



Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 279 – October 2012

African Safari

Ade and Penny Foster

Our September speaker was unable to make it, so I filled in with a talk and photos of our African Safari holidays. We stay at the Gomo Gomo Game lodge in the Klaserie Game Reserve, which is part of the Greater Kruger National Park. Situated in the north east of South Africa, it is a seven hour drive or fifty minute flight from Johannesburg.

The lodge is in 'thorn scrub' country – predominantly acacia thorn, with areas of Mopani forest and denser, lush growth along the water-courses. Accommodation is in thatched chalets, with ensuite bathrooms. Breakfast and lunch are taken in the main dining area and dinner is around an open fire in a 'boma' – an earth floored, circular, fenced area under the brilliant African night skies. The lodge is situated on the edge of a large waterhole, which is fed from a bore, and this attracts many animals to the camp to be viewed in comfort.



The viewing deck at Gomo Gomo

We always travel in winter for several reasons. It's the best time to get away from Geelong, and it's cheaper in Africa at that time. And, winter is the dry season so the grass is golden and sparse and many of the trees have shed their leaves, making it easier to see the animals. The weather is always fine at that

time, with chilly mornings and 23 – 24 degrees during the day.



Early mornings are chilly

A typical day at Gomo Gomo starts with a wake-up call at 5.15 am. We watch the sunrise with a cuppa and scone, then climb into the trucks for the morning drive. The trucks are long wheel-base Land-Rover utes, with three rows of tiered seating in the back. The tracker sits on a seat welded to the bullbar, and searches the ground for tracks, and the surrounding bush for animals, as we drive along. We stop for morning tea or coffee around 7.45am then it's back into the trucks for another drive, returning to the lodge for breakfast at about 9.30am.

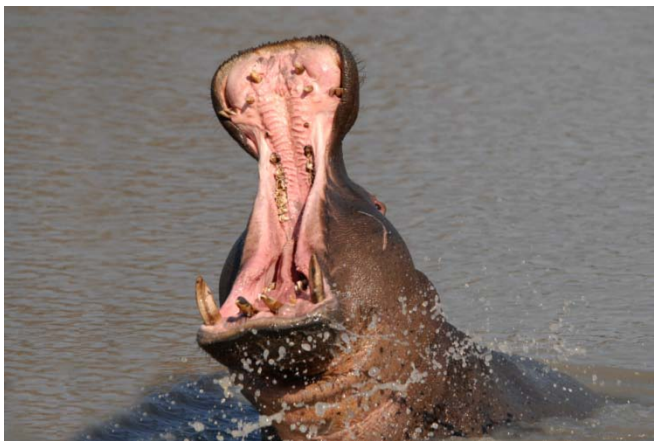


President: Harry Webb - harry.webb@bigpond.com
Treasurer: Frank Scheelings - ftscheelings@gmail.com

Secretary: Bruce McGinness – brucesm@unimelb.edu.au
Editor: Ade Foster - adefoster@internode.on.net

Australian Plants Society – Geelong P.O. Box 2012 Geelong. 3220

After breakfast we have the day to do as we please, within reason. Some like to catch up on sleep, or read, or just sit around the camp watching the animals at the waterhole. I take my camera and search the scrub in camp for birds, keeping an eye out for any interesting action at the waterhole. The rangers will take a walking tour during this time, if you wish. They show the visitors animal tracks and how to tell them apart, birds, plants and anything else that they might encounter.



Hippo in the lodge water-hole

Lunch is served at 2.00 pm and at 3.00, it's back into the trucks for the afternoon/evening drive. We stop again for 'sundowners' as the sun is setting. This is a drink of your choice (I have white wine) and a savoury snack. The African sunsets are amazing, and darkness follows quickly. Once it is dark we climb back into the trucks and the tracker, armed with a big spotlight, leads us through the night where we encounter many of the nocturnal animals not seen during the day.



A big male lion stops for a drink.

We return to camp at around 8.30pm and, after a quick freshen up and a drink at the bar, dinner is served. The cook is a natural comedian (although he uses the same jokes just about every night) and the staff can be coaxed to sing a few songs - a perfect way to end an exciting day. We usually go straight

from dinner to bed. It's almost 10.00pm by now, and tomorrow is another 5.15 start!. We are always escorted by an armed ranger after dark. We are not allowed to wander at night, as the animals do come into camp under cover of darkness.

The traversing area of the Gomo Gomo Camp is about 15,000 acres, shared with other camps in the area. The rangers are in contact with each other by radio, and when one finds an interesting animal, he lets all the others know where it is, so that everyone gets a chance to see it. The variety and diversity is astounding. In six days on our last trip we saw 65 different birds, and 26 species of mammal. In my entire life of wandering the Australian bush, I have not seen that many Australian mammals.



A female leopard on the hunt.

Highlights of our safaris are numerous, and indelibly imprinted on our memories. A few that really stand out include :-

- My first sight of a wild elephant. It was at night, under a full moon, and brought tears to an old man's eye.
- Being present when a two week old white lion cub was discovered. It was only the fourth white cub ever found in the wild.
- Sitting in camp watching fifty-six elephants playing in the water-hole just metres away.
- Seeing a male hippo showing off in the lodge water-hole.
- Having a lioness bring her three week old cubs out of hiding to 'show' them to us.
- The excitement every morning wondering what the day will bring. It never fades ☺

I heartily recommend an African safari be added to your bucket list. Our lodge is called Gomo Gomo, and you can find about all about it at ...

<http://www.gomogomogamelodge.co.za/>

PLANT TABLE

with Matt Baars

The weather was less than lovely on the night and heavy rain dissuaded most folks from venturing into the garden for specimens. There were fewer plants than usual, but an interesting collection nonetheless.

Pityrodia axillaris is a lovely little plant with soft, almost furry, foliage and, in this case, lovely purple/red flowers. There are also pink and orange varieties available. See 'Plant of the Month' for more information on this lovely little plant.

There were several *Darwinias* on display. It appears to have been a good season for them, and the colour range was quite varied. Among them were flowers red and white striped, solid pink, and white with pink tips. For some reason, 'pink tips' caused more than a little giggling from Eileen ... no idea why.

June Parrott brought along a lovely late Banksia – 'Giant Candles', which is a naturally-occurring hybrid between *B. ericifolia* and *B. spinulosa*. They are known for their large flower spikes, however, this one was quite small. As June said, she couldn't reach the bigger ones.



Banksia 'Giant Candles'

Pandorea, the Wonga Wonga vine, was represented with a lovely white form of *P. jasminoides*, and the yellow *P. 'Golden Showers'*. Both are vigorous climbers and can get out of hand if allowed to grow unchecked.

June also brought along a *Phebalium* sp., a small shrub which is a mass of tiny cream flowers.

Roger brought in some magnificent Waratah's which he grows with some great success at St. Alban's park.

Kennedia nigricans is a vigorous climbing plant which can spread to 6 metres. It is one of the few plants with true black flowers, and is a striking sight in full flower.

And there were also *Lasiopetalum*, *Prostanthera*, *Westringia*, *Eremophila*, *Pimelea*, *Eutaxia*, *Gastrolobium* and *Calathamnus*.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Pityrodia axillaris

Carmel (who organises the raffle) won the raffle AGAIN!! After some ribald comment about the rigging of raffles and fraudulent behaviour in general, she suggested that our secretary, Bruce McGinness, draw the next ticket. Bruce duly drew his own ticket from the box, so a Royal Commission is being sought.

However, Carmel selected *Pityrodia axillaris*, brought in by Sue McDonald, as plant of the month. Sue writes...

I had never seen a native foxglove, *Pityrodia axillaris*, until I spotted one for sale at Phillip Vaughan's nursery in Curlewis, last June. It had beautiful soft grey foliage and looked like it could be a "drop dead", but I had to try it. Good drainage in full sun is required. It grows in a fairly small area in WA. But nevertheless, I planted it in the park with some trepidation then went for a 9 week camping holiday to WA.



Pityrodia axillaris – photo Arthur Chapman

In WA, I looked for an example of this lovely thing and was delighted to find several growing together with wreath flowers in red soil about 30k south east of Canna on the Gutha East road just south of Madden road.

On return to Ocean Grove in mid September, I was surprised to find my little specimen was still alive. I had planted it without much hope 3 months before and it was flourishing - 30 cm high and ablaze with bright pink flowers on a beautifully shaped plant with five soft branches. It will be interesting to see how long lived it is in the harsh environment of the park with clay soil (with added gypsum, seasoil and Johnsons soil improver and mulch).

Pityrodia axillaris is described as: A low, diffuse shrub to 30cm high. Flowers are vivid red to yellow-scarlet. It grows in sandy soils and flowers between July and December. It is critically endangered in the wild. Studies vary but there are possibly only eight known populations in the Morawa (WA) area, approximately 200k SE of Geraldton with less than 100 mature plants (survey 2008)

WATERWISE OR WATERLESS GARDENS

By Merve Hodge, Brisbane

Editor's Note. This article was supplied by Tony Cavanagh, and has previously appeared in the Grevillea Study Group Newsletter No. 74 of July 2006. It is used with the permission of Peter Olde, Leader of the Grevillea Study Group and the author, Merv Hodge. We are grateful to both men for their ready permission to reproduce the article here. It is a topic which I am sure has concerned all of us in the past and the information here will hopefully answer many of the questions we may have.

I regard a waterwise garden as the effective minimal use supplementary watering and a waterless garden as one that relies wholly or mainly on natural rainfall, except for initial watering to get the plants started. My garden falls into the latter category.

Whether you believe in climate change or not, you must admit that much of Australia is subjected to a long, hot, dry period and most of the capital cities are experiencing water shortages (**Tony's Note:** True when the article was written (early 2006) but rain has been much better in the last two years. Nevertheless, the principles of conserving water in the garden still apply.) In Brisbane, for example, residents were only able to water their gardens by bucket.

The best strategy is to use plants that are drought tolerant and adaptable to the local environment. Native plants are a good suggestion for this purpose, but being mindful that some natives like plenty of water, we should be cautious about which natives we promote. I remember the bad advice given some years ago "Grow natives for a no-maintenance garden". Grevilleas could be considered for the waterless garden but each person should select the

best suited for their particular conditions. There is the added bonus of attracting birds to the garden.

There are several strategies that members might consider to help make the most of their water supply or natural rainfall. Considering that we have the double whammy of water restrictions and a hotter climate, we should concentrate on northern grevilleas. In S.E. Queensland, it is easier to bring plants from north to south rather than from south to north. (**Tony's note:** This generalisation may not work in Victoria as northern and tropical Queensland plants generally do not grow well here. However, many of the recently developed tropical hybrid grevilleas are okay here, but can grow large and straggly if not pruned regularly).

I find that the best time to plant in our part of the world is mid-autumn to mid-winter (in Victoria, late summer to early winter, late winter to early spring but be prepared with the latter to water over the first summer). There is less stress on the plant and it has a better chance of establishing its root system before summer. In sandy or well drained sites, I would prefer to plant in a slight depression to collect water around the plant. Conventional wisdom is to plant on a slight mound so that water doesn't collect around the trunk and cause collar rot. (**Tony's comment:** I agree with Merve, all my plants over the last 5 years have been planted in depressions). A rule of thumb to check drainage is to dig a hole big enough to accommodate the root-ball of the new plant and pour in a bucket of water. It should disappear fully within five minutes (but wouldn't work at my place, Tony).



When planting, give the plant a thorough watering after backfilling so as to ensure good contact between the backfill and the root-ball. Follow up watering, decreasing the frequency over 6 to 8 weeks, depending on the rainfall and soil type. The most any grevillea should need after establishment is no more than once per week. After establishment, connect drippers if these are allowed by the local authority. The drippers are best controlled by a timer so that

over watering is prevented. Two or three drippers are best for each plant to give even watering around it.

Planting on a slope

If planting on a slope, dig a shallow channel on the top side of the plant to catch water and assist it to penetrate the soil near the plant. It can be shaped like a boomerang so that water is directed towards the plant.

Mulches

Use organic mulches to no more than 5-10 cm (2-4 inches) deep. It can be a wasted expense if too deep and it will probably prevent light rain from being effective. Mulches tend to maintain even temperature and even moisture as well as suppressing weed growth. Do not pack mulch up against the trunk because this could cause collar rot. Keep a gap of about 20 cm between the trunk and the mulch. Organic mulches will burn so you may need to weigh up the risks and benefits if bushfires are a possible problem. Organic mulches include shredded sugarcane, tea tree mulch, lucerne, forest litter (shredded trees) (or you can make your own). Gravel is sometimes used but weed seeds readily fall into it and germinate. A blower may be needed to keep it clean but it is fireproof.

Weedmat, plastic and newspaper

Do not use weedmat or plastic under mulch – they both assist compaction and cut off air exchange to the soil and exist there forever. Generally, water will be shed off them rather than get through to the plants. They are also a nuisance when trying to dig holes for plants. Newspapers should also be avoided under mulch. Water does not penetrate easily and the thicker they are, the worse the problem. Newspapers may take years to break down under mulch (which is why they can be great for a mulch covered path, Tony).

Water crystals and hydrocell

Water crystals are okay but once they absorb water, they do not readily release it. The roots of the plant need to penetrate the crystals for the best benefit. They also break down over time and lose their effectiveness. They should be placed under the plant when planting, (about one teaspoon per plant and mixed into the soil). It is also possible to soak them beforehand and let them swell, several hundred times their original volume, and then put this in the planting hole. It is a good idea to follow the directions on the container or you may be surprised to see plants popping up out of the ground!

Hydrocell is another product that stores water. It looks like chunks of polystyrene but when wet, it feels

like wet cottonwool. It does not significantly swell when wet. It readily releases water into the soil around it when the soil becomes dryer. Both these products only store water, they do not make it, so eventually even they can dry out.

I stored a similar amount of each in open plastic containers and noted that after about one week, the Hydrocell had dried out but the water crystals looked like they had not lost any water. This tends to agree with their ability to release water into the soil. I intend to repeat this, weighing each before and after to check water loss.



Soil wetting agents

Soil wetting products are useful in allowing dry soil to absorb water more readily rather than repel it. This can happen particularly with sandy soils with little organic matter incorporated. Three products are "Wettasoil", "Moisture Aid" and "Penetrade". They need to be re-applied every six months.

Antitranspirants

Antitranspirants can be useful to cut down the moisture loss of the plants. They will need to be re-applied periodically, depending on rainfall. They are also useful for frost and heat protection. Three product names are "Envy", "Stressguard" and "Floraguard".

Grow Tubes

Grow tubes are cylindrical objects open top and bottom, standing vertically surrounding the plant to create a microclimate and give protection against wind, frosts and small animals. The tube should be at least as tall or taller than the plant it is to protect. Three or four small stakes should be placed around the plant to support the grow tube. They can be fashioned from recycled shopping bags (or other plastic bags) cutting open the bottom with care taken to weight the bottom down to prevent it blowing away. Cardboard milk cartons can also be used (with the bottom and top cut out). For larger plants, the cartons can be slit down one side and stapled together to form a tube. There are also manufactured grow tubes in a long roll so that the length required to protect a plant can be cut off the roll. (Some manufactured tubes can be filled with water which weeps onto the ground through pieces of micro tubing inserted through the wall of the tube, Tony). A combination of some or all of the above will give your plant the greatest chance of survival.

It is essential that you read all directions and precautions on containers when using any of the products mentioned in this article.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Some of you may remember that I brought along some pamphlets advertising an Australian Native Plant Photographic Competition. It was run by the Diamond Valley Photographic Society in conjunction with the APS Yarra Yarra Group as part of their Annual (Native Plant) Exhibition and was for "Plants native to Australia".



Tony's third placed photo – *Darwinia oxylepis*

Photos could be of plants cultivated or in the wild and could be exhibited as either prints or digital images. The competition was held at Eltham on 8th and 9th September. I was not surprised to learn that our very own Tony Cavanagh took out first and third in the

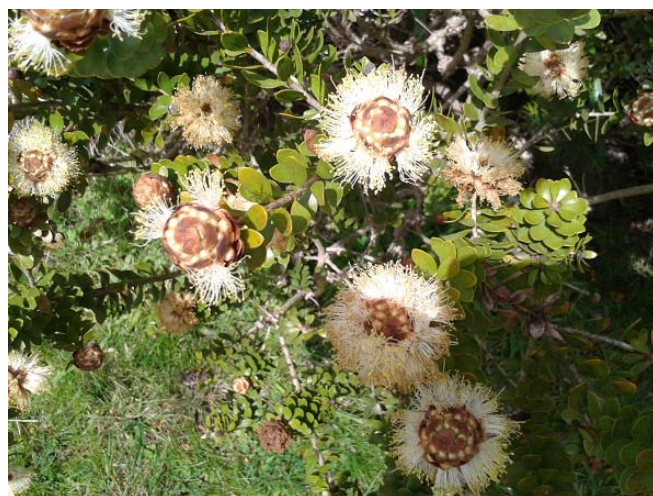
digital images section and also received a "Highly Commended" for a third image.

Congratulations, Tony on a wonderful result.

BRENDON AND MAUREEN STAHL GARDEN VISIT Deans Marsh, September 9 by Bruce McGinness

Twelve people assembled at the Bunning's car park at 9am; the thirteenth member came striding across the tarmac after parking in a different car park. Obviously the road had risen up to greet him again and disorientated him. After strapping the president safely into the back of Rogers's truck we were right to go.

Brendon and Maureen greeted us and invited us in for a mug of tea and freshly made pancakes. Brendon then gave us a comprehensive tour of the garden. The 14 acre property consists of two distinct areas; a formal area around the house and a fenced off paddock area at the back of the property. I use formal in the loose sense to describe an area with shaped garden beds and mown lawns; it consists of a dam, gravel tennis court and vegetable garden. Old fruit trees and interesting exotics such as *Pinus pinea* (edible pine nut) are mixed with some newer plantings of natives by Brendon.



***Melaleuca megacephala*- According to Roger this metre high shrub used to be grown more often but has fallen out of favour. The white flowers present well on the end of the branches.**

The back paddock has a diverse planting of natives with some remnant eucalyptus. The well drained sandy loam has allowed Brendon to grow a wide range of plants successfully. Bush rats have made their home there with many burrows tunneled throughout the property.

An impressive collection of Banksias in the paddock were first visited with each possessing an individual story which could be recalled by Brendon with his meticulously kept notes. We circumnavigated the

property passing a splendid collection of hakeas then crossing into a diverse collection of acacias. Returning to the formal section of the garden we skirted the dam with its picturesque setting causing much clicking of cameras (get ready for some duplicate landscape shots at next year's photo competition). Around the front of the garden are some very old gnarled fruit trees which continues with plantings of citrus and a well laid out vegetable garden.



***Acacia denticulosa*, Sand paper wattle - This West Australian spindly shrub caught my eye with its brilliant rod flowers and rough but attractive leaves.**

There were a number of plants which took my fancy, I plundered seed where I could and took a few pictures with my camera phone. These pictures with a short description appear in this blurb.

We then settled onto the patio for lunch, Maureen and made a pot of soup which was well appreciated. Judy and I had not brought any lunch so we ate the food offered by others. I must admit I was tired from dropping, begging and rolling over by the end of lunch.

Everybody had a splendid time and we thank Brendon and Maureen for welcoming us and showing us around their garden. Brendon and Maureen have decided to sell up and move to Colac; we would like to wish them happiness and success in their next adventure of setting up another house and garden.

With Judy on the trip we must at least mention one weed/garden escape growing in a culvert near the front of Brendon's property. This garden escape can be weedy with its classic ARACEAE tubers which are hard to eradicate. A quick glance could fool somebody into thinking it is a giant *Pterostylis*. It is native to Asia and Europe growing in cool shady places which makes it a candidate to become a bad weed in the Otways.



***Arisarum vulgare* – Friar's Cowl**

UP-COMING EVENTS

1 October – registration deadline for 3D Gardening – 9th FJC Rogers Seminar.

6 October - APS Mitchell Spring Plant Expo. 9.00 am to 3.00 pm. Memorial Hall, Sydney Road, Kilmore. Native plant and books sales, environmental information, native flora and landscape artwork by local artists for viewing and purchase. Plant propagation demonstration. Entry \$2 adults, children free

6/7 October - APS Grampians Pomonal flower show

20/21 October – APS Foothills at the Knox Sustainability festival, Rowville Community Centre, Rowville. Plants for sale, displays, gum nut crafts.

20/21 October - 2012 APS South Gippsland Native Flower Show, plant sale, book sale. Leongatha Recreation Reserve, Exhibition Shed.

20/21 October - 2012 Friends of RBG Cranbourne Plant Sale. 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

10/11 November - FJC Rogers Seminar – 3D Garden Design – “Dream it, design it, do it!” Saturday at Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre, Preston; Sunday at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne

OUR NEXT MEETING

October 16th

Jason Caruso

Eucalypts

CHRISTMAS BREAK-UP

Change of Plans

There is a change of venue for the Xmas break-up. It will now be held at John and Barb Bell's house, in Horseshoe Bend Road, near Torquay. Details in later editions.