

Sicily tour 27 April to 18 May 2021

This Friends' wonderful tour of Sicily has been rescheduled to 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The tour is being organised by one of our members, Alf Reina, who grew up in Sicily. It will be led by him and his cousin Alfie Orlando, who was born in Australia but now lives in Sicily, and has been conducting tours for over 25 years.

Highlights of the tour include amazing archaeology in Agrigento, Selinunte and Segesta, and fantastic architecture and unique art including the floor mosaics in the Roman Villa del Casale and the gold-leaf mosaics in Monreale Cathedral and the Palatine Chapel. The tour will visit beautiful and interesting private and public gardens and travel through picturesque countryside offering marvellous views of the mountains and the coastline. We expect that there will be a profusion of wildflowers at this perfect time of the year. We will also visit nature reserves and the largest beech forest in Europe as well as the stunning Flower Festival in Noto (Infiorata) where the streets are decorated with flowers representing a different theme each year. And of course we will see the volcano of myths and legends, Mount Etna, which overlooks the whole of the East coast. The fresh food markets are a delight and the food is indescribably good.

Sicily has been described as 'the island at the crossroads of history' because of its strategic location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. The many civilisations that occupied the island over the centuries all left their mark, particularly on the people and their culture, but probably none more than the Normans. This makes it a particularly interesting place to visit, especially in the company of two people who know the place so well.

We have a few vacancies, so if you would like to be part of this wonderful adventure, please get in touch with **Alf Reina** for more information and a copy of the itinerary.

Tel: 03 9769 7881
 Mobile: 040 169 210
 Email: reina@iinet.net.au



*Previous tours of Sicily.
 Top: Coastal cruise,
 2019.
 Centre: Floor mosaic,
 Roman Villa.
 Bottom: 2018, at
 Giardino San Giuliano.*

Membership update

This quarter we are pleased to welcome 29 new members: Jacomina Pretorius, Alan Hogan, Leanne Fox, Lara Campana, Sarah Clark, Deirdre Garvey, Viktoria Edney, Brett Edney, Gabrielle Baldwin, Peter Fitzpatrick, Kerry McDonald, Meagan Dalton, Andrew Hardie, Aimee Hardie, Lenka Hardie, Marek Hardie, Pamela Murray, Karen White, Georgie Rutter, Andrea Taylor, Aneesh Gregory, Kellie Vanderkruk, Leigh Rabl, Laura Baker, Caroline Moran, Kim Brock, Sarah Begg, Jenny Jensen and Heather Gaye Cameron.

If you have any Membership queries, please contact Alexandra Stalder via:

- membership@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au
- telephone 0431 025 733.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and learn, the peoples of the Kulin (Koolin) Nation, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.



I hope you enjoy some of the new focus in this edition of *Naturelink*; we are also considering revamping *Quicklink* to meet changed circumstances.

How much has changed since the last full meeting of the General Committee! While the Corona Virus was then looming, it was thus far a very busy and successful year. The good news is we can fund some projects for the Gardens.

As the projector in the auditorium wasn't working well, we offered to replace it. This offer has been accepted by RBGV and quotes are being sought for the work.

Building and funding approval has been gained for the installation of a hot water system in the Growing Friends (GF) Nursery. No more cold hands in winter!

The Friends have agreed to fund an extra Elisabeth Murdoch Scholarship for \$5490. The Maud Gibson Trust is awarding this to Trent Loane to enable a plant-collection trip to NSW National Parks and reserves, in addition to three other scholarships for Warren Worboys, Steven Liu and John Arnott.

Marjanne Rook has initiated plans for the renovation of the Elliot Centre library, with the books placed around the walls rather than in the centre. When completed this will enable more flexible use of the Centre as a whole by Special Interest Groups, but for now, this plan has to be put on hold, as the Elliot Centre is occupied by the RBGV staff to facilitate meeting social-distancing guidelines.

A final event before the shutdown was the highly successful Autumn Plant Sale. How ironic that just as the quality of the plants and the popularity of the event was soaring, Friends activities had to cease and the GF nursery was put into storage.

It's really great that we have been able to contribute funds on your behalf to the Gardens for these projects. Thank you to everyone who has supported past plant sales, tours and events. Your efforts are appreciated because for the next six months our ability to raise money to donate to the Gardens will be limited.

With the postponement of our Events, Excursion and Travel program for the foreseeable future, Friends' Activities are now completely on hold. In most cases we are attempting to reschedule, but this isn't always possible. These postponements have required us to reconsider some aspects of our cancellation policy, and we are endeavouring to return all deposits paid by participants. Many of you have elected to commit to trips at a future time which means there is no 'one size fits all'. We are very grateful to all participants for their patience in this regard and for their continuing support of the Friends.

So, where to from here? Well, in the meantime, we will be looking at alternative ways of maintaining contact with Friends during the lock-down. Obviously, virtual meetings are no substitute for the companionship we've enjoyed in the past, but we'll do our best. Our first committee meeting via Zoom last week was a success!

When will this all be over and when can we get back to normal? This of course is the big question, but despite all the pronouncements of politicians and theories of commentators, the only answer in such a situation is that we don't know. And furthermore we don't know what the new 'normal' will look like.

The Committee is working hard in very limited circumstances and our main concern at the moment is to keep in contact with you, our members. We'd love to hear from you. There are many avenues for communication, whether via Facebook, Instagram, phone, email, our website - so do let's keep connecting.

Painting the Landscape 29 February 2020

- reflection by the artist, Erica Wagner

'Lessons of landscape can only be learned through a direct observation and experience of nature' – Mitchell Abela, *Landscape Painting*.

What do you do when you are faced with the beauty of nature, with all of its intricate patterns and forms, colours and shape? How do you even start to capture any of that on paper or canvas?

These questions have informed my art practice for years, with my approach varying, depending on my mood, as well as the atmosphere and features of the landscape.

For example, last year I spent six months living and working in Darwin. My accommodation was a beautiful elevated house with louvred windows all around, looking onto a rainforest garden, rich with tangled leaves and magnificent and active bird life day and night. Trying to capture the feeling of this riot of greens was challenging! But it was the most compelling subject and resulted in a suite of rainforest and jungle garden paintings.

My advice is to shake off the compulsion for photo realism or accuracy. Accept that there's no way to exactly replicate nature's riotous creativity. Have fun and experiment! There is no right or wrong! The main thing is to be fully present. Bring yourself to the mark – and experiment. Make a choice to see shapes, or tonal variations, connecting lines, textures.

'Symbols or marks can't "be" the actual landscape, but they can communicate the same emotion and serve as an analogy' – Mitchell Abela.

I'm looking forward to sharing the joy of landscape painting again with you when the Gardens re-open. In the meantime, if you can see some greenery from your windows or have a garden to inhabit, now is the perfect time to start drawing and painting. Good luck!



Top: Rainforest garden in Berry Springs, Northern Territory.
Centre: Experimenting, April 2019.
Bottom: The finished work, completed in the studio in Melbourne: *Rainforest Garden, I*, acrylic on linen board, 2019.

Painting the Landscape 29 February 2020 - report by Julie Watt

One unusually cool February morning I took part in RBGV Cranbourne's first-ever landscape painting tutorial. I used to draw and paint as a child, and now that I'm retired I've done a few pastel classes in our local community house but have never worked *en plein air* before. I love being in nature and in later life have come to a deeper appreciation of our incredibly diverse plant life. What could be better than combining this with like-minded people in the RBGV's Australian Garden?

A group of about 12 of us, all ages and abilities and all very friendly, met in the Visitor Centre early that Saturday, and Erica Wagner, our teacher for the day, led us along the Eucalypt Walk area with its huge flat rocks of Mansfield mudstone. The air was misty and fragrant, the sounds were of rustling eucalyptus leaves and birdsong of all kinds. Strappy grasses, tumbling groundcovers, spiky bushes and mottled tree trunks were all around us, giving us the option to draw boldly or softly depending on our preference, as well as distant vistas across the Red Sand Garden to the hills beyond if a broader landscape beckoned.

Erica was a fabulous teacher, warm and encouraging. First up she got us to relax into the session by giving us an assortment of exercises, ranging from simply marking a horizon line, through

sketching the shapes of different kinds of foliage, to looking through a little frame she provided to draw what we saw inside the 'window'. Keen observation was the key - that was fabulous in itself - and we worked through these exercises quickly. At one point we all laid our work out on the ground to see what everyone else was doing. There was no criticism or comparison and Erica explained how everyone's marks are unique to each person, and to just allow those to happen, not to try and correct them to what we think is the 'proper' way of drawing. That was very freeing.

Barbara, one of the Cranbourne Friends, brought us morning tea and this gave us all the chance to get to know one another a bit more, and to wander around the area (being very careful where we put our feet!) deciding what to focus on for the second half of the session. After having a go at a couple of close trees, I was still very tentative and my pencil marks were faint. Others were more confident and assured and several people were using paints. Having tried a bit of pastel for a close-up branch and not being happy with that, I found myself drawn to the wider environment and, using the little window, opted for charcoal to draw what I could see. I was happier with that: it seemed to have more presence.

All too soon the session was coming to an end, just when the sun was starting to filter through, bringing strong contrasts to our surroundings. Would an image with strong contrasts be more challenging to draw? Or easier? What would Erica be able to teach us about that? Perhaps we'll find out next time!

Hopefully there is a next time.

Thank you to all the participants for your supportive comments. We hope you'll keep in touch, and as soon as the coronavirus emergency has passed we hope we can follow up on this program and invite Erica back. In the meantime we'd love to hear from you, perhaps even share some of your artworks!

Open House - Elliot Centre 2020

We are currently in lockdown so our 2020 Open House program has been put on hold. Once our activities resume, Open House will again be held on the 2nd Thursday of the month, and you will be advised via Quicklink.

Raising Rarity Project by Dr Meg Hirst

February was the first Open House talk and get-together for this year. The Science Division works with a team of volunteers from Melbourne University to collect Victorian species that have been identified as rare and vulnerable plants from areas that are under threat. Seed is collected from the wild population. After germination, the plants are trialled and their potential for sale and for growing in gardens is assessed.

Thank you Meg for coming to Open House and telling us about this very important project.

Bushfoods by Owen Janusauskas

Not only did we get an excellent talk from Owen, a horticulturalist from Canbourne Gardens, but we got cake too at this Open House meeting in March! Owen has been interested in eating Australian plants for almost as long as he has been growing them - a significant timeframe.

The Myrtle Cake that he brought along for us to eat was flavoured with Strawberry Gum (*Eucalyptus olida*), the icing with Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) and the cream with *Syzygium anisatum*. The talk covered a lot more species but I can't mention them all here. Hopefully the number of species commonly in use continues to grow in the future.



Now is the perfect time to get stuck into those Kangaroo Paws - by Rodger Elliot

Now is the time to begin the rejuvenation process for Kangaroo Paws, especially the taller varieties that have *Anigozanthos flavidus* parentage and flower from mid-spring and through summer, producing stunning flower stems to about two metres tall. These plants are generally much better performers in gardens than many of the smaller varieties that have been popular, like many of the 'Bush Gem Series'. These are best grown in containers rather than as general landscape plants.

Flowers of the taller kangaroo paws are regular destinations for a range of nectar-feeding birds such as New Holland Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills, Little Wattlebirds and Red Wattle Birds. Such visits can really add to the pleasure derived from gardening.

Many of the taller *A. flavidus* varieties were available for purchase at the Kangaroo Paw Celebration that was held at the Australian Garden in November 2016. There was the 'first release' of a number of selections under the banner of *Landscape Series* that were bred by Angus Stewart, who is now the Cranbourne Friends' Patron. Perhaps you may have purchased some of these plants during the 'Celebration'. The Growing Friends have also offered many selections at their ensuing Plant Sales.

Names under which taller *A. flavidus* kangaroo paws have been marketed include: 'Big Red', 'Green and Red', 'Landscape Lilac', 'Landscape Lime', 'Landscape Orange', 'Landscape Pink', 'Landscape Red', 'Landscape Violet', 'Landscape Yellow', 'Orange Cross', 'Tangerine', 'Triple Treat' and 'Yellow Gem'.

These are usually excellent performers in a range of soil types. However, to really get the best performance from all kangaroo paws, they need special attention at this time of year. There are a few really simple actions which will promote excellent flower production later this year.

Flowering is virtually finished so act now! Here are the steps:

1. Shear leaves and spent flower stems to just above ground level (see photos)
2. Remove by hand any excess diseased and dead leaves, especially those that have black Ink Disease noticeable on the leaves.
3. Apply slow release organic fertiliser liberally. Kangaroo paws are 'gross feeders' and respond well to such treatment. It is worth noting that vigorous plants are less likely to suffer from the sometimes-debilitating Ink Disease.
4. Water plants thoroughly.
5. Apply snail and slug bait that is not toxic to animals, e.g. Iron-based compounds. These little critters love to reside in the base of kangaroo paw clumps and they can cause much damage, especially to young emerging leaves, which are also ideal sites for the entry of Ink Disease. You may also need to apply such baits at other times of the year.

Now stand back and enjoy the production of new leaves over late autumn and winter with new flower stems beginning to form in late winter and spring. The application of slow-release organic fertiliser in early to mid spring can also be beneficial.



Anigozanthos flavidus 'Tangerine' with largely spent flowering stems, that are ready for shearing.

All photos: Rodger Elliot



Freshly sheared plants - could be reduced further still by 4 - 5 cm.



Now a suitable height but still requiring removal of old and dead leaves and stems.



Broad view of suitably sheared kangaroo paws that have been fertilised and watered.

Sometimes kangaroo paw plants can form very large clumps and they may lose their vigour even if given the treatment described above. If this is the case then division of the clumps is the way to go and that can be done in autumn or late winter. Simply use a very sharp spade to cut the clump into quarters and replant them in selected locations, apply slow release organic fertiliser and water the newly transplanted divisions well. Response to this treatment is usually very positive.

So good luck in getting your taller *Anigozanthos flavidus* kangaroo paws to perform better.

These *Anigozanthos flavidus* 'Tangerine' plants responded positively to shearing and fertilising plants eight months earlier.



Cancellation of events from May to September 2020 - Barbara Jeffrey, Coordinator Events Subcommittee

Due to the uncertainty of the present restrictions and the likelihood of COVID-19 extending for a longer period, the Events Subcommittee, with General Committee's approval, has suspended all events from May until the end of August. It is hoped that a clearer picture will emerge in the near future that will permit us to consider holding events between September and the end of the year.

If restrictions on activities at the Gardens and social distancing generally are lifted prior to September, my team will be able to bring together some events for you to attend, which will be advertised in Quicklink.

I am hoping that we will be able to incorporate events that have been cancelled into next year's Events Calendar. If you have any ideas for the **2021 events calendar**, I would like to hear from you (email suggestions to bajeffrey@westnet.com.au).

I would like to thank the Events Subcommittee members and other Friends who have done preparatory work towards events and tours that have been cancelled. It is quite time-consuming organising each event. Thanks also goes to the Treasurer and the Booking officer who have had organise refunding of money to those who had already paid for events.

Cancelled events:

Sun 3 May	Friends Lunch: Speaker -Millie Ross
Thurs 14 May	Open House: 'TroMPS in Queensland'- Warren Worboys
Sun 17 May	Open House: Fire Ecology- Dick Williams
Sat 30 May-Tues 9 June	Nth Queensland Tour
Thurs 11 June	Open House: Great Victorian forests- Sue Bendel
Sun 14 June	2021 Events Planning Day
Thurs 9 July	Open House: Koala - Hand raising -Melanie Mantel
Sun 19 July	Afternoon Talk: Superb Lyrebird: Alex Maisey
Sat /Sun 25 & 26 July	Winter Plant Sale
Sun 2 Aug	Talk: Ikebana Talk & Demonstration
Tues 4 Aug	National Herbarium/Fern Gully Tours, RBGV Melbourne
Thurs 13 Aug	Open House: Expedition Central Australia - Trevor Blake
Sun 30 Aug	Workshop: How Do I Set Up My Garden?
Thurs-Tues 19-24 Sept	Great Ocean Rd / Otways Discovery Tour (self-drive)



The Superb Lyrebird was to have been the topic of an afternoon talk by Alex Maisey. Alex and other presenters have agreed to defer presentations to next year.

Photo P. Klapste, The Australian Museum, *Encyclopedia of Australian Animals: Birds*, 1992, p 261.

Postponed / Cancelled Events due to COVID-19

Preparing for a landscape design consultation - Janette Wilson

The first point of contact between a client and a landscape designer is usually a consultation. It can last from 30 minutes to a couple of hours depending on the designer (and the site). Preparing for the consultation will ensure both parties get a strong picture of your needs and your style. Armed with this information the designer then creates spaces that suit you, taking into account how they will best fit on the site. Visiting the site is essential for the designer to identify any issues, benefits, traffic flows, views and sun/shade coverage.

Although it may feel daunting, there are many ways to make the most of that time, and a little preparation will help both you and the designer arrive at the best solutions for your lifestyle. Preparing a list of items for discussion is a great starting point and will help you order your thoughts before the meeting.

Boiled right down, Landscape Design is a response to a series of problems and possible solutions. But more than that, the solutions must work cohesively with the owner's lifestyle, and this is where the value is. A good designer will take the time to get to know a little about you and your lifestyle, so being open is essential. This allows the designer to get a feel for your household and how you will use the spaces. It is important to have all decision-makers present at the meeting, because changes later on in the design process can be time-consuming and costly.

For example, in the illustrated plan, some concerns identified are: there is a two-storey house which shades more than half the yard in winter, yet the garden is scorched with blazing heat in summer; there is no provision for a fence and it is open to the street; the client wants to increase bird activity and grow a mix of indigenous and native plants.

However, there are benefits to be found. There is a park across the road with some large *Eucalyptus* species, which means a variety of birds already visit the area and the park's trees provide some borrowed landscape. The seasonal nature of this garden space can actually increase the diversity of plants because there are areas that can easily be transformed into microclimates for sun-loving and shade-loving plantings, in turn increasing diversity in insects and other life.

Some things to consider:

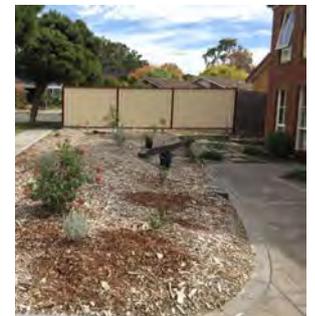
For each problem there are many solutions; the trick is finding the one that suits you. Many solutions are born out of a need to change, so contemplating the reasons you are meeting with a designer will help you identify what needs changing and why. It might be that a space is too small, too large, too hot or cold, or your children may have moved into a new phase and require a different space.

Budgets and maintenance are important. Telling your designer what your budget is provides clarity for them and a good starting point. It also creates trust; there is no point being offered a design you cannot afford. Some people love to garden but many prefer to just relax in it. Decide if you are a 'gardener' or a 'relaxer'. Will you be pruning the hedges and cleaning your own pool or will someone else be doing the maintenance? These decisions up front help the designer match a garden to your budget, and the plants to your preferred maintenance level.

IDEAS FOR YOUR GARDEN



As a designer it's important to listen and allow for adaptation. The owner of this property wanted a cottage garden plan to which she could add plants from her community indigenous garden group, so the design was left open enough to add many of the local infill plants like *Arthropodium*, *Brachyscome* and *Bulbine*.



Within one year, the vigorous growth of the tube stock and smaller plants can quickly create a filled out garden which will look as good as one where more advanced plants have been used.



The garden today, a year or so later.

Creating a mood board and a colour palette can help you convey your ideas and style. Identify the garden type and 'feel' you're after, and the style: will it be native bush, bush tucker, habitat, permaculture, native formal, native cottage etc. This can be done the old-fashioned way, by gathering together magazine cuttings, photos and colour charts, or you could collect your pictures on an app like Pinterest. These resources will help you and the designer visualise your style.

Gardens are living things. Consider how your lifestyle is likely to evolve over time and recognise that gardens have a lifespan. Sometimes a space can serve a dual purpose. What you need today may not be required in 10 years' time. i.e. could that sandpit make way for a separate area to entertain friends or a little extra lawn area?

Growing Friends - Marjanne Rook

March was an eventful month which presented us with the challenge of temporarily closing the Growing Friends nursery due to COVID-19.

In early March we supplied the Australian Plant Society Victoria's most interesting Banks and Solander events with hundreds of plants to be used as giveaways to visitors. They were mostly the pretty *Viola banksii* in tiny pots, with some *Geranium solanderi* and *Banksia serrata*. *Viola banksii* was chosen as it was among the plants collected by Banks and Solander at Botany Bay in late April and early May 1770. *Viola banksii* has proven to be the showiest and most hardy of the Australian violets. It thrives in damp locations with some shade.

Sadly, the APS events came to an early close, and plants left over were taken home by one of the organisers, Dallas Boulton, who had the lovely idea of leaving a few at the time on her letterbox to be taken by anyone interested. Many were taken by children, and some parents and children were so appreciative that they left little notes in the letterbox saying that they loved the little plants and would be planting them in their garden.

In mid-March we held a very successful Autumn Plant Sale, which raised \$24,000. It is a great event, which we work towards for many months. Thank you to those members who so regularly come to select from our plants. For some years now, the sale starts out very busy on Saturday morning with many customers arriving before the advertised opening time of 10am. Although it is rewarding to know that many customers are so eager to buy our plants, we kindly ask those early birds to come at the advertised time as this does put some unfair pressure on the volunteers who are busy with the setting-up.



After the sale we prepared the nursery for an indefinite closure due to the issues related to COVID-19. Members, please note that there won't be a Winter sale as our poster and flyer advertised at the recent plant-sale. But hoping for a Spring sale, some Growing Friends have taken home hundreds of plants from the nursery to be cared for and maintained at their homes during this closure period. The thousands of small plants remaining in the nursery will be cared for by Gardens staff. This should provide us with a great start for a Spring sale (should we be able to offer one) when once again we hope to have many beautiful plants to sell. In the meantime we wish you well and look forward to seeing you once again.

Nursery plants on agistment at Paul Sierakowski's home. He is looking after more than 300 mixed plants - a great effort.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



Viola banksii.



Geranium solanderi.

At the moment, Special Interest Groups are unable to meet.

Botanical Illustrators

The Botanical Illustrators is a friendly group of artists at various stages of development who normally meet in the Elliot Centre on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month (except December and January). We support, encourage and inspire each other, enjoy fun and friendship and share the occasional culinary indulgence. Our group has enjoyed a significant growth in membership in the past two years.

Due to the current suspension of Friends' activities at RBGV Cranbourne, we cannot meet until the Covid-19 crisis passes and we are safe to resume our usual activities. We hope that our Illustrators will maintain enthusiasm for our beautiful art and that pursuing it at home will be a welcome respite from the tensions now affecting us all. The activities we were planning for 2020 have now been put on hold.

Our group has been a welcome source of contact, pleasure and inspiration for all our members over the years and so we look forward to staying in touch through these trying times, wish each other safety and serenity and look forward to the day when we can once more gather together in our pursuit of art, friendship and communal endeavour.



Contact:
Margaret
Kitchen
0413 664 295

Friends in Focus



Six members signed on at the Elliot Centre for our January meeting, relieved that there was a change from the heat as some rain had fallen overnight. We welcomed one new member who had joined last year and was attending her first meeting. After a brief catch-up of news, we set off for the Australian Garden, where we were immediately busy photographing the honeyeaters darting amongst the kangaroo paws at the front of the Red Sand Garden.

We found a variety of summer flowering plants in bloom, including *Blandfordia*, *Regelia*, *Corymbia*, *Crinus*, *Ceratopetalum*, *Pandorea*, *Banksia*, *Leptospermum*, *Grevillea* and everlasting daisies to name just a few. We moved from the Diversity Garden through the Research Garden and along the back path to the Arbour Garden, through the Seaside Garden and up Elisabeth Murdoch Promenade, finding a wealth of photographic subjects.

At our February meeting we officially handed over our photo display book showcasing the group's activities in the Cranbourne Gardens. This was to be displayed at Karwarra Gardens for the *250 Banks and Solander Exhibition*, from mid-February to mid-April. On arriving in the Australian Garden we were confronted by strong winds that blew hats off and caused plants to wave violently, as well as the ever-present smoke haze. Despite these challenges we managed to find a variety of subjects to photograph. Highlights included the different coloured flowers of *Corymbia ficifolia*, the sensual tones and textures in the bark of the *Angophora*, the diversity of flowers and foliage along Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Promenade and a family of wood duck taking advantage of the shade beneath the Big Bandicoot.

Our March meeting was small, with Friends' programmes and events being suspended the following day. We enjoyed a walk through the Australian Garden along the Eucalypt Walk, Scribbly Gum Walk and Elisabeth Murdoch Promenade, concluding with a hot drink at the Kiosk and the Plant Sale.



Top left, *Brachychiton garrawayae*
Top to bottom:
Friends in Focus in action,
Superb fairy wren,
Regelia velutin.

Who or what is this Maud Gibson Trust?

In January this year the Cranbourne Friends Committee received a request to consider funding an Elisabeth Murdoch Scholarship for 2020 from the Maud Gibson (MG) Trust Committee. Every two years horticulturalists at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria are encouraged to apply for one of these scholarships that benefit both the Gardens and the recipient.

This year the scholarship selection committee decided that four applications should be funded, but the MG Trust Committee could only fund three of them. The fourth proposal was from a Cranbourne horticulturalist to collect wild plant material from the inland Ironbark forests of NSW, for propagation which would enhance and develop the Australian Garden's Ironbark Garden. This collecting trip will now eventuate! The Cranbourne Friends wholeheartedly supported the request for funding \$5490 - a magnificent gesture, greatly appreciated by MG Trust Committee.

Since 2015, these Scholarships have been awarded every two years. The Scholarships commemorate Dame Elisabeth Murdoch who was a member of the Maud Gibson Trust Committee from 1961 to 1989. Dame Elisabeth, a long-term RBGV patron, played a very important role in having the land secured at Cranbourne. Some Friend's members may know of the Scholarship Program, as recipients often provide a presentation on their research at our Open House afternoons.

Other recent projects the Maud Gibson Trust has supported include:

- Joint Fellowship in Taxonomy and Systematics (also supported by RBGV Foundation and Melbourne University School of Botany Foundation)
- Australian Research Council Linkage Grants (Trust as an industry partner)
 - Carbon accounting for managed urban environments
 - Evolution of halophytes (salt-tolerant plants)
- Bookbinding repairs to Rare Books in the Gardens' Library
- Installation of laser-cut corten screens in Australian Garden
- Kangaroo Paw Celebration at the Australian Garden
- Curating the National Herbarium's Foreign Collection (ongoing support), which is unearthing many botanical treasures
- Digitisation of the Herbarium sheets for VicFlora Project
- Cranbourne Gardens Entry Signage.

However, who or what is the Maud Gibson Trust? What important role has it played in supporting the RBGV since 1945?

On the 2nd March 1945 Maud Gibson established the Trust as a memorial to her father William Gibson, a founder of Foy & Gibson Department Store, to solely support the Royal Botanic Gardens and National Herbarium of Victoria. Grey-haired Friends' members are likely to remember the store on the corner of Swanston and Bourke Streets, Melbourne. Maud Gibson was keen to have her gifts made much more valuable by using them as a sort of 'pump primer' and this has certainly been the case. Even though it is a small Trust it certainly 'punches well above its weight'.



*The Trust helped fund the development of the Wylies Creek Wetlands in the southern region of the Cranbourne Gardens.
Photo: Rodger Elliot*



*Broni Swartz visited arid and semi-arid landscapes and reserves in North West Victoria and South Australia, including seen here Pooginook Conservation Park, on a scholarship-funded trip.
Photo: Broni Swartz*



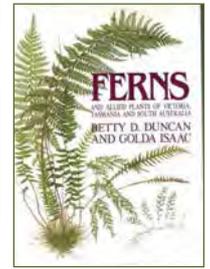
*The Trust enabled installation of the corten steel screens in the Lifestyle Gardens beside the Elisabeth Murdoch Promenade.
Photo: Rodger Elliot*



Miss Maud Gibson planting a tree at the then Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens on 18th November 1947.

Many other RBG projects supported and funded over time by the Maud Gibson Trust include:

- **Publications –**
 - ◇ *Plants of Victoria* (Vol 1 & 2) by Dr Jim Willis
 - ◇ *Nicholls Orchids*
 - ◇ *Muelleria* – Plant, Algal and Fungal Taxonomy and Systematics Journal, (continues to be published each year)
 - ◇ Melbourne Gardens Guide Books
 - ◇ *Fern Flora of Victoria, Tasmania & South Australia*, by Betty Duncan and Golda Isaac
 - ◇ Education Guides
- Sponsored Dr Melville’s visit from RBG Kew, which was a major impetus for botanical research to be undertaken by the RBGV.
- Botanical Art – the Trust played a major role in promoting botanical art by supporting and commissioning a number of world-renowned artists including Margaret Stones, Celia Rosser and Betty Conabere. This action was a major impetus for the development of the very active high quality Botanical Art movement in Melbourne and Cranbourne.
- Californian Garden at the Melbourne Gardens
- Botanical Conferences
- Field Work by Botanists and Horticulturalists
- Plant Breeding
- Science research and National Herbarium projects.



Members of the Trust Committee in the Australian Garden, 13th May 2004; from left Rodger Elliot, Julie Lidgett, Judy Baillieu, Tony Bacic, Jocelyn Allen, Philip Moors, Lady Carmen Carnegie, Tony Darvall (Chair), George Howson, Bill Middleton. Photo: Gwen Elliot

The RBGV is certainly very fortunate to have such marvellous support on so many projects from the Trust since 1945. Maud Gibson would undoubtedly be pleased that her gift has enabled such a range of projects to proceed.

Current members of the Trust Committee are:

Tony Darvall AM (chairman)
Professor Tim Entwistle, Director & Chief Executive, RBGV
Rodger Elliot AM
George Howson
Professor Ian Woodrow

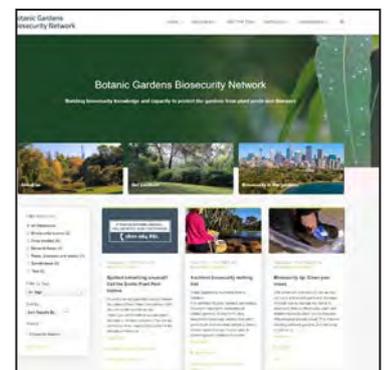
The Trust Committee is greatly assisted by expert advice from the Advisory Panel members: Anne Latreille, Millie Ross, Brian Snape AM and Penny Woodward.

News from the Gardens - by Warren Worboys

Botanic Gardens Biosecurity Network website launched

The Botanic Gardens Biosecurity Network website (extensionAUS.com.au/botanicgardensbiosecurity) has been launched providing a new hub of biosecurity information and resources for botanic gardens.

The website will hold practical information and advice for staff of botanic gardens, community interest groups and members of the public to develop their knowledge and skills so they can protect botanic gardens from new plant pests and diseases.



The homepage of the new Botanic Gardens Biosecurity Network website.

Contact info

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Going Plant Hunting in China - 2017

by Helen Kennedy

All readers of *Naturelink* will know that our beloved banksias got their name from Joseph Banks, (being particularly celebrated this year). And, strange as it might seem, that the pretty, delicate *Dampieras* I love to grow in our Australian plant garden are forever linked to the buccaneer (and navigator), William Dampier.

The hardships endured on voyages to find the great southern land and discover its flora and fauna are known to many of us. We've gone on our own (far less arduous!) trips of exploration to Western Australia and other states in search of treasures growing in the bush. But I had never heard of Jean Marie Delavay or George Forrest, (who are remembered in *Rhododendron forrestii* and *Magnolia delavayi*) until a trip to still-remote Yunnan Province China in 2017 gave me a fresh appreciation of the challenges the early plant hunters endured, as they searched for plants that have become the familiar staples of many gardens.

Our little group, led by Angus Stewart, 'followed in the footsteps' of some early pioneers, and hunted for plants in the wild. And we often found ourselves scrambling up steep slopes and traversing uneven, rocky terrain – on 'Shanks's pony' – although several times we had to move quickly to avoid mules sharing our narrow tracks as they ferried baskets full of stones up the mountain.

As is true for some parts of Australia, roadside stops where 'things looked promising' gave us some of our most exciting plant experiences. We came across many delights on hillsides, deserted apart from the odd goat: flat rosettes of green and purple saxifrage clinging to rock faces, fragile-looking green and white eidelweiss, ground-hugging tiny blue iris, orchids, and everywhere, rhododendrons of every hue. Seeing them all growing in their natural environment really opened my (Australian plant focussed) eyes to their beauty.

Yunnan is a 'hot spot' for rhododendrons, from large shrubs covered in lush, soft flowers to small ones with azalea-like flowers. Walking across slopes carpeted in wild rhododendrons in multi-coloured full bloom was as exhilarating an experience as standing in a field of West Australian *Rhodanthe chlorocephala*, but in Yunnan we were, as we travelled higher into the mountains, ringed by snow-capped peaks, breathing thin air! Surprisingly, at the entrance to one mountainous Shangri La monastery we saw, planted next to a red rose, a very familiar plant – *Xerochrysum bracteatum* - flowering magnificently and welcoming us in.

On one trek, from Yuhu village, we came across a group of local women who were out with big sacks on their backs. On a very different mission from us, they were searching for plants of medicinal value, plucking young leaves and flowers to cure eye, dental and skin problems.

A highlight experience for me was walking in the Cangshan Mountains along the 'Jade Belt Road', a paved track that snakes along the edge of a steep slope. Azaleas and rhododendrons cascaded down the hillside in pink, purple, red and pure white. Delicate pink and white deutzias and pieris clung to rock faces, their flowers in rows like little bells. As far as the eye could see, the sides of the ravines were clad with every hue of green (firs, poplars, oaks), lit with splashes of white and pink - a feast for the eyes, and soul.



While we frequently had to manoeuvre ourselves across difficult terrain, this was the least of the challenges for those early plant collectors in China. George Forrest was a Scot, who, like other 'hunters', travelled there in the early twentieth century in search of new plant varieties. On the border of Tibet, he was the only person in his group to survive a massacre by the local lamas. Despite the risks, Forrest made several more trips to the area, discovered new species and brought back over 30,000 specimens plus seeds for the London Herbarium. In the late 1800s, Jean Marie Delavay, the French plant hunter, collected over 200,000 specimens before he caught bubonic plague in China and finally died of it. Another famous plant collector, Austrian Joseph Rock, went to China and Tibet seven times in the 1920s and 1930s. He too witnessed the terrifying results of massacres wrought by armies in the area (decapitated heads on spikes). Nevertheless, he lived a spartan existence in the area for many years, published several books on its plants and a dictionary of the local Naxi people's language and sent thousands of specimens back to Europe.



As we fill our gardens today with plants probably bought from a nursery, perhaps we should occasionally spare a thought for all those plant hunters who in the past ventured to far-flung and often dangerous locations, in search of the familiar treasures we now take for granted.

The Comfort of Water: a river pilgrimage, by Maya Ward - Book review by Robin Allison

Meeting at the Timeball Tower at Port Gellibrand, Maya, Ilan, Kate and Cinnamon embarked on their journey upstream from the mouth of the Yarra. As the narrative unfolds, you will share the joys and hardships of each individual and be inspired by their affinity with the river. Ward explains 'The notion of walking the length of the Yarra grew from my quest to live with clarity and sanity in the place I call home.'

The journey is a pilgrimage. Ward's understanding of pilgrim, is 'those seeking connection with something larger than themselves, through devotion to the task, through mental and physical effort.'

The pilgrims all share a sound knowledge of the river, including its history, ecology, and the challenges of human impact.

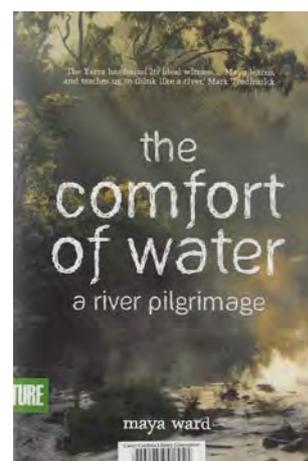
The river is often referred to as Birrarung, as it was known by the first people. Through her clear and thoughtful writing, Ward allows readers to get to know the pilgrims and all the people who support them along their way.

At times Ward diverges from her account of the 'long walk' to reflect on other aspects of her life, experiences which have enriched her and deepened her understanding and knowledge.

Descriptive passages are beautifully written. 'A tiny azure kingfisher dived over the water, a blaze, a shock of ochre and electric blue through the gloomy morning'

'Dying leaves with the morning sun behind them became small and vivid panes of ruby-stained glass. Mistletoe hung from the eucalypts, the crimson blossom fell in patches of the crackly, bark-covered earth.'

Ward has succeeded in bringing the Yarra alive to readers by sharing the experiences and escapades of the pilgrims.



*Transit lounge publishing,
2011.*

Things My Garden Taught Me: A talk by the author, Gabrielle Baldwin 9 February 2020 Report by Kate Walsh

At Koonwarra we planned to have no garden. Instead, we would concentrate on revegetation and just plant tussocks inside the fence around our houseand then things became more complicated! Thus I could easily identify with Gabrielle when she told us that her plan for their one hectare block on the Yanakie Isthmus was to ‘replicate the flora on the Vereker Outlook Walk at nearby Wilson’s Promontory’ and ‘then things became more complicated’.

For a start, the soils, aspect and drainage were quite different from the *Banksia/Xanthorrhoea* woodlands close by. This exposed windy site desperately needed to return to *Melaleuca ericifolia*, Swamp Gums and Manna Gums.

This brought Gabrielle to the question: ‘What is a garden?’ It’s certainly not the thick sward of introduced pasture grasses, subdivided from a dairy farm, which she and her husband bought – nor the dense Swamp Scrub that had covered the land earlier – and thus the garden lessons began.

The vegetation needed to co-habit with people in the 21st century. It needed hard work to shape it to suit their complex and individually unique purposes: aesthetics, shade, shelter, framing a view of Wilsons Promontory and Corner Inlet, providing space for grandchildren and their games, colourful flowers, favourite plants, habitat for chosen wildlife but not too many of the burrowing, biting, swooping or venomous kinds, respecting neighbours, not creating fire hazards, and so the list went on. The people also needed to adapt to the vegetation – plants (and their deaths) determined where there would be paths or glades. Design was accidental. Ambiguity abounded also.

As Gabrielle explored this theme, she was able to draw on insights gained from years as an Arts and English academic. Her book has neither photographs nor horticultural advice. It doesn’t shirk from describing the frustrations, mistakes, heartbreaks and challenges. It is philosophical and does have a sense of humour – a delightful sense of the ridiculous! Gabrielle has divided the contents into twenty-four lessons where life, literature and gardening inform each other and intermingle.

I’ve only just begun to read this beautifully presented little book. If it is as engaging as her talk, it will be a treat.



Cranbourne Friends Committee

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Membership Secretary: Alexandra Stalder	0431 025 733	Barbara Jeffrey	Lyn Blackburne
RBGV Representative: Chris Russell	5990 2200	Ian Chisholm	Rodger Elliot
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Barbara Jeffrey	5998 5410	Naturelink Editor:	
Jennifer Potten	0409 436 181	Rosemary Miller	0422 893 745
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Janette Wilson	0477 711 569	Quicklink Editor:	
		Janette Wilson	0477 711 569
		Social Media Convenor:	
		Amy Akers	0423 513 281

The General Committee meets on the second Thursday of the month (except January) normally at 5.30pm.