



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

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BBQ GET-TOGETHER

16TH February

Our first 'meeting' of the year was a BBQ at Frank and Tina Scheelings' house, in Highton. About 30 members braved a very warm day to make this a most enjoyable evening.

We also celebrated Sheila and Roger's engagement, and Frank made an impassioned and amusing speech to toast the happy couple.



Frank's speech – Sheila's face says it all 😊

A big thanks to Tina and Frank for making their home available, and a special plea to Frank for next year. Please, put some clothes on!

PLANT SALE 2013

April 6/7

Once again we remind you that the Plant Sale is on April 6th and 7th, 2013. It's not far away, so please be prepared for a busy weekend. All hands on deck! The venue will be Arthur and Linda Pape's property at 40 Lovely Banks Road, Lovely Banks. Please let all your friends know, and encourage everyone to come along. It's the perfect time to buy and plant natives – after the summer heat and before the ground gets too cold

and wet. More details at the next meeting, and in the next newsletter.

APS Victoria have rescinded their blanket ban on the movement of *Myrtaceae*, (see attached letter) so there will be plenty of plants to choose from.



Next Meeting

19th March

Our next speaker is Trent Wallis - the Barwon River Health Executive Manager of the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, and he will talk to us about the work being done to revegetate the Barwon River banks with indigenous and native plants.

UP-COMING EVENTS

From APS Victoria

- 2 to 11 March 2013 – Friends of RBG Cranbourne Quilt Exhibition in AG Auditorium, Cranbourne
- 23/24 March 2013 – APS Victoria Quarterly Gathering hosted by APS Maroondah
- 20 March to 24 March - MIFGS, APS stand and hanging baskets on display

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- 30 March to 1 April – Eucalyptus Festival, Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne (Easter weekend)
- 6/7 April – APS Geelong Plant Sale, ‘Wirawilla’, 40 Lovely Banks Road, Lovely Banks.
- 5 May 2013 APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale & Propagation Demonstrations. Cnr Brougham St and Main Street, Eltham. From 10.00 am to 3.00 pm.
- 18 May – APS Melton & Bacchus Plant Sale, Cnr Lerderderg St & Gisborne Road, Bacchus Marsh, will feature hakeas, orchids and dwarf eucalypts. From 9.00 am to 1.00 pm.
- 15 June – Quarterly Gathering hosted by APS Mitchell.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

RBG Cranbourne

The Friends Group from Cranbourne Botanic Gardens are having a "Discovery Tour" of Geelong and Queenscliff areas and are seeking suggestions for interesting gardens and other places to visit. It is not until Oct/Nov 2013 but time gets away from us all and they would like to start the organisation of the weekend.

I'm sure the Geelong Botanic Gardens is on the list, but there are plenty more great spots at the perfect time of year. We would like suggestions and offers for garden visits, and other places of interest in the area. If you would like to volunteer your garden, or have a favourite bit of bushland that might be worth a look, please let us know. Or, you may like to contact the liaison, Susan Funder.- susanfunder@live.com.au

WHAT'S IN THE BUSH

Soldier Beetles

I have been doing a bit of bird-watching at the Western Treatment Plant at Avalon recently, and noticed a huge swarm of yellow and green soldier beetles along Beach Road. A few days later, Tony Cavanagh sent me this fascinating article ...

In early January, I was talking with some friends who told me that their place in Barwon Heads was infested with soldier beetles and they were wondering whether they should be spraying them with an insecticide. I suggested that they wait a few days as my previous experience with the beetles indicated that they tend to disappear fairly quickly.

Anyway, three days later, we found some plants in our vegetable garden literally crawling with many thousands of soldier beetles, the leaves of our zucchinis were almost black and the parsley which had gone to seed was alive with small black and orange critters about 15 mm long. What to do?

This time I did some reading and found out that they are generally harmless to most plants and while they may nibble fresh foliage, they do little damage.

Apparently, they gather in these massive swarms to mate and feed on pollen, nectar and the small insects which are attracted to the nectar of flowering trees and shrubs. Occasionally, the weight of the swarm may break small, thin branches, and they have been known to damage ripe cherries but their insect predation outweighs these negatives. According to one source, they are one of the most important predators of the eucalyptus tortoise beetle and its larvae. They lay their eggs in the soil and the larvae develop in soil and leaf litter. The adults emerge from spring to summer.



Soldier beetles on a zucchini leaf in Tony's garden

Much to my surprise, I learned that there are about **150** species of soldier beetle, the one we know belongs to genus *Chauliognathus* and is called *C. lugubris*. They are soft bodied with distinctive bright colours, the stippled wing covers being a greenish-black, the head black and there is an orange-yellow band between the head and the wings. The rear end of their abdomen is yellow and can be seen when viewing the insect from above (see pictures).

Wwithin a week they had nearly all gone without my doing anything, although there are still a few around. As one source states, they are a "good bug".



Massed soldier beetles on parsley stem