

The Correa Mail

Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society, Geelong
No. 256 – August 2010

THE LAST MEETING

The July meeting was our AGM. There was a good turn-out of members for such a cold Winter's evening. After a stirring report from Vice President, Harry Webb, which received a standing ovation and several curtain calls, the chair was passed to Tony Cavanagh, and new office bearers were elected. Congratulations to:-

- Harry Webb, President
- Debbie Gaskill, Vice President
- Denise Cromer, Secretary
- Frank Scheelings, Treasurer
- Ade Foster, Newsletter Editor

And ... Diane Prowse, Sheila Deakin, Roger Wileman, Arthur Pape, Liz Wells, Carmel Adlam, Bruce McGuiness ... Committee Members. It was gratifying to see so many prepared to give their time and expertise to the club, and we look forward to another successful year.

A WORD OF THANKS - Harry Webb – New President

On behalf of our local group I would like to extend sincere thanks to past president Debbie who has served in the role of president for quite some time. Debbie's influence extends far and wide, and she has been able to get things done without a fuss, and with good leadership.

I recall the recent ASGAP conference at Geelong, and noticed that Debbie was always at the venue early in the morning, ensuring that there would be no hiccups to the success of the event. No doubt you all will be able to share a story of Debbie's consideration of others in the APS, as well her quiet strength which stimulated the confidence and support of members.

To all members of the committee who have served in the past financial year – Well done and thank you!!! To Phill who is having a break from the committee, we are grateful too for your selfless service in the interests of the APS.

AND, FOR THOSE WHO MISSED IT ...

Out-going Vice-President's Report

In reflecting, this past year has been very successful, in that I believe we have had a varied programme that fulfils the charter of this great organisation.

Our speakers have been varied and informative. They have given us insights into conservation, climate change, digital photography, fungi, bush tucker, as well as other interesting subjects. Our specimen table has portrayed the goodwill of our members who have shared willingly their beautiful plants. Members have been generous in their contributions to the monthly newsletters.

We have had a number of outings throughout the year, with trips to Lysterfield, Inverleigh, Lilydale House. We have enjoyed visits to various gardens at Lara, Ocean Grove and Lovely Banks. We were represented well by members at the FJC Rogers Seminar at Horsham. At the Waterwise event in Geelong our group conducted a successful stall over two days.

We had our first Photo Competition, which was an exciting evening, providing beautiful pictures, friendly bantering, and real good fun.

In hosting the ASGAP Conference our committee and members excelled in their organisation and commitment, resulting in a great successful event for Geelong.

Our Annual Plant Sale on the property of Arthur and Linda Pape has continued to grow in excellence, with people coming from near and far to make their purchases, and enjoying some food and drink at this great facility.

Members have represented us with information to schools and other organisations.

Committee members, and members of our local group, I would like on behalf of President Debbie to pay tribute to you, for making this past year a year of

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many memories. Each of you by your contributions have enriched us as a group, and connected with the wider community, so that the APS is seen as an effective informative group in promoting Australian plants to the wider community.

OUR NEW LOGO

Your committee has decided to adopt *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* 'Lara form' as the new logo for APS Geelong. *G. rosmarinifolia* is a well known garden plant with several very hardy cultivars available. It occurs naturally in southern NSW and sporadically across Victoria. The 'Lara form' is known from a single and now extinct population from the basalt plains near Lara, but it survives in cultivation. By adopting the "Lara form" as our logo we hope to encourage members, and others, to plant and cultivate it in their gardens, to ensure it continues to survive.

We have photos with a graphic designer at present, and hope to have the logo ready to present at our next monthly meeting.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Following the great success of our inaugural event at last years' AGM, our Second Annual Photo Competition was held at the July meeting. Members provided a wonderful array of their beautiful photos in three categories – Australian plants, Australian wildlife and Australian landscapes – and the winners were chosen by popular vote. Despite a conspiracy to prevent your editor from claiming any of the prizes, the winners were all worthy recipients.

Tony Cavanagh's stunning close-up of a *Verticordia* won the plant category, Frank Scheeling's portrait of a delightful Jumping Spider won the wildlife category, and Roger's artistic portrait of a disused jetty along the Nullabor took out the landscape prize. Carmel, Dianne, Tina, Ken and Harry

were all honourable mentions. A fun time was had by all, but be warned I'll be back!!

THE WINNERS

Australian Plant – Tony Cavanagh



Roe's Featherflower - *Verticordia roei*

Tony says - "*This plant goes under the rather ungainly name of Verticordia roei subsp. meiogona, common name Roe's featherflower, after John S. Roe, the first Surveyor General of W.A. It is a small plant to less than 1 metre, needs sun and good drainage, is a bit straggly and very susceptible to fungus and collar rot. It is rarely grown because of the difficulty of keeping it alive in the garden but plants grafted on Geraldton Wax, Chameleucium uncinatum, have been moderately successful here in Victoria. I took the photo several years ago in spring in Doug McKenzie's garden in Ocean Grove where he and his son Pete have grafted many Verticordias and Darwinias. Seen in magnification, the flowers and buds are spectacular and it is easy to see how the Verticordias are called "feather flowers"*

Tony's photo was taken with 6 Megapixel Olympus SP-500 UZ compact digital camera, hand held, set to Super Macro mode. You don't need thousands of dollars worth of camera to take a great photograph. (Don't tell my wife!)

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Australian Wildlife – Frank Scheelings



Northern Green Jumping Spider – *Mopsus mormon*



Found in coastal woodland and heath in South Australia and Western Australia, *Templetonia* can be a low shrub to a small tree. The striking red, orange or yellow pea flowers are large and showy, and though they are not in flower long, they make a spectacular display. Our specimen was a stunning dusty red.

Australian landscape - Roger Wileman



Derelict wharf – Great Australian Bight, W.A.

THE SPECIMEN TABLE

The table was a delight with a wide variety of flowers on show, particularly a number of Hakeas, which seem to be enjoying the colder, wetter year to date. There was a beautiful example of *Templetonia retusa*, or Cockey's Tongues from Harry's garden, which was worthy of note. They are great garden plants which are readily grown from cutting or seed, and are hardy even in Victoria's colder climate.

YOUR NEWSLETTER

As a new editor I am seeking your input and ideas for the newsletter. This edition has an article by Tony Cavanagh, and I would like to include a similar members' contribution each month. You all have a special interest, and knowledge, so get your pens and papers (or computers) busy.

I think we need a name for our newsletter, rather than "The Newsletter". I've gone with 'The Correa Mail' for this edition, just because I like puns! ☺ If you have any suggestions, please email me.

To save paper, and postage costs, the Newsletter could be emailed to those who are interested. Most of us have an email address these days, so if you would rather receive an electronic copy, with colour photos, email me at adefoster@internode.on.net

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AUGUST MEETING

Our next meeting will be on 17 August, and our guest speaker is State President, **Brendon Stahl** who will tell us all we want to know about **Acacias**.

If you haven't already paid your annual subscriptions, please see our Treasurer, Frank Scheelings, who will be pleased to accept your offerings.



Acacia suaveolens – In flower at Anglesea now

UP-COMING EVENTS

October 2nd and 3rd is the 28th Annual Pomonal Native Flower Show, and we encourage members to make the trip. Pomonal is just 10 minutes from Hall's Gap in the beautiful Gariwerd (Grampians) National Park, and the show will feature over 400 species, taken from APS members' gardens. Those gardens will also be on display on the weekend of October 30-31 when the Australian Plants Society (Grampians Group) holds its Open Garden Weekend.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A TV STAR?

We received this letter from the Geelong Landcare Group. It's pretty short notice, but some of you may be interested....

"The Geelong Landcare Network has been asked to support an advertising campaign to promote the work of Landcare and recruit volunteers. Landcare Australia

and the State Landcare team, along with the advertising production crews, will visit 3 sites to film volunteers in action. This will be part of a national community television announcement program to be run later this year.

We need as many people as we can get to come out and be extras. This event is about providing people in shots going about Landcare work.

*Our first site will be filmed at Lara from 11.00am on **Thursday 5th August** at Terry Hedt's property on Peak School Rd. The second site will be filmed at Barrabool Hills from approximately 1.30pm. same day on Ross George's property on Georges Rd., Ceres. The 3rd site will be filmed on **Friday the 6th August** at Lilydale Sanctuary property of Lit & George Belcher, starting 8.00am The opportunity exists for volunteers to take part at all three sites or whatever they can manage.*

Sites 1& 2 will be typical Landcare type activities- tree planting and rabbit control. Site 3 will be about weed removal to enhance our remnant bush and to improve conditions for our wildlife.

This is an opportunity to get out and visit 3 unique property locations. BBQ and refreshments will be supplied. Tree planting will be an activity but more importantly groups will come together and people will be provided a big opportunity to socialise with many like minded people and to catch up with old friends.

*Together we want to have a good turn out. We want school students, Tafe and uni students, corporate partners, local government, NRM agencies, and of course our own landcarers with their families. **Please** make this a special occasion by coming along and lending your support. Please acknowledge your interest by replying to this email address:-*

bronte.payne1@bigpond.com

Please forward to others who may wish to be involved. We look forward to a big turn out. Maps and other details to follow.

Bronte Payne

Geelong Landcare Network – Mob: 0417590085"

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CANNIBALS OF THE PLANT WORLD

by Tony Cavanagh - tonycav40@hotmail.com

I made an interesting discovery a while back. I knew that plants such as pitcher plants “ate” small insects by catching them in their pitchers, after which fluids in the pitcher digested them, to provide nourishment to the plant. I was not aware that some plants could parasitise large animals such as the larvae of moths and feed off them for perhaps weeks while they develop. Such is the life of the dark vegetable fungus *Cordyceps gunnii*.



It all started when my wife was hoeing part of our garden to break up compacted mulch. She noticed a number of black, stick-like bodies protruding above the ground and accidentally dug one up. To both her, and my, astonishment, we noticed that while the black section was obviously a fungus, the bottom section which was below the ground looked like a large caterpillar about 80 mm long. It was perfectly

formed and soft and flexible just like a live one but obviously very dead. As far as we could see, the fungus was growing out of where the head of the caterpillar should be. What was going on?



Cordyceps gunnii, left, & parasitised larvae

I checked the Fungimap book *Fungi Down Under* and also Bruce Fuhrer's *A field Guide to Australian Fungi* and learned that there was a genus of highly specialised fungi called *Cordyceps* which parasitises insects, generally at the larval stage, when the larvae is still underground. If allowed to develop normally, the larvae grow into large moths or beetles such as the longhorn beetle. Apparently, the adult female moth or beetle lays her eggs in flight over suitable ground, generally under trees and shrubs of *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia*. The eggs hatch and the larvae develop in a vertical hole at varying depths below ground, maybe as deep as 50 cm. They apparently feed of the roots of the shrubs. Those that avoid being parasitised eventually cut a hole about 1-1.5 cm across to the surface and escape, presumably as an adult moth or beetle, leaving behind on the surface a brown sausage skin-like case. In our yard, it occurs usually in autumn after rain.

I know these larvae/grubs as “bardi/ bardy/bardee” grubs and they are very similar to the witchetty grub of inland Australia. On the Murray, live bardi grubs are highly prized as bait for Murray cod. But if an adult fruiting *Cordyceps* fungus is in the vicinity, it forms thread-like spores, which break into smaller thread

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spores, which penetrate the soil and infect any grubs they find. The growing fungus literally consumes the larvae and develops into a club-like fruiting body which grows out of the larvae generally around its head. The larvae body is so rich in nutrients that sometimes two fungi can develop from the one grub. Talk about being eaten alive! The cycle then continues. There appear to be about 5 or 6 *Cordyceps* species of which *C. gunnii* is probably the commonest in southern Australia.

Editors Note: Frank and I walked the Anglesea cliff-tops on 24/7/10, and there were hundreds of Cordyceps. Most unusual.

FROM OUR ROVING REPORTER – Debbie Gaskill

Chelsea Physic Garden - London

When in London in May we took the opportunity to visit the Chelsea Physic Garden. Founded in 1673 it was the garden used by the Society of Apothecaries to train their apprentices in the growth and use of medicinal plants. It wasn't until 1899 that the apothecaries handed over control of the gardens to a local group.

As early as 1685 they had introduced heated glasshouses to allow the gardeners to grow plants not normally viable in Britain. The Swedish botanist Linnaeus made several visits there in the 1730's and many modern species of plants still carry the names that were ascribed to them by the various head gardeners there. Many seeds were swapped with collectors in other parts of the world. There was even an example of one of the Wardian cases used to transplant plants from places like Australia to the UK.

In its current form the garden covers 3.8 acres and it still set out pretty much as it was when it was used to train medical students and for scientific research. Medicinal and other useful plants are still grown there today and one section still makes use of the old Systematic Order beds, which are set out to show the botanical relationship between different types of plants.

Of other interest at gardeners is the rock garden which is the oldest man-made rock garden in Europe and which is registered by the National Trust. Included in the construction are pieces of carved stone which were once part of the Tower of London and basaltic lava used as ballast on Sir Joseph Banks' ship on a voyage to Iceland in 1772.

Today as well as being visited by gardening enthusiasts the garden is still involved in research and, in conjunction with a number of universities and museums, is collecting data on herbal remedies used in Britain over the years.

They have a Garden of World Medicine showing the use of plants for medicinal purposes by indigenous peoples. There are also sections reflecting the work of famous botanists such as Banks. Banks in fact, has a whole section to himself complete with quite a lot of Australian plants such as some very straggly looking leptospermums and a callistemon or two. I have to say most of the Australian plants we saw looked a little underwhelmed by having to grow in London. A Google search of the garden will give a lot more information about it.

As we were there in spring the whole place was extremely beautiful with lots of things in bloom. The Physic Garden is almost next door to the gardens used for the Chelsea Flower show, which they were setting up when we visited. There is lots of security for this event – you can't even peep through the fence to see what's going on.

There is a small fee to enter the garden (which also has a pretty good gift shop and a tea room) and I would recommend a visit to anyone interested in the history of gardening who may find themselves at a loose end in London. Europe has a number of such gardens (though no longer necessarily used for research). We stumbled over one in Nancy in France still set out in its original form but now featuring displays of plants of various species.