

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, MELBOURNE INC.

WINTER 1998

Perennials

With the Perennial Border set for a total overhaul this Spring, Gardens Division, with the help of the Growing Friends, is planning a Perennial plant sale. All existing perennial plant material is to be sold bare-rooted. The sale will take place on the Perennial Lawn **between 10.00am and 4.00pm on Saturday 27 June.**



Andrew Laidlaw, the Gardens' Landscape Planner, has offered to stage a presentation for the Friends about the new-look Perennial Border.

On **Tuesday 23 June at 10.30am**, Andrew, together with horticultural technicians Warren Penna and Rob Nahon, will explain why the change is being made and show us designs for new beds, paths and lawn in this prominent feature of the Gardens. Then we can walk to the site and visualise the rejuvenated landscape.

The presentation will take place in the Mess Room at the far end of the Nursery Yard (turn left from E Gate). Morning tea/coffee will be served.

Cost: \$6

RSVP by Monday 22 June on enclosed booking form

RBG SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Camellias, camellias, camellias! Also, the fragrant luculia and hellebores will lessen the winter drear in June. The Arid Garden is worth a visit in June and July, while the Southern Chinese Collection is at its best in July and August. The bulbs and vireya rhododendrons are harbingers of spring in August.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

While all our Friends' activities have a fund-raising purpose, they are also enjoyable social occasions and enlarge our knowledge of plants, flowers, trees and our scientific heritage. Every few years we invite our Members to express their preferences for the types and times of functions, and to make any general comments on our program. A survey form is enclosed with this *Botanic News*, and we will welcome your response; it will help in planning future activities.

Where our money goes

Work on the Observatory site is progressing well, and we expect to move into our new home - the lodge on Birdwood Avenue opposite the Shrine - in August or September. Almost \$90,000 is being contributed by the Friends towards the renovation of this building; we have paid our first instalment of \$28,000 to the Gardens.

We have just undertaken to provide \$13,864 to enable Terry Smyth to take up an invitation for a secondment at Kunming Botanical Garden in Yunnan, China between July and November 1998. The grant includes travel costs and covers the salary of a temporary replacement at RBG, where Terry looks after our Chinese plant collection. Terry's secondment will further consolidate the links between Kunming and Melbourne, and also acknowledges the close relationship between Terry and the Friends.

Other Friends' grants to the Gardens that have been agreed to recently are:

- * \$12,500 towards the appointment of the 1998 Mueller Fellow
- * \$3025 for conservation of artwork in the State Botanical Collection (see page 6)
- * \$4500 for the purchase of a painting by Marian Ellis Rowan, *Coreopsis lanceolata*, for this Collection

Berwick and Mildura visits

Friends' visits to newly developed gardens in April and May proved to be of absorbing interest. Wilson Botanic Park, Berwick, demonstrated how an old quarry could evolve into a most interesting landscape. At Mildura, Friends of the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens proudly displayed their rose garden (more than 1700 superb plants), their bush chapel, their salinity-countering plantings and their Mallee bushland when

they hosted the annual conference of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens of Victoria. Participants on this occasion included representatives from three NSW Gardens and from Adelaide as well as from 12 Gardens in Victoria. The excellent speakers, social activities and enthusiasm infected all the visitors with the Mallee magic.

Paintings of the Gardens

A special occasion is scheduled for Monday 29 June - an early-evening viewing of Anne Marie Graham's paintings of the Royal Botanic Gardens. Anne, who is a Friend, will talk about her project to complete 100 paintings of the Gardens, and may also express her dream to find a permanent home for the whole body of work, so that it can be kept together. I hope a large number of Friends will be present at Gallery 101 to applaud Anne's 'magnificent obsession'.

This Melbourne exhibition will launch a year's tour of the first 50 paintings for showing at regional galleries around Victoria. It will also mark the publication by Craftsman Press of a book covering 40 of the works, together with contributions by Jane Clark, a director of Sothebys Australia and former curator of Australian art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Juliet Peers, an art and cultural historian, and Helen Cohn, RBG Library Manager.

In appreciation

Golda Isaac was present at the meeting on Tuesday 9 March 1982 that led to the formation of the Friends. Subsequently she served as a member of our Council for several terms, and was involved in various sub-committees. Members still recall her marvellous, thoroughly researched tours of country gardens. Golda's organisation of an exhibition of Celia Rosser's Banksia paintings stimulated interest in this art form which led to the formation of our Botanical Illustrators; she also directed a notable exhibition from the resources of the National Herbarium.

Golda was honoured with Life Membership in 1994. In March, she retired from the Friends' Activities sub-committee, her last formal link with the management of our organisation. We will miss her professionalism and wise counsel, but can look forward to her continuing presence at our activities.

Another farewell - this time to Rod Dunstan, former Education Officer at the Gardens. After Rod addressed our April meeting, we presented him with two years' honorary membership of the Friends. This will assist his expressed desire to keep in touch with the Gardens and its Friends.

John Harper

WINTER ACTIVITIES

BRIDGE AT GARDENS HOUSE

Wednesday 10 June

At the time of going to press, this function was fully booked. However, anyone interested could call the Friends' office in case there has been a cancellation.

GREEK ISLANDS TOUR

16 June

See enclosed brochure

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE WALK

Wednesday 17 June at 10.00am

Meet at F Gate

The Gardens rest on a traditional and highly significant camping and meeting place for the local custodians of the area, the Bunurong and Woiworung people. Come and experience the rich, vibrant pre-colonial heritage of the site and share in the wealth of local plant lore through the eyes of your Aboriginal guide, Dean Stewart.

Dean, who has previously helped the RBG's education staff with their Aboriginal Trail, is on a three-month contract with the Gardens to research and organise this Aboriginal theme walk for tourist groups and members of the public. The Friends' tour is a 'trial run', and we'll be encouraged to offer feedback on its content and design.

The tour lasts a little over one hour.

Refreshments will be served in Mueller Hall, National Herbarium from 10.00am. Walk at 10.30am.

Cost: \$6.00

RSVP by 10 June on enclosed booking form

AN ARTIST'S VIEW OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Private Viewing

Exhibition of Paintings by Anne Marie Graham

Monday 29 June from 5.30 - 7.00pm

Gallery 101, 101 Collins Street, Melbourne

This exhibition marks the half-way point in Anne Marie Graham's self-appointed task to paint 100 scenes of the Gardens. We'll have the opportunity to see, assembled for the first time, 50 oil paintings depicting the landscape

in all seasons. Often the scenes include humorously-observed people working or relaxing; the *Potting Angels*, the Growing Friends, will be of special interest to us.

Anne, who is a Friend, will make this a special viewing by 'walking us around' the paintings and answering questions about her work. Up to 10 of these Gardens paintings will be for sale, together with others of subjects in Provence and Tuscany.

Thanks to the generosity of the artist and Gallery 101, all proceeds of our evening will go to the Friends to support projects in the Gardens.

The ground level Gallery is at the rear and on the right hand side after you enter the building from Collins Street. It is easily reached by tram, and there is convenient parking at Go Parking, 111 Flinders Lane.

Drinks and savouries will be served.

Cost: \$15 for one person \$10 for each additional person
RSVP by 24 June on enclosed booking form

FILM LUNCHEON
THE ROAD TO NHILL
Wednesday 8 July at 11.00am
Trak Cinema, 445 Toorak Road, Toorak

A story about a small country town where nothing much happens until a car-load of lady bowlers flips over on the way home from Quambatook. There is resulting confusion, but eventually everything returns to normal - almost. It's very pleasing to present an Australian film on this occasion, with its ensemble of fine local stars including Bill Hunter, Terry Norris, Monica Maughan and Patricia Kennedy. You'll enjoy its gentle quirky humour. David Stratton, Margaret Pomeranz and the Herald Sun critic each awarded this film * * * *.

Lunch (sandwiches, cake and tea/coffee/drink) follows the film. Parking in Tintern Avenue or Safeway carpark.

Admission \$12
RSVP 1 July on enclosed booking form

THE IMPACT OF WOODY PLANTS ON OUR LIVES
Talk by Dr Eugene Dimitriadis
Wednesday 15 July at 5.30pm for 6.00pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

This could almost be sub-titled *Almost anything you ever wanted to know about wood*. While most of us see plants and trees as stems and branches, leaves, flowers and fruit, Dr Dimitriadis finds the unseen - the wood - even more interesting.

He will show us examples of ancient woods found in Australia ranging from thousands to millions of years old. But he is equally conversant with newly-discovered plants - for instance the Wollemi pine, which he'll also discuss. In yet another field, Dr Dimitriadis is involved with grapes and wine flavour through wooden barrels, wood shavings used in stainless steel barrels and grape stems used in the winemaking process.

Dr Dimitriadis, who holds a doctorate in Plant Chemistry, is currently collaborating with three universities on ancient plants, and the screening of Australian plants and wood for medicinal use and cancer treatment. Having travelled widely in outback Australia, he has made a particular study of *Eremophila* species, the Emu bush, researching which types are toxic and which have potential medicinal uses.

Dr Dimitriadis is a Trustee of the International Wood Collectors' Society, a most varied group comprising botanists, foresters, scientists, cabinet makers, wood turners - people who want to use or learn about wood. The Society will meet in Adelaide in October, and Dr Dimitriadis has arranged for overseas delegates to have a guided walk round our Gardens en route to Adelaide.

As an experiment, we have set a pre-dinner time for this meeting, enabling people to come straight from work, or others to come out earlier on a winter evening. We will serve drinks and finger food from 5.30pm, with the talk commencing at 6.00pm.

Cost: Friends \$8 Others \$12
RSVP by Friday 10 July on enclosed booking form.

A MORNING WITH JANE EDMANSON
Wednesday 5 August at 10.00am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium

Jane has a high profile in horticulture, leading a very busy life as a broadcaster, TV presenter, writer and tour leader. Hopefully, she has time to actually do some gardening as well! With her wide experience and warm personality, we can be assured of a most interesting and engaging talk.

We'll serve tea/coffee from 10.00am, followed by Jane's talk.

Cost: Friends \$10 Others \$15
RSVP on enclosed booking form by 31 July

BALLARTO ROAD, CRANBOURNE

The result of the Panel Hearing into the Ballarto Road issues at RBG Cranbourne is now not expected to be announced until late June or early July.

RARE BOOKS ON AUSTRALIAN BOTANY

10 and 12 August

State Library of Victoria

These sessions, of outstanding interest, are not restricted to Botanical Illustrators. They are open to all Members. See page 5

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GROWING FRIENDS

The Growing Friends Autumn Sale was a tremendous success with sales of \$26,000.

This was in spite of very hot weather - 37 degrees on Sunday - and parking problems.

Thanks to all those who helped make the day so successful. The raffle prizes were a beautiful large cycad in a terracotta tub donated by Ruth Funder, and an exotic flowering *Begonia luxurans* (which was won by Margaret Howes and is looking splendid on her verandah).

Soon we hope to improve our plant labelling. Technology makes it faster and easy to add some cultivation notes. The labels will be easier to read and hopefully last longer. To date, all labels have been written by hand - at least 10,000 per year! It has been an arduous task.

Hope to see you at the Nursery (enter from E Gate) on Friday mornings between 10am and 1pm. There are lots of plants to choose, some from cuttings from the RBG and some interesting seedlings. Also we have some pots of well-established plants - a bargain at \$2.50.

Sharon Beaman

After two years' work, the RBG MASTER PLAN is here

The RBG Master Plan, the first such document for any Australian botanic garden, was launched by Minister Marie Tehan on Wednesday 20 May.

You might say, 'Our Gardens have managed quite well without a plan for 152 years, why do we need one now?' A perusal of this readable, comprehensive publication should convince you of its value to guide work in the Gardens over the next 20-30 years. It is not a plan for drastic change, but provides a constructive vision for orderly development, conservation and revitalisation. It will ensure that ad hoc decision-making is a thing of the past.

Dr Philip Moors gave three examples of new projects, as a taste of what's to come: the perennial border is being redesigned and replanted with unusual new plants; the New Caledonian Collection is being consolidated; and Guilfoyle's water reservoir, known as 'the volcano', is being restored and will be open to the public for the first time as a feature of the Gardens' heritage.

Copies of the Master Plan are on sale in the Gardens' shop. Serious Gardens-watchers will want to have one.



Three moving spirits in the foundation of the Growing Friends - Lydia Bartlett, Gillian Kirk and Dale Macdonnell - had the honour of cutting the very floral cake at the group's 10th birthday party.

Photo by Carolyn Tomkins

AWARD -WINNING LANDSCAPE

For the first time, the RBG this year entered a landscape display in the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, held in April at the Carlton Gardens. Our display took rainforest as its theme. It was designed, the plants propagated and the exhibition installed entirely by RBG staff - no mean feat considering over 2,500 plants were involved and some were 5m high! To the Gardens' delight and pride, the display received the Award of Excellence from the City of Melbourne for the most outstanding exhibit. Staff responsible for the design, installation and logistics included Andrew Laidlaw, Michael McNabb, Neil Perkins, Carolyn Jones and Annette Warner and members of their work groups.

The display was, by any measure, quite superb, and tens of thousands of visitors, including the Premier, enjoyed the luxuriant diversity of the plants (many propagated from the Australian Rainforest Walk) - not to mention the magic of Fairy Clare and the Rainforest Sprite, and the sculptural skills of David Wong who made giant dragonflies from plant materials.

One of the judges is a regular member of judging panels at the Chelsea Flower Show, and he took particular pleasure in telling Dr Philip Moors that the display was undoubtedly of Chelsea Gold Medal standard.

BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATORS

EXHIBITION *THE ART OF BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION*

23 October - 8 November 1998

APPLICATIONS FOR ENTRY FORMS ARE NOW INVITED FOR THIS EXHIBITION

Note: This will be the ONLY notice to Members to apply for entry forms

Members who would like to submit works for selection to this year's exhibition are asked to complete the enclosed booking form and return it to the Friends' office with a self-addressed stamped business-size envelope. We will then send the entry form to you.

Your completed form must reach the Friends' office by Tuesday 1 September 1998. Forms may also be collected from the Friends' office in the Great Melbourne Telescope Building.

For country or interstate Members: We have available, for a small fee per picture, the services of a courier for Members who would otherwise not be able to deliver and collect works for submission and exhibition personally. Information regarding this service is available by request. See enclosed booking form.

DIANNE EMERY'S CLASSES IN BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

Term 3 Classes, for the Winter term, will commence in the third week of July.

The Tuesday night class runs for a 10-week term, 2 1/2 hours per week, and the Wednesday and Friday morning classes run for eight weeks, 3 hours per week. They are held in the Whirling Room Studio on the Old Observatory Site.

The classes cater for both beginners and more experienced students. For beginners, the course introduces the basic techniques of drawing with pencil and ink and an introduction to watercolour painting. For more experienced students, emphasis is placed on developing sophistication and confidence in their chosen media, and preparing work for exhibition. Special events will include visiting artists, viewing the works held by the Herbarium Library, demonstration on the use of microscopes, and workshops.

The cost is \$180 for Friends, \$200 for others.

One-day Introductory Workshops in botanical illustration are being planned for the July school holidays. Dates currently being considered are Saturday 4 July and Friday 10 July. The final decision will be made when the number of those interested is known. The cost is \$60 for Friends, \$70 for others.

For further details phone Dianne on 9523 5397 or the Friends' office, 9650 6398.

Monthly Botanic Illustrators Workshops

For members already enrolled in these workshops, the program continues as follows:

9 June: Helen Cohn, Manager of the Herbarium Library, will show us botanical art held in the Library.

7 July: Anita Barley - emphasis on composition.

11 August: Dianne Emery workshop.

RARE BOOKS ON AUSTRALIAN BOTANY

10 and 12 August

State Library of Victoria

Following the great popularity of our viewings of rare botanical art books at the State Library last year, we have arranged another series of visits - this time to focus on the development of botanical knowledge of Australia.

Des Cowley, Australian Rare Books Librarian and Brian Hubber, the Rare Books Librarian, will present a tour through the expeditions made prior to James Cook, Cook's own voyages, the French voyages, Matthew Flinders in *Investigator*, the exploration of the interior by such figures as Charles Sturt and Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, and the work of Dr Ferdinand Mueller.

The works are illustrated by many very fine artists, including Sydney Parkinson, Ferdinand Bauer and Pierre-Joseph Redoute.

Please nominate on booking form your preferences for these sessions:

Monday 10 August 10.30am - 12 noon; 2.00 - 3.30pm

Wednesday 12 August 2.00 - 3.30pm

Please meet at Entry No. 3 in LaTrobe Street, about halfway between Swanston and Russell Streets, *15 minutes before your starting time*, from where you will be escorted to the Seminar Room.

Cost: \$15 per person *by pre-booked entree card only*
RSVP on enclosed booking form by 3 August.

Tuesday Painters Group (the Whirly Birds)

This group meets on two or three Tuesdays each month in the Whirling Room. It is an informal group, stimulating and supportive. New members are welcome and anyone interested in joining should telephone Mary Gregory on 9836 8587. Cost per day is \$2.50.

Position Vacant - Assistant Treasurer

In 1989, Joan Baumgartner started working one day a week as our Assistant Treasurer. Since then, Joan has overseen the move from the recording of the accounts in a manual cashbook to the computerisation of all financial records. With the growth in the Friends' membership, Joan needs to work two days a week and her files, which used to number four, take up one and a half drawers of a filing cabinet. Now Joan has decided it's time for her to retire.

Applications are called to fill this position which will become vacant at the end of August. An accounting background and experience with computers and payroll, preferably with the program MYOB, are required for this two-day position. Please note that, because the Secretary will be overseas for much of June and July, interviews will not be held until the end of July/early August.

Anyone interested is invited to address applications to the Secretary at the Friends' office, including details of previous experience. Applicants do not have to be Members. Please bring this vacancy to the attention of anyone suitable whom you may know.

FROM THE FRIENDS' SHOP

Dear Friends,

We have a wonderful supply of cookery books; I thought you might like to try something new and different during the Winter:

<i>The Pocket Muffin Book</i>	\$6.95
<i>Islands Harvest</i>	\$39.95
<i>100 Great Noodle Recipes</i>	\$14.95
<i>Caviar, a True Delicacy</i>	\$10.95
<i>Colin Spencer's Vegetarian Book</i>	\$29.95
<i>Chilli Fever, Mine's Hotter than Yours</i>	\$18.95
Special:	
<i>Delia Smith's Summer Collection</i>	\$24.95
<i>Yum: Terry Durack</i>	\$39.95
<i>River Cafe Cook Book 1 & 2</i>	\$45.00
<i>TUKKA: Real Australian Food</i>	\$39.95

Have fun, and happy cooking!

Jill Swann

DISCOUNTS

Some shops and nurseries who generously offer discounts for Members are still complaining that some Members are lending their cards to friends and relatives. Please note that Membership is not transferable and this is now stated on Membership cards. We would ask that all Members observe this rule and do not abuse the generosity of our commercial supporters.

MEMBERSHIP

As mentioned in the last *Botanic News*, a letter with questionnaire, as well as a renewal form, was sent to each Member whose subscription was well overdue.

Approximately 190 letters were sent out and half of the recipients responded; of those, half renewed. Most of those who did not renew stated that they were rationalising the number of organisations to which they belong, or that they were unable to attend the activities. Mention was made of the formation of a Younger Members' group, an idea that the Activities Sub-committee had been considering.

All Members whose subscriptions are not paid when due will receive three renewal notices and then an individual letter before their names are removed from the Membership List. At the office we do our best to ensure that our records are correct; we would ask that you ring us if you have any problems with your membership or mailing.

BOTANICAL EMBROIDERERS

Wanda McPherson of the Embroiderers Guild will continue to instruct embroidery classes with botanical interest on the following Mondays, from 1 - 3pm: 15 June; 13 July; 10 August. Next term's dates are 14 September; 12 October; 9 November; 7 December.

New members are always welcome, and we encourage beginners to join as well as those with experience. Classes may include embroidery combined with quilting, patchwork, cross stitch or ribbon work. The July class will focus on 'blackwork'. Members may wish to bring their current embroidery and receive help. Bring basic sewing kit. Book on enclosed booking form.

CRANBOURNE DINNER

JOHN LANDY, noted author, natural history photographer and outstanding Olympic athlete, will be guest speaker for the Friends of RBG Cranbourne dinner on Saturday 1 August, in the Cranbourne Public Hall. Tickets are \$32.00 each and you may book on tel. 03 5990 2200.

ROSSERS RESCUED

The RBG Library has six watercolour paintings of Victorian banksias by Celia Rosser. Unfortunately these were executed on paper backed by an acidic board which has deteriorated and started to discolour the paper. Funding from the Friends has enabled restoration work to be undertaken on the paintings at the Art Conservation Department of the University of Melbourne. The artworks have been lifted off the backing boards and the backings replaced, and the staining of the paper removed.

SPEAKERS

Several groups have already requested a speaker to talk to them about the RBG and the Friends. How about you? For further information, telephone Janet Thomson on 9571 9448 or the Friends' office on 9650 6398.

SCENES FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INLAND BOTANIC GARDENS, MILDURA



Conference visitors were given a guided tour on the tractor tram

The very atmospheric Bush Chapel has log seats, an altar, a lectern, and a cross backed by a blackened fragment of tree trunk. During our visit, a wedding took place between a Fijian and an Aborigine...the chapel is becoming popular for weddings.

Photos by Lesley Clark.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SPRING

Here are diary dates for some of the events we've planned for Spring. Full details in the next *Botanic News*.

- 15 September: Flower display and cocktail party at Gardens House
- 10 November: Friends' Annual Meeting in Mueller Hall
- 21/22/23 November: A conducted tour of galleries, private gardens and 19th century houses in Victoria's Western District.
- 2 December: Friends' Christmas dinner at Reception Centre in the Gardens.

GARDENS HOUSE

The RBG has recently licensed Peter Rowland Catering to manage Gardens House and all functions and events held there. This is a most beneficial arrangement for the Gardens. It will ensure that the unique location and atmosphere of Gardens House are matched by the highest quality management and catering services.

BENEFITS FOR FRIENDS

Both the Friends' Shop and the Gardens' Shop offer a 10 per cent discount on members' purchases over \$20.

The following businesses very kindly offer special discounts to Friends. Please note: only a member presenting his/her signed current membership card may claim a discount. CARDS ARE NOT TRANSFERABLE.

- Fryers' Nursery**
589 Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn
5% off plants only
- Idaho Nurseries**
410 Waverley Rd, E. Malvern
10% off plants only
- Bulleen Art and Garden**
105 Bridge St, Bulleen
5% off seedlings
10% off potted plants
- Town and Country Gardens**
1280 Malvern Rd, Malvern
10% off everything
- The Arts Bookshop**
1067 High St, Armadale
- Holmesglen College of TAFE**
inc. the Victorian Schools Nursery
585 Waverley Rd, Glen Waverley
10% off everything
- The Gardeners Corner Store**
190-192 New St, Brighton
10% off everything
- Collectors Corner**
Springvale Rd, Keysborough
10% off all plants
- Kew Nursery**
Cnr High & Gladstone Sts, Kew
10% off all plants
- Wolf Tools**
675 Canterbury Rd, Surrey Hills
10% discount
- Burwood Garden Patch**
1418 Toorak Rd, Burwood
10% discount
- Green Gables Nursery**
1039 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill
10% off all items except specials
- Garden of Eden Nursery**
33 Ferrars Street, Albert Park
10% discount off everything
- The Cottage Garden Nursery**
cnr Macedon Ave & Doncaster Rd
North Balwyn. \$20 per tray of seedlings (8 punnets), 10% off all other plants
- Banksia Hill B&B**
RMB 5349, Horsham, 3401
10% discount on accommodation



Botanic News is produced quarterly for the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Inc.

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

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His Excellency the
Hon. Sir James Gobbo, A.C.

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Print Post Approved
PP 3458420025
ISSN No. 08170-650

Printer:
Gill Miller Press Pty Ltd
110 Franklin Street
Melbourne Vic. 3000

Printed on
100 per cent recycled paper
Australian made.

FROM THE GARDENS AND HERBARIUM

In March there was a dramatic influx of thousands of Grey-headed Flying Foxes into the Gardens. They spread far beyond the Fern Gully and caused considerable damage to trees. We quickly commenced a twice-daily disturbance program using a variety of loud noises - banging empty rubbish bins was the most effective one. Over the past eight weeks the number of flying foxes has declined considerably. At last count there were approximately 1,000 compared with about 10,000 when the noise disturbance program began. The Fern Gully continues to harbour most of the Flying Foxes, but smaller groups are present elsewhere in the Gardens. We shall be continuing our dispersal efforts.

The contractors continue to make steady progress with the works for Observatory Gate. The Friends Councillors were guided around the project in April by Wendy Williams, our Project Officer.

The details are still being finalised for the move of La Trobe's Cottage to its new position near the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

The future scientific priorities and programs of the RBG are currently being reviewed in order to complement the recently published RBG Corporate Plan for 1997-2002. We shall be maintaining our role as the key scientific institution providing information on plant biodiversity for Victoria. Our research into the population genetics, *ex situ* plant propagation and reintroduction, and the conservation of rare species contributes to the maintenance of the present diversity of plants and ecological communities and their viability across the biological regions of Victoria.

In recent years the RBG has become an Australian leader in studies on freshwater algae and fungi, and in the identification of horticultural plants in the south-eastern States. Micropropagation of native orchids and horticultural species is a recent addition to the research program, as is the use of genetics for the management of remnant plant populations. The newly established Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology will be a world-class centre for scientific studies and ecological processes in urban natural areas.

As part of the review, the title of the Research and Herbarium Division has been changed to the Plant Sciences and Biodiversity Division. We congratulate one of the Division's senior staff, Dr Tim Entwistle, who will be leaving the RBG in September to take up his appointment as Senior Assistant Director, Plant Sciences, at RBG Sydney. He has made major contributions to the reinvigoration of science at RBG Melbourne and we will greatly miss his talents and presence.

The senior managers in charge of RBG Divisions, formerly known as Assistant Directors, have been retitled Divisional Directors.

During June I shall be in the United States visiting several botanic gardens and research institutes and attending the Annual Conference of the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta in Philadelphia. One of my main objectives is to promote the scientific and curatorial programs at the National Herbarium, and to explore opportunities for collaborative projects in plant sciences and in making our remarkable herbarium collections more accessible to botanists throughout the world. I shall also be seeking out the latest trends in horticultural maintenance and presentation, visitor programs, and sponsorship.

Philip Moors
Director