Summer 2008-09

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS *of the* ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

SEASON'S GREETINGS AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2009

To all our Members

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As 2008 draws to a close we can reflect with pleasure on some achievements over the last twelve months.

In February, the membership of the Friends reached an all time high of 2368 – a great credit to our Membership and Promotion Committee which has worked so hard and with such enthusiasm. Cathy Trinca, who convened the Committee for three years, has recently stepped down and we are delighted that Lee Tregloan is taking over the role. In addressing the challenges in recruiting new members, Cathy has worked skilfully and tirelessly and we extend to her our thanks and appreciation for all that she has done. Since February, the membership figure has slipped slightly but during the summer months, when more opportunities arise to promote the Friends, I believe we can regain that lost ground and more.

The Events Committee has also seen some changes – Susie Brookes, the convener of that Committee, has handed the reins over to Susan Mackintosh who responded to a notice, inserted in the last edition of *Botanic News*, seeking an Events Committee convener. I was very pleased indeed that Susan accepted the appointment. Susie, during her time as convener, took responsibility for the arrangements of two very successful events – the visit to Melbourne last November of David Howard, then Head Gardener at Highgrove House, the country residence of His Royal Highness Prince Charles, and in October, the visit of Jekka McVicar, the renowned English organic herb specialist. In addition, Susie oversaw the streamlining of the Events Committee operation so that the workload is more evenly spread. We thank Susie very much indeed for all her very hard, efficient and thoughtful work. It was greatly appreciated.

Lack of rain has not made life easy for gardeners but, nonetheless, discerning shoppers were quick to snap up many beautiful specimens at the Growing Friends' Spring Sale. The quality of the plants on offer was exceptional and the Growing Friends are to be congratulated not only on their propagating skills but on the success of the sale which raised $20,835 nett. Thank you to the Growing Friends and all those who helped at the Sale to achieve this splendid result.

The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition in November brought to us beauties of a different kind – magnificent works of art by many talented Friends. Elaine Canty, Chairman of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board, in opening the Exhibition, said 'Botanical illustrators must have not only a keen eye for detail but a significant knowledge of plants.'

My fellow Councillors and I were greatly saddened to hear of the death in September of former Council Member, Anne Weber. Anne served on Council from 2000 to 2006, made a very significant contribution to the affairs of the Friends and was held in great affection by us all. We extend our sympathy to her family.

In November we regretfully farewelled Helen Fahey, a dedicated member of the Friends' office team for 14 years. Helen's responsibilities included working with the editor in the preparation of *Botanic News* and a multitude of administrative duties. Her knowledge of the Friends, her willingness to take on extra tasks whenever necessary and her warmth and friendship will be greatly missed. We extend to her our thanks and appreciation for the contribution she made and wish her well in the future.

Festive greetings, peace and good health to our readers.

Janet Thomson

Photo: Cathy Trinca

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Front cover: Hybrid flowering gum, Corymbia ficifolia x Corymbia ptychocarpa *'Summer Red'*
Back cover: Jacaranda
Photos: Jennifer Marshall.

2008 Annual General Meeting

This meeting of the Friends re-elected President Janet Thomson, Vice-president Cathy Trinca, Treasurer Maurice Castro and Ordinary Members of Council John Hawker and Peter Kelly. The President then welcomed Ordinary Member Susan Chandler and farewelled Sir Ninian Stephen and David Plant who, while eligible for re-election, chose to retire.

David Plant joined Council as an Ordinary Member early in 1997 and served as Vice-President from 2000 to 2004. He convened the Shop Committee from late 1998 until the shop was taken over by the Royal Botanic Gardens in 2000. For some years before the Friends handed over responsibility for the Seat Program to the RBG in 2002, David, with the help of the Friends' staff, kept track of seats placed in the Gardens – no easy task as frequently they were moved vast distances from the location chosen by their donors. In 2006-2007, David chaired the Friends' 25th Birthday Celebrations Planning

Committee and over many years has helped at Growing Friends' plant sales. David is an ornithologist and is perhaps best known for the wonderful bird articles which appear from time to time in *Botanic News*, written in collaboration with Tony Delves. We thank David most sincerely for all the time and hard work he has contributed to the Friends.

Sir Ninian Stephen was appointed as President of the Friends in September 1998, following the death of John Harper. On completion of his term as President in 2002, he served as Immediate Past President for four years, then for another two years as an Ordinary Member of Council.

In 2001-2002 he was a member of the Future Directions Committee. The Friends were greatly honoured that such a distinguished and busy Australian made time to support us by taking on these roles, bringing to them his skill, vast experience and wonderful sense of humour. We greatly appreciate his contribution and thank him very much indeed.

Volunteer Service Medals were awarded to:

Lydia Bartlett and Pauline Morrison (25 years);

Geoff Hardy, Gillian Kirk and Lucille Strachan (20 years);

Joanna Brownell, Anna Denton and Rosemary McMeekin (15 years).

Members enjoyed the presentation of Scholarships to Wayne Gebert, Helen Jolly and Philip Bowyer-Smyth and the address given by Dr Pina Milne on her Australian Geographic expedition to the remote Hay River in Central Australia.

Friends' Exhibition

Congratulations to the Friends for another highly successful *The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition*. The exhibition demonstrated that botanical illustration is thriving in Melbourne, with many new artists being selected to exhibit high-quality works. Reflecting this four paintings were bought for the State Botanical Collection with a grant from the Friends. They are paintings by Beverley Lewis, Ruth Jackson, Debra Bartlett and Maggie Munn (more details on page 10). I am most grateful to the Friends for their generous continuing support of the Gardens and State Botanical Collection.

Friends' Scholarship

On 13 October, Peter Symes arrived back in Australia from a four-week study tour to the USA supported by the Friends' scholarship. He visited many botanic gardens and other scientific institutions in Nevada, California, Colorado and Arizona to study landscape water management, plant selection, supportive technology, water treatment, etc. Following his tour, Peter considers that RBG Melbourne is leading many USA botanic gardens in efficient water management and in policies supporting landscape adaptation to climate change. Peter has gained professionally in studying the natural climates of more arid-adapted plant species, building relationships with environmental, horticultural and water-resource management experts in the USA, and developing a portfolio of heat-adapted and drought-tolerant plant taxa.

Forthcoming presentations will be planned to pass on his findings to employees and Friends of the RBG.

The Gardens' staff eagerly awaited the announcement of the scholarship recipients for 2009 at the Friends' AGM in November. Congratulations and best wishes go to Wayne Gebert, Helen Jolley and Philip Bowyer-Smith. (all pictured on page 4) who will share the Award. We look forward to their presentations with interest.

Australian Garden

The Australian Garden's award successes have continued with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) awarding Taylor Cullity Lethlean with Paul Thompson the 2008 *Award of Excellence in Design* for the Australian Garden in the *2008 National Awards in Landscape Architecture*. This is a continuation of the succession of major awards received by the Australian Garden – bringing the total of regional and national awards since 1997 to 16.

The Woodland Picnic Area, the first of four elements comprising Stage 2 of the Australian Garden, was officially opened by Elaine Canty on 23 November, in conjunction with the new *Garden Grubs Kids' Club* amid a sea of colour. A series of family activities kept visitors busy throughout the day, including a sausage sizzle, face painting, didgeridoo workshops and the chance to meet Grubby, the Garden Grub. I strongly recommend taking advantage of the warmer weather to take a ride along the new bicycle track, try the children's play area, or simply enjoy the barbecue facilities and the woodland setting.

The Visitor Centre is currently undergoing preparation for the commencement of construction of the extension. The Boonerwurrung Café is temporarily relocating its operations to the Gallery Space behind the entry/reception area of the Visitor Centre to allow for uninterrupted construction.

Rare and Threatened Species Collection

Landscape works on the Rare and Threatened Species Bed have now been completed and the plants are beginning to flourish. Thank you once again to the Friends for funding the initial stages of this important project. The George Alexander Foundation has also provided funding for the development of signage and educational programs focusing on threatened plants and biodiversity conservation.

In an example of the conservation work of the RBG, a DSE officer working on threatened species in SW Victoria recently requested locality details of the endangered species *Bossiaea vombata*. The information has resulted in the establishment of a 'no-go' area surrounding the sole remaining *B. vombata* population, which is located in the Wombat State Forest. The DSE officer had read the 2008 article by Jim Ross in *Muellaria*, 'A new species of *Bossiaea* (Fabaceae: Bossiaeeae) from Victoria', and requested locality details as she was aware of a

number of management activities (e.g. controlled burning, grading of the road) scheduled for the general area. In light of the threats to the population, precise locality details were passed on to the appropriate land managers at DSE and the site has now been protected.

Spring Open Day

The RBG celebrated the arrival of spring with the annual Spring Open Day on Sunday, 19 October. Once again it was a huge success with a spectacular display of colour and sound. Many people took advantage of the fine weather and 'access all areas' tours of the National Herbarium, behind the scenes in the Nursery and Gardens discovery walks. As always, the Growing Friends' Plant Sale attracted many home gardeners eager to find the many special and unusual plants on sale. Radio RRR's two-hour gardening program *Dirty Deeds* even joined in the action, broadcasting live from outside the Visitor Centre.

Philip Moors

Painting of Salvia involucrata x karwinskii *by Deborah Churnside bought by the RBG for the State Collection.*

Philip Bowyer-Smith

Wayne Gebert

Helen Jolley

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

Our Plant Sale, held on the weekend of 18 and 19 October, yielded a very creditable and pleasing result of $20,835. We saw many regular buyers and met some new shoppers very keen to understand how the Growing Friends produces its stock and how the sale helps the Gardens.

The success of the weekend depends on a heavy commitment from dedicated Growing Friends and the Friends' Treasury section and a marvellous input from volunteers keen to help in the sales and entry tents, in the kitchen and with publicity. While the plant stock may in part sell itself, it is the volunteers who guarantee the success of our efforts. Every one of you is a great advertisement for the Friends' organisation. Thank you very much for your help.

Overheard in passing was the cry from a customer pushing a loaded trolley 'I only came in here for three plants....' and seen following his parent was a young lad carefully holding a pot containing a succulent with tear-shaped leaves. He was enjoying gently feeling the leaves of 'his' plant. There was another young lad who insisted that for his garden bed he needed something with orange flowers (which we could provide) but we also heard the common cry of 'Have you sold all those already? I must get here earlier next time.'

We are very grateful to the following donors of prizes for our raffle:

Dorothy Smith for a tapestry of a Margaret Preston painting won by Claire Hill.

Betta Grower Fertilisers P/L for fertiliser and soil conditioner won by Virginia Morrison.

Bunnings, Northland for a child's wheelbarrow won by Estelle Redlich.

The beautiful yellow clivea, donated by the Growing Friends and won by Gina Crossman.

Congratulations to the four winners whose contributions helped raise about $575 towards the sale total and grateful thanks to the wonderful donors, Dorothy Smith, Betta Growers P/L and Bunnings Northland who continue to support the Gardens so well.

Meg Miller.

GROWING FRIENDS

Following the success of the Growing Friends' Spring Plant Sale we are proud to say that the Growing Friends have raised $42,100, after expenses, from the sale of plants in the past financial year. This ultimately benefits the Gardens.

In September I had the opportunity to attend the BGANZ *Diversity and Directions* forum in Geelong; BGANZ is the acronym for Botanic Gardens of Australia and New Zealand. This organisation, incorporated in 2004, is dedicated to representing the interests of Botanic Gardens within Australia and New Zealand and to help the ongoing recognition of how precious such gardens are within communities. One of their aims is to show governments the power of gardens to influence a diverse and significant percentage of people. Approximately 14.5 million people visit botanic gardens in Australia and New Zealand each year.

The forum was attended by representatives from Botanic Gardens all over Victoria. BGANZ also holds a biennial congress which next year will be held at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in Queensland, from 5 to 11 October.

BGANZ is open to both staff and others associated with Botanic Gardens, such as Friends' organisations. In Geelong I was the only Melbourne Friend, but there were many Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat Friends.

As you can see from the photos, the Melbourne Gardens was strongly represented among the speakers. Some of the gardeners pictured here with me at lunch on day two spoke about the particular areas they are concerned with in our Gardens. Philip Moors, Richard Barley and Andrew Laidlaw also gave substantial presentations. Philip spoke on the ability of botanic gardens to influence horticultural development, Richard on the importance of the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia, and Andrew on the current revival of Guilfoyle's Volcano.

The program was well organised by Annette Zealey, the Director of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, with 22 presenters on varied and most interesting topics.

The manager of Urban Design for Greater Geelong, and the Landscape Planner for Greater Bendigo both spoke, on the first morning, about the importance of leading by example in urban design. They each described how they are maintaining those incidental parts of our everyday visual world, such as roundabouts and footpath planting in dry, often highly compacted areas.

Later that day Neil Perkins, from our Melbourne gardens, spoke about his work in the Australian Border: of its early history when designed by Guilfoyle in 1887 and planted with 1400 plants from Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, through to the changes in the 1990s into a Rainforest Collection. He then described what further planting has been undertaken since 2006 to further alter the border using plants from all over Australia, the main criterion for inclusion being that they use less than 500 millilitres of water a year.

Tim Wall, another gardener at the RBG, then gave a comprehensive presentation on the plant collection in the California Bed, with an emphasis on the plants' suitability for the current local climate.

Other interesting speakers were the Curator of the Melbourne Zoological Gardens, and the Planner-in-Charge of the Carlton Gardens parterres which are currently being replanted by the City of Melbourne, who described the issues involved in rethinking heritage plantings to retain the design ideas whilst recognising the current parameters the city must live within.

Other presenters gave outlines of experimental and research projects they are involved in, which focus on the environmental issues that are now so much a part of all our lives. Rodger Elliot spoke of recent advances in selection and cultivation of new Australian plants being prepared for the nursery industry.

John Rayner, a lecturer at Burnley, told us about the results from his drought tolerant plant research plots, and the guidance from this in the choices for future public plantings.

At the conclusion I left with a great feeling of hope for the future of our public garden spaces. With such a dedicated band of thoughtful, professional people working, thinking and researching how to make our environment work as well as possible, we are very lucky.

Juliana Horsfall, ***Convener***

John Rayner and RBG gardeners Tim Wall, Matt Howard and Jeremy Prentice with Julie Horsfall in the conference centre.

The BGANZ Committee lunchtime meeting.
Photos: Jane Cleary

MISCELLANY

Photo: Mark Haydon

The Gardens Market

In its fourth successful year, the well established GARDENS MARKET started again at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, on 8 November.

Attracting over 3,500 visitors on each occasion, this lively and vibrant Market sells unique botanic-themed products including jewellery, craft, plants, garden sculptures, fashion items and gourmet food – all set against the magnificent historic backdrop of the beautiful Botanic Gardens.

Take a stroll through the Gardens, listen to live music, tempt your tastebuds with the many culinary delights on offer and visit over 100 stallholders selling quality gifts in beautiful surroundings.

This year, the Market has incorporated fresh farmers' produce into the mix. With Farmers' Markets becoming increasingly popular and consumer trends now heading towards healthy eating and organic fresh food, this will add another aspect to the existing botanic-inspired Market. Shoppers will have the opportunity to buy clean, fresh, healthy produce, meet the growers/farmers and generally feel a lot better about the food they buy.

Close to the heart of the City, this is a unique visitor experience for both stallholders and shoppers, with live music, fine gourmet food and exclusive handmade products:

- Plants
- Artwork
- Garden Sculptures
- Jewellery
- Fresh seasonal produce
- Gourmet food
- Ceramics & Mosaics

GARDENS MARKETS at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra (opposite the Shrine of Remembrance)

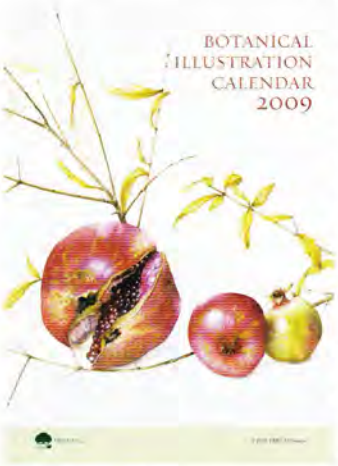
Saturday 13 December 2008
Saturday 10 January 2009
Saturday 14 February 2009
Saturday 14 March 2009
Saturday 11 April 2009
Saturday 9 May 2009
9.00am to 2.00pm

For more details visit www.marketsinthegardens.com.au or phone 0425 856 168 or 9899 5979.

Unique Christmas gift ideas from the Friends

Gift Membership

Surprise someone this Christmas with a gift that will last all year – a membership subscription to the Friends. Give a relative or a friend access to all the fabulous events and activities put on by the Friends, a beautiful quarterly magazine, exclusive access to the Growing Friends' Nursery and the opportunity to take Botanical Illustration classes at a reduced rate. Just knowing your gift membership helps to support the Gardens is rewarding. A Gift Membership form is included with this issue. Extra forms are available from the Friends' Office or can be downloaded from our website www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org



This beautiful calendar is based on a number of botanical illustrations painted by the Friends' Botanical Illustrators Group. Each month has a unique botanical illustration. This would make a special gift. Available for $15 from the Friends office or by mail order (download an order form from our website).

Christmas Cards

Our beautiful card this year features detail from Sandra Sanger's award-winning painting of the dramatic flower head of *Doryanthes excelsa*, the Gymea Lily.

Priced at $10 (incl. packing and postage) for a pack of five cards, they are available from the Friends' Office, telephone 9650 5398 or download an order form from our website.

Cards from other years are also available from the Friends' Office for personal shoppers. Some cards contain the *Season's Greetings* message and some are blank. All are $10 for a pack of five cards.

Special orders for printing personal or business details inside cards are available on request (minimum 100 cards). For details and prices please contact the Friends' Office on 9650 6398 or email: friends@frbgmelb.org.au.

Growing Friends' Vouchers

Available in denominations of $10, $20 and $50, these popular vouchers may be purchased from the Growing Friends' nursery on Fridays between 10.00am - 1.00pm.

MEMORIES

Photo: Jennifer Marshall

Anne with former Growing Friends' Convener, Colin Herbert, at one of our plant sales.

Anne Weber

On 24 September President Janet Thomson, FRBG office staff and other Members of the Friends along with many of Anne's former colleagues from the Growing Friends joined her family and friends for a Memorial Service to celebrate Anne's life.

Anne was a very active member of the Friends of the RBG for years. This included serving for several years on the Friends' Council.

In 1990 Anne joined her sister Pat Wales in the Friends' Catering Group. In 1995, Pat left Catering to devote more time to her property at Mount Macedon. At that same time, Anne joined the Growing Friends (GF). She often mentioned the luminaries of the GF at the time she joined; Ruth Funder and Elaine Brumley in particular. She had great regard for their enthusiasm and knowledge, which she had found inspiring. Anne continued to work with the Growing Friends until 2006 when she moved to Canberra to be closer to her family.

I first came to know Anne when I was a helper at the twice-yearly GF plant sales where I became aware of this quiet person presiding over a very special group of plants, the Vireyas. During her time with the GF, Anne developed a wonderful knowledge of Vireyas and it is largely due to her passion for these plants that the GF Nursery has maintained a section devoted to their propagation. Anne appreciated that Vireyas not only produce glorious flowers once established but they are also very hardy. She thought that this member of the genus Rhododendron was very garden-worthy and that with a minimum of care it could thrive in our gardens.

At the Friends' AGM in 2006, Anne was awarded her 15-year long service medal. She maintained contact with the organisation through her family even when she became unable to communicate directly.

Anne was a proud Member of the Friends.

Hannah DiBella

Elaine Brumley

Elaine was one of the originals at the 1988 Growing Friends' planning stage. Sharon Beaman joined in September 1989 and says 'When I met her I must have called her Eelaine, because she very nicely said, with a friendly smile, that she was "a lane and not a street". I never forgot that and never again made the mistake of calling her Eelaine.'

She was a Latin scholar and a plant lover who could tell us the origin of plants and the meaning of the Latin botanical name. Her Latin was so scholarly that she could not accept the labelling of plants with names that did not (for whatever reason, probably an error at the first official recording of the name of the plant) conform with Latin grammar. Meg Miller remembers referring to Tulbaghia as 'Tulbajjia' and being gently chided for her mispronunciation. Meg learned that the 'gh' sound is a hard sound as in Tulbaggia – another lesson never to be forgotten.

Elaine was very generous in sharing her plants, but was very impatient with the *weed potential* issue because she was very fond of the self-seeders. She had the magic ability to produce numerous tubes of plants from one clump of perennials. Elaine left Growing Friends during 2003 when her health began to deteriorate. Alzheimer's set in and sadly she could no longer have discussions and use her lively analytical brain.

At the funeral we learned that Elaine came from a large family who lived in Dandenong. She was very academic, studying Humanities at Melbourne University as well as completing a Psychology degree at a Sydney University. She taught at schools around Melbourne, mainly private girls' schools. In fact, Sue Keon-Cohen (who was with the Growing Friends in the early days) and Wendy Henderson were both taught by Elaine. She was also a keen traveller, although we rarely heard her talk about this.

A friend mentioned that in the '50s Elaine planned and planted her garden, which still looks beautiful. The same friend has made a generous donation to the Friends' Trust Fund in celebration of Elaine, a dedicated Friend of the RBG.

Sharon Beaman et al

Elaine (at right) and friend setting off on a bike ride from Melbourne to the Grampians.

EVENTS

Summer Guided Visit

TO THE GROWING FRIENDS' NURSERY

Friday 5 December at 10.30am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
COST: $5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 3 December 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 will be limited.

Our summer nursery visit will be the perfect opportunity to purchase Christmas presents from the full range of plants in our nursery.

This visit is particularly suitable for new members and others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of our Growing Friends' Nursery. We will gather at Gate Lodge for morning tea and the opportunity to meet other like-minded gardeners and then be guided down to the nursery. If you plan to buy a number of plants, think about bringing your shopping trolley to help carry your purchases.

Late Summer Guided Visit

TO THE GROWING FRIENDS' NURSERY

Friday 6 February at 10.30am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
COST: $5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 4 February 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 will be limited.

Our late summer nursery visit will be the perfect opportunity to view and purchase good-looking plants that have stayed the distance of Melbourne's long hot Summer, from the full range of plants in our nursery.

This visit is particularly suitable for new members and others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of our Growing Friends' Nursery. We will gather at Gate Lodge for morning tea and the opportunity to meet other like-minded gardeners, and then be guided down to the nursery.

If you plan to buy a number of plants, think about bringing your shopping trolley to help carry your purchases.

Fit Friends' Ramble

THROUGH THE PARKS

Tuesday 10 February, 10.00am sharp
Meet at carpark adjacent to Darling Park
Melways: Map 59, K11
By train: Glen Waverly line departing Flinders St. Station 9.13 and 9.28am, get out at Darling Station.
COST: $30 Friends $15
RSVP by Monday 2 February on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Bookings essential. Numbers limited.

We will wander through Hedgley Dene Gardens, admiring the shady mature trees. This once was the site of the family farm belonging to Edward Charsley who named it in memory of his English birthplace. We will enjoy the lovely homes and gardens around the Central Park area, after which we'll view the richly planted park itself. Central Park was originally a golf course used by Royal Melbourne Golf Club. The large Conservatory (1927), is a reminder of a bygone age. After morning tea in Wattletree Road, our walk continues to some gracious buildings which are now used as schools.

The walk itself will be of about two hours' duration. Please bring plenty of water to drink, hats and sunscreen! This will be a long walk, therefore please be capable of completing the walk and be able to keep up a good walking pace. Please consider fellow Friends and arrive promptly!

EVENTS

Summer Insiders' Walk

HELPING HANDS AND A VOLCANO

Wednesday 18 February 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 Friday 13 February on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Join us for morning tea and information at Gate Lodge before the walk.

The *Helping Hands* Volunteer Members of the Friends was formed in 2007. The group has been working to restore the garden around E Gate Lodge.

Past President of the Friends, Irwin Newman, who initiated the idea of Helping Hands, will be present to talk to our group about the work in this area of the Gardens and how volunteers are selected from the Friends' organisation. This is a wonderful hands-on experience for the volunteers involved and some more of us may be encouraged to join this team.

The walk will pass by the Rain Garden, part of the planned irrigation of the RBG, then visit the Guilfoyle Volcano site and we will learn about Guilfoyle's vision, ideas of irrigation, how he used the site and the plan for the volcano's active future.This major re-development is exciting for the neighbours of the RBG as well as the whole community.

Summer Talking Plants Morning

SICK OF SUCCULENTS?

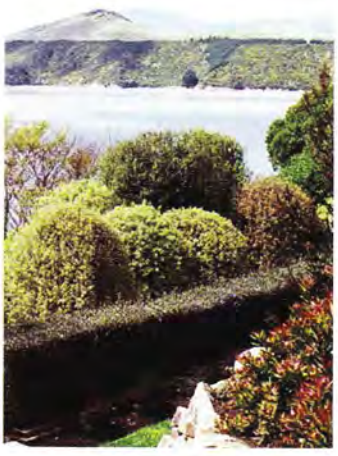
Friday 27 February at 10.00am
Meet at Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive
COST: $15 Friends $10
RSVP by Wednesday 25 February on enclosed booking form or download a booking form from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

The Summer Talking Plants theme will be good-looking low-water use plants but NOT succulents. All those attending are invited to bring a piece of a favourite summer survivor to show and share.

A knowledgeable plants person will be present to discuss these survivors.

The morning will be held at Domain House and will be an informal gathering of Friends with a common interest in plants and gardening. It is a wonderful opportunity for new members to meet other Friends.

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.



Spring In New Zealand

LANDSCAPES AND GARDENS OF NEW ZEALAND

9 – 20 November 2009
COST: Land Content Only: $4480 p p (twin share). $990 single supp. $4280 p.p. (early bird special if booked by 31 March 2009)
Full details are available by contacting:
Australians Studying Abroad
Tel. 9822 6899
Freecall: 1800 645 755
(outside Metro Melbourne area only)
Email: info@asatours.com.au
Website: www.asatours.com.au

Australians Studying Abroad, in association with the Friends and hosted by Andrew Laidlaw, Landscape Architect with the RBG Melbourne, are conducting a superb 12 day tour to both islands of New Zealand in Spring 2009.

This fascinating tour takes us to a large number of public and private gardens exhibiting an extraordinary variety of New Zealand landscape gardening. The program will be enhanced by some of New Zealand's most important gardeners and landscape architects.

In addition, we also visit the volcanic slopes of Mt Egmont, where a 4,000mm rainfall creates ideal conditions for rhododendrons and their companion plants. We will see Maori carvings and unique flora and fauna of the rugged West Coast of the North Island, including mature 1000 year old Kauri trees.

Landscape architect Robert Wilson will accompany us to Christchurch Botanic Gardens.

The Art of Botanical Illustration Exhibition 2008

This ninth biennial exhibition was officially opened by Elaine Canty, Chair of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board, on Friday 7 November in the Domain House Gallery, when more than 300 guests attended the opening reception.

Four paintings were bought for the State Botanical Collection with a grant of $5000 from the Friends and one bought by the RBG. Dr Phillip Moors commented that it was a testament to the quality of the work that half the paintings submitted could be selected to hang in the exhibition, including not only known names of botanical artists but also newcomers to the genre. He said that the paintings bought for the State Collection would be held for posterity and represent contemporary (botanical) art.

The Celia Rosser Medals were awarded to Jennie Phillips, Sandra Sanger and Jennifer Wilkinson.

Elaine Canty, Chair of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board, opened the exhibition, saying (in part) 'We are blessed with remarkably talented artists. Botanical paintings must be scientifically accurate and the artists have conveyed subtlety in their works. The selection panel had a very difficult job - portrait painters don't have to worry about their subjects collapsing on them!'

Many thanks to the 82 exhibiting artists, including artists from the UK and Italy, for the 170 wonderful works on display, and to the hardworking members of the Exhibition Committee who spent many hours organising this event.

Judy Jarman and Edyta Hoxley.

Photos: Greg Hoxley

State Botanical Collection

Dracunculus vulgaris
Debra Bartlett

Banksia integrifolia
Maggie Munn

Strelitzia nicolai
Beverley Lewis

Cortinarius archeri
Ruth Jackson

Equal winners of the Celia Rosser Medal

Eucalyptus pryiformis
Jenny Phillips

Rhododendron *'David'*
Jennifer Wilkinson

Doryanthes excelsa
Sandra Sanger

ILLUSTRATORS

Classes

Term 1 2009 will start in the week beginning Monday 2 February. Classes will be held on Tuesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays (two sessions each day), Fridays and Sundays (one three-hour session each).
2.5hr classes: $255 (incl GST)
Friends $215(incl GST)
3hr classes: $295 (incl GST)
Friends: $255 (incl GST)
For further information on classes contact the Friends' Office, 9650 6398.

Workshops

ALL CLASSES WILL BE HELD IN THE WHIRLING ROOM STUDIO, OBSERVATORY GATE

Beginners' Workshop with Dianne Emery

5,6,7,8 January.
10.00am – 4.00pm
Cost: $295 Friends $250

This intensive course is an introduction to botanical art via pencil and watercolour. Students will begin to develop skills in outline drawing, fore-shortening, tonal work and rendering of surfaces, basic colour work and paint application.

The cost includes drawing materials, paint, watercolour paper and brushes and morning and afternoon tea.

Plant Dissection and Microscope Illustration Workshop with Mali Moir

13,14 January, 10.00am – 4.00 pm
Cost: $175 Friends $130

Suitable for both beginners and more advanced artists. Basic botany and plant dissection for illustration will be covered. Choose your medium – pen and ink, graphite pencil or watercolour. Students will need to apply for a materials list.

Insect Illustration Workshop with Kate Nolan

9,10,11 January.
10.00am – 3.30pm
Cost: $225 Friends $180

Painting insects can be a fantastic way to enhance a Botanical Illustration and indeed Insect Illustration is a fully-fledged art all of its own. In this course we give you the techniques to handle those weird and wonderful little creatures and take you, step by step, through the process of painting beautiful and fascinating illustrations of them. All skill levels, including beginners, are very welcome.

We will concentrate on the watercolour painting method and will touch on some of the other media used to illustrate insects. Some locally available specimens will be supplied and you will be given the chance to purchase from a wide selection of exotics.

Students will need to apply for a materials list.

Insect Illustration Workshop (Advanced) with Kate Nolan

16,17,18 January, 10.00am - 3.30pm
Cost: $225 Friends: $180

Insect Illustration, like all arts, can be taken to extremes of skill and difficulty. In this course we explore as many of the more challenging aspects as we can, such as the best ways to capture the effects of iridescence, pitted surfaces or transparency. We look at tackling practical difficulties such as locating, identifying and using rare specimens, or illustrating extremely small or large specimens. Students who so desire can choose and bring their own specimen or can select and purchase in class. A materials list will be supplied on application.

Summer Fruit Painting with Dianne Emery

19,20,21,22 January.
10.00am - 4.00pm
Cost: $275 Friends: $230

This workshop is open to artists with some experience. Paint your choice of luscious, juicy summer fruit so that it looks good enough to eat.

Morning and afternoon tea will be supplied. Students will need to apply for a materials list.

Black and White Workshop with Mali Moir

27,28 January, 10.00am - 4.00pm
Cost: $175 Friends: $130

This 2 day workshop is suitable for all levels of experience.

Day One will focus on a pencil and colour wash technique using specimens with low chroma, ie. banksias cones.

Day Two will concentrate on pen and ink techniques used in scientific illustration work, on paper and/or drafting film. References will be made to some of the visual language needed in line art.

Students will need to apply for a materials list.

Vellum Workshop with Mali Moir

29,30 January, 10.00am-4.00pm
Cost: $175 Friends $130

A workshop for students experienced in watercolour. Vellum is an animal skin from the leather industry, especially prepared for painting. Its semi-opaque quality gives water-colours a uniquely lustrous and vibrant effect. This course will focus on producing small works using primarily 'dry-brush' technique.

Kelmscott vellum from England will be available for purchase at the workshop. One piece (6 x 8 inches) will cost approx. $25, or you may bring your own. Students will need to apply for a materials list.

Male Giant Dragonfly
Sandra Sanger

Whirlybirds

The Whirlybirds meet every Tuesday in the newly-painted Whirling Room where we can discuss our paintings and support each other. The Botanical Illustrators will hold their last meeting for 2008 on Tuesday 16 December.

We will resume our weekly painting days on 3 February 2009. If you are a member of the Friends and would like to join us, please contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532 for further information.

Botanical Illustrators Quarterly Meeting

Tuesday 16 December at 11.00am
RSVP to Friends' Office: 9650 6398

Come along to the Whirling Room for a shared Christmas lunch to celebrate the end of the year's activities.

Please bring a plate of food (savoury or dessert) to share.

GARDENS

I must confess to currently vacillating between frustration and despair. The cause of this rollercoaster of emotion is the local supermarket in the home town of Woodend. Let me explain: some years ago, when clan Barley first moved to Woodend, there were two supermarkets. One was old, and had the charm of Ronnie Barker's hardware store in *Open All Hours*. It was called 'Parker's', and therefore was colloquially known as 'Nosey's'. In it one found a deceptively wide array of goods, not in great numbers, and perhaps what you found was not overly fresh, but at least there was choice. The customer was offered variety.

The other supermarket was far more modern and extensive, and deployed various gadgets and facilities of the twentieth and possibly the current century, such as electric lights and cash registers and maybe a floor polisher. It had a surprisingly good variety of stock, including (much to my unending delight and Miss G Barley's horror) not one, but two different brands of canned snails. These were never purchased by anyone that I saw, but they remained on offer, just to service the needs of that one person every fifty years or so who would dash in on their way to a French-themed picnic, seeking some characteristically Gallic fare to round out their basket. Mmmm. It was comforting to know that they were there anyway.

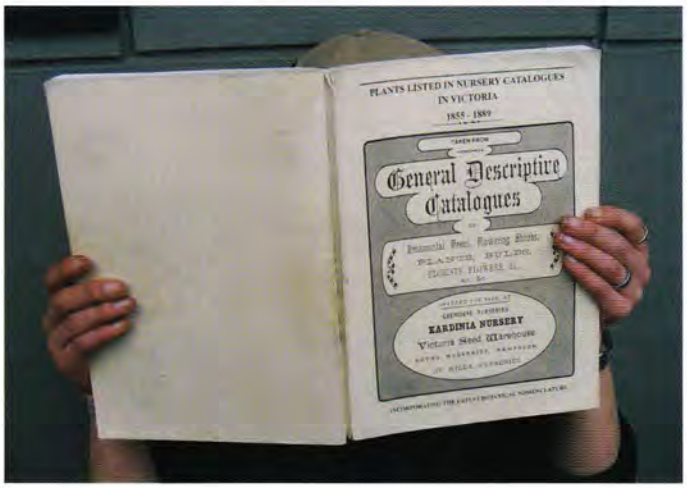
Sadly, following the mortal departure of Nosey himself, Nosey's closed. So then there was only one supermarket and, inevitably, it was taken over by a well-known supermarket chain. From that point it has been all downhill in terms of diversity of offering. The result is that one can wander along up and down aisles, and only pass one or at the most two brands of whatever you're looking for – a famous named dark fizzy drink, or the other one, for example. For miles, all one can see are the choices of one, one-and-a-half, two, three, five, ten, fifty or even one hundred litre plastic bottles of the same things. OK, they don't have one hundred or even fifty litre bottles, but rest assured that if they could engineer them onto the shelves and thence into a shopping trolley, they would be there, squashing the lamingtons. Mark my words. The point is, though, that this is not necessarily a step forward towards a better world. Lack of diversity leads inexorably to dullness. Bulk size does not equate to interest.

Well I'm glad to have the opportunity to get that off the chest, but this isn't really just about the drink in the supermarket in Woodend, is it? No, of course it's not. Let's talk about plants and gardens. To a great degree, the passage of the last fifty or so years in terms of availability of diversity of general nursery stock has reflected the supermarket trend. The range of stock available from most of the larger nurseries has become very limited and, as a result, many gardens have developed a sameness, simply through commonality of components.

There are exceptions, of course, in both gardens and nurseries. Nurseries that dare to maintain a range of rare, unusual, or unfashionable plants do certainly exist, but they swim against the downstream current.

So how are we going to make a stand and turn this trend around? How are we going to bring a bit more diversity back into the gardening plant palette? Well – here is a start: the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia (GPC for short). You may be aware that the newly-named GPC is the latest evolutionary form of what was originally the Ornamental Plant Collections Association, which then became the Ornamental Plant Conservation Association of Australia (OPCAA).

As the name now more clearly suggests, one of the primary aims of the GPC is to conserve genera of garden plants. The reason is simple. If we continue to lose plants selected or bred over the decades



An RBG apprentice engrossed in the nursery catalogue listings. Photos on pages 12 and 13: Richard Barley

Viburnum carlesii growing in the RBG Melbourne.

and centuries for gardens, then we are not only limiting our ability to continue to create interesting planted landscapes, but we are also potentially losing species or cultivars that offer greater suitability for our current and future climates, and possibly also genetic material that would provide great benefit for breeding.

During the 1980s, the Association (under the banner of the OPCA) commissioned research into the diversity of plant stock available in Victorian nurseries in the period 1855–1889. There was nothing magical about the year 1855, except that it was the earliest Victorian catalogue that could be found. The research resulted in a book with the catchy title: 'Plants listed in nursery catalogues in Victoria 1855–1889', which was published in 1992 and is soon to be reprinted. It is a ripping read.

This weighty tome provides a clear picture of the loss of nursery stock variety. For example, a scan of the listing reveals that there were over 450 named varieties of Dianthus, 480 Fuchsias, and close to 1,000 varieties of Pelargonium! In addition to the ornamental cultivars, there were many species both native and exotic from which to choose. One could be tempted by a selection of the 90-odd Pinus species, or perhaps one of the dozen or so Araucarias. It should be noted that these were not specialist nurseries – the stock was widely available to the planting punter. Hence many of the gardens created during this period are (or were) incredibly diverse, and the vestiges of that diversity can still be seen in extant landscapes.

So – what is the GPC doing to seek to reverse the trend of loss of diversity of garden plants? The first step is to conserve what exists. Collections of plant genera are registered by the GPC. The collection holders are either private enthusiasts, nursery-persons, or public gardens (the RBG Melbourne holds the Viburnum collection, and is planning to register also the Araucaria and Pomaderris collections). By and large the collection holders aim to put together as complete a collection of the genus as their growing conditions will allow. Around 60 National Collections have been registered to date.

Logically, the next steps involve identification of those species or varieties that have merit as garden plants, and which are no longer available in the nursery trade, then seeking to reintroduce those plants for the benefit of the gardening public. The net result should then be at least a small step back towards having greater choice of plants for our gardens, and possibly a better array of plants suited to our current and predicted climatic conditions.

Another plan currently on the drawing board of the GPC is duplication of privately-held collections in public regional botanic gardens. By duplicating selected collections and growing them in botanic gardens selected for their match of climate, soil, style, lack of weed potential and proximity to the private collection, a valuable back-up will be provided to guard against loss of the original collection, also giving visitors to the public gardens the benefit of learning about the particular genus. The botanic gardens themselves can only benefit from the inclusion of high quality taxonomic collections also. It's easy to see wins all round.

You will notice the smart new logo (see below) and livery of the GPC appearing at all the best places in town and country – and you will find that for a modest annual fee you can join up and support this most worthwhile cause (their office is situated in the Observatory Building at RBG Melbourne). In doing so, you will be striking a blow against all that smacks of modern chain-store bulk commercialism, and surely that alone will feel good! Then next time you are confronted by the expanse of thousands of kilolitres of generic fizzy drink, you may smile inwardly, and vengeance will be yours.

Richard Barley

Crocus tommasina 'Taplow ruby' *from the RBG Melbourne.*

GARDEN PLANT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Chris Jenek in the RBG nursery with the Pomaderris collection.

Magnificent Araucaria bidwillii in the RBG Melbourne.

FROM THE MEMBERS

1. The scene that made Pam weep.

2. Roadside view of the Stirling Range across a canola plantation.

3. Tall trees in the Karri forest.

It was with great anticipation that eight Friends, outnumbered by 27 travellers seasoned by other trips with our leader, Merryle Johnson, set off on the advertised tour to the *Wildflowers and Private Gardens of the South in Western Australia*. What a friendly group of people they were, and how we all enjoyed each others' company, getting to know each other very quickly indeed through a shared interest in things botanical and avian.

Many of the group work, or worked, in gardening or horticulture and were happy both to share their knowledge and seek to enhance it. Add to that the knowledge possessed by both our guide and the bus driver and we were set for a wonderful week. We often halted at the side of the road to view wildflowers or hunt for orchids, and the challenge at one stop – no coffee until we found five different orchids – had us all walking slowly along looking ten inches above the ground for shy flowers, mostly on single stems. We came away with a list of about 15 different orchids seen by most of us during the trip.

At breakfast one morning a group from Bendigo discussed stage 4 water restrictions, which they have had for 11 years. To my question, 'how do you cope?' came the answer 'well, you do. We all use our recycled water several times, then lastly it goes onto the garden. We're back to planting old-fashioned plants, not hybrids, and gravel and succulents are featuring in more of our gardens. Surprisingly, this year, our wildflowers are

4. Cowslip orchids.

5. Banksia coccinea *at the roadside.*

6. Tree hovea, coral vine and wattle.

better than they've been for a long time.'

Along the highway, cultivated fields of white lupins grew on one side of the road while fields of oats, wheat or canola appeared on the other. Apparently it is more profitable to sow about a third of the land in canola as it brings a better price. It is also very practical, as the two harvests occur separately. The country travellers on our bus were very interested to hear that the fields of white lupins served a dual purpose, both as leguminous restoration for the soil, and also as a source of flour sent to India, and silage and stock feed in Australia's West. Farmers are also leasing their non-arable land for plantations of hybrid blue gums, which grow straight and are harvestable after 20 years for wood chips. The return to the farmers is 20 per cent of the yield. We also learned that tree lucerne is being grown in the middle of stock paddocks as shade, and fodder in lean times.

We heard much of the history of the areas we visited, snippets of information on a variety of subjects – 'up' on the end of names means 'place of' in the Nyoongar language – all designed to enhance our experience as we enjoyed the wildflowers blooming everywhere and visited places of interest.

Because the south-west of Western Australia is not troubled by drought the private gardens we saw were lush and beautiful. The enthusiasm of the owners was a joy to encounter and their willingness to share their interest made our days complete. Garden designers in Albany have persuaded the town Council to allow some imaginative roundabout plantings in the main streets and those designers shared their experiences with us. Trips through the Valley of the Giants and the Tree-top Walk taught us much about the value of conservation.

However, the final word must come from a South Australian garden designer who said 'Now I'm a girl who just adores well-planned colour schemes but I was moved to tears by the sheer subtlety and sophistication of a scene in WA's Stirling Ranges. There it was before my unbelieving eyes – a gloriously delicate carpet of slightly off-white flowers with drifts here and there of gently muted orange, all spiked occasionally with small sage-green eucalypts. The backdrop to the delicate display was a hill of velvety silver blue, the whole picture unified magnificently by the light cast from a cloudy grey sky. Divine!'

Thank you, Merryle and Kerry, for a really well-organised and interesting tour and thank you to Shirley, Pam and others who shared their thoughts. We might have known something already about the magic of WA's wildflowers, but the ever-changing displays from nature's palette made this a most memorable and worthwhile trip.

Meg Miller

7. Part of a magnificent private garden at Margaret River.

8. Leschenaultia *in the wild.*

Photos: Meg Miller

9. Another lovely private garden in Denmark, WA.

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I wish to apply for membership in the following category

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(*state pension number / student number and educational institution)

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FRIENDS *of the* ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

BOTANIC NEWS

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