



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 309 – July 2015

JUNE MEETING.

Melton Botanic Gardens

Our June meeting was addressed by David and Barb Pye, regulars at our plant sale, and heavily involved with the foundation and on-going management of the Melton Botanic gardens. They were joined by John and Jill, members of the Melton APS group who are the driving force behind the gardens and their continued growth.

The gardens are unusual in that they are managed by volunteers, funded by grants and supported by the local council. The keys to success are the main personnel – President and Treasurer – as well as a great grant writer. The gardens are divided into sections and these are managed by excellent project managers. The 'Friends' group is 200 strong and are ready and willing to volunteer.

They also have a great team of folks from Centrelink who are required to put in some voluntary work to qualify for their Centrelink payment, local Scout groups and schools.



Ryans Creek and the magnificent Redgums

The gardens are sited along the banks of Ryans Creek, which is home to some magnificent and ancient River Redgums. The rainfall is low at just 450mm per annum, with 300mm last year.

The Gardens began in 2003 with the formation of the

'Friends' group. In 2005 the Council decided where to place the park and the first planting took place in 2008 along the creek. The Eucalyptus Arboretum was established in 2011, and the nursery in 2013. The cost was around \$7,000,000, funded mostly by grants.



The Eucalyptus arboretum 5 years on.

A project team was established in 2010 to begin work on the Eucalyptus Arboretum, even though there were no funds at the time, with the exception of a donation of \$100. This was used to buy seed, which was propagated in the hopes that money could be raised to continue the project. In 2011 grants totalling \$160,000 were procured and work began in earnest. Garden beds and paths were established and the first of the Eucalypts were planted.



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In 2012 more Eucalypts and the understory were planted. The hard work was rewarded with the first flowering. There are now over 100 species in the Arboretum, many planted in groups.

ON THE TABLE

with Matt Leach

Matt was finally persuaded to host the plant table and his knowledge was greatly appreciated by all. Because he was so nervous, our heckling was directed at Carmel, instead ☺

Banksia again featured on the table, with their showy inflorescences. An example of a prostrate *B. spinulosa* caused a bit of comment, as did a beautiful example of the Swamp banksia, *B. paludosa*. This is a compact plant with upright, pinkish flowers which turn lemony yellow as they age. *B. oreophila*, the Mountain Banksia is an attractive plant which occurs naturally in the Barren and Stirling Ranges in WA.



***Banksia paludosa* – Photo Brian Walters**

There are always Grevilleas in flower, no matter what time of year, and mid-winter is no exception. Among the mostly hybrid specimens were *G. 'Ellendale Cascade'*, a *G. fililoba* cultivar; *G. 'Orange Marmalade'* a *G. venusta* x *G. glossadenia* hybrid; *G. 'Winpara Gem'* which came from a property named Winpara, in South Australia, and is a hybrid of *G. thelemanniana* x *G. olivacea*; *G. 'Superb'* and *G. 'Robyn Gordon'*, both have *G. banksia* x *G. bipinnatifida* heritage; and *G. 'Seaspray'* which is a *G. preissii* hybrid which is particularly suited to Geelong's climate. Only two true species Grevilleas made it to this month's table ... *G. maxwellii*, a low-growing very prickly shrub with deep red flowers; *G. paniculata*, with delicate whitish flowers and wickedly sharp foliage, and the contentious *G. rosmarinifolia* '*Lara Dwarf*', which may (or may not) be the plant we have chosen for our logo.



Grevillea 'Roby Gordon'

Hakeas featured strongly again with old favourites *H. 'Burrendong Beauty'* and *H. francissiana* among the very showy specimens. *H. multilineata* is a large, striking plant to 5m, with masses of red and white stem-hugging flowers. *H. scoparia* features yellow flowers which age to deep pink; *H. drupacea* has strongly scented white flowers giving rise to its common name, Sweet-scented Hakea. *H. pycnoneura*, with pink and cream flowers is also very heavily scented. *H. cristata* is associated with granite outcrops in the south of WA and has interesting sculptured and heavily veined leaves, with creamy yellow flowers.

Eremophilas are also flowering now and the table was heavy with various hybrids and true species plants. *E. alternifolia* is a large shrub with almost cylindrical leaves and bright pink/purple flowers. It was used by aborigines to treat colds and coughs and is a soporific. It bears the unusual common name of Poverty Bush.

E. decipiens is a medium shrub with orange/red flowers, and *E. maculata* has large, deep purple flowers with heavily spotted throats. There were several *E. glabra* ssp and cultivars (who said when in doubt, call it glabra?) including an orange red specimen, a ssp. *albida* and '*Kalbarri Carpet*'.



Eremophila 'Kalbarri Carpet'

There was some discussion with one specimen as to whether it was *G. brevifolia* or *G. maculata ssp brevifolia*. I didn't record the final decision, but it was a lovely deep, reddish purple. There was also a lovely deep purple one which is a hybrid of *E. longifolia* x *E. bignoniflora*.

There were also a good number of very pretty Eucalypts including *E. lehmannii* – the Bushy Yate, and *E. newbeyi* – Newby's Mallet, both featuring huge yellow flowers and very interesting flower caps. *E. cosmophylla* is called the cup gum, due to the shape of the fruits. It is found in the Mt. Lofty Ranges and on Kangaroo Island, South Australia. Matt brought along four examples of *E. leucoxolon*, the Yellow Gum. Each had different coloured flowers ranging from Deep red, through red and pink to yellow.

One interesting specimen among many others on the table was *Siegfriedia darwinioides*, an unusual shrub 1m x 1m with narrow, shiny leaves, deep green above and coppery below. It has rather showy buds for about 3 months, before the greenish-yellow bell-like flowers appear in the winter. These are followed by large, toothed bracts which give the plant colour for some months after flowering.



Siegfriedia darwinioides – Photo Russell Cummings

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Banksia grossa

Called the Course banksia for its thick leaves, *Banksia grossa* is one of several shrubs previously assigned to the *B. spaerocarpa* group.

It is a small shrub of 1-1.5m x 1.5-2m, open, with lignotuber and flaky bark. Leaves are linear and scattered, 4-12cm long x 2-3mm wide with revolute margins. They are silky, hairy to smooth on the upper surface but woolly below.

Flowers are produced in the autumn to winter months (March-August). The inflorescences are barrel-shaped, golden-brown in colour and set on short lateral branches within the bush, although sometimes they are on the end of the main branches. Styles are often a deep red colour and permanently

hooked after being released. Flower spikes may be up to 7cm long. Fruits are similar in shape to the flower head. These bear large elliptical, hairy follicles with the dead flowers persisting around them.



B. grossa is one of the more northern *Banksias* from Western Australia. It inhabits shallow or deep sand over laterite, or deep sand, in shrub-land. It is found from Eneabba to Regon's Ford, where rainfall is about 600mm annually.

It is a slow growing and spreading shrub, which prefers poor to well-drained soils in an open situation. It is frost and drought tolerant.

My *Banksia grossa* was grown from seed over 15 years ago and is currently 1m x 1.5m. It was first planted out in the paddock in an open situation, along the driveway. After a couple of years with no growth, (or, if anything, going backwards) it was dug up, put in a pot and placed into the hothouse. It took quite a few months before signs of new growth emerged.



After being in the pot for over a year, it was re-planted into a raised lateritic sand garden bed on the west-side of the house. Here it thrived, with supplementary water through the summer. After some years, it started to flower, but sparingly. Now it has 7-10 flowers on it each year. This one is a

rich maroon-red, but others I have had in flower have been yellow, through to red.

EXCURSION TO MELTON BOTANIC GARDENS.

We met at 8.30 on a very cold, breezy morning, rain threatening to spoil our day. Luckily, the coffee from drive-through kiosk was good and helped ward off the cold while everyone arrived. Fourteen of us headed for Melton in convoy and were joined by a couple more at the gardens.

Were greeted by John, Jill, David and Barb, and some volunteers, who made us welcome with tea, coffee and home-made Anzac cookies. We donned our coats, hats, scarves and gloves and headed out into a light drizzle to begin the tour.

I was immediately struck with the great collection of *Eremophilas*, most in flower, that began with the car-park plantings. Two amazing specimens of *E. oppositifolia* – one creamy/white, the other a mass of deep lilac- had all of us oohing and aahing.



Barb Pye and *Eremophila oppositifolia*

At this point we divided into two groups, with David and Barb leading, and moved off in opposite directions to explore the gardens. The *Eucalyptus* collection was interesting and varied. Most were small trees, suitable for suburban gardens, interspersed with old original woodland trees and giant, ancient river redgums along the creek and lake shore. Groundcovers, especially *Eremophilas* and *Myoporums*, are growing rapidly to cover the mulch and help with weed control.

Beds have been set aside for South African plants, an Aboriginal usage garden, a Western Australian garden and others. An island in the lake is being revegetated to serve specifically as a bird sanctuary. Paths meandered around and through the plantings, and we were encouraged to explore. We had lots of questions, all of which were answered with honesty and a deep knowledge of the gardens, their history and purpose.



The Lake and picnic rotunda

The gardens must be a source of great joy to those whose properties surround it. One of the neighbours has begun a daily bird list to keep track of bird species and numbers. We remarked that a donation from all the locals would be in order given how much the gardens must have improved their property values.

Unfortunately, family commitments meant I had to leave the group at midday, so I missed the usual raucous lunch picnic/BBQ. But, I know a great time was had by all. Thanks to everyone from Melton Botanic Gardens for their time, hospitality and knowledge.



The lovely little *Eucalyptus desmondensis*

If you have not visited these amazing gardens, make sure you do so soon. It is a hidden gem, and well worth the trip to Melton.

TASMANIAN CONIFERS

by Roger Wileman.

This month sees Roger continue his series on the conifers of Tasmania, this time ...

Microcachys Tetragona

"Strawberry pine"

Strawberry pine is another single species of conifer, in the Family Podocarpaceae, which is confined to Tasmania. It is a straggling shrub, usually prostrate, spreading over rocks and plants. The branches

resemble *Diselma archeri* for which this species is often mistaken. It occurs in alpine and sub-alpine areas, usually on wet moors and ridges at 1000 - 1500 metres, on mountains in the west, south west and central highlands.



***Microcacys tetragonis* cones – Photo Tindo2**

The female cones are 6-8 mm long and 3-4 mm wide, they are bright red when ripe and are edible, although it would take a long time to pick enough to even fill an egg cup as they are very small. The cones contain only 20-30 seeds. Interestingly, seedlings of the strawberry pine have never been recorded.

Fossils 20 million years old of an ancient relative are found in New Zealand, indicating the lineage may have been wide-spread across the southern hemisphere.

My original plants were purchased in Hobart approximately 15 years ago and were planted in large containers out of the direct sun. They still survive.



One of Roger's *M. tetragona* plants in a pot

One drawback I find with this plant is that at times pieces of the tiny branches die off. But, the remaining part of the plant stays healthy. It is an interesting and ideal plant for pot culture.

JULY MEETING AGM and PHOTO COMPETITION

July 21st is our Annual General Meeting, and we elect a new committee on that occasion. All committee positions are declared vacant, and nominations are taken from the floor for all positions. All but one of our current committee have indicated that they are willing to stand again. We will be looking for at least one new member, and new blood is always welcome. Please give thought to adding your input to **your** committee.

Membership fees are due in July and a Membership form accompanies this edition of the Correa Mail. The Committee has determined that fees will remain unchanged for the 2015/2016 year. Please be prompt with your fees.

The photo Competition will take the same form as previous years. There are three categories :- Australian Plants, Australian Animals (including birds, reptiles, insects, fish etc.), and Australian Landscapes. Nominal prizes will be awarded to the top three places in each category, and all photos will feature on our Facebook page.



Last years' winner, *Leptospermum* by Tony Cavanagh

The committee recommends that photos are no larger than 5 x 7 or A5 size. Please enter as many photos in as many of the categories as you wish. I will ask all winners to email their photos, or bring them along on a datastick so I can copy them to my computer for the Newsletter and Facebook page.

SIGN-IN AT MEETINGS

It is essential for our records and for insurance purposes that everyone who attends our meetings signs in on arrival. Members will be asked to add their mobile phone numbers in future, and we thank you, in advance, for your co-operation.

SPEAKERS and EXCURSIONS

The Committee has been working hard to fill all places with new and interesting speakers.

August: 'Fungi' ... followed by an excursion to find and photograph our own.

September: Bruce McGinness will tell us about his work with naturally occurring insecticidal properties of Australian plants. There will be a garden visit and visit to the Kevin Hoffman Walk in Lara on the Saturday after the September meeting. Details to follow.

October: John Arnott, Director of the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens will address us about his work at the gardens. There will be an excursion to the gardens on the following Saturday. Details to follow.

CORREA MAIL - SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER EDITIONS.

Penny and I will be taking our biannual holidays this year and we will be away for all of August and September. Phil Royce has kindly consented to publish the September and October editions of the 'Correa Mail' in my absence. I know you are keen to help him out with some articles, so here is his email address ...

phil.i.royce@gmail.com

to be used for all newsletter related correspondence until October. Thanks.

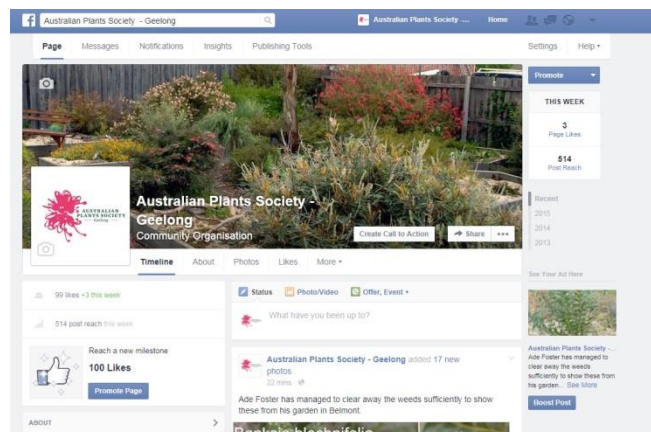


OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Ade Foster

It is with considerable pleasure and pride that I can report our Facebook page is a roaring success! Since my rant a few months ago, we've had regular contributions from Franks Scheelings, Roger Wileman, Matt Leach and me, as well as odd contributions from other members, for which I am very grateful.

Since the week of the plant sale, we have risen from 32 to an amazing 100 'Likes' and the page has been viewed by over 500 people each week, for the last 6 weeks.



Other groups are taking an interest and sharing our photos on their own pages. APS Hunter Valley in NSW is sharing our photos, as are Grevillea Growers Qld, and the Wirraminna Environment Education Centre, NSW. We are being shared by folks in Taiwan and Spain, and we have fans viewing our page from all states of Australia as well as the England, Northern Ireland, France, Netherlands, Turkey, Argentina and India!

Whether this equates to many new members is yet to be seen, although we have already recruited two as a direct result of our online presence.

But, it will give a huge boost to the numbers who view and so attend our plant sale, and this can only be good for the club.

I urge you all to come on board and email me your photos. You don't have to use Facebook yourselves, but please help the many hundreds who do use it to learn more about our fabulous club.



Thryptomene paynei – from our Facebook page