

NATURELINK

NEWSLETTER OF THE CRANBOURNE FRIENDS ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS VICTORIA INC.

VOLUME 30 :4| SUMMER 2023



This is the the new boardwalk that has been added to the Stringybark Garden, to protect the much-loved *Xanthorrhoea* and *Kingia* species. The Friends have contributed to this project. Photo: Judith Cooke



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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.

EVENTS

Visit the mountains this summer with the Friends

Members have two wonderful opportunities to visit the Victorian Alps this summer to enjoy spectacular landscapes and mountain wildflowers. We are very lucky to have Friends member and current National Vice President of the Australian Plants Society (Australia), Chris Clarke, as our botanical guide.



Mount Baw Baw. Photo A Stalder



Montane forest on the Lake Mountain Road. Photo A Stalder

Lake Mountain - Saturday 16 December, 2023

Escape the hustle and bustle of Melbourne in December and join us for a guided day trip to the Lake Mountain Alpine Resort. Here you will experience the striking, multi-coloured bark of the snowgums *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, diverse birdlife and stunning displays of native alpine flora in bloom. The Lake Mountain plateau is home to a plethora of plant species, including Mueller's Bush-pea, *Pultenaea muelleri*, *Epacris paludosa* and the endangered Sky Lily, *Herpolirion novae-zelandiae*.

The trip is self-drive, or car-pool. We meet at Marysville, before setting off at 10am to drive to Lake Mountain. A quick stop on the way up to take in some montane forest species, precedes a guided walk up the gentle ascending track to Helicopter Flat. Lunch (BYO) back at the Lake Mountain village is followed by an afternoon walk at the Snowy Hill boardwalk.

Cost: **Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$15**

Mt Baw Baw tour - Thursday 11 to Monday 15 January 2024

Indulge your love of nature and join us for a 4-night tour to Mt Baw Baw in January 2024. Only 2.5 hours from Melbourne, the Mt Baw Baw region is known for its stunning alpine wildflowers, sculptural snow gums and spectacular vistas. Included are guided botanical walks at Mt Baw Baw and Mt St Gwinear, a visit to the Mt Baw Baw Alpine Dingo Resource Centre as well as a trip to historic Walhalla for a ride on the historic Walhalla Goldfields Railway and a tour of the Long Tunnel Extended Gold Mine.



Macleay's Swallowtail on *Stylidium* at Mt Baw Baw. Photo Chris Clarke

Accommodation will be across two lodges at the Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort, with meals and evening activities based at the larger of the two - Edski Lodge. The tour will be self drive (or car pool) with evening meals provided (excluding the final night at the Baw Baw Village Restaurant). Breakfast and lunch will be self-catering, with ample facilities for preparation available at the lodges.

- Cost will be **\$400 per person for 4 nights** and includes 3 evening meals and all activities. Accommodation is twin-share rooms with shared bathrooms. As this is a Cranbourne Friends fundraising event, this rate includes a levy of \$80 per participant, that will go towards supporting the Cranbourne Gardens and the work of the Friends.
- You will need BYO pillows plus doona/sleeping bag, linen and towels.
- As the trip is self drive, please let us know if you are willing to drive extra passengers, or alternatively if you need a lift.

Bookings, more information - Lake Mountain or Baw Baw tour

Bookings: cranbournefriends.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/

Don't hesitate to contact tour organiser Alexandra Stalder at email: membership@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au or by text: **0431 025 733**.

Upcoming Cranbourne Friends events

December 2023/January 2024

- Saturday 16 December - Field trip to Lake Mountain
- 11 January to 15 January - Mt Baw Baw alpine trip

February 2024

- Thursday 8 February - Open House*
- Sunday 25th February - Botanical weaving workshop

March 2024

- Thursday 14 March - Open House*
- Sunday 17 and Thursday 21 March - Members' tours of Australian Garden with Garden Ambassadors
- Weekend 23/24 March - Growing Friends Plant Sale

April 2024

- Thursday 11 April - Open House*
- Sunday 21 April - Propagation workshop
- Sunday 28th April - Botanical weaving workshop

May 2024

- 15 - 30 May - Sicily 2024 tour (booked out).

Botanical weaving workshops | Tess Holderness

The Cranbourne Friends are looking to recreate a 'Botanical Basketry' Group, through the hosting of a series of weaving workshops in 2024, featuring facilitation from First Nations as well as non-Indigenous creatives.

Join us for an opportunity to learn and yarn together - exploring traditional and contemporary weaving practices, under the guidance of experienced plant fibre tutors, artists and cultural educators. Discover some new techniques and develop some practical skills in working with a range of materials (including harvested botanicals, raffia, *Pandanus* fibres and twine).

In the different sessions, participants will be invited and supported to create their own unique, hand-woven works, inspired by nature - from decorative pieces to coil weave baskets and dilly bags. Beginners are most welcome.

The first two workshops will take place on the last Sunday of the month in February and April 2024 (25/2 and 28/4), with a view to continuing the sessions on a bi-monthly basis. The Indigenous tutor for the first session has been announced - it is artist Jenine Godwin-Thompson.

Further details about the individual workshops, including the cost of attending, will soon be available on our Events bookings page (and may also have been sent out in Quicklink or by email). Please visit the Event Booking page to add your name to the Expressions of Interest list (or later to book):
cranbournefriends.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/

Please contact Tess Holderness if you have any queries (email tessholderness@gmail.com or call 0412 195 283).

EVENTS

Check the monthly **Quicklink** and emails from the Friends for the latest information about these events and others.

OR visit our Event page at:
cranbournefriends.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/

* Open House is a free event for Members only, on the second Thursday of the month. Bookings are no longer be required. Members will receive an email with the details of each program.



From top: Traditional weaving using plant fibres; Raffia produced and dyed by the Tjanpi Desert Weavers.
Photos: Tess Holderness.



Newly elected member of the Committee, Kim McKee, after the meeting, between Rosemary Miller and Jennifer Potten.



Neville Walsh accepts Honorary Life Membership of the Cranbourne Friends.

Annual General Meeting 2023

The Cranbourne Friends RBGV Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 12 November at the Auditorium at Cranbourne, with an attendance of 40 members.

The popular guest speaker was Neville Walsh, who is well known to many Friends as he has spoken at workshops and led alpine walks for the Friends at Mt Hotham in January 2019. His talk was entitled: *50 (or was it 60) years of mucking around with plants*. Neville retired as Senior Conservation Botanist at the RBGV's National Herbarium of Victoria, in 2022. Later in the meeting Neville was awarded an Honorary Life Membership of the Friends, in recognition of his dedication to the flora of Victoria, long service with the RBGV and contribution to Cranbourne Friends tours and workshops.

At the meeting the Rules of the Friends organisation were changed, so that the President can stay in her position for a little longer. Until now there had been a limit of three years on the President's term, to encourage fresh perspectives and prevent potential abuses of power. This limit has been extended to five years, which will allow the committee time to hopefully recruit someone to take over the role at some time in the future.

A new committee member was elected at the meeting, Kim McKee, who will be a great contributor and will be able to represent Growing Friends members. The existing committee were all re-elected and will continue in their existing roles.

Chris Russell, Executive Director, finalised the meeting with a report on the latest details of building and roadwork projects and the announcement of an expansion of the Raising Rarity project, with a plant sales commercial expansion in the offing as well as extensive work with schools and councils (see page 8).

The Annual General Meeting was very positive, with the committee receiving a positive reception and endorsement, members enjoying the social aspects of meeting old friends, and all enjoying a Devonshire tea, supplied by the Boon Wurrung café, at the end of the proceedings.



President Erin Cosgriff addresses the meeting, flanked by (L) Treasurer Wendy Herauville and (R) Secretary Jennifer Potten.



Retired Senior Conservation Botanist Neville Walsh spoke to us about 50 years of mucking around with plants.



The Friends Committee. From left, Jennifer Potten (Secretary), Rosemary Miller (Vice-President), Jill Burness, Wendy Herauville (Treasurer), Erin Cosgriff (President), Helen Kennedy. Not in photo: Alexandra Stalder (Membership Officer), Kim McKee. All photos: Peter Miller



As ever, this update is written well in advance of you receiving *Naturelink*. After what seems like a lingering wet and cold spring, I've just come in to the computer from watering pots that might now wilt in the glorious sunny Cup Day that has sprung upon us. It's been such a wildly variable spring, blessing all our gardens with cool conditions and rainfall. Although it has felt like summer will never come, I expect that it is about to, with a vengeance. Time to set things in place for everyone and their gardens to survive. Do remember to care for yourselves, your plants and animals in the heat.

The Growing Friends Plant Sale was a great success – our customers were offered another beautiful range of specialist and robust plants to get settled in at home while conditions were favourable. You will read reports elsewhere but I particularly wanted to congratulate the hardy bunch of 20+ Growing Friends volunteers who soldier on through all conditions to propagate and present their 'babies'. The logistical feat of transporting the nursery stock, display tables and erecting marquees on the Ian Potter lawn was aided and abetted by very willing Gardens' staff as always. Reviewing and preplanning the event with Chris Russell, Kevin Alexander and his team paid pleasing dividends for the Growing Friends team. The exercise went more smoothly and with much less stress. Bravo and thank you to everyone who contributed to the improved communications, planning and the actual work over many days.

Spring also saw the Events committee conduct a wonderful tour in the Otways - see pages 14 and 15 - and collaborated with the Melbourne Friends and their Whirlies botanical illustration group. This collaborative staging of an *Acacia* exhibition accompanied by a learned presentation by Dr Daniel Murphy and tours of our Gardens' *Acacia* plantings were quite a Wattle Day festival. The Events committee are hard at work preparing for a bumper 2024 calendar of educative, fun events and tours and would welcome interest and help in this important work that provides connection and activities for our members.

Our financial contributions to the Gardens have been showing rewards; check out the refurbishments to the Dry River Bed, Stringybark decking and anticipated planting of more venerable *Xanthorrhoea*, during your next visit. In the new year we will fund the installation of digital speed warning signs – to be undertaken once the Western Entry has been upgraded. Your donations to the **Plant Label Donor project** were exceptionally generous and contributed half of the \$25,000 required for stage one. This has been topped up from Friends' reserves and transferred to the RBGV Cranbourne for use in the new year. Thank you all, there were many touching stories of donors who had very strong connections and personal commemorative reasons for contributing to this project.

Spring has also seen the refresh of very important senior positions in the RBGV hierarchy. Our new CEO Dave Harland has started "in a hurry" and promises to bring new perspectives and experience to this critical role. The Government appointed Board of the RBGV has also been revitalised with many new members and one of two remaining members appointed as Chair, Penny Fowler. Already I have been invited to meet with Dave Harland to discuss the role of the Cranbourne Friends and then later to attend the December Board meeting at Cranbourne. It is promising to be a time of innovation and energy and consultation!

Enjoy your festivities and holiday times – we'll see you back in the Gardens in 2024.



Last edition I mentioned some changes with the commencement of our new Director and Chief Executive, David Harland. Dave has been very busy over the last couple of months connecting with staff, supporters and stakeholders to get a deep understanding of what we currently do, and to understand our aspirations for the future. It is fair to say there is a sense of excitement across the organisation as we take stock of what we have achieved so far, but an increase in focus on how we can achieve even more. The timing for future planning coincides well with the recent commencement of our new Board, with Penny Fowler (previous Deputy Chair) taking over from Chris Trotman as Board Chair. Many Cranbourne Friends will have interacted with previous Board members and will know that Chris (as a Gippsland resident) had a particular soft spot for Cranbourne Gardens. My thanks to all departing Board members, and if you wish to explore the new Board further details are on our website at <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-organisation/the-board/>.

Some of you will have heard about **Raising Rarity**, a (nearly) new and far-reaching project that has great potential to help RBGV 'achieve even more' in our quest to conserve rare and threatened plants. The project is particularly exciting given it has evolved from the passion and expertise of our scientists and horticulturists. The project originated with research led by our very own Dr Meg Hirst to 'identify the horticultural potential of rare and threatened Australian wildflowers', with the aim of increasing public knowledge and awareness of rare plants and plant communities throughout Victoria. Horticultural trials were conducted within the research plots in the Australian Garden, which led to a couple of pilot public programs involving guided tours of Cranbourne's conservation collections by Meg and our Horticulture team, coupled with the sale of rare Victorian plants propagated from stock initially collected from the wild. The huge demand for participation, both of tours and buying plants, indicated a real resonance with the notion that plant conservation action isn't just for the scientists and experts – that anyone can grow rare or threatened plants in their home garden (or window box) and contribute to their conservation *ex-situ*.



Proud Rosedale Primary students with Dr Meg Hirst (second from right) with their Raising Rarity collection.

From these beginnings, the project has grown into a community outreach program working with different audiences. There are four main components, as follows.

- 1. Plant sales outreach.** We are partnering with a company specialising in plant licensing, marketing and distribution to develop a range of conservation-significant plants for sale to market. This builds on the pilot plant sales that I just mentioned but takes it to the next level in terms of the number of selections and size of the market. It is early days, but we see great potential as a launch pad to share stories about Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria's role in plant conservation while giving home gardeners the opportunity to play a direct role in conserving at-risk species.

2. Schools outreach. Our Schools Learning and Horticulture teams have been working on a pilot program involving Essendon Penleigh Grammar and Rosedale Primary School (in Gippsland) where the students learn how to propagate and cultivate selected rare species in garden beds at their schools. The student learn about growing plants, but also about the importance of plant conservation, with seed from mature plants being harvested and available to seed revegetation projects and future school programs. Feedback from the students has been fantastic and we are exploring how these learning schools can expand as learning hubs into the surrounding community.

3. Local government outreach. RBGV partnered with University of Melbourne to develop the City of Melbourne Threatened Living Collection Plan which aims to foster the cultivation of threatened plant species for conservation. The report, commissioned by City of Melbourne, provides a threatened species assessment tool and priority list. Strong interest from other local government areas could be serviced through the establishment of a consultancy group.

4. Botanic garden outreach. The Care for the Rare program was supported by a philanthropic grant from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust for a pilot program to establish conservation collections and associated interpretive signage in six regional botanic gardens. There is scope and demand to expand the program into the future.

As you can see, Raising Rarity has huge potential to contribute to our integrated plant conservation aims through direct involvement of different sectors of our community. It resonates because it provides the opportunity for hands-on involvement by individuals – a platform to respond to the urgent call to action to do something about loss of biodiversity. I presented the concept to the new RBGV Board a few weeks ago and received a very solid thumbs up to proceed with the project. Watch this space!



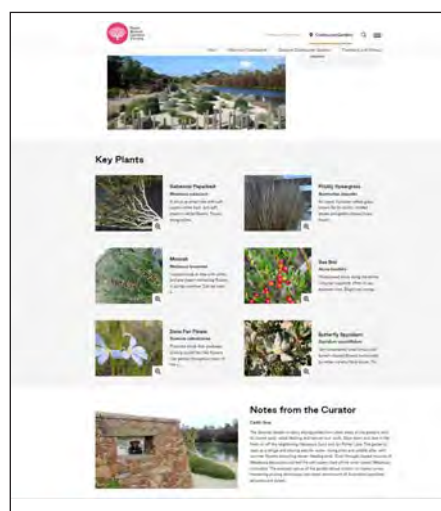
Rosedale Primary School student examines seed development on endangered Grey Billy-buttons, *Craspedia canens*.

Living Collections now online for everybody to see

Visit the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne Living Collections site to see information and photos about key plants in each of the special garden areas at the Australian Garden.

This page is accessible at:

<https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/cranbourne-gardens/discover-cranbourne-gardens/cranbourne-living-collections/>



In the example shown at left, key plants in the Seaside Garden are shown with information about where the plants come from and how you might use them in your garden, and notes from the staff member who curates the garden itself are also provided.

There are 21 Garden collections displayed in this way, so this collection is a wonderful ready-reference.



Moonah
Melaleuca lanceolata
Coastal shrub or tree with white, bird and insect-attracting flowers in spring-summer. Can be used as an attractive shade tree or windbreak.



Sea Box
Alysicarpus
Widespread shrub along the entire Victorian coastline, often in very exposed sites. Bright red-orange decorative fruit, unique creamy white twisted star-like flowers in spring to

Friend Quiz 14 Charles Young

The theme for quiz 14 is “plants I noticed while trying to come up with a theme for quiz 14”... so, sorry, there’s no real theme. But I hope you know these wonderful plants!

1. Let’s break the hex of Quiz 13 and start with a “good luck” plant, *Veronica perfoliata*. What is the plant’s common name and to what does it allude?



2. This Eucalyptus has the largest fruit (gumnut) of any species in the genus. What are its common and scientific names and how big is the fruit?



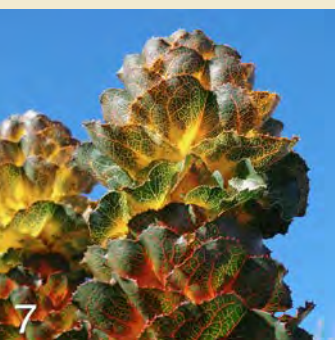
3. The very geometric-sounding scientific name of this distinctive pea alludes to the shape of the flowers (genus) and leaves (specific epithet). What are the names of plant?



4. These are the flowers of *Siegfriedia darwinioides*, notable for the large, persistent bracts. What is the origin of the scientific name of this plant?



5. This plant loves to spread its burrs/ seeds via socks and trousers! It is native to Australian but is named after another country. What are its scientific and common names?



6. This spikey heath, found in SE Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, is named for its flesh-pink flowers. What are the names of the plant and what is its preferred habitat?



7. Royal Hakea attracts people from around the world to the Fitzgerald River region of WA. Who is the royal personage honoured in the specific epithet and what height can the plant attain?



8. Generic names such as *Actinobole*, *Actinodium* (*A. cunninghamii*, pictured) and *Actinotus* are derived from the Greek *aktis*. What is the meaning of this word and what does it imply in botanical names? And what is the connection with Kiwifruit?

Photos by Charles Young.

Check your answers on page 16

Gowing Friends | Marjanne Rooke

Isn't it wonderful – summer is here. As reported in November *Quicklink*, the Spring Plant Sale went well despite the cold and very windy weather on the Sunday. With very little stock left, our takings for this sale were over \$22,500. The sale was held on the lawn at the Ian Potter Lakeside Precinct. It's a lovely, spacious and picturesque area to have the sale and this will also be the venue for our Autumn sale.

Autumn Plant Sale

It will be on 23 and 24 March 2024 - a prime time for planting. With a five months break between sales and being the 'growing' season, we should have a good range and number of plants for sale. The list will go out about a week before the sale.

Nursery open

In the meantime, members can visit the nursery any Thursday between 10am and 2pm to purchase plants or simply look over what we have growing. If you have a large garden or property and would like a special future 'heritage' tree you may be interested in the *Araucaria bidwillii* which we have in our nursery right now. We have two small *Araucaria bidwillii* - small at just 40-50cm tall right now rather than a full height of 50 meters. It is a fast-growing, large tree - 30-50m tall, with a diameter of 1.5 m, with a straight dark-brown, furrowed trunk. It can be grown in a large pot for a few years.

Araucaria bidwillii

The genus *Araucaria* comes from the Spanish word '*Araucania*' – the name of the area in Chile where the first species of this tree originated, and/or Araucanos, the Spanish word for the original habitants - a Chilean tribe of the area. The species name '*bidwillii*' refers to John Carne Bidwill who sent the first specimens to William Jackson Hooker, the then director of Kew Gardens- he named it to honour Bidwill in 1843.

The common name is Bunya Pine used by the Europeans after various First Nations people names including Buya Bunya. Trees begin to bear cones at about 14 years. The hard-shelled 4-5cm nuts from the very large cone are edible with a lovely nutty taste. I have tested the taste with nuts that fell in two cones from a large tree in my neighbourhood. The cones can weigh in at 10kg.



This tree is in Marjanne's neighbourhood. Information from Wikipedia and the Gymnosperm

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Growing Friends

Contact: Marjanne Rook

growing.friends@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au

CRANBOURNE FRIENDS

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria



Autumn spring flowers

Growing Friends Plant Sale

Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 March 2024

10am to 4pm

Australian Garden - Cranbourne

Come along and select from a wide range of plants many of which you will find in the Australian Garden.

Plant-list available 1 week before sale

Eftpos available

rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au

fbgfriendscranbourne

The Botanic Fabricators & Illustrators will be there too.



Araucaria bidwillii in the nursery - a bit smaller at this age.

Summer 2023 FIGS | Christine Kenyon, Bill Jones and Linda Jones

There have been memorable days in the gardens since the last *Naturelink* reached your inbox.

Fertilizing the *Westringia fruticosa* garden beds in the Red Sand Garden was a challenge for Linda and Bill: How do you open a bag of fertilizer?

Bill, at the end of the day: "I'm just gonna go home, soak my pants in a bucket of water and fertilize my garden." And "I am pleased to report Mr and Mrs Jones did enough work for half a dozen people." Unfortunately, the rest of us were unwell or unavailable that day.

Most of you will know that bags of fertilizer are often closed by sewing with string or twine. Not so well known is that there is a quick and easy way to undo the stitches. However, this method was not discovered until Linda searched the internet later for instructions (at right).

The continuing renovation of the Serpentine Path:

In mid August and September, Mathieu and the FIGS team pulled out a section of river pebbles in the Serpentine Path. We removed the built-up mud, bark and leaves and replaced the river pebbles to aid drainage and tidy up the area. Beautiful! It is worth the effort! But, let's not do it too often. (Whilst packing up our tools with the path still covered in debris, a brown bandicoot visited and found some very tasty morsels. When weeding, we are often visited by Superb Fairy Wrens checking what we have disturbed).

Clearing the *Hypolepis* from the Gondwana Garden. Sometimes we do not realise what conditions plants truly like. The *Hypolepis* in the Gondwana Garden embraces the open, sunny conditions. Scott Levy has placed barriers round the trees to keep the *Hypolepis* at bay but they do require regular slashing. The FIGS team helped clear the garden of unwanted fern material.

What to do when there is a storm warning for the day? The wonderful Mathieu Lascostes had pruned the *Syzigium australis* hedge behind the GA shed ready for us to clear away the clippings, but there was a storm warning and rain, and more rain. Three hardy members, Bill Jones, Wendy Herauville and Sue Delaney worked with Mathieu in the rain clearing the clippings. It would have been a major clearing job for Mathieu without help. Where were the rest of the Horticulture team on this wet and windy day? They were also out in the rain planting - nice wet soil for the plants to settle in quickly.

Friends in the Gardens (FIGS) help the Horticulture staff in the Australian Garden on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday morning of each month, meeting at the Visitor Centre at 9.15 am. We then spend our time in the Gardens until 12.30 pm and then adjourn to the café for lunch and a chat. Earlier we have morning tea. All tools are provided, you just need to bring your enthusiastic self, a drink bottle, sunblock, a hat and gardening gloves.

The Horticulture staff are never short of projects for us - weeding, planting, clearing hedge prunings, raking or sweeping paths or spreading mulch. We learn so much from the fantastic Hort. team. We always welcome new members.

Contact: email: figs@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au:
Christine Kenyon - 0438 345 589.



Weeding the North-South line in the Red Sand Garden. L-R: Sue Gilbert, Bill Jones, Tony Anderson, Mathieu Lascostes, Wendy Herauville, Sue Delaney, Francesca Scuderi. Photo Christine Kenyon

Steps to open the bag:

Again make sure you turn the bag so the single stitch side of string is facing you
Looking at the single stitch side and follow it to the far right end of the string.
Undo the first little loose knot by pulling the string tail out of the loop. Pull the tail of the string gently and it will slowly unravel the stitching.

The string should come off in one piece without any fuss!

Note: if you pick the other side (left side with single string facing you), it will be frustratingly impossible!



Clearing *Syzigium* hedge clippings in the rain - before and after.
Photos: Wendy Herauville

Botanic Illustrators | Jan Maslen

In October the Botanical Illustrators held a two-day workshop for beginners in watercolour. Participants came with different existing artistic skills but a common wish to learn about using watercolour in botanical illustration. Our tutor was well-known botanical artist Marta Salamon.

Materials were supplied so that people were not required to spend a lot of money before deciding whether this medium was for them. Although nowadays there is an enormous range of prepared colours available in watercolour paint, for this workshop we went old-school with just six colours – a warm and cool hue of each of the primary colours. So the first day was largely devoted to how to obtain any desired colour from mixing these, as well as considering the impact of dilution and discussion of paper and brushes.

The chosen subject was *Anigozanthos* (Kangaroo Paw) and a potted plant of the *Bush Inferno* hybrid was given to each participant. After day one we took our pot plants home to prepare a drawing for day two, a fortnight away. When we reconvened, everybody had an image ready for transferring to watercolour paper and painting.



Elliot Centre in readiness for the Watercolour class;
(at right) preparatory sketching of Kangaroo Paw.

Although the time was not sufficient to complete the work, everyone took at least one flower through all the painting stages. The delight – and challenge – of illustrating plants is observing the fine detail and working out how to represent that. *Anigozanthos* was no exception – all those tiny hairs that give the flowers their velvety texture and much of their colour. As always it was fun to work on a common project and hopefully everyone is motivated to complete their Kangaroo Paw illustration.

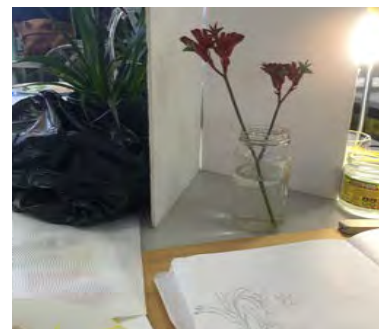
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, 10am to 3pm

Contact Margaret Kitchen

Phone: 0413 664 295

Email: illustrators@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au



Membership report | Alexandra Stalder

This quarter we are pleased to extend a warm welcome to 45 new members. It was great to meet many of you at the recent Growing Friends Plant Sale. We hope you will enjoy all that your Friends membership has to offer.

Thank you as well to all our members who continue to renew and support the Friends and the gardens at Cranbourne. As you may know, we now have a rolling membership renewal date which corresponds to the date you joined. For many members this is July 1, but increasingly these dates are spread across the year. Please be sure to update any address changes and provide your details if paying by balance transfer or cheque, so that your payment can be identified. If you don't receive your card or need a replacement, please get in touch. The Membership Secretary is unable to take calls during the day so a text message or email is preferred when possible:

Email: membership@rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au
Text: 0431 025 733



Pterostylis unicornis,
Anglesea heathlands,
Otway tour 2023.
Photo: Alexandra Stalder

Friends in Focus | Judith Cooke

Rodger and Gwen Elliot attended our July meeting, where Rodger showed his PowerPoint presentation entitled *Landscapes, Plants, Flowers & Patterns of Australia*, illustrating the extraordinary diversity of Australian flora and landscapes, and provided comprehensive information on how each image had been produced. The nine members present were delighted to have this opportunity which provided plenty of inspiration on ways we might develop our photography.

Instead of our scheduled meeting in August, members had been invited to join the Australian Plant Society Cardinia Region visit to Paul Sierakowski's garden in the morning. Five members participated. With Paul leading, we had a wonderful time touring this large garden on the Bass Coast, photographing the enormous variety of native plants, particularly *Banksia*.

With temperatures plummeting, gale force winds and almost continuous rain during the previous day, it was uncertain what would happen for our September meeting. After we waited around in appalling weather conditions, luckily the clouds then cleared, the sun came out and we were able to enjoy ourselves for the remainder of our visit. There was a spectacular diversity of spring-flowering plants for us to photograph. Waratahs were just putting on early buds. We photographed several wattle species, one of the highlights being the extensive planting of *Acacia binervia* on Gibson Hill in full flower. A number of bird species posed obligingly, including Dusky Woodswallow and Common Bronzewing. We admired the new boardwalk beside the *Xanthorrhoeas* and *Kingias* before looking at Tim Entwisle's tree and concluding our walk along the Eucalyptus Walk.

Acacia binervia; *Banksia coccinea*, at Paul Sierakowski's garden.

Photos: Judith Cooke

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Friends in Focus

2nd Saturday of the month, Elliot Centre.

2 pm, April to September (9.30 am Daylight Saving Time)



Vale Ralph Henger | by Barrie Gallacher

Ralph Henger (21/01/1941- 26/10/2023) was very involved with the Cranbourne Gardens and Cranbourne Friends in many roles. Over many years he was Garden Ambassador who led tours, a Growing Friend assisting in the nursery and also a member of Friends in the Garden doing hands-on garden beautification.

Ralph was employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for many years from 1986, stationed in Katharine and Darwin. He was involved with Aboriginal groups from Northern Territory to Western Australia and obviously earned their respect; he was given the title of "Mulaga" meaning "Boss Man". He developed a love of Eucalypts from this period. He had three sons who joined him in camping and canoeing adventures in the NT.

Ralph loved to talk. He was an engaged and engaging Friend with an inquiring curiosity. He loved to push boundaries. While he was volunteering at the Growing Friends he took up Dragon boat racing, and even competed in the Masters Games for a couple of seasons, both interstate and internationally. In Victoria he moved from Eaglemont to Frankston to be near one of his sons, and ultimately to a retirement home in Echuca, where his outdoor garden featured favourite Eucalypts. He was said to have compiled plant lists for other residents.

Vale Ralph, your volunteering and contributing to the Cranbourne Gardens and the Friends was greatly appreciated.



(R) Ralph Henger, with staff member Caleb Crockford, May 2019.

Photo: Christine Kenyon

Why does time in nature feel so good? Kathleen Bagot

Kathleen Bagot is a Friends member; she presents Forest Therapy at Cranbourne Gardens.

We seem to intuitively know that time in nature is good for us, but do we really understand why? There are different proposals to explain the benefits of time in nature. As humans, we have spent 99% of our history in outdoor environments rather than living inside air-conditioned residences and work places as many of us do now. Our bodies and our brains therefore evolved in natural environments, and we are drawn to the life within nature (EO Wilson's *Biophilia Hypothesis*). Our physical and psychological processes function more readily within environments with vegetation and open space, and with bodies of clean water (evolutionary explanations). These types of environments are easier for us to be in, supporting us to function optimally. Not always, of course. For example, thunderstorms or heat waves can be problematic, and for many, spiders and snakes are more concerning than calming. But generally, safe natural spaces are more suitable for us to spend time in and to be at our best.

Time in nature is restorative for us physically and mentally. Research shows that natural environments regularly score higher on the four components of a restorative environment: being away, compatibility, soft fascination and extent. So, for example, a visit to the Gardens takes us away from the daily pressures of home and work (being away), the Gardens provide opportunities to wander in nature, perhaps reading the signs to understand more (compatibility), there are many interesting things to look at, holding our attention effortlessly (soft fascination), and there are a series of distinct but related spaces to wander through on established paths (extent; connectedness and scope). Therefore, for many of us, Cranbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens can be one of our restorative environments.

Time in a restorative environment allows our brains to rest, for our capacity to concentrate to be refreshed, restoring our ability to pay attention to our daily tasks and demands. If we stay longer, we may find that our minds feel clearer, and even have mental space to reflect on what is important to us. You may have already experienced some of these benefits yourself – feeling more relaxed or energised after time in the Gardens. It is not surprising then to know that after time in a natural environment, research shows that we have greater mental flexibility, working memory is improved and we can be more creative. We can feel less stressed or worried, and happier and calmer. Physical improvements include stress hormone cortisol reducing, high blood pressure lowered and immune system improving. We even sleep better.

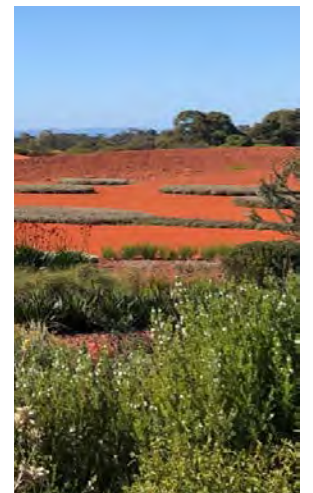
And of course, restorative natural environments are not limited to visitors to botanical gardens. Students in greener school playgrounds can have improvements in their academic results. People in healthcare settings have better outcomes with views to nature. Time in local or national parks, even time in our own backyards and home gardens are also beneficial. So next time you need to de-stress after a busy day, clear your head or you're looking for an energy boost, spend some time in nature and be restored.

Helpful hints

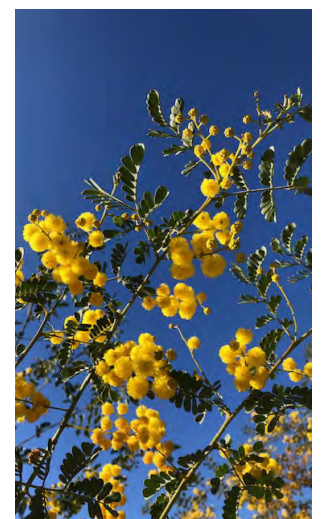
- Wander slower than usual, with no pre-determined destination
- Use all of your senses to explore a leaf or flower (well, maybe not taste!)
- Sit quietly, noticing nature around you; when ready to move on, stay for longer
- Bring paper and pencils, to capture something on the page, or if visiting with children, grab the free treasure hunt cards from the Visitors Centre.



One of the many lovely paths to wander along



Views to the amazing Red Sand Garden.



Something small to capture the attention

Photos: Kathleen Bagot

Otways 2023 Tour Report | Mick Robertson

The Great Ocean Road is one of Australia's premier tourist destinations and over many years it has developed strong supporting infrastructure. The Lorne Mantra, formally Erskine House, is a fine example of this. Throughout our tour we were based here returning each day for dinner, drinks and usually a guest speaker. An early morning walk on the beach preceded breakfast, collecting lunch and moving off on the day's excursions. We ran a heavy schedule. The area is also a biodiversity hotspot and a hothouse for people developing innovative approaches to the use and display of Australian as well as introduced plants.

One of the themes that pervaded the tour was that of healing. We live in a time of Climate and Biodiversity crises and of increasing inequality. All of the people we visited demonstrated commendable stewardship.

We met for the first time at Matt Freeman's farm for a BBQ and to finalise the paperwork before heading off on a walking tour. The previous owner had sold off the topsoil, run motor bike trails and a waste dumping service. Now much of the property has been turned over to nature conservation, rejuvenation of the soil and ground cover. Three good years of rain has helped no end, and the healing is progressing well.

That night, after dinner, Neil Anderton took us on an illustrated orchid tour of the region. He had a great collection of photographs and we saw a huge range of the local species and heard stories of the taxonomic work done by the botanical community to record their biodiversity.

Day two, a beautiful day, saw us take a long drive out to Weeaprounah, the wettest area in the state, to do the Otway Fly canopy walk. It takes you through the Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Myrtle Beech (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*) canopy, so it is very high - up to 57m off the ground. Our walking tour was led by the enthusiastic, knowledgeable and quirky Ticker. He was further tested when one of our members tripped on the return path and was subsequently found to have broken an elbow. Ticker smoothly organized transport back to the visitor centre for onward transport to medical assistance.

In the afternoon we went on to lunch and a First Nations perspective at Triplet falls, just up the road from The Fly. Richard Callopy, a Gunditjmara man, gave us a local account of the Frontier Wars and his First Nations and European heritage. He also left us with a very challenging perspective on the approaching referendum, before our inspiring walk past the falls.

Angelsea was the site of an open-cut brown coal mine and power station that supplied electricity to the Point Henry Aluminum Smelter ; it closed down in 2015. Site remediation has been progressing for some time and we were taken on a tour of the site by Alcoa's Warren Sharp and Nicky Marris. A lot of civil engineering work has been completed to create a viable landscape, and Wallaby grass (*Rytidosperma* sp.) has been broadly planted to stabilize the soils. Some areas have also been top-dressed with local soils and many indigenous species are returning. We saw two new species, a sun orchid and a sundew, that are now growing on the site. There is a body of water in the former pit that is naturally and slowly filling from ground water.



Top: Johanna Beach. Below, Point Addis walking track.



Top: *Drosera glanduligera*;
Below: *Sphaerolobium minus*; *Olearia pannosa* subsp. *cardiophylla*.



An Australian version of the UK Eden Project is also proposed for the site and it does indeed seem that may be a viable opportunity for the not too distant future. Progress at the site is really quite impressive and the local social licence seems to be building nicely

In the afternoon we dropped into the Angair Wildflower and Art Festival for a hasty lunch and to check out the local biodiversity displays before regathering at the home and garden of Peter and Simone Shaw. They are the principals of Ocean Road Landscapes and the proud homeowners of the acclaimed Sunnymede which has been open to the public on a regular basis over many years. The garden retains much of the original vegetation but has been landscaped most particularly with a sculptured undulating lawn. Most of the plantings are native species and it is most certainly supporting much of the local fauna - a great Garden for Wildlife!

After dinner we had a presentation by Rowan Reid, an Agroforestry consultant. According to Charles Massey, author of the bible of the Regenerative Agriculture movement in Australia, *Call of the Reed Warbler*, Rowan Reid is one of the two most influential people in Regenerative Farming in Australia. Rowan challenged us with a vision that would see farmers producing much of Australia's timber and fibre requirements while diversifying farm products and income streams, their biodiversity, aesthetics and carbon loads and thus long term sustainability. Andrew Stewart, a local farmer who has worked with Rowan over many years, also spoke, showing us some images of his property that we were to visit the following day.

Andrew and Jill Stewart's 4th generation farm, Yan Yan Gurt West at Deans Marsh, was, a generation ago, an almost bare farm with declining productivity, where erosion and salinity issues were starting to have a significant impact. It is now still as productive as it ever was in terms of the number of sheep it can support but bare it is not! In addition to the sheep it produces timber, cut flowers from a magnificent two acres of banksias etc., increased biodiversity, a lot more carbon, ecotourism and three daughters that are all interested in making their livelihood from the farm.

Rowan's farm was bought some 37 years ago to demonstrate his agroforestry ideas and is similar to Yan Yan Gurt West in that it was degraded by many years of poor farming practice. It is now host to much more diversity and is visually a beautiful and productive landscape. Many of the trees have attained harvestable proportions, indeed his micro timber mill and kiln has been busy producing timber for his and Claire's new house, currently under construction. We also spent a few hours at Mike and Wendy Robinson-Koss's nursery where they and their team produce 150,000 indigenous plants for the local community.

Our tour had been timed to coincide with the Angair Wildflower and Art Festival but our large group of 30 made it tricky to participate in the formal festival so we made do with dropping in at lunchtime on the Sunday to view the displays. The real highlights of the festival are the guided walks in the surrounding biodiversity hotspots. We were treated to our own tours of said hotspots on the Tuesday after the festival where we walked, very slowly, marvelling at the rare and unusual orchids and other species that grow in the Angelsea heaths. Marg McDonald, doyen of Angair, later joined us for dinner and gave a presentation of many beautiful photos of species we had and hadn't seen earlier in the day. The other insight Marg provided was the role that Angair has attained in lobbying the local council and State Parliament about planning in the area. Angair has been critical to saving a number of subdivisions that would have led to the clearing of heathlands adjacent to the town area. Another really interesting observation is that the town has



Tour of regeneration work at the Angelsea Coal Mine site.



Peter & Simone Shaw's Angelsea Garden. Photo: Jill Burness



Rainy day at the Geelong Botanic Gardens.
All photos Alexandra Stalder unless otherwise indicated.

become a destination for retiring naturalists and plant people because of Angairs' great work.

On the Wednesday afternoon we visited Conservation Ecolog, another organization doing great environmental work. They are researching the reintroduction and protection of native animals including Quolls, Bandicoots and Poteroos, some of which we saw in their large enclosure. Tradition demands that the final dinner is a special affair. This was done to great effect "in house". The settings were quite fancy and the food matched it nicely. There were speeches and thank yous and we finished it off with Alexandra Stalder's famous trivia quiz. For a fitting finale we had a great morning tea, tour and lunch at the Geelong Botanic Gardens, hosted by the Friends of said institution and sister organization.

Answers to Friend Quiz 14 on page 8

A1. This is Digger's Speedwell. According to William Guilfoyle (1884), Digger's Delight, as it was called then, derives "from a supposition that its presence indicated auriferous [gold-bearing] country" as it "is plentiful in the elevated gold regions of Australia."

A2. This is Mottlecak or *Eucalyptus macrocarpa* (Gk *makros* large + *karpos* fruit, alluding to the large gumnut). The fruit is typically 35-45 mm (but reportedly up to 100 mm) in diameter.

A3. This is *Platylobium obtusangulum* or Common Flat Pea, named for its flat-lobed flowers (Gk *platys* flat + *lobos* lobe) and obtuse-angled leaves (L. *obtus* blunt/obtuse + *angulus* corner/angle).

A4. The bracts! *Siegfriedia* is after Siegfried, the German mythological hero who possessed a cloak that made him invisible, as the bracts do to the flower heads; *darwinioides* alludes to the resemblance in aspect to *Darwinia* species (*Darwinia* + Gk *-oides* resembling).

A5. This is *Acaena novae-zelandiae* or Bidgee Widgee, named for New Zealand, where it was first collected and described.

A6. This is *Sprengelia incarnata*; the genus is named after German botanist Christian Konrad Sprengel while *incarnata* is Latin for flesh-coloured. The common name, Pink Swamp-Heath, indicates the habitat, wet swamps and heathlands.

A7. This is *Hakea victoria*. To quote James Drummond (1847): "To this most splendid vegetable production which I have ever seen...I have given the name of our gracious Queen," i.e., Queen Victoria. He collected a plant that was 4.3 m (14 feet) high!

A8. *Aktis* means ray, beam or spoke and implies radial or radiating features, e.g., the white bracteoles radiating from the flower head of *A. cunninghamii*. Kiwifruit are in the genus *Actinidia*, named for the radiating styles of the female flowers.

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The General Committee meets on the third Tuesday of the month (except January).