



Spring 2008

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS of the ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

FEATURE: Seed viability experiments page 4

PLANT SALE: October 18 and 19

THE ART OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION
EXHIBITION 2008 November 8 - 23

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Developing relationships and working co-operatively and collaboratively with other groups associated with the Royal Botanic Gardens is an important priority for the Friends. Representatives of the Voluntary Guides and the Plant Craft Cottage attend our Operations Committee meetings and the Secretary, Treasurer and I meet from time to time with our counterparts in the Cranbourne Friends. Recently I and others from the Cranbourne Friends and RBG staff were invited to attend a meeting of the Cranbourne Friends' Activities Sub-Committee to plan their Friends' activities for 2009. Such close working relationships will not only benefit the RBG but each individual group as well. The Melbourne Friends are also very keen to develop closer links with Friends' groups in other gardens both in Victoria and interstate, enabling us to work more closely together in areas of mutual interest.

Our very hard-working Events Committee has arranged a busy schedule of wonderful activities between now and the end of the year and I do hope to see many of you at a large number of them. One event I would particularly like to mention is the visit to Melbourne of Jekka McVicar, a well-known and highly regarded organic herb specialist and grower from Gloucestershire in England. Her visit has been arranged through the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. Known as the 'Queen of Herbs', Jekka will present two lectures

in Mueller Hall on Thursday 9 October. For further details see page 9.

Every year the standard of the work produced by our botanical illustrators seems to get better and better which is very exciting not only for the Friends and the illustrators but also for those who are fortunate enough to purchase these exquisite works of art. Over the years several artists associated with the Friends have won prestigious awards overseas and I am delighted to report that the latest person to do so is Sandra Sanger who won the *Best Exhibition in Show Award* at the RHSD Garden Show, Birmingham for her series, *Australian Indigenous Trees*. Members are reminded that this year's *The Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibition will be open from Saturday 8 November to Sunday 23 November. More information about the exhibition can be found on page 11.

The Friends does indeed have some very generous Members. We were recently advised that we have received a bequest of \$10,000 from the Estate of Yvonne Knight, a Member of the Friends for 15 years. Such bequests are greatly appreciated, enabling us to provide even greater support for the RBG.

Finally, don't forget the Growing Friends' Spring Sale on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 October – these sales are not to be missed.

Janet Thomson
President



Photo: Cathy Trinca

2008 Christmas Card

The illustration for this year's card is a detail from a painting by Sandra Sanger of the dramatic flower head of a Gynea lily, *Doryanthes excelsa*. The original water colour painting has been chosen to promote the 2008 *Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibition, where it will be included in the display.

Native to the woodlands of the Central Coast region of New South Wales, *Doryanthes excelsa* flowers are carried on an immense spike up to 6m

high which arises from a rosette of 2m long sword-shaped leaves. These impressive plants can be seen growing in The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden where they make spectacular feature plants.

This is the seventh in our *Illustrated Garden* series of cards taken from paintings of plants growing in the collection of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, and that have been included in the *Art of Botanical Illustration* biennial exhibitions.



FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

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Front cover: *Conospermum mitchellii* (Grampians) fruits. The exquisite beauty of the fruits is revealed when the image is magnified. See pages 4 and 5 for more details. Photo: Meg Hirst



Photo: Richard Barley

Chelsea Flower Show

The Australian Garden has recently been showcased (display pictured, left) at the Chelsea Flower Show as a destination within the *Spring Gardens of Victoria* tour run by Ross Garden Tours. The Garden display received a large amount of interest from the public, with a huge number of people having photos taken in front of the Red Sand Garden mock-up and enquiring about visiting the Australian Garden. Nearly 5,000 Australian Garden brochures were distributed, along with 3,000 joint RBG Melbourne and Cranbourne brochures. This is great international exposure for the Australian Garden and we hope to see an influx of new visitors!

Travel to Korea and Singapore

During June I travelled to Korea and Singapore to attend the second conference of the East Asian Botanic Gardens Network (EABGN) in Seoul and to have discussions in Singapore on the development of a training course for staff at Asian botanic gardens.

The two-day conference was attended by approximately 90 participants from gardens in South Korea, Japan, China, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Russia, Australia and New Zealand and mainly focused on exchange and cooperation among the botanic gardens in the East Asia region, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, promotion of public education programs in the region, and the focus of the EABGN for the next two years.

The meeting at Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG) furthered the development of a horticultural diploma short-course for Asian gardens staff. Likely partners for delivering the course are SBG, RBG Melbourne, RBG Sydney and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). It is expected to be a four-week intensive course held at SBG for the first time in mid-2009, with lecturers provided by partner gardens. Asian gardens will be surveyed to determine the exact content of the course, which is intended to be offered annually to strengthen staff skills. I am keen for RBG Melbourne to be an active partner in delivering the course.

Volcano Project Update

Those of you who have recently walked past Guilfoyle's Volcano Reservoir, located on the Anderson Street boundary approximately 100 metres from D Gate, will have noticed that an amazing new view to the city has opened up as work has begun to redevelop the Reservoir. The first step of the project has been to clear self-sown and weedy vegetation from around the area. It was also necessary to remove a small number of ornamental trees to accommodate the new landscaping. Over the coming months testing, cleaning and, if necessary, waterproofing, works will be carried out on the Reservoir's bluestone lining. Hard landscaping works are planned to begin by the end of the year. The project has attracted much media interest, including from *The Age*, and it has also received additional generous

financial support from donors helping to fill the remaining funding gap. The Volcano redevelopment is due to open early in 2010.

Hamer Award

The Online Plant Census – an RBG project to digitise records on over 50,000 plants from the 10,000 species growing in RBG Melbourne – has been awarded the 2007 *Sir Rupert Hamer Records Management Award for Innovation and Excellence* in the Outer Budget Agency category. Jenny Steinicke and Sabine Glissmann-Gough accepted the award on behalf of the Gardens at a ceremony held in Queens Hall, Parliament House.

The Census, available directly on the RBG's website, contains the names and digitised locations of plants within the Gardens and allows the database to be searched against scientific and common plant names, as well as specific garden beds. We are the first Australian botanic garden to have online access to our complete living collections, and it is already receiving much use by the public, voluntary groups and staff. This award is a tribute to the Census Project Team and efforts over a number of years in meticulous record keeping, mapping and labelling by horticultural staff, botanists and plant information staff.

Rope Bridges

Rodney van der Ree, Senior Ecologist at ARCUE, has recently received a flurry of media interest in Australia and internationally in his road

ecology research. In June 2007 a rope bridge (pictured, top) was installed across the Hume Freeway to allow native animals to safely cross the road. It was the first of its kind in Victoria, and the culmination of a three-year research program into the effect that roads and traffic have on wildlife. It is a joint project by ARCUE, The University of Melbourne, Monash University and VicRoads.

Cameras at either end of the bridge have recorded 50 crossings by ringtail possums and almost as many partial crossings, seven partial crossings by brushtail possums, and four partial crossings by squirrel gliders. In preliminary work, research found that survival rates of animals near the freeway are only about one-third that of animals living further away.

These early findings are impressive as they show that native fauna have acclimatised to the 70-metre rope bridge and are using it to cross the highway to find food, shelter and mates. The squirrel glider results are particularly positive as they are faced with the threat of extinction in Victoria and New South Wales.

Since the installation of the first bridge near Benalla, a second bridge at Longwood and four 'glider poles' have also been installed. The bridge and poles will be used to test the effectiveness of such structures in assisting animals to get to the other side safely, and this information will then be used by VicRoads in planning future road projects.

Philip Moors

The Friends' Scholarship 2007-08 Report by recipient Megan Hirst

In December of last year, I was awarded the inaugural Friends' Scholarship of \$2,000 to assist with my Victorian Conservation Seedbank / Floriscience project: *Identifying pre treatments and procedures to assist seed germination in targeted Victorian plant species.*

The objective of my project is to achieve reliable seed germination from a target group of fifty Victorian species. Within this group, all 16 of the natural regions of Victoria are represented, with a strong emphasis

Why doesn't this seed germinate?

on the most threatened species from these regions. There is also a wide range of families and habitats represented, from high alps to near sea level, semi aquatic to dry Mallee scrub.

The Friends' award enabled me to travel to Kings Park and Botanic Garden in Perth in March of this year. Kings Park is a renowned institution for research in Australian seed science. I felt incredibly privileged to have research scientist Dr David Merritt as my mentor during my stay. Dr Merritt is based at Kings Park and is also a lecturer in the School of Plant Biology at the University of Western Australia.

Gaining valuable 'hands on' experience and working alongside seed biologists of whom many are recognised experts in the germination biology of seeds of Australian plants, was an amazing opportunity for me.

Prior to my arrival in Perth, I posted seed samples over to Dr Merritt. This enabled all the work I carried out in the Kings Park laboratories to be conducted on the Victorian seeds represented in my project.

After familiarization with the X-ray machine I spent much time producing images of my target seed. The X-ray machine gives a high resolution image without detrimental effect, allows examination of the seed's internal morphology and determination of its viability. I remember emailing David Cantrill excitedly from the X-ray lab after my second day in Perth pleading the case for our own X-ray machine! He did reply I might add.

Following on from the X-ray machine, I operated the dissection microscope and captured images of fruits and seeds. Dr Merritt assisted me whilst examining dissected seed, giving me a greater insight into what I was actually observing. Whilst the X-ray image can determine if a seed is present as opposed to empty or predated (as in the X-ray of *Acacia sporadica*), it can be harder in some species to depict the internal structures of the seed. Performing a cut test, which involves slicing through a seed with a scalpel to determine if an embryo and endosperm are present, and if so, appear in good order, is the next step in assessing seed quality. I progressed through a series of cut tests under magnification, then photographed the result for each of my target species.

However, the knowledge of



Top: Hume Highway rope bridge in daylight at Violet Town.

Left: Possum family taking the safe way at night.

Photos: Rodney van der Ree

FEATURE

a viable seed is one thing, but will it germinate? This is the tricky bit. Throughout my stay I met regularly with Dr Merritt, and discussed many topics, starting with 'Why doesn't this seed germinate, Dave?' But it isn't a question one can answer too readily. As I have now discovered while working with germination trials, the more you think you know, the more it seems you don't.

My time at Kings Park concluded with discussion on experimental design, reviewing trials in academic papers, seed dormancy mechanisms, methods for breaking dormancy, stratification, pre treatments (such as smoke water and Gibberellic Acid) and the aim and objectives for my project. My head filled with so much new information, it felt as if my hand could not scribble quickly enough to get all the details down.

I encourage all interested staff members to apply for the Friends' scholarship. The time spent with Dr Merritt and his colleagues and the new skills and perspectives acquired have truly embellished my original project. The X-ray and photographic images I obtained have already been put to good work displayed on a poster which I presented at the annual ANPC conference in April. I am grateful for the Friends' award and their keen interest in the subject matter of my project.

I would like to acknowledge Neville Walsh and Jeff Jeanes for their ongoing support and assistance with this project (and the places it has taken me.).

Meg Hirst

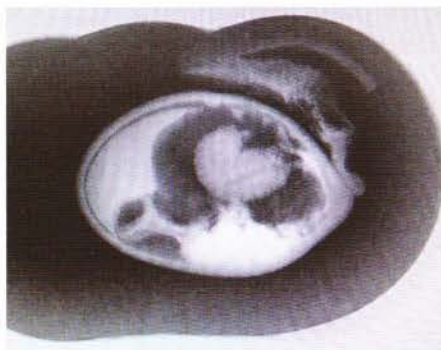
Seedbank officer.

Don't judge a seed by its cover!

Acacia sporadica intact and apparently normal.



X-ray: Acacia sporadica containing well-fed insect Eastern Highlands larva.



Kelleria laxa (Snowfields) fruit and exposed seed.

The embryo can be seen on the right. It is the lighter coloured section running vertically at the centre of the exposed seed.



Omphalolappula concava (Murray Mallee) fruit and exposed seed.

The fleshy yet firm translucent centre indicates the likelihood of a viable seed. But will it germinate?



Photos: Meg Hirst.



**GARDEN
PLANT**
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA

GPC
(formerly OPCA)
Annual General Meeting
Thursday
11th September 2008
6.00 for 6.30 pm
Wine & Cheese

DOMAIN HOUSE
Dallas Brooks Drive
SOUTH YARRA

**Guest Speaker &
Annual Plant Auction**

Supper provided

Members should be aware that we are planning a Spring 2009 garden tour of New Zealand at a date to be confirmed. Details will appear in the Summer edition of *Botanic News*.

ILLUSTRATORS

Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday 9 September
At 10.00am for 10.30am
In the Whirling Room
Cost: \$5.50 (inc GST) Pay on the day
RSVP: Friends' Office 9650 6398

LETTERING YOUR PAINTINGS

Bev Ednie, Botanical Illustrator, will talk about positioning the title and signature on your paintings and placing the matt around them. Poor labelling can spoil your work, so she will discuss ways to enhance the visual effect.

Bev will provide printed notes.
Judy Jarman

The Art of Botanical Illustration 2008

OPENING AND RECEPTION:

Friday 7 November 2008
6.00pm – 8.00pm

For more information about this event, please go to page 11.



Whirlybirds

The Whirlybirds group of botanical artists meets every Tuesday in the Whirling Room Studio.

At the moment, some of the artists are working on illustrations for submission to *The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition 2008*, while others are completing their paintings of the Eucalypts.

If you would like to join us, please contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532 for more information.

The Art of Botanical Illustration 2008

Would artists please note that works should be both delivered to AND collected from Domain House during and after selection. The exhibition will be open daily, 8-23 November, from 10.00am – 5.00pm at the Domain House Gallery.

Sandra Sanger

Sandra successfully exhibited in *Botanical Art @ Karwarra* at the Karwarra Australian Plant Garden in Kalorama. Because she was involved in this exhibition, which only included native plants, Sandra painted a series - *Australian Indigenous Trees* - which was shown at the RHSD Garden Show, N E C Birmingham, 2008 and received a Gold Medal and an award for *Best Exhibition in Show*. During the time she painted the trees, she also completed *Doryanthes excelsa*, (at left) and this image is being used to advertise *The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition 2008*. Well done, Sandra.

Nature in Colour Pencil Workshop

HONEYEATERS AND FLOWERING GUM

Wednesday 24, Thursday 25 and Friday 26 September 2008
10.00am – 3.30pm

Cost: \$240 Friends \$180
For application form, please contact the Friends' Office on 9650 6398 or email friends@frbgmelb.org

Janet Matthews, well-known pencil and wildlife artist, will conduct this three-day workshop. She will demonstrate the basic techniques of handling colour pencil, and drawing flowers and birds together with specific techniques like creating flower stamens, feathers, eyes, etc. Janet combines demonstrating her process step-by-step with personal guidance. A materials list will be available on application to the course.



Each participant will finish with their own folio of techniques for future reference and a completed study of a honeyeater on a flowering gum.

The pencil drawing above is Janet's rendering of Firetails in a flowering gum.



Sandra pictured with her successful series of paintings in Birmingham.
Photo: William Sanger

FROM THE MEMBERS

Spring in Greece with Caroline Davies

It was May and the weather was perfect. The Ionian Sea was a deep turquoise, the rivers of Epirus ran milky jade over limestone, the trees were covered in soft new growth and everywhere there were flowers (photo, centre right). Alpine meadows sometimes a froth of pink, yellow and white, sometimes scarlet with poppies; hillsides ablaze with yellow broom; thyme underfoot; salvia, campanula, cistus, convolvulus, phlomis, verbascum, geranium, mallow, scabiosa (and many many more) by the roadside; *Euphorbia myrsinites* and *Ramonda serbica* emerging from crevices in the limestone rocks and tiny sedum clinging to stone walls. On a jeep track near the Albanian border we saw both the rare monkey orchid (*Orchis simia*) and the exquisite deep red peony (*Paeonia peregrine*, photo middle bottom of page).

This wonderfully organised tour was enjoyed by a group of Friends of the RBG. The itinerary took us from the verdant island of Corfu with its gentle countryside of olive groves and cypresses, where we spent our first week, to Ioannina, the principal town of Epirus, the rugged mountainous north west province of Greece, where we spent our second week and then finally to Meteora and Delphi.

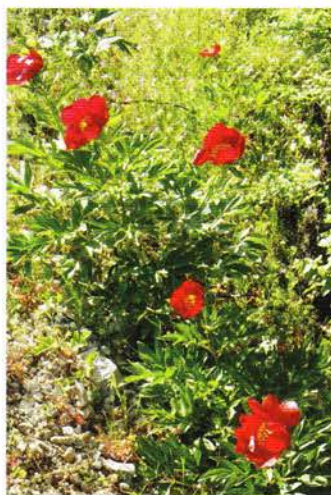
During our three weeks we walked along coastal paths, through gorges, beside rivers, up jeep tracks and along narrow pathways worn by sheep and goats. We ate wonderful meals at local tavernas, in the shade

of ancient trees and vines. We explored the town of Corfu with its Venetian, British and French heritage and Ioannina with its mosques, minarets, forts and bazaars, the legacy of centuries of Ottoman rule. We visited the mountain villages of Zagoria, with traditional stone houses and arched bridges and the ancient sacred sites of Dodoni and Delphi.

On Corfu we were privileged to visit a number of private gardens, including the spectacular estate of Lord Rothschild (photo bottom far right), the lovely terraced garden of Lady Marjorie Holmes and the estate of Cali Doxiadis with its Venetian house and its garden set within olive groves, vineyards and orchards (photo top right). Everywhere we were welcomed as friends and made to feel guests rather than tourists.

My thanks to Caroline Davies and David Martin of *Caroline Davies Garden Tours* (photo below) for devising such a magnificent treat for the Friends.

Bronwen Merrett



Photos: Bronwen Merrett



Spring Guided Visit to the Growing Friends' Nursery

Friday 12 September at 10.30am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 10 September on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Map showing location of nursery is also available on the website
Bookings essential as numbers limited

Spring has sprung, the grass is riz....Anon

As the sap rises, so does one's enthusiasm for the Spring garden. So come along and indulge in the variety of plants on offer in our nursery. Our Spring nursery visit will be the perfect opportunity to purchase from the full range of Growing Friends' stock in preparation for Spring planting.

This visit is especially suitable for new members and for others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and

workings of our Growing Friends Nursery. We will meet at Gate Lodge for a brief morning tea and to meet other like-minded gardeners, and then be guided down to the nursery for a brief overview of the nursery and to make purchases.

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



Spring Fit Friends Ramble:

MELBOURNE'S OTHER RIVER: THE SALT WATER MARIBYRNONG

Thursday 18 September, 10.00am sharp
Meet at carpark entrance to Canning Reserve, Maribyrnong. Melways 27 G7
Cost: \$30 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 12 September on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Bookings essential as numbers limited.

This ramble, a circuit of approx. 6kms, taking about two hours, will commence at the Canning Reserve near the bank of the Maribyrnong River, then follow the river around to Solomon's Ford where the fresh water meets the salt water.

We'll break the walk for morning tea at a café in Military Road and return via the historic tea gardens reminiscent of an early, more leisurely Melbourne. The 'visual space' afforded by this environment, and the

natural bush so close to the city, may surprise some.

Please be confident of completing the walk at a good pace. Parking and toilets are available in Canning Reserve.

Public Transport: Tram No 57, Elizabeth St to terminus (stop 48 – about 50 mins). Cross bridge over river to reach Canning Reserve. Please consider fellow Friends and arrive promptly. Remember to build-in adequate travel time.



The Wonders Of Chile

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY DR RUDOLF THOMANN

Thursday 25 September at 6.00 for 6.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$25 Friends \$15
RSVP by Monday 22 September on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Please join us for a glass of wine and savouries before the talk

Dr Rudolf Thomann is regarded as one of Chile's leading marine biologists, naturalists and environmental consultants. Since 1990 he has worked in Santiago as an environmental assessor and teaching ecology at universities. Dr Thomann also lectures, manages a hatchery and has been involved in the development of some outstanding *Explora* tourism projects. He leads tours to some of Chile's most outstanding World

Heritage Areas including Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia, the Atacama Desert and Antarctica.

Dr Thomann will introduce the unique flora and wildlife of Chile, its gardens, some magnificent national reserves, remarkable landforms and the Mapuche (indigenous peoples of the south). He will be introduced by Mr Warwick Forge.

EVENTS



Queen Of Herbs: Jekka McVicar Herb Fest

TWO LECTURES AND LUNCH

Thursday 9 October 10.00am to 3.30pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Cost: \$95 Friends \$70.
Includes two lectures, morning tea
and basket lunch OR

Cost: \$45 Friends \$35

For single lecture attendance ONLY

RSVP by Friday 3 October
on enclosed booking form or
download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Crowned the 'Queen of Herbs' by Jamie Oliver, one of Rick Stein's food heroes Jekka McVicar, of Jekka's Herb Farm, is the leading organic herb grower in the UK. Author and winner of 60 RHS gold medals, including 13 Chelsea golds, she appears on gardening and cookery programs, is a regular columnist in *Gardens Illustrated*, and is an elected member of the RHS Council and President of the West of England Herb Society.

Lecture 1: Planning a Herb Garden, and winning gold at Chelsea.

Lecture 2: Culinary and medicinal herbs from around the world.

Please indicate when booking whether for whole day or single lecture

Lectures run for 1.5 hours, starting promptly at 10.00am and 1.30pm.

Jekka McVicar's latest book (signed) and a selection of herbs will be available for sale..



Bus Trip to Australian Garden at Cranbourne

Thursday 16 October. Depart 9.00am from Kooyong carpark where parking is available (opp. Kooyong Tennis Club, close Kooyong Station and Glenferrie Rd trams. Return: 4.30pm approx.

Cost: \$60 incl bus, entrance, lunch and guided tour of Australian Garden

RSVP by Friday 3 October
on enclosed booking form.
or download a booking form from the
Events page on our website:
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Payment must accompany booking.

The Australian Garden (AG) at the RBG Cranbourne has matured and developed since its opening in 2006. Our last visit to the AG was shortly before it was completed, so if you haven't been since then, this bus trip will be a must.

A specially organised guided tour has been arranged for us by the AG Master Gardeners, so we can see the full extent of this wonderful garden's development. A delicious lunch in the café will follow. After

lunch selected walks within the gardens at Cranbourne will take place. A short walk to the Trig Point will give a marvellous view of the AG and the surrounding landscape. For the more energetic the walk will continue on to the Stringybark Picnic Ground through the heathland or you may return to the AG for further viewing.

The bus will pick us up from either the AG or the Picnic Ground to return home.



Growing Friends

SPRING PLANT SALE

Saturday 18 October

10.00am to 4.00pm

Sunday 19 October

10.00am to 3.00pm

Inside E Gate, RBG Melbourne

Entry Free.

Our Spring Sale is timed again this year to coincide with the RBG Melbourne's Spring Open Day. Wonderful Spring temptations will be available at the Sale. Included will be trees, shrubs, perennials, succulents, bulbs, vireyas and hanging baskets. All the Growing Friends and some RBG Horticultural staff will be on hand to dispense advice on the right plant for your garden. Once again tickets for fabulous raffle prizes will be on sale.

A full catalogue of all plants for sale will be available for \$5.

Visa, Mastercard, cash, cheque and EFTPOS accepted. At left is *Rhododendron vireya* 'Mrs Elizabeth Miller' which will be on sale.

EVENTS



Spring Insiders' Walk

**IAN POTTER
FOUNDATION
CHILDREN'S GARDEN**

Thursday 23 October at 10.00am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$15 MEMBERS ONLY

Payment must accompany booking as this is a limited number event
RSVP by Monday 20 October on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Join us for morning tea before the walk

Revisit childhood and remember a time of plates of germinating wheat seeds on cotton wool, falling into the rosemary hedge, watching lettuces and rhubarb burst forth and the stolen fruit that always tasted best.

This walk will pass through the grassy woodland and the Education Service, then pause in wonder at the entry point to the magic of The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. Two education officers will

explain how children and schools use this garden.

The IPF Children's Garden is a wonderland of education and adventure, with bamboo tunnels, a viewing tower and vegetable and fruit growing areas. Since the opening in November 2004, the plants have matured, changes have been brought about in water use and new, magical areas of play have been developed. Spring is a perfect season for us to visit.



New Members' Welcome

Wednesday 29 October at 10.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Birdwood Ave, South Yarra

Photo of *Camellia japonica* 'Volunteer' by Michael Hare.

Please join us for the New Members' Welcome! Invitations will be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering.

We look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to the Friends. Morning tea will be served while you will have the opportunity to mingle and meet other new members. Learn about the Friends' wide range of activities in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with conveners of all groups on

hand to provide information. Finish up on a special tour of the Gardens with an expert Voluntary Guide.

Those who have already expressed interest in a Morning Welcome will also receive an invitation. If you haven't been able to attend a New Members' Welcome and would like to come this time, you are most welcome. Please ring our office on 9650 6398 and we'll make sure your name is on the list.



Gardens of China ILLUSTRATED TALK BY SARAH GUEST

Thursday 30 October
at 10.00 for 10.30am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$25 Friends \$15
RSVP by Friday 24 October on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Please join us for morning tea before the talk

Sarah Guest has been on a bus trip to China with Peter Valder which, as she says, does not make her an expert on anything or everything Chinese. She certainly does not see herself as an expert on Chinese gardens. However, she has returned full of enthusiasm and laden with photographs. The trip included visits to some remaining fragments of classic Imperial gardens, the gardens of the rich and famous of past ages and ancient temple gardens. Public

parks and public places were also of great interest and often, in this land of sharp contrasts, revealed an interesting east-meets-west approach to design. Some plants were new to her while some old garden favourites attracted attention through their placement and usage. Tree trunks bandaged in rope or dressed like Elvis Presley in gold lame remain for her as mysterious as they were surprising.

EVENTS



The Art of Botanical Illustration 2008

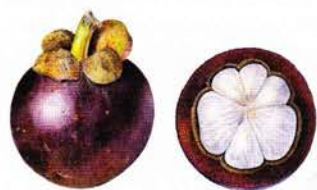
OPENING AND RECEPTION:

Friday 7 November 2008
6.00pm – 8.00pm
Domain House Gallery,
Dallas Brooks Drive, South Yarra
(opposite the Herbarium)
COST: \$30 Friends \$20
RSVP by Friday 31 October on
enclosed booking form or download a
booking form from the Events page on
our website www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

The Friends are proud to present this beautiful exhibition of over 150 works by leading botanical artists from Australia and overseas. Botanical illustration is a thriving art form and has been used throughout history for the scientific documentation and identification of plants. This year, works for the exhibition have been selected by an expert panel including an artist and a botanist. A highlight of the exhibition will be the awarding

of the Celia Rosser Medal to the artist/s whose work in the exhibition is judged as outstanding.

All exhibited works of art, as well as a selection of cards, unframed works and the Friends' 2009 calendar will be available for sale.



Garcinia mangostana

The Art of Botanical Illustration 2008

COMPREHENSIVE TOUR WITH LOUISE CORONEL

Thursday 13 November at 10.00am
OR Tuesday 18 November at 10.00am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Cost: \$20 MEMBERS ONLY
Booking essential. Numbers limited
RSVP by Friday 7 November on
enclosed booking form or download a
booking form from the Events page on
our website www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Please nominate your preferred date on the booking form.

Louise Coronel, Honorary Life Member of the Friends and founder of the Botanical Illustrators Group, will lead a visit to *The Art of Botanical Illustration 2008* exhibition.

This comprehensive tour will be an opportunity to discover some of the intricacies of design and technique used in botanical illustration, and the demanding selection criteria to be met by exhibitors. The exquisite and detailed works on display cover a huge range of

subjects and artistic styles, and Louise will endeavour to help you observe and understand these differences.

We will meet first at Gate Lodge for morning tea and a brief introduction to the history of the eight previous biennial exhibitions presented by the Friends. Louise will then walk us over to the Domain House Gallery to view the exhibition together.



Spring 'Talking Plants' Morning:

ROSES

Friday 21 November at 10.00am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
COST: \$15 Friends \$10
RSVP by Wednesday 19 November on
enclosed booking form or download a
booking form from the Events page on
our website
www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

The Spring Talking Plants theme will be 'Roses'. All those attending are invited to bring a bloom of their favourite rose to show and share. A rose enthusiast will be present.

The morning will be held at Gate Lodge (Baldwin Room if weather inclement) and will be an informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening. It is a wonderful opportunity for new members to meet other members. Refreshments will be served

during the morning. Following the discussion there will be the opportunity to visit the Growing Friends' Nursery for plant purchases. If planning to make plant purchases don't forget to bring a market trolley.

Occasionally when strolling the byways of the Gardens' footpaths, enjoying the many and varied sensory offerings of the seasonal smorgasbord, one can't help reflecting on How Things Have Changed. You might think that this would be the realm of the older patron only, but I assure you that there is merit in this exercise for all of us. It gives us a sense of the journey and, hopefully, of achievement. It shows us that our endeavours have borne or are soon to be bearing fruit – with any luck.

The living landscape changes continually at some levels of detail, of course. You only need to look at photographs taken across the decades to see the extent of the change. The garden is constantly growing, evolving, and fluctuating seasonally. So too are the horticultural practices to some extent. Consider for a moment how much has changed in the way we do some things. There are two old photographs which illustrate this graphically.

The first was taken around 1875, and shows the Gardens employees moving a substantially-sized cedar on a horse-drawn dray. This operation took place during William Guilfoyle's period of significant remodelling of the Gardens, during which time he transplanted scores of biggish trees from Mueller's earlier regimented placements into new locations to create the framework for his new Gardens vision. For example in the summer of 1874-5 he reported that he had overseen the transplanting of 832 large trees, with the loss of only six

(presumably by 'loss' he meant death, not that they were misplaced somewhere).

When you view this photograph, I'm sure it will not escape your attention that the dress standards of the Gardens personnel have slipped to some degree. Collars, ties, waist-coats, jackets, side-whiskers.... and that's not to mention the head-wear! What the top-hat lacks in terms of the modern requirements for brim and shade is more than compensated for its capacity for storage in the attic space.

The fascinating thing is that while we know that Guilfoyle

shows a pair of horse-drawn lawn mowers at work on the Eastern Lawn in the Gardens. The mowers are single cylinder design, with the operators walking behind. These were employed for maintaining the Gardens turf until possibly the late 1930s, though it is noted in R.T.M. Pescott's book *The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne – A history from 1845-1970* that a request was made by the then-Director John Cronin for the purchase of an additional horse-drawn mower and a 20-inch cut motor lawn-mower, which was the first in the history of the Gardens.

Consider for a moment how much has changed in the way we do some things.

successfully moved so many large trees, we would now be shy to attempt this. Our modern arboricultural sensibilities would suggest to us that this was unwise, and that the chances of success were slim. The equipment costs alone (excavator, possibly hydraulic tree-spade, mobile crane etc) would be prohibitive. I suppose (fortunately) that the need for us to move many large trees doesn't exist – we do not need to remodel the landscape as Guilfoyle had done. Ours is more a mission of ensuring that there is enough young tree stock being introduced to the site over time such that the tree population is suitably mixed and therefore sustainable. From that point of view, planting young trees is more sensible (and far cheaper).

Consider also the second of my chosen photographs. It

What a layer of complexity the use of horses in Gardens operations must have added. Stabling, feeding, grooming, tack and harness, blacksmithery, veterinary care.... not to mention dealing with the whole psychology of the horse. I rather think that the modern equivalent has bypassed most of those obstacles, though it could be argued that the modern mower has a psychology all its own.

Mowers themselves have also evolved to some extent. Until the 1950s the only true mower was a cylinder mower. These were works of art – a well-honed and tuned cylinder mower skillfully operated could deliver a lawn fit for a king. However, by the 1950s we had a change of monarch, so some fresh thinking was needed, and where better than in suburban Sydney.

The tale of the birth of the

Victa rotary mower is part of our national folklore, though many would not be aware that the original rotary mower prototype was put together by a chap called Lawrence Hall, who used a boat motor, heavy tubular steel frame, blades mounted on a plough disc and a kerosene tin as a petrol tank for his 'Mowhall' rotary mower. It was apparently so heavy that it had to be pulled and pushed at the same time to move it across the turf!

It is reported that Mervyn Victor Richardson saw Hall's 'Mowhall' working in a park in Sydney, and four years later developed the 'Victa' rotary mower (the 'Rotomo') using the same concept but different components (including a peach tin instead of the kero tin) – and the rest is history. Within two years he had sold 20,000 of them, and in 1992 the five-millionth Victa rolled out of the factory. So the rest of the world might have been splitting atoms and making rockets capable of flight into space, but by golly, we had tamed the unruly grass of the suburban back yard, and – as the Victa advertisement said – turned it into lawn.

One of our least popular mechanical gizmos at the Gardens is the backpack blower. As the name suggests, this is a piece of machinery that sits on the back of the operator, for the purposes of blowing air. The air is directed at leaves and such litter on the ground, and the result is a form of pneumatic sweeping. Unfortunately, the airflow is accompanied by the scream and smell of a two-stroke engine, so their contribution to the restful amenity is limited. I understand

GARDENS

that the weapons created for the 'Ghostbusters' movie of the 1980s were based on the backpack blower. Ghouls have little concern for amenity, it seems.

Even within my memory of the Gardens' maintenance the non-mechanical path-sweeping alternative was still in use. This involved taking a palm frond, trimming its lower leaflets, and binding it onto a handle (often bamboo). The resulting broom would be operated by swinging it slowly from side to side, sweeping the litter clear of the paths. I recall an older employee claiming that he could sweep a path more quickly and efficiently with the old palm frond than any new-fangled machine could do it, but sadly the 'ultimate sweep-off' never eventuated. With some relief we have obviated the need for much of the back-pack blowing recently, by hiring a contractor to bring in a street-sweeper on a regular basis, in the early hours of the day.

Even that staple utility of the garden shed, the wheelbarrow, has been relegated to a role off the interchange bench. Most of the tasks that would have been the wheelbarrow's bread and butter in decades past have now been allocated to the electric John Deere utility vehicles. These almost-silent workhorses glide around the paths, taking loads of prunings here, new plant stock there – and surprising many a pedestrian in between with their lack of warning motor noise. What a pleasant change it is, though, to reduce the noise of machinery around the Gardens in one small way.

Perhaps one of the most significant areas of change in management of our plants has

been in arboriculture. In our archival sheds, we still have the old long wooden ladders which were used to access the canopies of trees up until the 1980s. The equipment and the approach were fairly basic, and hadn't really changed much over the preceding several hundred years. I recall an instructional drawing in a French volume on arboriculture, showing the use of what appears to be a large meat cleaver for removing a branch, while perched atop a ladder. What would the Workcover Authority say? Would the French listen?

The modern arborist is skilled in the safe use of ropes, harness, knots, chainsaws, and all manner of other specialised kit. Our understanding of tree biology has changed, and so the nature of total tree care including pruning limbs, care of the root zone, and the dynamics of the canopy has developed.

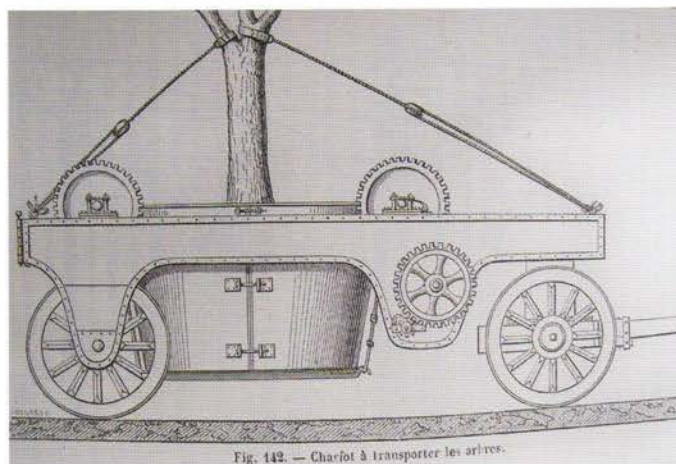
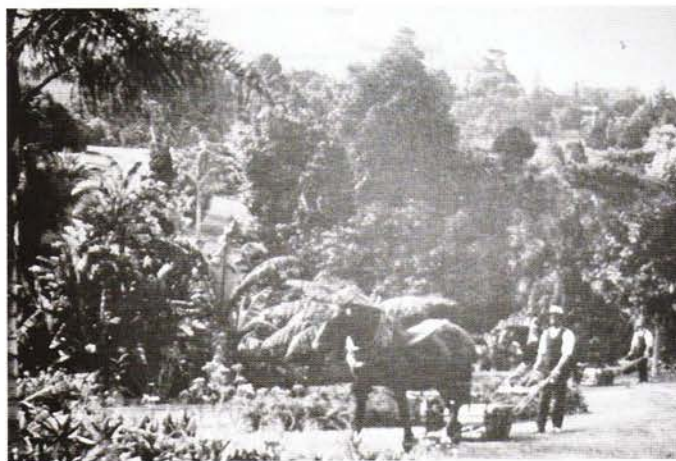
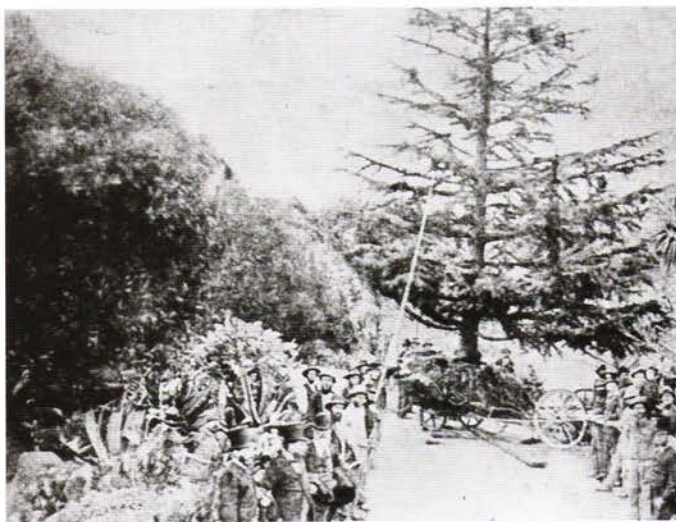
I can't help but wonder though – with all this knowledge and equipment, would we actually have a better success rate than William Guilfoyle if we moved 832 large trees? Would we, as Guilfoyle put it so well, achieve a success 'proving the geniality of the climate for this sort of work'? Perhaps. Fortunately, the need should not arise.

Richard Barley

Top Picture: Moving a large Cedar in the Gardens.

Middle Picture: Mowing the Gardens' lawns with horsepower.

Bottom Picture: French transplanting wagon, from Culture Des Arbres et Arbrisseaux D'ornement, by M A de Breuil, 1873.



GROWING FRIENDS



GROWING FRIENDS



1. Old 'Mouse House' containing computer, printer, boxes of new labels, stationery, library, records, electrical leads all over the floor, 12 pigeon-hole storage for about 26 Growing Friends' belongings every Friday, teacups, tea, sugar and biscuits. Very cramped when researching data and at morning tea times. Note storage of polystyrene boxes outside.

2. Old Mouse House and potting area. Note only two windows and no cross-ventilation. Note also joint plant sales and morning tea table outside.

3. Original potting up area suitable for about 14 people at a time. Crane removal of the old building and installation of the new one required demolition of this area.

Photos 1,2 and 3: Stephen Paterson

4. All cleaned out and ready for workmen. The RBG provided storage for returning equipment. Convenor Julie Horsfall is tired but happy.

5. The crane lifting the new portable over the top of a sensitive, historic building was the one used to extract Phar Lap from the old museum in Swanston Street. It was an interesting afternoon. A 300mm margin for error proved how skilled the crane driver was, even when a corner of the portable brushed the small grey building below.

Photo: Pam Eames

6. Workmen settling new building onto its foundations. Photo: Pam Eames

7. New potting area with room for about 22 people; roof of Laserlite making for a much lighter workspace. A happier atmosphere is very noticeable.

8. Inside new 'Grouse' (it's much, much better) House, showing computer and library areas.

9. Our new indoor kitchenette and personal storage area. It's the first time we have had an indoor sink and automatic hot water.

10. 2750 litre water tank donated by PJT Plumbing. Many thanks to Paul. The tank collects water from our roof.....

Photos 7-10: Michael Hare

Note: Special thanks to RBG Infrastructure and Maintenance departments for their highly valued advice, assistance and support during this project and to architect Growing Friend Estelle Redlich and past Convener Pam Eames without whom the renovation would not have been possible.

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(Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Dr)

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I wish to apply for membership in the following category

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual (within 50km of the GPO) | \$45 |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Interstate, Overseas, Country,
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(*state pension number / student number and educational institution) | \$33 |

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BOTANIC NEWS

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