



# Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 295 – April 2014

## APRIL MEETING

**Wilma Trew**

The speaker at the last meeting was Wilma Trew, the area co-ordinator for 'The Tree Project'. Wilma has studied Conservation & Land Management, completed a Habitat & Conservation Management Course and volunteered in the conservation area.

The Tree Project is a non-profit, non-government volunteer-based organization that provides an opportunity for people to make a real difference to the environment by growing indigenous seedlings in their own backyard. It provides volunteer growers with the training, support and growing materials needed to set up a 'backyard nursery' and successfully grow strong healthy seedlings



**A Tree Project volunteer**

Using these seedlings, Tree Project helps repair damaged or fragmented habitats, create wildlife corridors, repair waterways and provide habitat to birds and animals.

Each year, Tree Project volunteers grow around 70,000 seedlings. Since 1989, 2.2 million native trees, shrubs and grasses have been grown and planted across Victoria.

Improving the quality and quantity of native vegetation in Victoria is critical to maintaining the health of water, land and atmosphere. One of the most practical ways we can help is by making sure we have healthy and sustainable native vegetation across the state. Vegetation reduces the impacts of drought, flood and soil degradation and is the single most effective tool for carbon sequestration.

Vegetation holds soil together and slows water runoff so that moisture is absorbed into the ground which results in slow seepage into our waterways rather than flood and water loss. Leaf canopies cool the air and facilitate rain. Vegetation breathes CO<sup>2</sup> and exhales oxygen cleaning our air and providing a healthy atmosphere.

Volunteer growers and landholders work together for local and global environmental recovery. The volunteer aspect of the growers means the cost of environmental repair is affordable for landholders when they take on regeneration projects.

Growing seedlings for landholders in rural Victoria provides an opportunity for rural and urban communities together to work together on serious environmental issues. Landholders and growers work together to repair damaged environments.



**Wildlife corridor in the making**

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Many of TreeProject volunteers grow and plant for the same landholders year after year, they build lasting friendships and develop a stewardship for the areas they help regenerate. Affordable seedlings make a huge difference when thousands of seedlings are needed to establish shelter belts, wildlife corridors, stabilize erosion and repair

The basic growing kit consists of -

7 polystyrene fruit boxes to hold 350 recycled plastic forestry tubes, slow release fertiliser, Potting mix, mulch which prevents the fine seed washing away and protects soil surface, and packaged seed provided by the landholder. There is also an Instruction Booklet, including sowing times and contact details for the landholder the volunteer is growing for, and the area coordinator. Each kit contains materials for 350 seedlings, which takes up about 2 square metres. Volunteers are encouraged to keep the landholders updated on the progress of their seedlings.



**A single kit in place**

Contact TreeProject if you would like to become a volunteer grower or if you would like to order affordable seedlings to repair your property. TreeProject will supply 500 seedlings for \$175.00 plus the cost of the seed from the seed bank.

If you might like to consider being a grower, please consider the following ...

Attention: The seedlings require some daily attention.

Time: Filling the tubes takes time - you will need several hours.

Timing: The beginning of the propagation period, Dec/Jan, is a busy time for most people (school and summer holidays, Xmas, etc) and the seed sowing needs to be done on schedule.

Space: 7 boxes take up about 2 square metres and ideally you need a bench or rack to raise them to comfortable working height, safe from dogs, snails and small children.

Position: The trees must be raised in full sun for all or most of the day. This will ensure hardy seedlings resistant to disease and the shock of transplanting.

Handling: Full boxes weigh approximately 12 kg; an average fit person can lift and handle them easily. If you have a back problem, please ensure you have reliable help when collecting and managing your kit.

Instructions: TreeProject provides detailed training, a manual and contact names of experienced growers (area coordinators), so there is always help on hand.

Wilma also told us a little about her own special project which she calls Project 1000. Her interest in growing plants began many years ago when a neighbour showed her how to propagate *Eucalyptus* seeds. When she moved to Corio she became involved with community days at the Limeburner's Link project, and developed an interest in indigenous plants of the area. Wilma collected seeds and began propagating. Project 1000 is her own commitment to giving away 1000 indigenous ground covers every year into the 3214 area.

She focusses on just three plants, Ruby Saltbush, *Enchylaena tomentosa*, Nodding Saltbush, *Einadia nutans* and *Atriplex semibaccata*, Berry Saltbush.

Wilma says "Doing this I teach people an extra dimension to diversity in their home gardens and that there are choices to help the local environment right here in suburbia."



**Ruby Saltbush, *Enchylaena tomentosa***



## ON THE TABLE

with Matt Baars

With the very dry summer we've had, the plant table was a little sparse, but varied and very interesting nonetheless.

Grevilleas are always a reliable source of colour in the garden, no matter the weather or time of year. *Grevillea* 'Pink Surprise' is a great plant as you will see in the 'Plant of the Month' which follows. *G. 'Ivory Whip'* is a grafted plant to 2m with very pale pinkish flowers. *G. 'Coconut Ice'*, one of the Robyn Gordon complex is a small shrub to 1.5 metres with masses of pink and white blooms. *Grevillea 'Bush Lemons'*, from John Bell's garden is a low shrub with striking, glossy, egg-yolk yellow flowers. Also present were old favourite *G. 'Billy Bonkers'*, *G. 'Ellendale Pool'*, and *G. 'Superb'*.



***Banksia prionotes.***

*Banksias*, too, provide colour at this time of year. Frank's weebegone, weather-beaten, worm-eaten *B. prionotes* continues to produce stunning orange and white flowers. *B. baueri*, the Possum or Woolly banksia, lives up to its name with pinkish, quite furry flower spikes, which have (to some) an unpleasant smell. *B. media*, again from John Bell's garden has showy yellow flower spikes. It is, according to John, the best of the W.A banksias for the Geelong area.

The Eremophilas don't seem to mind the dry periods so much, and were well represented on the table. *E. biserrata* is a ground cover, spreading to 2m. Andrea described it as 'deep green carpet' with bright red flowers. *E. 'Kalbarri carpet'* another ground cover

has grey green leaves and yellow flowers. Andrea brought two along, one had more orange blooms. The very variable *E. maculate* was represented by a stunning plant with smallish, deep green leaves, and bright pink/purple flowers. *E. 'Summer Beauty'* is a spindly, open plant with grey/green foliage and pale purple flowers.

Margaret Guenzel brought along some interesting and different plants, among them a lovely lemon *Xerochrysum viscosum* and a tiny purple *Billardiera*. Margaret continues to be the envy of all with her ability to grow the beautiful Flannel Flower, *Actinotus helianthi*. Another interesting plant, given Wilma Trew's Project 1000, was a Berry Saltbush, *Atriplex semibaccata*, with yellow berries, rather than the usual red. Matt also noted a plant growing near the Corio Club which has white berries.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

*Grevillea* 'Pink Surprise' is a spontaneous hybrid between a *Grevillea* sp. from Mundubbera (cream flowered), and *G. banksii* (red flowered). The original seedling occurred in the garden of Mrs. W.M. Bristow of Sherwood, Queensland, and was given to Mr. R. Baily of Indooroopilly, Queensland, who submitted the cultivar for registration in 1976.

*G. "Pink Surprise"* develops into a tall shrub and may reach 5m x 5m in warmer areas. In cooler climates plants usually reach a height of about two metres. In very frosty areas the plants need to be cultivated in sheltered situations.



***Grevillea 'Pink Surprise'***

The segmented leaves are grey in colour. Flowers are beautifully presented on long, terminal clusters. Each flower spike may reach a length of 20 centimetres. Flowers are pale pink/cream and profuse. Blooms are carried throughout the year. This is an outstanding hybrid *Grevillea*. Honeyeaters love the nectar-rich flowers. Pruning is recommended to keep plants dense and bushy. Propagation must be

from cuttings in order to retain the desirable characteristics.

#### OUR NEXT MEETING

#### Exotic Birds

Our next meeting is April 15<sup>th</sup> and the topic is 'Exotic Birds'. Frank and Ade have been lucky enough to do some overseas travelling in recent years, and have put together a show of some of the birds that have taken their fancy in South Africa, Botswana, Finland, Lithuania, Thailand, Borneo and New Zealand.



**Black-collared Starling - Thailand**

#### AUSTRALIAN OPEN GARDEN SCHEME

**April 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>** – Dunns Creek Estate, 137 Mcllroys Rd, Red Hill. A historic rambling garden whose owners have created an extensive wetlands fed by a natural spring. Self sown native plants provide a habitat for swamp wallabies, frogs and 60 species of birds. Vineyard, alpacas etc.

**April 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>** – Wyanda, 166 Point Leo Rd, Red Hill South. Rock lined waterway, two wetlands, well labelled tracks through the forest and a viewing platform to Waterhole Creek. Guided walks around the bushland areas every half hour.

**April 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>** – Cummins Garden, 4 Mowbray Court, Doncaster East. Informal plantings of indigenous and other Australian native species predominate in this well designed sustainable permaculture garden.

**April 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>** – Woodcote, 73 Pascoe Avenue, Kilsyth. Designer Sandra McMahon's garden with Australian plants in the front garden and a Japanese inspired stroll garden incorporating dry pebble area and flowing water.

**April 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>** – Northview Park, 133 Casey Creek Rd, Toorloo Arm (near Lakes Entrance). 3 acre Country property worth travelling for. Serene expansive garden, surrounded by forest, some rare and unusual Aust. plants; standard grevilleas, dam landscaped with native plants.

See [www.opengarden.org.au](http://www.opengarden.org.au) website for more details on all information above.

#### PLANT SALE 2014

**April 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>**

It's all hands on deck again for our 2014 plant sale. Everyone is encouraged to come along and help out over the weekend. 9.00 – 5.00 on Saturday, 9.00 – 1.00 on Sunday. There are plenty of jobs available for those who wish to help out, and an unbelievable array of plants for sale.

If you are growing plants for the sale, please have them at Arthur's place late on **Friday afternoon** so we can vet them for suitability, and set up our display ready for 9.00 start on Saturday.

We also have a **DISPLAY TABLE** at the sale, so if you have any plants in bloom, please bring some flowers along for the display table. It is set up like our display table at the meetings, and is an important part of our public prolife at the event. They don't have to be unusual or rare, just native plants to show the punters what natives have to offer.

If you are baking something for the canteen, please contact Tina – Ph: 52297494 with details.

A fabulous BBQ tea is provided for all the helpers and growers on Saturday night, beginning at 5.00 pm. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

#### NBG CANBERRA & ORCHID HOUSE by Tony Cavanagh

In September last year, I had a family reunion in the small town of Allora, in the Darling Downs of southern Queensland. We left Victoria early so we could spend a week in Canberra on the way up. It was a hectic and somewhat rushed week and we saw most of what we wanted to see, especially the Botanic Gardens and the National Arboretum with its fascinating National Bonsai and Penjing Collection, largely of Australian plants. We also spent half a day at Floriade, when Commonwealth Park is transformed into a fascinating and very colourful horticultural park with hundreds of thousands of tulips and related species in pots set out as garden beds.



**Pots near the Information Centre**



I'm probably being one-eyed but I think the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show is more interesting and has a more comprehensive range of exhibits and things to do.

I was surprised to learn that the Gardens (formerly the Canberra Botanic Gardens) had been in development since just after the war but were only officially opened by Prime Minister John Gorton in 1970 and given their current name in 1984. This was to reflect the national role and importance of the collection which currently numbers some 6300 plant species, around one third of our flora, arranged in either taxonomic groupings and/or by geographic region.



***Acacia pravissima* – Kurunga Cascade**

They cover some 35 hectares but there are several short trails which take visitors on loop walks to "sample the flora". Many of their special plants are on display in large tubs along heavily-used walkways. A new feature which was opened recently is a large, open Central Australian garden complete with red sandy soil. It seems strange to have such a garden given Canberra's notorious winter weather but it is in a large, open, sunny area protected by the local bush.

You have to be pretty game to say this but I found a couple of dryandras which I believe were wrongly named! The Gardens are using the proposed *Banksia* names rather than *Dryandra* but even allowing for this, I was pretty surprised. I will be in contact and suggest that they check them out – you never know, it could be me that is wrong. It was a great day and the Gardens are a must in any Canberra visit. Don't miss the Rock Garden or the Rainforest Gully and if you are lucky and the display glasshouses are open, don't miss them either.

They had a wonderful display of *Dendrobium* orchids from their research collection - mind blowing. I have included a few pictures of garden plants and several from the Orchid Glasshouse just to give you a taste. The research collection was largely of many of the forms of *Dendrobium speciosum* about which there has been much controversy in recent years.



***Dendrobium speciosum* – Eat Your Heart Out, Roger**

Some botanists believed that the group was composed of many species while others considered that it was a single species with perhaps a number of subspecies. Extensive DNA work based on plants in this collection showed that the latter view is correct. One of the two recognised subspecies occur in northern Queensland, the other in southern Queensland and New South Wales, the point of separation being an area known as the St. Lawrence Gap north of Rockhampton. So now you know the serious stuff, I hope that you enjoy the pictures and visit the Gardens when next in Canberra. Oh, I nearly forgot, there is a charge to use the car parks so come armed with coins.



**Some epiphytes, mounted on cork.**

### **A FABULOUS TREE**

I can't really claim this beauty as a favourite, given that I haven't noticed it until this year ... but it is a ripper! The 'Twin Oracles', Phil Vaughan and Roger Wileman, assure me that it is a *Corymbia calophylla* x *C. ficifolia*. It is in Roslyn Road, opposite Roslyn Primary School and it was a mass of large, soft pink flowers in late January/early February. As you can see by the wheelie bin parked along-side, it is approaching 16 metres in height. I don't know how I have missed it



til now, given that I drive past it twice almost every day. Oh well ... I'm glad to have made its acquaintance now. ☺



#### WHAT'S IN THE BUSH

#### Kangaroo Apples

There hasn't been much in the bush to excite me of late, but a recent trip to Anglesea and a kind offer of some seedlings prompted me to write about Kangaroo apples, *Solanum laciniatum*.



*Solanum laciniatum* flowers

The plant is widespread in southern Australia and Tasmania often found in coastal areas or forest margins. It is short-lived, but grows quickly and is a

useful screening plant while waiting for other plants to mature. The leaves are long and dark green. Pretty blue/mauve flowers in the spring are followed by yellow fruits which turn orange/red when ripe.

The Tasmanian and southern Australian aborigines apparently ate the fruit, but treated the cherry-sized kangaroo apples with respect. All green parts of the plant are poisonous, as are the un-ripe fruits. They reportedly taste like tomatoes, but can only be eaten when **very** ripe. To enhance the ripening process the aborigines buried piles of the yellow fruits in mounds of sand to soften and deepen their colour to an orange/red. Aborigines traditionally burned off the outer skins, before eating.

As bush tucker, it is very versatile and can be substituted for tomatoes or eggplants to produce a delightfully spicy relish or chutney. The fruits can also be dried and preserved in herbed olive oil as a substitute for dried tomatoes. *Ed. This information is gleaned from a bush-tucker web-site ... but I would recommend extreme caution if you want to try them!*

In central Australia, many other *Solanum* species are important foods, and are known as bush tomatoes'. Aborigines attributed this plant with contraceptive properties, and fruit pulp was used as a poultice on swollen or inflamed joints. The plant apparently contains a steroid which is important to the production of cortisone.



Ripening fruits – Photo: Iain Harrison

The closely related *S. aviculare* is farmed in several countries of the world, to produce a drug used in the manufacture of oral contraceptives. It is extracted from the young leaves and green fruits. *Solanum aviculare* is native in New Zealand as well, and Maoris (who call it poroporo) cultivate it for the edible fruit.

#### YARRA YARRA GROUP NATIVE PLANT SALE

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May ... 10.00 am – 3.00 pm. Corner Brougham Street and Main Road, Eltham. Demonstrations of propagation: seeds, cuttings and grafting from 1.00 pm.