Spring 2005

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS *of the* ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

Growing Friends' Plant Sale

8 – 9 October

Quercus – The Oaks Exhibition

26 – 30 September

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Good news! Payment for Stage 2 of the Friends' *Water Works Water Wise* project is now complete. Members may recall that in 2002 our Council accepted the Director's suggestion that the Friends support much-needed extensions of the Gardens' Automatic Irrigation System and agreed, as a first step, to fund the irrigation of Southern Cross Lawn, adjoining Gate Lodge, plus hydraulic adjustments necessary to almost double the system's flow capacity. This work and the payment for it ($46,995) was completed in 2003. We then moved on to Stage 2, the irrigation of the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden and a commitment of $50,000, the final instalment of which was paid recently. Of the total of $96,995 contributed to the *Water Works Water Wise* project to date, $30,000 has come from our Trust Fund and the balance of $66,995 from the Friends' funds raised by our very hard-working, dedicated volunteers.

Two years ago, the RBG organised a Spring Open Day to coincide with the Sunday of the Growing Friends' Plant Sale. Many people were drawn to the Gardens to enjoy activities on the Open Day program and many ended up at our Sale, boosting sales considerably, much to our delight. This year the Spring Plant Sale will be held on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 October (see flyer for more details). Once again a Spring Open Day, which will include free guided walks and tours of the Herbarium, will be held on the Sunday.

Something else to look forward to is the exhibition of many of the completed illustrations of the RBG's oak collection. This is part of the Botanical Illustrators' project *The Illustrated Garden*, a florilegium of plants growing in the RBG. The exhibition is timed to coincide with the Voluntary Guides' Conference at the end of September. Don't miss the opportunity to see these beautiful illustrations on Wednesday 28 September (see Activity page 7).

It gives the Friends great pleasure to work in this co-operative way with the Gardens, where we both enjoy the benefits that are derived.

Irwin Newman

Annual General Meeting

The Friends' Annual General Meeting will commence at 8.00pm on Monday 7 November 2005. Nominations for Council may be made through the Friends' Office on 9650 6398. Council members are elected for two years. This year Janet Thomson (Vice President), Richard Smith (Secretary), Susan Brookes, Judy Jarman and Richard Kirsner (Ordinary Members) are due to retire but are eligible for re-election.

Nominations are to be received by 7 October 2005.

Notes from Gate Lodge

Volunteer Friends make up the backbone of our organisation and it is during the winter that our office volunteers put in long hours because of the large number of renewals falling due at that time. Joan Murphy and Rosemary McMeekin deserve particular mention, coming in each week to record money received for functions and subscriptions which, at their peak, total more than $8,000 per week. As well as recording the money taken and preparing it for banking, they prepare and laminate the new membership cards and organise for them to be sent out to Members. Quite simply, we would not be able to carry the workload without their help.

We are delighted that Patricia Hart agreed to take over the task of filing away the membership renewal forms which form a valuable reference, after Elizabeth Fincher died late last year. Bronwen Merrett has committed herself to the paperwork associated with classes in Botanical Illustration, which has been a huge help.

We have also saved considerably by calling our handyman Bruce Peebles to fix minor problems inside the building and Geoffrey Kneebone does a marvellous job looking after the Gate Lodge garden under the supervision of the RBG horticultural staff. There are many other volunteers – too many to name here – who help in Gate Lodge, sending out renewal notices, labelling envelopes for *Botanic News* and packing the newsletter.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Ros Smith, who was an enthusiastic volunteer in the office on a regular basis for a number of years until she was prevented by illness.

Helen, Jean and I would like to express our thanks to each of our wonderful volunteers who donate their time, hard work, skills and expertise to our organisation. We love seeing your cheery faces and thoroughly enjoy your company.

Virginia Henderson

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

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Front cover: Quercus wislizenii *(Interior Live Oak/Californian Live Oak) painted for The Oak Florilegium by Helene Wild*

Photo: Jill Burness

Australian Garden

The Australian Garden is progressing well, and RBG Cranbourne is a hive of activity as we move closer to the opening of the Australian Garden in May 2006. The major landscape works and the Escarpment Wall have been completed. The earthy colours and textures of the Escarpment Wall are stunning, and its placement against the flowing water of the Rockpool Waterway (pictured) is a triumph of design. The Ephemeral Lake Ceramic Sculpture has been commissioned and will be an eye-catching and vibrant feature for visitors as they first enter the Australian Garden. Work on the Visitor Centre is progressing well, and the construction and fit-out should be completed by October. Planting of the Australian Garden landscapes continues, and several new horticultural staff have been appointed at RBG Cranbourne to meet the increasing workload.

RBG Board

After eight years, Mr David Adam retired as Chairman of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board on 3 June 2005. During that time, the Royal Botanic Gardens benefited greatly from his expertise, and dedication to, and promotion of, the Gardens. We wish him very well in his future endeavours and thank him for his guidance and leadership. Ms Elaine Canty (pictured) was appointed in June 2005 as the new Chair. Ms Canty, who has been Deputy Chair since April 2002, has a wealth of experience from her other roles which include Managing Director of Canty Communications Pty Ltd, and board member of organisations including VicHealth and the Royal Women's Hospital.

Water Management and Savings

RBG Melbourne has continued to use water most efficiently despite Melbourne's prolonged period of low rainfall. In 2004-05, we reduced our irrigation water use by 60% when measured against usage in 1994-95, the year the automatic irrigation system was installed. The outcome of this is that we have met the RBG water conservation target of 60 per cent savings two years in advance of the original July 2007 target. This fantastic achievement has come about through the hard work and dedication of our horticultural and infrastructure staff, who have attended training on the efficient use of the automatic irrigation system, improvements to the distribution of water by the system, and the use of current technology, including the automatic weather station located inside The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. In addition, water demand has been reduced by converting turf areas to warm season grasses, which use less water than cool season species, and the adoption of a regular mulching program to improve soil properties. The RBG is in the early stages of developing a medium-term water management plan, which will address all aspects of water across both sites. One of the first steps in the development of this plan is a domestic water audit, which will determine levels of consumption and recommend reduction strategies.

Corporate Plan

The Royal Botanic Gardens has a new Corporate Plan 2005-08, which sets out the strategic goals and directions of the RBG for the next three years. The new Plan follows on from the previous Corporate Plan 2005-08, and has been endorsed by the Minister for Environment and the Royal Botanic Gardens Board. Members of the Friends who wish to read the Corporate Plan can download a copy from the RBG website at www.rbg.vic.gov.au

Functions and Events

The Board of the Royal Botanic Gardens has decided to outsource the operation of Functions and Events at RBG Melbourne, currently run by RBG staff with external caterers. This decision was made in the context of the need to engage an external operator to run the Australian Garden Café and conduct functions at RBG Cranbourne. A public tender was issued earlier this year, and it is anticipated that the successful tenderer will commence operations in November 2005. The new arrangements will not affect the Friends' use of Mueller Hall, as it is not one of the sites to be managed by the new operator.

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The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden

The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden has continued to be extremely popular with families and school groups, and has exceeded all of our visitation expectations. The Friends will be aware that the Children's Garden was closed over the period from 11 July to 7 September 2005 in order for the Garden to rest and regenerate, and to allow time for construction of two new features – the Activity Shelter and the Tree Tower. It has now reopened in good time for children of all ages to enjoy the Garden and its new features in the beautiful Spring weather!

*Philip Moors, **Director***

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

Behind the Visitor Centre desk is the smiling face of Matt Jones, the RBG's Customer Service Co-ordinator. Matt began working for the RBG as a Weekend Ranger in 1999, one of two Rangers patrolling the Gardens, helping visitors, providing information about both the RBG and Melbourne generally, enforcing regulations, supervising functions and events and dealing with any emergencies that arose.

Matt always had a love for the outdoors and the environment. He spent many happy hours with his younger brother exploring and helping out on their grandfather's dairy and beef property in Maffra, East Gippsland and his family holidays were always of the practical variety, encompassing camping, fishing, bushwalking and swimming. He also joined the Cubs and Scouts, further expanding his outdoor interests.

At the age of seven, Matt decided he wanted to be a Park Ranger after a family holiday at Wilson's Promontory where his father, a police officer, worked for three months over the summer. The Park Rangers took Matt and his younger brother (both Junior Rangers) on a wide range of adventures and walks throughout the Prom, sparking his passion for the Australian bush and wildlife. After secondary school, Matt studied Natural Resource Management in East Gippsland and at the completion of his course, headed to Anglesea for his practical placement, where the six weeks became two years. Here he began hosting a wide variety of eco-tourism programs including snorkel and canoe tours, spotlight and bush walks and a variety of school holiday and education programs. While in Anglesea, he also worked as a team leader on the Summer Fire Crew with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This role included doing a variety of park maintenance and wildlife management tasks throughout the Otways and Angahoook-Lorne State Park, such as constructing walking tracks, fuel reduction and ecological burns and also attending wild fires throughout Victoria.

The full-time position Matt now occupies in the RBG is quite varied, involving the co-ordination of the friendly customer service team and the displays and information available at the Visitor Centre. Matt's role also includes being involved in the co-ordination of the Voluntary Guides and in the development of new tours and programs for the RBG and The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. Some Members may even remember seeing Matt playing the part of Mr McGregor, chasing Peter Rabbit around the kitchen garden during one of the recent school holiday programs!

Matt has always been a very keen sportsman, playing football, basketball, tennis and badminton, is also an active member and committee member of the South Melbourne Surf Lifesaving Club and helps train the 'nippers' (junior lifesavers) at the club. He likes to keep very active and his hobbies include

scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing, camping and bushwalking. Matt is also the State co-ordinator for Interpretation Australia, organising training workshops and events for members from a range of organisations throughout Australia in jobs similar to Matt's.

On a horticultural note, Matt always had his 'section' of the large family garden while growing up in the country and has more recently begun working in his spare time on a native and bird-friendly garden at his own house.

Meg Miller

GROWING FRIENDS

Since its inception in 1988 the Growing Friends group has developed into a thriving, educational and profitable Nursery within the grounds of the Royal Botanic Gardens. The group relies on, and benefits from, the significant support and assistance of the horticultural and scientific staff of the Gardens and operates within the RBG and FRBG guidelines.

The driving force of the group as a whole is the support of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and its management and staff.

Individual member commitment spans 20 years, creating a flow of knowledge and expertise within the group which is continually challenging, inspirational and educational. Every year the Growing Friends bury their past in another ring of functioning wood.

The Growing Friends Nursery is divided into several sections including Perennials, Trees and Shrubs (with sub-sections of Camellias and Vireya Rhododendrons), Bulbs, Iris, Succulents, Australian or native plants, hanging baskets, Climbers and Rhizomes (including Bromeliads and Clivia). Individual members are continually developing and broadening the range in each section to provide an outstanding variety of select plants for their Autumn and Spring Sales.

Our stock is the result of a consistently inspirational, creative and hard-working Cuttings team working with recommendations received from team leaders in each section and the Royal Botanic Gardens' horticultural staff.

We are also continually grateful for and highly value rare and unusual donated material from private sources.

The group of thirty volunteers arrives consistently *every* Friday from 7.00am onwards, with an individual requirement of a minimum of four hours per day and 45 out of 52 Fridays per annum. Each member works exclusively in their allocated section ensuring Shadehouse to Nursery distribution (bending and lifting), care and maintenance, potting up and overall charge of their stock. A team leader is allocated to each section with an enthusiastic Nursery Manager maintaining overall supervision. Our Horticultural Committee provides advice and recommendations as required.

Occasionally a new member finds it difficult to appreciate the commitment required of a Growing Friend. It's a 'getting down and dirty' hands-on approach with a responsibility for independent function. Our Spring and Autumn Plant Sales, and the results achieved, are a joint effort of the Group as a whole with puissant contributions from each member (we not only commit to every Friday but are also needed for the Saturday and Sunday of the two annual Sales and rostered Monday clean-ups). All Growing Friends assume a number of responsibilities. In addition to caring for their plants' health and safety, members are rostered on a rotational basis to a variety of tasks including Bins and Benches, Trolleys, Mouse House, Plant Labels and Data entry. The allocation of various roles such as OH&S, Deputy Warden, Purchasing Officer, Treasurer, Inventory and Catalogue, Publicity, New Members, Photography and Nursery Maintenance are voluntarily accepted by those with either the required expertise or necessary enthusiasm and dedication.

Simply, as a production system for a wide range of plants, we are continually potting up, accessioning, maintaining and learning through conversations at the potting bench, plant 'show and tells', visits from Gardens' staff and a combined knowledge of at least 1,500 years' gardening.

Would you like to join us?

Pamela Eames, ***Convenor***

PS: We have a variety of Camellias, currently flowering, for sale. Visit us on Fridays between 10.00am and 1.00pm (not 17, 24 Sept or 1 Oct).

Volunteers will again be welcome in the exit tent at our forthcoming sale on Saturday and Sunday, 8 and 9 October.

Prospective helpers are asked to contact Gate Lodge on 9650 6398.

Meet a Growing Friend

CAROLYN TOMKINS

When Carolyn retired from paid employment, she felt she needed something to do to fill her days. While she had always been interested in nature, she had no actual horticultural expertise, although she came from a work background as a microbiologist and later in sales and marketing for an academic book company. A friend suggested joining the Friends which Carolyn did, putting her name on the list for the Growing Friends. After a few weeks of joining the Growing Friends on Friday mornings, Carolyn became enthusiastic and interested enough to enrol in the Burnley horticultural short course. At the same time she became a Voluntary Guide,

Photo: Steven Wells

hence gaining a wide knowledge of the RBG and its activities and plant stock.

For the Growing Friends, Carolyn liaises with RBG Nursery and Herbarium staff, getting cutting material and planning its propagation, and helps in the Australian Natives section of our own Nursery.

For some time Carolyn was involved with Reading for the Blind. Currently she enjoys patchwork and has a yearning to spend more time on this, as well as studying genealogy and visiting Sydney to see her daughters and little grandson.

Meg Miller

ACTIVITIES

Kyneton Daffodil Festival

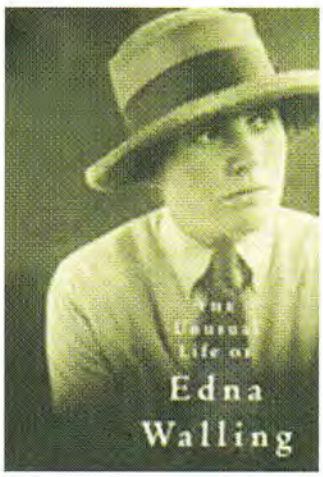
BUS TRIP TO KYNETON AND SURROUNDS

Wednesday 7 September
leaving at 9.00 am sharp,
returning at approx. 5.00 pm
Meet at the carpark adjacent to Vision Australia, Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong.
Cost: $58 (includes morning tea, lunch, guide and all garden entries
RSVP by Friday 26 August
on enclosed booking sheet

The Kyneton Daffodil Festival is a memorable experience: it appears to a visitor that the whole town is devoted to a glorious display of daffodils. The roadside verges, the parks and private gardens are planted with beautiful daffodils, which combined with spring blossom make an overwhelming impact.

We will visit two or three selected gardens where the design of the whole garden highlights their daffodils, thus providing an opportunity to see and identify a wide range of these bulbs, many of which have been bred in the district.

We will drive through the township to see some of its splendid architecture while also viewing other display gardens, and will enjoy lunch at a delightful restaurant.



The Unusual Life of Edna Walling

PRESENTED BY SARA HARDY

In conjunction with Australian Garden History Society
Thursday 22 September
at 10.00 for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: $20 Friends and AGHS $15
RSVP by Monday 19 September
Please join us for morning tea before the talk.

When actor Sara Hardy was performing in the play *Edna for the Garden* in 1989, she 'discovered' Edna Walling. In 2004 she was awarded the inaugural Peter Blazey Fellowship at the University of Melbourne for her work on Walling. *The Unusual Life of Edna Walling*, her first book, is the long-awaited eponymous biography of the Australian landscape designer. Hardy has unearthed amazing primary sources: letters, photographs and stories told to her by Edna's niece. Sara tracks the aspiring designer through the horticultural course at Burnley and charts her transformation from 'the girl gardener' for the ladies of Toorak, to designer of large-scale gardens for wealthy Victorians. She reveals the other women who supported Edna in her endeavours.

Signed copies of the biography will be for sale.

National Herbarium Tours

WITH HELEN COHN

Tuesday 27 September
Two tours: 10.30am and 11.30am
National Herbarium,
Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra
Cost: $10 MEMBERS ONLY
Numbers limited
Tour time and instructions will be confirmed after booking
RSVP by Friday 23 September
on enclosed booking form

The RBG Melbourne has an extensive Library containing a wealth of information in support of the work of the Gardens. This includes botanical illustrations and comes in a variety of media.

Helen Cohn, Manager of the Library, will introduce you to a selection of the artwork in this collection. Among these will be works published in the Sixteenth Century, some that date from the early years of European exploration of Australia, and others that have illustrated Gardens' publications. Included in these will be *Banks' Florilegium*. The works on display will range from the scientifically exact to the purely decorative.

This is your opportunity to see some of the beautiful works in the Herbarium collections and to gain an understanding of the value of these works to the Gardens' programs.

ACTIVITIES

Quercus – Paintings From The Friends' Florilegium of The Oaks of the RBG Melbourne

GUIDED TOUR WITH EDYTA HOXLEY

Wednesday 28 September at 10.00am
Meet at Domain House
Cost: $10 MEMBERS ONLY
Book early as numbers are limited
RSVP by Friday 23 September

In 2003 a project was initiated by the Botanical Illustrators to document the magnificence of the RBG Oaks in a florilegium. These paintings will be a permanent gift to the Friends – *The Friends' Florilegium*. Join us to look at the first series of these paintings, which will be on display in Domain House.

Edyta Hoxley, Convener of the Botanical Illustrators group, will talk to us about the *Florilegium* – how it was designed, what needs to be included and the Illustrators' plans for the future. She will guide us around the paintings on display.

Afterwards, you can walk across to the Gardens and the Oak Lawn to look at the RBG Collection.

Morning tea will be served before the tour

The Lazy Gardener

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY GARRY REID, SPECIALIST NURSERYMAN

Tuesday 11 October
at 10.00am for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: $20 Friends $13
RSVP by Friday 7 October
on enclosed booking form
Please join us for morning tea before the talk
A large number of bulbs will be for sale after the talk

The Reids are exceptional plants people who run a small nursery specialising in rare bulbous plants. Their knowledge of bulbs is extensive and they grow more than 18,000 species and varieties.

Plant once and leave them for years. Bulbs are a group of plants that often thrive in poor soils, with little water, and neglect. Make life easy for yourself as nature's little time capsules lie quietly beneath the surface of the soil, just waiting for their time to burst forth into flower.

We'll see some of the alternative species to those bulbs commercially available and ask you to consider bulbs as foliage plants, with shapes and textures to complement perennials and shrubs.

If you have any bulbs you wish to have identified, bring them along and Garry will do his best to identify them.

Madagascar

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY LORNA GILLESPIE

Tuesday 25 October, 6.00 for 6.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Cost: $20 Friends $15
RSVP by Friday 21 October
on enclosed booking form
Please join us for a glass of wine and savouries before the talk.
Lorna will have some Malagasy craftwork for sale, with all proceeds returning there.

Join us for a visual feast of Malagasy flora, much of which is endemic. Madagascar offers both delight and despair as poverty and charcoal production annihilate stunning examples of dry land flora.

Ken and Lorna Gillespie travelled extensively in Madagascar during the `90s, searching out dry land flora. They have returned many times, but now their concern is based on the Akany Avoko Centre for young children situated on the outskirts of the capital Antananarivo (Tana).

Ever-present conflict between the need to maintain Madagascar's bizarre flora and the people's need to survive has seen the development by National Park bodies of local self-help schemes which share wealth gained from tourism. This arrangement has support but as they say in Madagascar, it is mora (slow).

ACTIVITIES

Wine and Roses in the Barossa Valley

BUS TRIP

Tuesday 15 November to Sunday 20 November 2005

Please phone Country Farm Perennials on 03 5628 4202 for a full itinerary.

We still have a few places left on the six-day tour that Merryle Johnson, of Country Farm Perennials, has designed, in conjunction with the Friends, to South Australia.

The Barossa Valley is an area with a fascinating past, leaving a legacy of historic homes and gardens, as well as some beautiful contemporary gardens created with the prosperity of its famous vineyards.

We will stay 5 nights at Chateau Barossa – Lyndoch, set in its own garden of 20,000 roses over 12 hectares. There will be day trips to private gardens, historic homesteads, wine tastings, galleries and restaurants, plus all the charm and attractions of the area.

Touring will be in a luxury 5-star air-conditioned coach.

Managing Spain's Historic Gardens

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY STUART READ

Heritage Officer, NSW Heritage Office

Presented in conjunction with Australian Garden History Society

Saturday 19 November at 3.00 for 3.30 pm

Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: $20 Friends and AGHS $15

RSVP by Tuesday 15 November on enclosed booking form

Please join us for afternoon tea before the talk

Why a study tour of Spain? Perhaps because it may well contain Western Europe's oldest continuously gardened space, may claim the West's oldest private ornamental garden and legacies of Roman, Islamic, Christian and Modern eras.

Urbanisation since the 1980s has led to increased pressure on existing parks. Many of these are a legacy of former royal estates. Private properties converting to public gardens bring challenges of increased usage.

Spain hosts 90 million visitors per year, and six to eight million visit the Alhambra and Barcelona's Parc Guell. Tools to manage visitors are vital.

Stuart hoped Spain's long history and climate similar to southern Australia's might have lessons for all. He also wanted to see new trends, particularly water conservation, Mediterranean plant use, how change is managed and who makes the decisions.

Spring Quarterly Insiders' Walk

BIRD WALK WITH DAVID PLANT

Sunday 20 November at 10.30am

Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)

Cost: $10 MEMBERS ONLY

Numbers limited

RSVP by Tuesday 15 November on enclosed booking form

David is a Voluntary Guide at the Royal Botanic Gardens and has conducted bird walks in the Gardens for the last eight years. He is also a member of the Council of the Friends of the RBG and has been a guest speaker for the Friends in the past on the subject of birds in the Gardens.

David is a member of Birds of Australia and the Bird Observer's Club of Australia. He has had a lifelong interest in birds and has 'birded' in many parts of Australia.

He will take us for a leisurely stroll to the lake and back across the lawns. With some luck we will encounter the elusive powerful owl on our travels.

ACTIVITIES

Spring 'Talking Plants' Morning

PERENNIALS

Friday 25 November at 10.30am
Meet at Gate Lodge
(opposite the Shrine)
COST: $10 Friends $7
RSVP by Tuesday 22 November
on enclosed booking form

The Spring Talking Plants' theme is *Perennials Suitable for the Home Garden*, with Jimmy Morrison, who will have some terrific suggestions for us. Jimmy, who has a beautiful garden open under the Open Garden Scheme, is also part of the team that looks after the Perennial Border in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. The morning will be held in the Gate Lodge garden (weather permitting) and will be an informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening. Morning tea will be served during the morning. All those attending are invited to bring a piece of a favourite plant, perennial if possible, to show and share information about.

Spring Fit Friends Ramble

ST KILDA GARDENS

Saturday 26 November, 9.00am sharp
Meet at the St Kilda Botanic Gardens
North West Gate (unrestricted parking)
COST: $15 Friends $10
RSVP by Tuesday 22 November on enclosed booking form.
Please wear appropriate clothing, good walking shoes, bring a water bottle and, as always, be able to keep up a good walking pace.

We will proceed directly to the Farmer's Market at Peanut Farm, where purchases may be made. We shall then make our way to 'Veg Out', a chemical-free garden run by volunteers on a former lawn bowling green. There are over 140 plots, where a commitment to a sense of conservation and organic gardening principles prevails. Many plot holders adorn their patches in artistic and quirky ways.

We'll return to the St Kilda Botanic Gardens, where we will enjoy morning tea in the famous Rose Garden.

The Gardens received a significant facelift in 2003 with a new entrance adjacent to the Eco House, refurbished glass-houses for use by the Friends group and the construction of a community garden.

Christmas Dinner

Tuesday 29 November
at 7.00 for 7.30pm
Alexandra Club. Collins St, Melbourne
Cost: $75 per head (including GST, pre-dinner drinks and wine with a 3-course dinner, a lucky seat prize and three tickets in our Christmas raffle).
Dress: Lounge suit

There is convenient carparking in Flinders Lane between Exhibition and Russell Streets.

The Friends are very excited to be holding their Christmas celebration this year in the gracious surrounds of the Alexandra Club. We would be delighted for you to join us.

We'll be presenting a sit-down festive three-course dinner and an after-dinner speaker. There will be a Christmas raffle as well, with plenty of wonderful prizes. Tickets for this raffle will not be sold on the night, but will be included in the cost of the dinner. You are most welcome to invite family and friends to this festive occasion.

We look forward to meeting you for this celebratory end to another fabulous year for the Friends. Please put the date in your diaries and look out for the booking form in the news-sheet that will accompany the Annual Report.

ILLUSTRATORS

The Oak featured here is Quercus wislizenii *(Interior Live Oak/ Californian Live Oak) painted for The Oak Floriligium by Helene Wild*

Helene says "This sparsely foliated evergreen tree is situated at the edge of the Oak Lawn in the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. I painted the sprig of pale new leaves, tiny female flowers and pendulous male catkins on 28 August 2003. The second piece, featuring clusters of small developing acorns, was executed on 3 February 2004. Almost every one of these small acorns had aborted by the middle of May. On 29 June, I struck it lucky when I found the small, half grown acorn amongst leaf litter under the tree and located the larger, fully mature one high up on a slender overhanging branch."

Artist Profile: Helene Wild

Even as a child Helene found nature fascinating and illustrated her school books with flowers, leaves, berries and swarms of insects and other tiny creatures. You could say her career as a natural history artist was launched in primary school!

Although she painted sporadically during her working and child-raising years, it was not until her son had almost completed secondary school that she found the opportunity to paint seriously. After joining the Australasian Native Orchid Society, Helene concentrated almost exclusively on native orchids and those watercolours were reproduced in *The Orchadian*. Her first solo exhibition, *Orchids and Butterflies of the Castlemaine District* (1989), was an outstanding success and other solo and group exhibitions followed. Soon after she began teaching botanical art, she was introduced to Jenny Phillips and indulged herself by attending a few of Jenny's classes. As a result, she began exploring new avenues within the genre.

During the course of her career Helene has accepted numerous commissions. One of the most satisfying was for 14 watercolours of indigenous plants for the City of Keilor, and another highlight was The Castlemaine Art Gallery's inclusion of her watercolour *Native Orchids of Mt. Alexander Shire* in their permanent collection.

Helene's botanic art is also featured on cards, stationery and other commercial products and, earlier this year, DMC released two cross stitch kits of her work depicting bouquets of Australian flora. She has won major awards for her botanic art, and her work is represented in private and corporate collections in several countries.

Soon after its inception, Helene joined the Botanical Illustrators and also discovered the many joys of being a Friend of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Her work has been included in every *The Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibition and in 1996 the Friends gave a grant to the RBG for the purchase of her painting of *Sarcochilus falcatus* for the State Botanical Collection. This work was featured in the catalogue of the RBG's 150th anniversary exhibition, *Nature's Art Revealed*.

In 1999, the Habitat Trust invited Helene to be their Resident Artist and showcase her botanical art. Her work with the Trust celebrates the indigenous flora of the basalt plains of Melbourne's west. The Trust donated Helene's watercolour of *Ajuga australis* to the RBG's State Botanical Collection in 2003.

When she is not painting Helene is probably using her desktop publisher. Her illustrated short stories appear occasionally in popular publications and, since 1989, she has been Editor of the Australasian Native Orchid Society's monthly newsletter, a position she continues to find challenging and rewarding.

Rita Parkinson

Quercus

THE OAK FLORILEGIUM

Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive
26-30 September 2005
10.00am to 5.00pm

In 2004 a group of illustrators who meet regularly decided to embark on a full botanic illustrative depiction of The Oaks of The Royal Botanic Gardens. Melbourne. Each of these paintings takes a year to complete as they include details from the full annual cycle. The genus of *Quercus* (Oaks) can be found on every continent: *Q glauca* – Japan, *Q Yunnan* – China, *Q robur* – England, *Q agrifolia* – California. There are 42 oaks represented in the Gardens. Most of them can be found on the Oak Lawn, but there are other examples throughout the Gardens. Many of these are historic trees, planted by noted visitors such as royalty and governors, such as the wonderful *Quercus canariensis* planted by Lady Loch on 15 November 1889.

At the present time the illustrators are about halfway through completing this project. The actual paintings will be gifted to the Friends, but kept permanently in the Herbarium Library. As anyone who attends our biennial exhibition will know, we have a number of very gifted illustrators among the Friends and we hope that this will become a permanent record of their work held for the future.

Although the paintings are not for sale, prints will be available for purchase during the exhibition.

Rita Parkinson

ILLUSTRATORS

Illustrating Plants from the RBG Melbourne

Through the biennial *Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibitions, we are selecting a number of illustrations of plants growing in the RBG Melbourne, which the Friends can use as reproductions on cards and in other publications, for our *Illustrated Garden* project. All artists are invited to participate in this project.

The RBG horticultural staff have agreed to assist us by allowing participating artists, through prior arrangement via the Friends, to access illustration material from the Gardens.

We are initially focusing on three significant collections: the Southern Chinese Collection; The Camellia Collection, which includes Southern Chinese varieties; and the native garden on Long Island.

Terry Smyth, who is the horticulturalist responsible for the Southern Chinese Collection, has suggested two exceptional spring-flowering shrubs in particular:

Paeonia ostii is an unusual tree peony blossoming in mid-Spring. You will find it along the narrow winding path near an *Acer pentaphyllum*. It's certainly worth seeking out, as the single delicate flowers are pure white, revealing, as they open, a hint of burgundy at the base of the petals. The stamens have purple filaments with yellow anthers.

Viburnum plicatum 'Mariesii' is a treat to see flowering in Spring. The apple-green leaves appear as though pleated and they set off the horizontally held 'hen and chicken' type white flowers. The larger sterile flowers surround a cluster of tiny fertile flowers – a most pleasing combination. Look for it in the Viburnum and Pterocarya Beds. Viburnums come in a wide range of forms with interest provided all year through flowers, Autumn foliage and fruit colour.

The Camellia collection is included because it will be gaining special attention in August next year at the time of the International Camellia Conference.

The new Australian Garden at Cranbourne will be opening to the public in 2006, so we are including the indigenous plants of the Lower Yarra River habitat on Long Island for special attention and to encourage artists to submit illustrations of native flora for the next exhibition. (See details of Illustrators Quarterly Walk on this page.)

If there are specimens in the Gardens that are of particular interest to you, but are not included in the collections mentioned, we may still be able to help you with accessing material.

We look forward to hearing from you, and seeing the results of this project in the *Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibitions.

Remember, taking any plant material from the Gardens is strictly forbidden; it is only accessible through the Gardens' staff by prior arrangement. To do this, please contact Louise Coronel on 9827 5910 or the Friends' Office on 9650 6398, giving us as much notice as possible.

Louise Coronel

Classes

Term 3 will start on Monday 10 October.

Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays (two sessions), Fridays and Saturdays.

2.5hr classes: $245 (incl GST). Friends $205 (incl GST)

3hr classes: $280 (incl GST). Friends $240 (incl GST)

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

Botanical Illustrators Quarterly Meeting

Visit to Long Island

Tuesday 13 September

10.00am for 10.30am

In the Whirling Room Studio

Cost: $5.50 (inc GST) Pay on the day

RSVP: Friends' Office on 9650 6398

This is a great opportunity to see the ongoing development of the Long Island garden. We will walk down and meet gardener Sandra Hodge, who will show us the special indigenous plants now well established, many of which will be Spring flowering.

Whirlybirds

Winter has passed and the warmth of the Whirling Room Studio has contributed to many days of creativity and friendship for the Whirlybirds.

This group of Botanical Artist friends has made a substantial contribution to the Quercus Exhibition as they share their interest in painting and drawing each Tuesday.

If you would like more information regarding this group contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532

2005 Christmas Card

Another illustration in a series depicting plants in the collection of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, this year's card features detail from an illustration by Bernadette Lim of the Madonna lily (*Lilium candididum)* found growing in the grounds of Gardens House which was established in 1856 as the private residence for the Directors of the Gardens.

To order cards see the enclosed flyer.

Gold Medal

Congratulations to John Pastoriza Pinol on achieving a Gold Medal at the Winter RHS Exhibition, London, with his paintings of the orchid genus *Dracula*.

Exhibition

Artwork of Celia Rosser, Margaret Stones, Anita Barley, Dianne Emery and Mali Moir will be held in the Sydney Herbarium at the Red Box Gallery from 11 to 16 October. Information may be obtained from Anita von Bibra on 0412 121 022.

Mature Araucaria bidwillii. Photo: Richard Barley

Recently I was fortunate to be appended to a tour of the Government House grounds, which as an added bonus also included a look around inside the House. During the tour I was taking in the finer points of the interior, while making mental notes about how to rearrange the domestic furniture and fittings at Chez Barley to achieve a more vice-regal effect.

Our host, Louise Kinder, (Executive Officer at Government House) noted that the floors in the room in which we were standing were made from Queensland Kauri. A quick scan of the floor boards revealed the warm pinky-orange colouring so characteristic of the timber of this species. I must confess that I missed the next few minutes of the descriptive tour as I pondered on the many qualities of the magnificent trees of the family Araucariaceae, of which Queensland Kauri (*Agathis robusta*) is such a fine representative.

It goes without saying that the landscape of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne owes much to the *Araucariaceae*. Many of our most significant 'framework' trees are members of this ancient family from the division Pinophyta. The trees are significant in that they represent a physical link with the ancient Gondwanan continent, and are found naturally distributed across the various modern fragments of the old continent – Australia, New Zealand, South America and wayward south-west Pacific islands such as New Caledonia and Lord Howe Island.

In the Gardens they provide visual structure and strength on a large scale. Their shapes are strongly characteristic. The rounded bullet shape of the Bunya Bunya (*Araucaria bidwillii*), the tall column of Captain Cook's Pine (*Araucaria columnaris*), the regular narrow cone shape of the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*), or the more tufted cylinder shape of the Hoop Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) – they each contribute interest to the broader landscape. Add to the Araucarias the other major player on the Gardens' Araucariaceae team – the genus Agathis of floorboard fame – and you get a sense of the magnitude of the role being played. The strength of their colour is also notable. The strong dark green, with occasional brighter highlights during the Spring/Summer flush of growth is unparalleled.

To realise the extent of the contribution made by these trees to the living landsape, one only has to undertake the exercise of looking across the Gardens, and mentally rubbing out the *Araucariaceae*. The 'virtual' result is a comparatively tame, subdued landscape scene. The *Araucariaceae* adds excitement.

These trees were woven into the Gardens fabric from an early stage. The large Norfolk Island Pine (*A. heterophylla*) near the Tea Rooms was planted by second Curator John Dallachy in 1857. William Guilfoyle's early sketch designs for parts of the Gardens often included Araucarias, particularly as central feature plants within a bed, or as significant skyline plantings. Indeed, these species were available through the commercial nursery trade in Victoria from quite early in the piece. The plant catalogues of J and J Rule's Nursery in Richmond in 1855 listed *A. bidwillii*, *A. heterophylla*, *A. araucana* (the true 'Monkey Puzzle' from Chile, then called *A. imbricata*), and *A. cunninghamii*, together with *Agathis australis* (the New Zealand species – though this may have been the Australian *A. robusta*). Other species were also freely available within ten years of that time, including the rarely grown *A. rulei*, a New Caledonian species named by Mueller for the proprietor of the nursery.

Of the total of 160 representatives of the *Araucariaceae* in the Gardens, we have no fewer than 57 Agathis specimens, of which 40 are Queensland Kauris (that's a lot of floorboards!). Of the 103 Araucarias, we have roughly equivalent numbers of Bunya Bunyas (19), Norfolk Island Pines (14) and Captain Cook's Pines (16), with slightly more Hoop Pines (28). If your interest runs to the more unusual species, we have *Araucaria bernieri*, *A. biramulata*, *A. hunsteinii*, *A. laubenfelsii*, *A. luxurians*, *A. montana*, *A. muelleri*, *A. nemorosa*, *A. rulei* and *A. subulata*. Many of these hail from New Caledonia, which is thick with unusual coniferous offerings. Add to these the several variations on the Agathis theme: *A. robusta*, *A. australis*, *A. moorei*, *A. lanceolata* and *A. atropurpurea*, and you've got quite a contribution to the cause of the Southern Hemisphere chapter of the conifer club.

You will recall that often in autumn we go through some nervous weeks as we work out which of the Bunya Bunyas (*A. bidwillii*) is going to be producing cones and, if so, how many. The female cones can be up to 300mm tall, and weigh up to 10 kilograms. By and large it would be best to avoid having these falling on

Young Araucaria bidwillii. Photo: Richard Barley

our visitors or staff. So trees are roped off, signs are put up, and as of last season, some strenuous de-coning is undertaken on specific offenders. For example, the mature Bunya Bunya on Central Lawn yielded over 75 cones, after we thought that most of them had already fallen! The seeds contained therein are deliciously edible.

Roger Spencer notes in *The Horticultural Flora of South-eastern Australia* (Volume 1) that there are large natural specimens of *A. heterophylla* on their native Norfolk Island of around 350 years of age, with a circumference of over 11 metres. By my reckoning, that produces a diameter of about 3.5 metres, which is large in anyone's language. This gives us some comfort in terms of the potential longevity of these species. Curiously, I can't recall that we have ever had the need to remove a member of this family from the Gardens – be it for reason of poor health, instability or other problems.

We do, however, see the need to plant a selection of young specimens of Araucariaceae to ensure that down the track the Gardens landscape will continue to reap the benefit of these sentinels. There can surely be few more satisfying activities than planting a young Agathis or Araucaria, smug in the knowledge that for generations and possibly centuries to come, it will be bringing pleasure to many... and, if a Bunya Bunya, nervousness to a few.

Richard Barley

Janet Flinn

The tourism award-winning Gardens Shop has long prided itself on the wide range of local botanic art that is showcased in its gallery.

In addition to being able to purchase art from the Shop, the Shop has now decided to offer its visitors the chance to view some of Melbourne's finest artists at work. As part of a new *Artists in Residence* program, the Shop is now offering you the chance to see some big name artists in action.

The first artist in the program is Janet Flinn, whose renowned paintings capture the magic of the unique wild creatures of Australia.

Janet explores beyond the obvious, bringing us different and exciting paintings. She has spent years patiently observing birds in their natural habitats, resulting in perceptive portraits, full of character and personality. Her paintings 'sing' with life and colour, where the artist's hand at work is shown but where something is left to the viewer's imagination.

So, visit the Gardens Shop on Sunday, 18 September and Sunday, 9 October between 11.00am and 3.00 pm and meet our Artist in Residence.

VIP Viewing of Progress at the Australian Garden, RBG Cranbourne

A GUIDED WALK WITH PHILIP MOORS, RBG DIRECTOR

Thursday 13 October at 10.00 am
Meet at the Australian Garden carpark (enter Main Gate, Melways 133K10, and follow the signs)
Cost $25. Funds support the Australian Garden, RBG Cranbourne
Open to Members and non-Members
Bookings essential by 6 October with Susie Hamson 03 9866 5370 or susiehamson@hotkey.net.au
Morning tea will be served following the tour.

Few of us have yet had the chance to see the enormous worksite that's becoming the RBG's Australian Garden. Philip Moors and guides will show us around and tell us some of the inside stories behind this magnificent new garden, more than ten years in the planning.

Expected to open in May 2006, the Garden displays and celebrates our continent's remarkable plantlife. Come for a preview of the red expanse of the Sand Garden, the cascades in the Rockpool Waterway, and the dramatic 80m-long Escarpment Wall sculpture.

Wear warm clothes and sturdy shoes that can take a bit of mud. After the tour and tea, you can picnic at the Stringybark Picnic Area, visit Trig Point look-out, or walk through the bushlands and heathlands – the heath should be in bloom and there are glorious views.

Photo: Jill Burness

New Members Welcome

Thursday 6 October at 10.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Invitations will soon be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our next 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering. We look forward to meeting you. 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.

If you have not been able to attend a previous Welcome and would like to come this time, please call our office on 9650 6398 and we'll make sure you receive an invitation.

Members are reminded that the next Markets in the Gardens will be held on Saturdays October 8, November 12 and December 10 on the Southern Cross Lawn, starting at 9.00am. Prospective stall holders should contact Andrew Laidlaw on 9899 5979.

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

Botanic Birds

Recently, while talking to Sandra Hodge, horticulturist in charge of Long Island, I became acutely aware of the complexity of plant-animal interaction on the lakes in the RBG. Water birds occupy a wide variety of niches differing according to diet and feeding habits. There are carnivores, herbivores and omnivores; stalkers, divers, dabblers and grazers. Most birds are opportunistic feeders and take advantage of seasonal abundance of certain plants and animals.

Black Swans are almost entirely herbivorous, grazing and foraging in water and on land. They are strict vegetarians and surface-feed around the edge of the lake or dabble in the shallows as deep as their long necks will reach, taking soft shoots, roots and foliage of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants. On land they feed on shoots and roots of grasses. In the Long Island swamp area they have been seen seasonally grazing Water Ribbons (*Triglochin procerum*), eating seed from the tall flower heads of Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), dabbling for submerged foliage of Curled Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) in the Lake Backwater and scooping up seasonal drifts of Duckweed (*Lemma* sp).

Eurasian Coot also feed almost exclusively on leaves, stems and shoots rather than the seeds favoured by some other water birds. In the water they peck at emergent shoots or dive for leaves and stems of submerged aquatics such as Pondweed and various algae, supplemented with aquatic insects, crustaceans and molluscs. On land, they feed on grasses and, occasionally, eggs.

Black Duck, Dusky Moorhen and Purple Swamphen are omnivorous. About three-quarters of the ducks' diet is vegetable matter. They dabble and dredge for seeds of bog plants and aquatic grasses and sedges and have been seen feeding on Pondweed and Duckweed. They also strip seeds off plants along the edge of the water and supplement with aquatic insects, crustacea such as yabbies, fairy shrimps and other small creatures. On land they graze on both plant and animal material including slugs, snails and insects.

Dusky Moorhen have been seen dabbling in the shallows for Pondweed and feeding on foliage of the Slender Knotweed (*Persicaria decipens*) and seeds of Water Plantain around the edge of the Long Island wetland. On land their diet is mainly seeds and vegetable matter, insects and frogs.

The Purple Swamphen are seen mainly on the lawns and in the reed beds where they perch unsteadily. They feed on the tender bases of reed stems or forage for animal material. They have been observed biting off the bases of both the Tall Spike Rush (*Eleocharis sphacelata*) and the Club Rush (*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*) to get at the white parts, then stripping out the inner pith. They also eat insects, frogs, lizards, fish, young birds, eggs and small mammals.

The Australasian Grebe and the Nankeen Night Heron are both carnivores. The Grebe dives for aquatic insects, snails and fish, while the Night Heron stalks in the water for fish, frogs, crustacea and insects.

Sandra keeps records of what she sees on Long Island and has noticed Reed Warblers harvesting seed of both Tassel Sedge (*Carex fasciculatus*) and Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardieri*), possibly to feed their young.

I've often wondered if the water birds of Long Island wetland/swamp feed on floating aquatics such as Pacific Azolla (*Azolla filiculoides*) or the Liverwort (*Ricinocarpus natans*), or browse emergent or submerged foliage of the Cat-tail Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum caput-medusae*). Has anyone observed the birds of the Lake feeding on them?

Margaret Polmear

Feeding the Birds

Visitors to the Gardens' lakeside have probably seen signs asking them not to feed the birds.

There are very good reasons for this request. First: bread, which forms most of the food fed to the birds is not good for them. It is filling and easy to obtain but does not contain the proper nutrients for the birds. Second: the practice does not teach young birds especially, that food must be sought out. Humans must not be seen as a regular source of bounty. Third: a large percentage of the bread cast on the waters is not eaten and sinks to the bottom of the lake. This pollutes the water and further disrupts the health of the flora and fauna of the lake.

David Plant

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

FRIENDS BENEFITS

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.

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1 Centre Rd, East Brighton
390 Balcombe Rd, Beaumaris
cnr Bay/Graham Sts, Port Melbourne
589 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
5% off plants only

Bulleen Art and Garden
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The Gardeners Corner Store
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24 Blackwood Lane, Gembrook
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Simply Panoramic
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Lister Teak Garden Furniture
22 Industry Court, Lilydale,
Ph: 9735 4010.
Free 100-page colour catalogue of Cotswold Furniture Collection.
Ask for the Members' surprise

Terrace Tea Rooms & Reception Centre, RBG Melbourne
Complimentary tea or coffee with meals, scones or cakes

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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Multiple sheets - POA.
Advertising material requires the approval of the editorial committee.
Contact the Friends' office, 9650 6398, for details

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

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☐	**Household** (two adults living at same address)	**$60**
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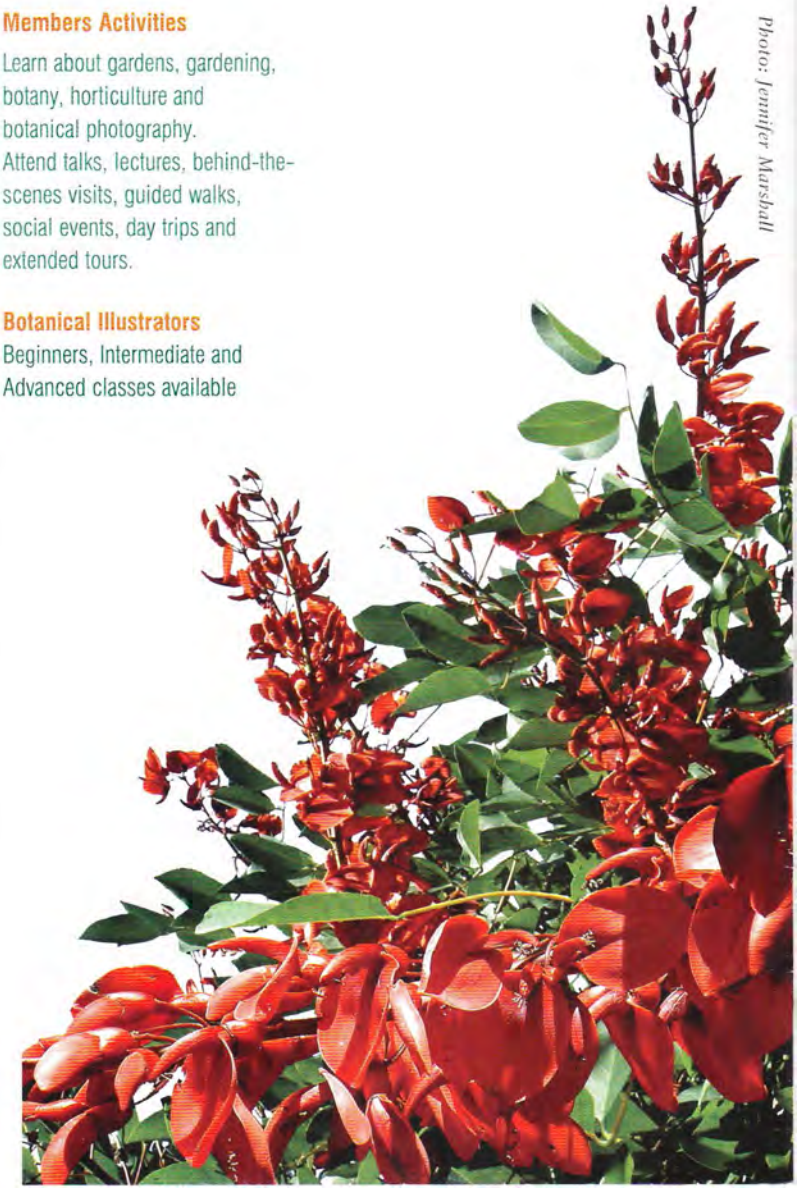

Photo: Jennifer Marshall