



Correa Mail

Newsletter No 406 - October, 2024

SEPTEMBER MEETING - Stephen Murphy

Our September meeting was addressed by Stephen Murphy and his talk centred recreating habitat in an urban environment to improve the lot of our native wildlife.

His goal is to return vegetation to our broader landscape that will last for centuries, support our wildlife and be as good as the original. A great way to 'rescue' endangered plant species is to grow them in your garden.

Nature strips are an under-used asset when it comes to native plants. Councils have a conservative view of planting nature-strips, but surely that is their purpose?



A Pt. Lonsdale nature strip.

Stephen's 'rules' for gardening created quite a bit of discussion. Large trees have large root systems and deprive other plants of nutrients and water. Native and exotic plants are not good mixers. Exotics need to be fed and watered. Natives evolved in nutrient poor soils and low rainfall climates and so, do not.

He advocates 'gardening to mimic nature.' Plants indigenous to our area will do well and have evolved along with the local wildlife to provide food and shelter for them.

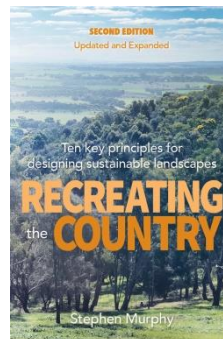
As very large trees are important for wildlife, but not suitable for suburban gardens, then street trees should fill this void.

Stephen urged us to start small – in our own gardens, where we have control. Liaise with neighbours to create larger habitats. Plant out nature strips for greater diversity as many councils across the country do. Urge our councils to think about public spaces, creekside reserves and public buildings.

In other countries a different approach is starting to be accepted. A high-rise apartment complex in the Italian city of Milan, Bosco Verticale, has balconies so heavily planted that it provides green space equivalent to a three hectare woodland. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Melbourne or Sydney could look like this?



To quote Stephen - *'Our cities could become sanctuaries for Australia's iconic flora and fauna, particularly those that no longer have habitat in the wild.'*



Stephen's blog 'Putting Nature Back Into Nature Strips' can be found on his website. You can also purchase his excellent book, 'Recreating The Country'. Visit the website for lots of interesting content at ...

www.recreatingthecountry.com.au

President: Position Vacant Secretary: Peter Nuzum: apsgeelong@gmail.com
Treasurer: Penny Foster: pennysf11@gmail.com Editor: Ade Foster – adefoster@internode.on.net
Australian Plants Society, Geelong - Website: www.apsgeelong.org

OCTOBER MEETING – October 15th

Our October meeting will be addressed by Jen O'Dwyer who is a senior vet in the Life Sciences Department at Werribee Zoo. Following the horrendous 2019/2020 Bushfires, and in collaboration with RSPCA, a new state of the art wildlife hospital was created at Werribee Zoo. It is currently treating around 100 sick and injured wildlife patients monthly. Jen will tell us about her work there, the journey that led to its creation, and what we can do to minimise the number of patients they see.



2024 MEETINGS and OUTINGS

Oct Meeting RSPCA Koala Hospital
Nov Meeting Ian Evans - Brachychitons
Dec 7th Christmas Break-up BBQ

Lots more in the pipeline. Stay tuned!

PLANT TABLE - by Ade Foster

It was a very large plant table this month, and we ran out of time, so the report will be a limited one.

My own contributions were mostly grevilleas, as usual. But I had a couple of others. *Kunzea baxterii*, a pink flowering form, is a very vigorous shrub in my garden. It is now at about 1.5 m x 1.5 m. The flowers are presented on the ends of the long branches. After flowering new growth appears from the old flower head and the branch grows even longer. I try to cut back behind the old flower head to avoid the plant getting out of control ... but I think it's winning.



The long new growth from the flower head

Matt Baars had a number of interesting specimens. There were three different *Darwinias* from the nursery of a specialist grower in Ocean Grove. One of them, 'Coolamon Pink', is a *D. lejustyla* variety with deep pink bracts, surrounding the tiny flowers. A lovely *Diplolaena angustifolia*, with large orange flowers, was, sadly, damaged by the recent winds.



Coolamon Pink from Matt's garden

Matt's *Pittosporum angustifolium* is a large tree at about 6 metres with a lovely weeping habit. It has long, narrow leaves and tiny yellow flowers on branches which sweep the ground.

Frank Scheelings always has some interesting plants and his *Grevillea magnifica* caused considerable comment. It produces lovely red and green flowers on long upright branches. Frank's has about 20 of these

flowers spikes around 4 metres in length. *Mirbelia dilitata* is a small shrub with lovely purple/mauve flowers and very sharp foliage. It's common name of Holly-leaved *Mirbelia* is descriptive but it's other name Mauve Prickle-pea, perhaps more so.



Frank also brought in a beautiful White Waratah which was chosen as Plant of the Month. Read on ...

PLANT OF THE MONTH – by Frank Scheelings

Grant Baverstock won the door prize and chose a white Waratah, brought along by Frank Scheelings. Frank writes ...

WHITE WARATAH, "SHADY LADY WHITE"

'Shady Lady' is a hybrid of *Telopea speciosissima* (NSW) and *Telopea oreades* (Gippsland) of which there are a number of cultivars - red, white, yellow, crimson, pink

The genus name *Telopea* is from the Greek *tilopos*, meaning "seen from afar" which is a very appropriate name.

A White Waratah was first discovered in 1967, by maintenance men from Nepean Depot of the then Sydney Water Board. Its site was kept secret until some growers obtained cutting material, which eventually came into production as *Telopea speciosissima* 'Wirrimbirra White'. This was not a hybrid, as are the Shady lady varieties, which are much more vigorous and produce more flowers.

Aboriginal Dreamtime stories say that the iconic red waratah was originally white, until a Wonga Pigeon was attacked by a hawk, escaped but then fell, died and bled on the flower so that all waratahs subsequently were red.

There are 4 other species of waratah - *Telopea aspera*, more commonly known as the Gibraltar Range waratah; *Telopea mongaensis* ,The monga waratah, *Telopea oreades* , Gippsland waratah, and Tasmania has *Telopea truncata*.

Waratah 'Shady Lady White' is an evergreen shrub with dark green, leathery leaves and large pure white flowers in spring. The plant is a large shrub, growing to 3 or 4 meters, but best kept compact by regular pruning.

It took me several attempts to grow waratahs, and became more determined after seeing the success of Roger Wileman's plants. Eventually, I found the right spot in the garden, facing south, with morning sun and afternoon shade. Mine have survived about 5 years so far and this year produced about 12 blooms, hopefully double next year.



The flowers are great for attracting native birds. Once the flowers have finished, prune generously which will encourage healthy new growth. Once established, keep moist during periods of extended heat and dry. Keep the plant well watered for the first 2 years for it to establish.

**POMONAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY & FLOWER SHOW
By Lyhn Barfield**

The theme for the weekend was on our Native Bush Foods. The speakers were Neil Marriot, Clarence Slockee and Julie Weatherhead.

Clarence Slockee, from gardening Australia, is in fact hugely funny and very entertaining. He manages to walk the two worlds bridging his aboriginal heritage, ancestry and knowledge with all 'non- First Nations'. He refuses to get caught up in the latest controversy of Welcome to Country. He did it anyway, including the Aboriginal form of a Maori Haka, so powerful it was enough to pin you to the back of the seat.

He mentioned many plants either eaten or used medicinally ... Bulbine Lily, Davidson's Plum variously known as Rainforest Plum or Kakadu Plum, Native Fig, Native Parsnip, the Myrtles (Lemon Scented, Anise and Cinnamon), Warrigal Greens, Native Currant, Native Celery, the *Prostanthera* and Geraldton Wax, to name a few. He gave examples of some seeds that were used for damper or as flavour enhancers.

Julie Weatherhead and her husband Anthony own and run Peppermint Ridge Farm at Tynong. It is all about growing bush foods, education, research and tours. You can eat delicious foods in their cafe and buy their plants and produce online. Independently, both Julie and Clarence expressed frustration over the fact Australia possesses a fantastic array of plants which for thousands of years supported a population of people. Yet, currently, so little is known about them. Melbourne University has conducted extensive into some of them. In the last few years scientists from around the world gathered in Melbourne for an in-depth presentation on *Eremophilas*, especially their usefulness medicinally.

Sadly, little progresses to a commercial level, except perhaps Eucalyptus and Teatree oil. In the meantime other countries are regularly helping themselves to the rich resources we continue to fail to act on.

Plant Breeders are putting International Plant Patents on some species. A Russian scientist recognized the Kangaroo Apple seed as containing a contraceptive agent. Silver Wattle is the basis for a French perfume. Fortunately, local interest is growing especially in the food industry. Who would have known the Mountain Pepperberry and the Myrtles contain up to 40% more antioxidants, vitamins and minerals including lutein (so important for eye health), than blueberries.

I bought a packet of dried Anise Myrtle and add it to stir fried vegetables. It has a sensational flavour.

Julie spoke about many more useful plants. For those interested in the subject, can I direct you to her book Australian Native Food Harvest which contains much theory, in addition to her tried and true recipes. Personally, as someone who loves to cook, I came away from the weekend amazed. I have not really considered using our bush foods. That will all change.

Finally the simply marvellous and precious Neil Marriot covered the topic of Grampians flora. The Grampians contain 30% of the states flora. There are 40 different ecological regions because of the topography and micro-climate, which house oftentimes site-specific

flora. There are grim stories of species going extinct, either due to land clearing, ignorance or fire.

Fortunately, as we know, WAMA, the Wildlife Art Museum of Australia, is well under way. The new concrete arts building is very evident from the road. The plan is to have perhaps all of the Grampians species growing in the Botanic gardens.



Grampians flora, recovering from the recent fires.

It is a thrill to hear Neil speak about some plants they have propagated, growing happily in the gardens, in not their normal micro-climate. Canopy cover, where ideal, is not yet well developed. Neil covered many of the Grampians-specific plants, all of which we would love to get our hands. Sadly, many are not available in nurseries. However, in the not too distant future, Angus Stewart will be making many of them commercially available.

It is very evident the biggest threat to plant species in the Grampians are the frequent fires and the take home is the knowledge there are any number of people, local and afar, like Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, working towards securing their ongoing safety and viability.

Editor's Notes:

You can read all about Julie and Anthony's Peppermint Ridge Farm here ... <https://peppermintridgefarm.au/>

A little information about Clarence and his work here <https://www.jiwah.com.au/about>

And, about WAMA here ... <https://wama.net.au/>

BENDIGO BUS TRIP REPORT Bruce McGinness

Nineteen intrepid APS Geelong members set off for an excursion to Bendigo in steady light rain, which didn't relent until late in the afternoon. After detouring around some low train bridges, we made it our destination with the aid of google maps. The first stop was Mandurang garden of Marilyn Sprague, who was very glad to see the rain, after a dry winter. 10 mm had fallen before we had arrived. Marilyn and her partner John purchased the 4.5-hectare property 47 years ago.

Surrounded by National Park on three sides, it is in a beautiful setting. While the bushland is open without huge forest trees, they have their fire plan worked out, with sprinkler systems and a fire refuge. A kangaroo and rabbit-proof fence allow them to grow plants that would otherwise be impossible. Large pots filled with water are dotted around the veranda and are used for growing aquatic plants, and for an easily accessible source of water to put out a spot fire.



After a cuppa and cake under the veranda, Marilyn took us for a tour of their extensive and diverse garden. Marilyn owned and ran the Goldfields Revegetation Nursery, working 7 days a week, until selling the nursery and starting a cut flower business on their property.



Marilyn grows a diverse range of native plants for cut flowers but is passionate about the local flora and has collected and propagated many unusual forms of local plants such as a double form of *Philotheca verrucosa*, orange flowered form of *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* and a white flowered form of *Prostanthera aspatholoides*.



Double-flowered form of *Philotheca verrucosa*

Marilyn is a skilled grafter of plants and has a wide range of grafted plants in the garden. The *Darwinia* were especially spectacular. Marilyn adapted the methods for grafting native plants from the instructions available for cutting grafts on the APS Victoria website. Plants in pots are in groups around the garden and are watered with a drip system fed from the dam, which is very low for this time of year. Especially when compared to Boxing Day 2023, when it overflowed and flooded the bottom paddock.



The region can suffer severe frosts. There were ten frosts in a row this year. To protect the cut flowers, Marilyn uses a product called *Floriguard*, which was effective in protecting most of the plants. Marilyn is pushing the boundaries by growing grafted tropical

grevilleas for cut flowers in the bottom paddock. They are not suited to her soil type.

On passing a bed of *Eremophila* in the bottom paddock, an interesting observation was made. When ash from a burned wood-pile was incorporated into the garden bed the *Eremophilas* planted into it thrived. Marilyn suspected the alkalinity of the ash aided their growth. Next stop was a raised bed full of *Ptilotus exaltatus* which had germinated after the Boxing Day rain,. Their emergence came as a pleasant surprise after the initial planting had senesced.



We followed Marilyn around her garden for two hours and her passion and knowledge amazed us. Her ability to continue to learn different ways of growing plants, and to be continually observant of how plants respond to different conditions, is why she succeeds in growing them to the high standards we observed.

The rain kept on drizzling down, but it didn't stop us. Indeed, I thought it highlighted the colours of the flowers and the landscape. As we toured the bottom paddock the yellow of the *Pomaderris* stood out. The orange of the *Banksia* and the reds of the *Dodonaea* were spectacular.



Marilyn grows *Leschenaultia* very well, in pots and in the ground, and again, the red and the blue flowers looked amazing. On returning to the house, we passed

Marilyn's propagation area where many members were sucked into the vortex of the nursery.



We thanked Marilyn and John for making us welcome and allocating so much time to us.



Next stop was the Bendigo Flower Show at Victory Christian College, in a large indoor sports stadium. APS Bendigo put on display of native plants growing in the region and a broad cross-section of other Australian plants. The Bendigo Field Naturalists and The Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens had interesting stalls. APS Vic book sales, as always, had tempting books and, of course, there were several plant sales benches. A pleasant hour was spent there until hopping on the bus home.



We acknowledge and thank Roger Wileman for contacting Marilyn to organise this trip; well done

Roger! A big thank you to our bus driver, Ade Foster, who tackled bumpy roads, rainy conditions, fogged-up windows, low bridges (resulting in unplanned for detours), and a dearth of open cafes, with skill and patience. We also welcome our new member Pip Williams who has been following Marilyn on Instagram and jumped at the opportunity to visit her garden. It is lovely to have you with us Pip.



GELEZNOWIA VERRUCOSA

By Ade Foster

One of the flowers I brought to the meeting was *Geleznovia verrucosa*. Pronounced, roughly, JELLezNOvia, it was first described by Ukrainian botanist Nicolai Stepanovitch Turczaninow in 1849. It was named for another Russian botanist, Nikolai Zheleznov.

It is a small shrub growing to about 1m. It has many, small, oval-shaped, green leaves with pale yellow margins. These grow from the yellow stems in some profusion. The older wood of the plant has sharp, warty bark and the specific name, *verrucosa*, means "covered with warts"

The yellow flowers are clustered on the ends of the stems in late winter and spring. They have quite large yellow bracts which become orange as the flower ages.



It is native to the sand belt country of coastal Western Australia between Perth and Kalbarri. I've seen

it germinating prolifically from seed after fires. It would perhaps be suitable for the smoke method of propagation in the garden. I'll leave that to the more experienced among you.



In the garden, *G. verrucosa* will need a well-drained position in full sun or light shade. It seems to be quite happy with longish dry periods. We don't get very heavy frosts in Belmont, and there seems to have been no damage done to my plant by frost.

It seems to be quite uncommon in a garden setting, and collection from wild populations has caused the plant to become increasingly uncommon in the wild.

I bought mine, grafted, I think, from Phil Vaughan at the plant sale about ten years ago. It was getting quite leggy and looking like it was on its last legs. So I bought another one and planted it right next to the first. The idea was to get the new one established before I condemned the old one to the green bin. The old one must have divined my intentions and has put on quite a show this year. I might just let him stay for another season 😊



Old and new *G. verrucosa*.