period. While most people know of Paterson's Curse,

how many know the plant is also called Salvation Jane? Under this name it was seen recently at a nursery in Central Victoria. While I was growing up, the gardeners in my family used to laugh about the English keeping Oxalis in glasshouses, while we couldn't get rid of the

populations through seedlings or runners, then try to dispose of unwanted material sensibly.

Botanical gardens must set a good example in the way they deal with actual and potential environmental weeds. Dr Roger Spencer, Senior Horticultural Botanist for the Royal Botanic

developed in conjunction with other botanical gardens, botanists and weed experts."

If you have access to the internet, there are some very useful sites offering advice and lists of weeds. The lists are never going to provide the last word on 'weediness' because, as already mentioned, soil conditions vary not only in areas all over Victoria or even Australia, and plants are also affected by prevailing climatic conditions.

Try these websites and be prepared for some surprises: www.ergonica.com; www.nps.gov/plants/alien; www.bln.gov.au/weeds; www.weeds.org.au; [www.anbg.gov.au/weeds/weeds/html](http://www.anbg.gov.au/weeds/weeds.html); www.woerner.com/pages/grass/weed.htm; www.weedscience.com; www.dpi.vic.gov.au; www.hear.org Follow the prompts especially for the last site which contains a huge, worldwide list of potential weeds. Don't ignore these. Remember, many parts of the world have climatic conditions similar to ours.

These are some of about 560,020 items showing when 'weeds' was typed into the search engine. It was interesting to see references to definitions of weeds as well as the problems other countries are facing – it's not just Australia trying to deal with this. Let's hope that all gardeners learn to manage their garden discards wisely, or remove some offenders from their gardens.

Meg Miller

Illustration by Helen Burrows



stuff. I suspect the Oxalis might have been a different species from those causing so much trouble in Australia, but 'weediness' is in the point of view and the circumstance in which the plant is grown.

Plants that have been thriving in the drought may not survive in times of heavy rain. Thus growth conditions have a bearing on the weed potential of several varieties. The thoughtful garden lover needs to be aware and watchful for sudden increases in plant

Gardens, Melbourne says, "We are currently developing a Weed Strategic Plan. This will evolve into an overall policy and program in relation to environmental weeds. The most difficult and controversial aspect of this is deciding which plants we can grow and which must be excluded. So, as part of the plan we will be formulating a Weed Risk Assessment (a clear method for deciding which plants are to be rejected at the RBG). We anticipate that this will be

ACTIVITIES



Houses and Gardens of the English West Country

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by Caroline Davies

Thursday 2 September
at 6.30 for 7pm

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$20 Friends \$15

RSVP by Monday 30 August
on enclosed booking form

Join us for a glass of wine and
savouries before the talk.

Caroline's talk will focus on the rural counties of Devon, Somerset and Cornwall, an area filled with history and rich in houses and gardens where some families have lived continuously for centuries.

Many of these are private estates which do not open to the general public and belong to fascinating and eccentric individuals, as well as talented gardeners.

To give balance, Caroline

will discuss smaller gardens which have much to offer in the way of diverse plant material, design and individuality.

Also included are some of her favourite well-known gardens, including Trebah in Cornwall, East Lambrook Manor, created by the legendary Margery Fish, and Marwood Hill, the late Dr Jimmy Smart's masterpiece in North Devon.



Spring Fit Friends Ramble

WILDFLOWER WALK AND PICNIC

at the RBG Cranbourne

Thursday 16 September
at 10.00am sharp

Cost: \$8 Friends \$5

RSVP by Wed 8 September
on enclosed booking form.

This is a long walk. Please wear comfortable walking shoes and bring hats, drinks and morning snacks.

Join us on this self-drive ramble to see the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens at the peak of their wildflower time, and catch up with our Cranbourne Friends. We plan to meet first at the Visitor Pavilion near the Stringybark Picnic Ground.

The Cranbourne Friends will guide us on a walk encompassing Spring wildflower highlights and the construction of the new Australian Garden.

On our return to the picnic ground the Cranbourne Friends

will treat us to a barbecue lunch (BYO drinks). After lunch you may return home or take further walks in the Gardens if you wish.

Take the Monash Freeway/South Gippsland Highway through Cranbourne to the Gardens (Melway Map 133). Take the Ballarto Road exit, drive to the entrance to the Cranbourne Gardens, then to the Stringybark Picnic Area. Park in the car park adjacent to the entrance.



Beyond Oranges And Yellows: New Clivias

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by Helen Marriott

Wednesday 22 September
at 6.30 for 7.00pm

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$17 Friends \$12

RSVP by Friday 17 September
on enclosed booking form

Join us for a glass of wine and
savouries prior to the talk

Commonly known as tough, shade-loving and drought-tolerant plants, recent developments in clivia breeding now bring us a huge variety in flower and leaf shape, colour and form, ranging from light pink and peach through to red.

Interbreeding with other species with pendulous flowers which have been rarely available, makes it possible to have clivia flowers or buds for

most months of the year.

This talk will introduce and illustrate such developments and will also provide guidance on cultivation methods for growing clivias in the garden or in pots, for which they are eminently suited.

Laurens Rijke, a breeder of specialist clivias, will provide plants for display.

ACTIVITIES



Spring Quarterly Insiders' Walk

IAN POTTER FOUNDATION CHILDREN'S GARDEN

Thursday 30 September
and Tuesday 5 October
at 10.00am sharp

Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)

Cost: \$10.00 MEMBERS ONLY.

RSVP by Monday 27 September on
enclosed booking form.

Please indicate on the booking form
which day you would prefer to attend.

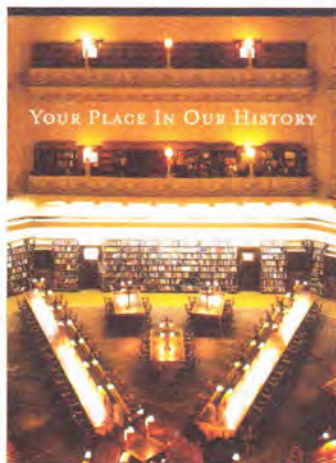
Join Andrew Laidlaw, the
RBG's Landscape Planner and
Designer of the Ian Potter
Foundation Children's Garden,
for this exciting preview of the
RBG's soon-to-be-opened latest
project. We have all watched
with interest as this amazing
garden has evolved over more
than three years.

The Garden will offer an
interactive, hands-on
experience for children of all
ages and abilities. It will

celebrate the imagination and
curiosity of children and foster
the creative nature of play.

Andrew has offered the
Friends a chance to see the
almost completed garden
shortly before it is opened to
the public.

Join us for morning tea and
brief information session first at
Gate Lodge, followed by the
tours.



Gardenesque At The State Library

TOUR

Wednesday 13 October
at 10.00am sharp.

Meet in the foyer inside the front
doors at the State Library of Victoria,
Swanston Street, Melbourne

Cost: \$15 Friends \$10

RSVP: Friday 8 October
on enclosed booking form

This year marks the sesqui-
centenary of our State Library
of Victoria.

This is a wonderful time to
view the restored Domed
Reading Room; surely one of
the most treasured and iconic
spaces in the city of Melbourne.
We shall be able to admire and
enjoy some of the selected areas
of this vast building.

Rare botanical books will be
made available for our viewing.
Our visit is timed, during this
special year of significance in

the library's history, to enable
our viewing of the exhibition of
Gardenesque.

This major exhibition in the
Keith Murdoch Gallery is
drawn from the Library's rich
and diverse garden history
collections, showing the history
of gardening in Victoria.

The exhibition covers a
broad range of garden related
topics from design and fencing
to seeds and lawn mowers, and
is a must for anyone interested
in gardening.



The Art of Topiary And Espalier

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by Lloyd Rankin

Tuesday 19 October
at 10.30 for 11.00am

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$20 Friends \$15

RSVP by Friday 15 October on
enclosed booking form

Join us for morning tea before the talk.

For 15 years Rankins Nursery
has been growing a unique
range of roses and quality
plants, supplying Australia's
leading garden centres and
landscapers. Lloyd Rankin
ensures that the traditional
methods of growing, training
and pruning are used for the
benefit of these plants, and has
agreed to share his expertise in
the art of topiary and espalier.

The enthusiasm for clipped

evergreens in every conceivable
shape has transformed topiary
from formal, almost architec-
tural, features into unrestrained
garden sculpture.

The elegant art of espalier -
training fruit or flowering
shrubs into decorative, highly
productive designs on walls or
along wires - has a long
pedigree. We thank Lloyd for
allowing us to extend our
interest in this subject.

ACTIVITIES



Birds of the RBG Melbourne

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by David Plant

Thursday 28 October
at 6.30pm for 7.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost \$15 Friends \$10
RSVP by Monday 25 October on
enclosed booking form

Join us for a glass of wine and
savories before the talk

The Royal Botanic Gardens have always been regarded as an oasis within the city, and one whose actual boundaries have been unaltered since foundation. However, over time, many changes have occurred and continue to occur, which have led to variations in the use of the land, the plantings and therefore the habitats.

David Plant, Vice President of the Friends and active member of Birds Australia, is a keen bird

observer and co-writes the Botanic Birds articles in our quarterly newsletter. He has been part of an ongoing survey of the birds to be found within the Gardens and will talk about the birds which have been found, and how some of the changes to the Gardens have had a remarkable effect upon the numbers and variety of species which have been seen here since the survey commenced in 1997.



The Art of Botanical Illustration 2004

GUIDED TOUR

Morning tea and a special tour with
Louise Coronel

Monday 8 November, 10.00am sharp
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$10 Members Only
RSVP: Friday 5 November on
enclosed booking form. Payment
must accompany booking as this
is a limited number event.

Louise Coronel, Honorary Life Member of the Friends and founder of the Botanical Illustrators Group, will take a select number of the Friends for a fascinating tour of the artwork on display in *The Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition 2004.

We will meet first at Gate Lodge for morning tea and a brief introduction to the history of the six previous biennial exhibitions that Louise originally

masterminded and organised for the Friends.

She will then show us around the latest exhibition, housed for the first time in the Royal Botanic Gardens' splendid exhibition space in Domain House. This will be a timely opportunity to discover some of the intricacies of design and technique used in botanical illustration, and the demanding selection criteria to be met before exhibiting.



A Historical Overview of Botanical Art

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by Marta Salamon

Friday 12 November
at 10.30 for 11.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$17 Friends \$12
RSVP: by Monday 8 November
on enclosed booking form

Join us for morning tea at 10.30am
before the talk

Botanical art as we are familiar with it began to flourish in the 16th Century. Plants had been depicted for medicinal books as early as the First Century A.D. This became widespread in the 16th Century, but an accurate rendition of plants was required for horticultural books and catalogues. In the 18th Century the Linnaean system of plant classification and an interest in plants beyond Europe created wide enthusiasm for botanical art/illustrations. Australia was an exciting source for new plant

species and provided inspiration for many botanical artists, notably Ferdinand Bauer. In Australia, a number of female botanical artists since Ellis Rowan have made a significant contribution.

Marta Salamon's background is in Fine Arts. After attending *The Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition in 1992, she attended classes with Jenny Phillips, and now exhibits in *The Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibitions as well as other galleries.

ACTIVITIES



Changing Climate, Changing Gardens

ILLUSTRATED TALK

by John Patrick

Landscape designer and raconteur

Wednesday 17 November,
at 6.30 for 7.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: \$20 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 12 November
on enclosed booking form

Join us for a glass of wine and
savouries before the talk.

With changing climates and an increasing population, the community is facing the inevitability of having to be more careful with its use of water. Much of this focus will continue to fall on home gardeners. 25 per cent of domestic water consumption is external to the home, most of it on the garden.

We are not alone in facing this situation. In southern France the creation of holiday homes with their inevitable

swimming pools has completely altered the balance between the local population and water supplies.

In this lecture, John Patrick will review some of the sites he visited during his Churchill Fellowship to review water conservation practices. He will discuss technologies available to make gardens more drought-proof and discuss some of the wonderful plants that will suit our drier gardens yet continue to give us pleasure and beauty.



Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Muranna Herbs and The Garden Vineyard

BUS TRIP

Thursday 18 November
Meet at Kooyong Centre for the Blind
Carpark, Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong
Leaving 9.00am. sharp, and
returning by 5.30pm
Cost \$60.00 includes entry fees,
lunch and wine tasting
RSVP by Thursday 11 November
on enclosed booking form

Our Spring bus trip will take us to visit the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery to see drawings from Lloyd Rees's European Sketchbooks and an exhibition by Emma Minnie Boyd.

From the Gallery we will go to Muranna. The skilful and subtle design of this private garden – often referred to as a garden of the spirit – never fails to inspire visitors with its five acres of distinctly different 'rooms' flowing freely from one to the next. The kitchen

garden has 180 varieties of herbs, and it is here we will have a delicious boxed lunch.

We'll then move on to The Garden Vineyard where Di Johnson has worked magic, making a two-acre garden which includes perennial borders, a walled garden and sections of drought-tolerant and native plants within a vineyard setting.

We will taste the Johnsons' wine – Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris – before returning to Kooyong by 5.30pm.



Christmas Decorations

A MORNING WORKSHOP

by Shauna Lovisetto

Thursday 2 December
at 10am sharp
Whirling Room Studio,
Great Melbourne Telescope Building
Morning tea is included
and will be served at 10.00am
before the workshop starts.
MEMBERS ONLY. Numbers are limited
so book early to avoid disappointment.
Cost: \$45 (incl materials and GST)
RSVP by Friday 12 November
on enclosed booking form.
Payment must accompany booking.

Shauna Lovisetto is a florist who likes to play with the infinite palate of colour, texture and tone of flowers.

Her background in costume design and manufacture includes productions in opera, ballet, theatre and film on several continents. After settling in Melbourne a few years ago, her design work led her to open a florist business, resulting in award-winning designs at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Shows. She creates

arrangements for many, including corporate clients, from her Docklands studio.

Shauna says: "Many are inspired at Christmas time to create something personal for their home. Our workshop will explore some traditional decorations and also discover how texture and colour can completely change the mood of our creation. So whether you have a beautiful Victorian home or a sleek modern one, we will create something to complement your Christmas."

ILLUSTRATORS

Botanical Illustrators Quarterly Meeting

ATTENTION ALL ARTISTS

Tuesday 30 November at 10.00am
Whirling Room Studio
Cost \$2.50 Pay on the day
RSVP Friends' office, 9650 6398

This is a post-Exhibition meeting. Come and celebrate the conclusion of our seventh *Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition. We want to hear the applause and the criticisms, and discuss future programs and 2005 exhibitions.

We will conclude with an end-of-year party luncheon – please bring a plate.

Whirlybirds

Sharing ideas, information, inspiration and achievement, botanical artist Friends meet and work together each Tuesday in the Whirling Room Studio under the name of the 'Whirlybirds'.

If you require further information on the group, please telephone Miriam Blight on 9583 6098.

Classes

TERM 4 CLASSES

will commence in the week beginning 11 October 2004. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays (two sessions), Fridays and Saturdays. Prices range from \$195 per 8-week term.

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



The Illustrated Garden

Discovering Shirley Sherwood's book, *Contemporary Botanical Artists*, in 1977 first inspired Beverley Allen to combine her ability to draw and paint with her love of plants. Her serious pursuit of botanical art was further ignited by the Ferdinand Bauer Exhibition, *An Exquisite Eye*, and the Sherwood Exhibition in 1998. A visit to *The Art of Botanical Illustration* later in 1998 was the first of many trips to Melbourne to study, paint and view exhibitions.

Beverley found an enthusiastic teacher in Jenny Phillips, with whom she has studied in Sydney and Melbourne. Jenny's encouragement and flair for sharing her knowledge have been the most significant influences on Beverley's work.

She has exhibited in *Botanica: The Art of the Plant* for the Friends of the RBG Sydney each year since 1999, regularly with the American Society of Botanical Artists and the Botanical Art Society of Australia, and has been invited to exhibit at the 11th

International Exhibition of Botanical Art at the Hunt Institute in USA this year. Beverley's paintings have been shown in *The Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibitions in 2000 and 2002, and she was delighted that her painting of the Blood Lily, *Haemanthus coccineus*, was chosen for *The Illustrated Garden*, a project she believes should be taken up by each Botanic Garden.

Fascinated by this lily in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Beverley sought out a plant and has enjoyed its rather stately cycle outside her studio. The first waxy red tips of the flowering appear in the centre of the large bulb and develop into an intense 'brush' of flowers on the sturdy single spotted stalk. As the flowers mature, the tips of the two leaves appear at the base of the flower stalk. These develop into gracefully curved and erect leathery straps which lie along the ground until decay.

Beverley enjoys the rigour of accurate botanical representation and the challenge of capturing the natural posture and 'personality' of a plant through both the composition and the play of light and shade within the colours. She is drawn to painting unusual and often-forgotten plants.

"I love the simple truthfulness of botanical painting. To see the drying, crumpled petals of a flower contrast with the swelling of the ripening seed pod, to watch buds opening and to be able to paint that wonderful cycle of life is a sheer delight," she said.

Rita Parkinson

The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition 2004

6 - 21 November
Domain House Gallery
Dallas Brooks Drive, South Yarra

Opening Reception: 6.00pm - 8.00pm, Friday 5 November. Keen art lovers and collectors may purchase a \$20 ticket, available from the Friends' office, for the opportunity to preview the Exhibition and purchase works prior to the public opening on Saturday, 6 November.

For those Members eagerly anticipating the seventh Biennial Exhibition, please note the new venue which is the RBG's newly-acquired gallery space. Again, the catalogue will be available in print and CD form at the Exhibition, and may be viewed on the Friends' website: www.rbg.vic.gov.au/friends after 6 November.

Participating artists: To obtain entry forms, send a stamped self-addressed DL envelope to the Friends' office. Completed forms must be returned by Friday 10 September.



The Oak Project

From a small acorn a giant tree can grow.

Last year a group of the Friends' Botanical Illustrators started work on a project to document the oak trees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. The aim was to paint detailed studies of a one-year cycle of the plants' growth.

On 27 April the participating artists met in the Whirling

measurements, and usually with much the same colouration, the aspect that really came through was the individuality of style and approach. In other words they were all strikingly different.

We all agreed that we would like to continue this work for another year, as several artists wanted to join us and add to the project. There are about 42 oak trees in the Botanic Gardens.

... the aspect that really came through was the individuality of style and approach.

Room to take stock of our progress. We had twelve virtually-completed paintings, and another three in progress. It was stunning to see them all together for the first time. Although we were all painting the same genus and documenting the annual cycle, all painting to the same

So there is some way to go, if we are to document them all.

We are making plans to exhibit these paintings, probably next year. If there are other illustrators who would like to take part, please come along to the Whirling Room on a Tuesday or phone 03 9821 5883.

Rita Parkinson



Botanical Illustrators participating in The Oak Project inspect the progress of their work in the Whirling Room Studio.

Photo: Heather Marshall

The nature of the *Botanic News* production cycle is such that as I sit here, pen poised above the notebook (well, fingers poised above the keyboard might be more accurate) ready to describe some of the many wondrous offerings of Spring in the Gardens, I'm afraid that my thoughts are totally, irreconcilably... wintery.

You see, your formidable editorial staff of the *Botanic News* office brook no nonsense when it comes to meeting a deadline for the Spring edition. Not for them the paltry excuses which are my bread-and-butter when I am seeking to gain a little flexibility in the deadline. They take a firm hand with your correspondent, and rightfully so.

I, on the other hand, like to learn from the full-forwards on the football field. I note that after they have taken a mark right on the fifty-metre arc, they try to crib a few steps to get a bit closer to goal, hoping that the umpire isn't paying attention. Similarly, I have tried various ruses to get a bit closer to Spring before having to concoct this text, in the hope that the creative juices will be stimulated by the approaching blossom-fest.

Spring ... it must be out there somewhere. Perhaps it is making its way slowly down from the sub-tropics, with a new tan. I must say that some of the early harbingers of Spring in Melbourne, such as the reliable cherries (*Prunus* spp.), which get underway with their flowering from early July, have already donned their festive attire. I like to keep an

eye on Mrs Elvins. Well, not actually her, but her impressive cultivar (*Prunus* 'Elvins'). From a distance the branches take on an appearance of being graceful pale pink fingers – the blossom being borne closely along the branches. There is an old black-and-white photograph of Mrs Elvins (the person, not the tree) in the Nursery Office in the Gardens. The photo shows her standing in front of *Prunus* 'Elvins' in sensible clothes and stout boots, and to be honest she looks a bit fearsome. Woe betide anyone who mistreats *Prunus* 'Elvins'!



The procession of *Michelia*s and *Magnolia*s starts to lift the spirits from late July – and before we know it we are in full swing with what police would describe as a 'spring-like situation' on our hands. The single most significant thing which strikes me about the changing seasons, though, is the change of light in the landscape, and how this heightens the effect of trees in blossom and other seasonal offerings. Together with the change of light intensity and angle, comes the addition of small splashes of colour here and there, and what an impact they have.

Speaking of splashes of colour, I have just returned from viewing the Impressionist works at the National Gallery of Victoria (*The Impressionists – Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay*), where I was struck by the beauty of many works, and particularly the depiction of trees in blossom in the landscape. For example, take Australian artist John Russell's two works *Le Jardin*,

Longpre-les-Corps-Saints (The garden, Longpre-les-Corps-Saints) (1886), and *Amandiers en fleurs*

(Almond trees in blossom) (1887). Note also Camille Pissarro's *Printemps. Pruniers en fleurs/Potager; arbres en fleurs, printemps, Pontoise* (Spring. Flowering plum trees/ kitchen garden and flowering trees, Spring, Pontoise) (1877). Despite Pissarro trying to keep us guessing about the subject matter of his work, the features which bring these paintings to life are the fruit trees in blossom, and it is in the interpretation of light on the trees themselves that the viewer's attention is captured. It's a shame 'Mrs Elvins' hadn't stepped into the spotlight in the nineteenth century. I imagine it

would have been right up Monsieur Pissarro's alley.

It comes as no surprise to learn that the work of the Impressionists was strongly influenced by several significant practical factors – the Industrial Revolution had delivered to the artists a new range of paint pigments: cobalt blue, ultramarine and caerulean, followed by

...the play of light on single trees or groups of plants...is one of the principal underlying qualities of this garden.

crimson, lemon yellow, Naples yellow, Veronese green, mauve and cadmium pigments. These vivid hues had not been available to earlier artists.

Their actual tools changed also – the production of brushes with metal ferrules allowed the brush ends to be flattened, and thus the paint application changed. The lead paint tube made it easy for the pigments to be transported to locations in the landscape, and the artist was then able to capture the various effects of light throughout the days and seasons. Previously landscape works had generally been

based on initial sketches in the field, with the main work being completed back in the studio, by candle light.

There is no need to paraphrase here all that has been written by folk-far-more-qualified-than-me on the subject of the Impressionists and their techniques and use of light in the painting. Suffice to say, it struck a chord.

The chord is the very same one struck when wandering in the Gardens and noting the play of light on single trees or groups of plants. It is one of the principal underlying qualities of this garden. The placement and prominence of particular trees or other plants, the understanding and exploitation of light in planting design, the subtle way in which the eye of the viewer is led from one feature to another, the restrained use of a splash of colour, and the fluidity and balance of mass and void in the Gardens is artful, and stimulates the visual senses.

The fact that the Gardens has maintained this quality for so many decades of continuing development is, I believe, a testament to the skills and abilities of the many staff who have played a role in the choreography of the garden – designers, plantspeople, arborists, gardeners – all, perhaps, artists in a sense.

Now, is Spring any closer yet?

Richard Barley

From the Growing Friends, Cranbourne

The Growing Friends group of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne are currently propagating substantial numbers of Australian native plants for several different projects. These include plants for the buffer areas of the new Australian Garden (currently under construction), plants for sale at Open Garden Scheme gardens, and for use by the Gardens Education staff. If any Melbourne members would like to sample these activities, they would be very welcome to join in.

The Cranbourne Growing Friends' main meeting is on the third Wednesday of each month, commencing at about 10.00am, and usually finishing at about 2.30pm. Lunch is BYO. They are a very friendly group who would make any visitors from the Melbourne Friends most welcome.

2004 CHRISTMAS CARD

This elegant card features a full colour detail from a beautiful illustration by Marta Salamon of the *Telopea speciosissima*. The original watercolour painting (see front cover) featured in *The Art of Botanical Illustration* Exhibition 2002, and is shown in full on the back of the card with some information about the plant.

The card is the third in our series using illustrations from the Friends' *Illustrated Garden* Collection. See enclosed flyer for more information.

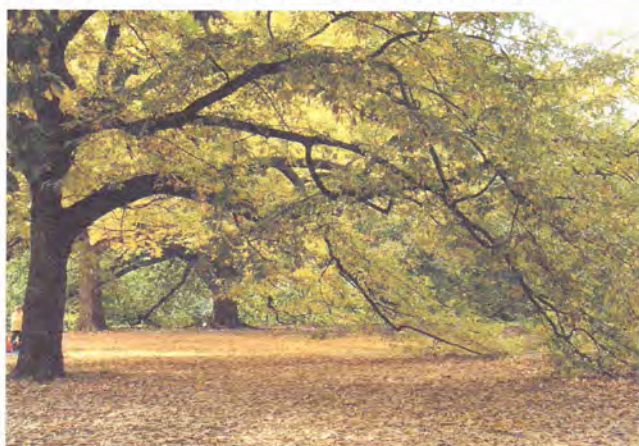


Photo: Jennifer Marshall

Botanic Birds

I think it was in the late 1980s that David Albrecht (former Identifications Botanist at the Herbarium) told me that he had recently heard the tinkling calls of Bell Miners coming from planted eucalypts just outside the RBG boundary on the corner of Anderson Street and Domain Road. As far as I know there were no Bell Miners present in the RBG before this time. So this small group seems to represent the starting point for the thriving Bell Miner population currently in the gardens.

By the second half of the 1990s the Anderson Street colony had become well-established about as far north as the Tea Rooms. Large remnant River Red Gums in this general area became well-frequented by the birds presumably because of their liking for psyllids and other insects that occur abundantly on eucalypts.

Around 2000 the Long Island project saw the ivy-clad billabong and lake edges towards the north-west corner of the RBG cleared and replanted with local plants of the middle Yarra Valley. By mid-2003 Bell Miners had spread to this site, no doubt attracted by the vigorous young River Red Gums that had been planted. It seems that the thinner, softer new leaves of younger eucalypts are especially attractive to various leaf-eating insects and that insect-eating birds follow accordingly.

This period of Bell Miner expansion at the RBG has some potential future consequences

that we need to monitor. Because they live in colonies and defend their territory aggressively, they are capable (at least in some recorded

Because they live in colonies and defend their territory aggressively, they are capable...of excluding other birds from the areas they frequent.

instances) of excluding other birds from the areas they frequent. I remember seeing the Long Island Bell Miners trying to chase off the visiting Azure Kingfisher last year and also ganging-up on a Red-rumped Parrot. At this stage I am not aware of this behaviour adversely affecting the numbers of other birds in the RBG, but it should be watched.

This aggressive territorial behaviour has the potential for

Bell Miners to be involved in the decline of tree health, especially in eucalypts. Studies in other parts of Victoria have concluded that Bell Miner

colonies effectively 'farm' psyllid insects. They do this partly by excluding other insect-eating birds such as pardalotes and thornbills that would otherwise keep psyllid populations in check. They are also supposed to feed on the psyllids in such a way that they remove only the white sugary covering (lerp) that the psyllid secretes to live under, thereby leaving the insect to make another lerp and so on.

The build up of psyllid insects, lerps and associated sooty moulds in such cases can lead to severe tree decline. Studies have shown that if a Bell Miner colony moves away from a site with unhealthy eucalypts, tree health soon returns when other insect eating birds reclaim the site. It is worth noting that in at least some of the areas where Bell Miner-related tree decline has been observed, there have also been other contributing factors such as increased runoff and nutrient input due to fertilisers and pesticides.

As far as I know, there has been no Bell Miner-related tree decline observed in the RBG so far. However, it would be wise to observe the situation closely in case negative impacts do occur in future.

John Reid, Botanical Information Officer

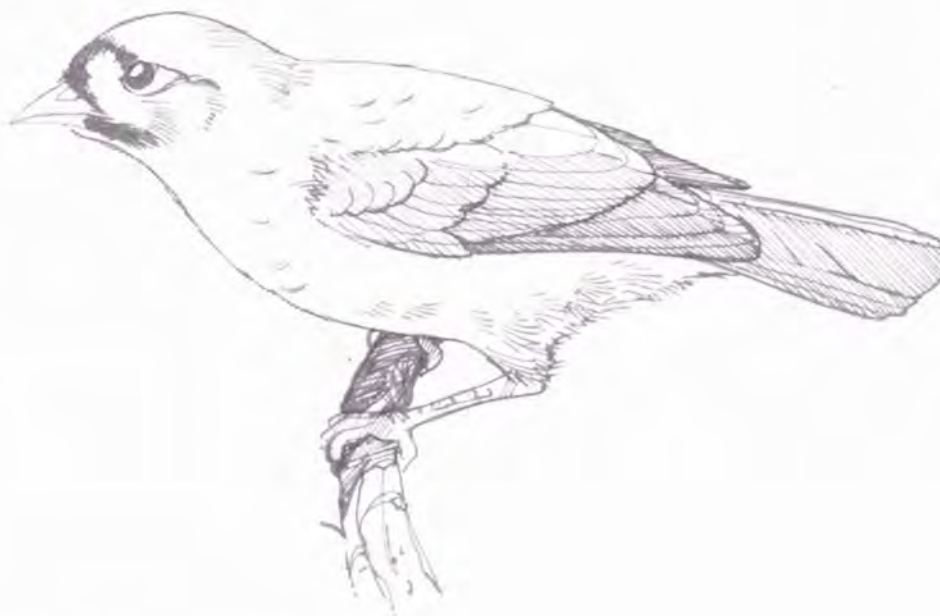


Illustration of Bell Miner by Andrew Plant

The Growing Friends Spring Sale is scheduled for the weekend of 9-10 October. Normal Friday morning sales of plants to Friends only will be suspended from 1-15 October inclusive to allow organisation for the Sale, subsequent return of unsold plants and post-sale inventory.

Drought-tolerant plants at the sale include species of *Echeveria*, *Grevillea*, *Correa*, *Kalanchoe*, *Iris* and *Sedum*. Dry shade plants include *Clivia*, *Helleborus* and *Arthropodium*. A marvellous range of unusual bulbs will be available; unusual perennials including *Sarracenia*; an interesting variety of trees for both sun and shade; hard-to-find *Rhododendron vireya* species and cultivars, a meticulously-selected range of Australian natives and a variety of hanging baskets. The succulent collection is inspirational. There's too much to mention here; the *Terrific Temptations* flyer enclosed in this edition outlines a few of the interesting plants for sale. The complete Growing Friends Catalogue will be available on the first day of the Sale. We focus on reasonable prices, personalised service and advice from experienced gardeners, and hope you will visit us.

Weed potential considerations continue to be a primary concern of the Nursery and Herbarium. Stock is constantly being assessed against global, national and state guidelines. While many exotic plants are progressively under review, particularly in relation to our climatic zone, the Growing Friends regularly

consult with Herbarium staff and adhere to their recommendations.

Plant Breeders' Rights has become an additional issue. After a lengthy appraisal of stock by a *very* dedicated Member, it was a relief to find that currently the Nursery does not hold any registered plants. Compliance remains a continuing objective.

We are extremely fortunate that our *Iris* collection is largely derived from the iris bed in the Western Lawn. This bed consists of exclusively Australian cultivars. A sample of the wide range of interesting Tall Bearded cultivars that will be available at this sale are 'Como Surprise', 'Sneak Preview', *Velvet Vista*, and 'Wedding Vow'. We also have a number of unnamed cultivars coloured pale lemon, dark purple, white and blue and old gold. *Iris* are a favourite at the Chelsea Flower Show and are always popular at our Sales.

The classification of 'rare and unusual' plants remains problematic and a challenge to the Growing Friends. We continue to propagate a wide variety of rare and interesting genus whether they be trees and shrubs, perennials, succulents, bulbs, rhizomes, iris or Australian natives. This results in diverse Sale stock appealing to collectors, horticulturalists and the keen gardener. We are extremely grateful to the management and staff of the Royal Botanic Gardens for their continuing support and assistance in providing the majority of material propagated.

Watching the dawn of a brand new Friday in the Nursery is a bonus – buying milk, opening the Nursery gates, turning on the urn, rectifying possum forays and cheerfully greeting one and all from 7.00am requires stamina. As the buoyant steward of the Growing Friends for the last two years, we thank Colin Herbert for his crucial contribution to the Growing Friends.

Pam Eames, *Convener*

Illustration by Sandra Sanger



Garden Designfest 2004

More than thirty gardens designed by professional designers will be available for inspection over the weekend of 13-14 November.

Admission is by purchase of an event booklet for \$25.00 in advance or \$30.00 on the day to visit over the weekend period. Those who wish to visit one or two gardens only will pay an entry fee of \$10.00 per garden.

Total net proceeds will be divided equally between CARE Australia, Leukaemia Australia, Network Q and St Vincent's Hospital Bernard O'Brien Reconstructive Microsurgery Unit. This project is being assisted by the Rotary Club of Kew. For details contact John Patrick, 9429 4855 jpatrick@johnpatrick.com.au or Mike McFarlane of Kew Rotary Club on 0418 317 418.

New Members Welcome

Thursday 7 October at 10.00am Mueller Hall, National Herbarium. Invitations will soon be sent to all recently-joined Friends to our next 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering. We look forward to welcoming you to the Friends. After morning tea we will present a short information slide show, a welcome by the Director of the Gardens, and brief talks by our committee leaders. Following this, the Voluntary Guides will take you on a guided tour of the Gardens.

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

Trip to Tasmania – it's not too late!

Historic Tasmania – Wine and Roses

Tuesday 23 November to Sunday 28 November

A flyer for this trip was enclosed with our Winter newsletter. It is not too late to secure a place.

For bookings, please contact Country Farm Perennials as soon as possible on 03 5628 4202.

FRIENDS BENEFITS BOTANIC NEWS

The Gardens Shops offer 10 per cent discount on all Members' purchases.

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

Gills Nurseries (all branches)

1 Centre Rd, East Brighton
390 Balcombe Rd, Beaumaris
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589 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
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10% off plants, 5% off other goods

Town and Country Gardens

1280 Malvern Rd, Malvern
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10% off plants over \$20 only.

Holmesglen Nursery

585 Waverley Rd, Glen Waverley
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The Gardeners Corner Store

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10% off all plants

Kew Nursery

Cnr High & Gladstone Sts, Kew
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33 Ferrars St, Albert Park
10% off everything

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Rear 91-93 Doncaster Rd
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10% off everything

The Arts Bookshop

1067 High St, Armadale
10% discount

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via Daylesford. Ph: 5424 1821
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24 Blackwood Lane, Gembrook
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commissions

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122 Grange Rd, Glenhuntly
Discount on monthly Garden
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Landscape Design & Maintenance
Ph 9859 3610 Michael Seeley
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Cloudehill Nursery

89 Olinda-Monbulk Rd, Olinda
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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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