

Hakea fraseri

Australian Plants Society

Armidale & District Group

PO Box 735 ARMIDALE NSW 2350

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President's Message

Who would have imagined that Armidale and district would have had snow in November? After this imaginative hiccup, we are now back to hot, dry weather which means we have to think carefully about how we water and tend our plants. Questions such as: What sort of water do we use – tap, grey, tank, dam? How do we get the water to the plants – watering can, irrigation system (drippers, seepers or spray) – at what time do we water? Do we use inverted plastic bottles (or other mechanisms) as devices to reduce evaporation but ensuring that water gets to the roots of the target plants? How do we ensure that watering frequency matches the needs of all the plants? Do all plants have similar water requirements? Do we plant in garden beds or pots? Do we plant in groups which similar water requirements? What sort of mulch do we use - organic, sand, bark, stones, other? When and how do we prune? Growing Australian plants is not only a physical activity but is also a cognitive one – one has to find answers to such questions and then act confidently upon what you find.

But newly planted plants still become brown and brittle. I have recently had quite a few adopt this definition. Questions abound; poor watering procedures? Unsuitable position? Poor planting out? Nasty neighbour plants? Plus many others. One would expect “native” plants to survive in a natural environment – surely. This then leads to questions such as; “Native” to what area? (Consider the difference between ‘native’ and ‘indigenous.’) What microclimates are needed?

I suppose it's fine to think about all the factors that (probably) are important for a plant to survive, but I think I will go out and dig up all the dead ones for a mass burial and check them out to see what clues are forthcoming to help answer at least some of my previous questions.

Best wishes to everyone for the festive and New Year season – I hope you find many (correct) answers to the questions you raise.

Col

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS NEWSLETTER ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED at ANY TIME

Postal address as above or email – jrnevin @ northnet.com.au

GROUP INFORMATION

(group commenced August 1977)

We are a very friendly and helpful group who enjoy monthly meetings, garden visits and field trips to help members to enjoy the search for knowledge about our native flora. Most of all we range from raw beginners to others who have been at the game for many years - all willing to share their knowledge.

General Meetings are held at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except December, January, June and July) at The Tree Group Woodland Centre where a display of flowers is presented by members.

Old and new members and visitors are very welcome to these meetings and any outings that we organise.

Committee Meetings are held on the first Monday of the month at 7.30pm – see diary for where - members are welcome to these meetings too.

Annual General Meeting is held in February.

Solstice Function is held in June.

Wattle Day Function is held on a day closest to 1 September.

December Meeting is taken up by an end of year function, usually a BBQ or picnic.

ALL YOU NEED TO JOIN OUR GROUP IS A GREAT LOVE OF OUR NATIVE PLANTS

Cover: Background is adapted from a drawing of Hakea fraseri in Forest Flora, NSW

Newsletters by Email

For some time now your committee, at business meetings, has discussed the idea of sending out newsletters by email to those members who have this facility. The savings to the group include postage, paper, envelopes, printing and photocopying and then there are time savings of photocopying, collating, folding and posting about 100 newsletters. We already receive some of the newsletters that we exchange by email and it works very well. Please send an email, jrnevin@northnet.com or slow mail at PO Box 735 ARMIDALE 2350 to tell us how you would like to receive your newsletter after the AGM in February.

2007 ASGAP CONFERENCE IN NEWCASTLE, NSW 'Gums to Gullies, flora in Transition'

Registration forms are expected to go out in January 2007. If you would like to receive future registration information, and have not already filled out an Expression of Interest, send your contact details, (including Name, Postal address and email) to: APS, Newcastle Group, PO Box 76, Adamstown 2289 or email: c.gillard@bigpond.com

NOT TO BE MISSED

Check your label to see if your subs are due. A red dot means that you are overdue and two red dots mean that this is your last newsletter. Please ignore this if you have already paid your subs.

Annual General Meeting

Our next meeting on 20 February will be our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and once again we are looking for new people to take on some positions in YOUR committee. This is not an onerous job and any new people would be strongly supported by other members.

Following is a list of positions, some elected and some are voluntary: -

President, Vice Presidents x 2, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Officer, Auditor, Publicity Officer, Arboretum Coordinator, Markets in the Mall Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Newsletter Printer & Collator, Hospitality x 2, Supper Coordinator, Company Delegate, Monthly Plant List Collator, OH&S Officer, Environmental Officer, Northern Coordinator

We need some new ideas so if you can't see yourself taking on a committee position then at least put forward some of your ideas about meetings, outings, guest speakers or anything else to other members of the committee.

On another note our long standing members Bob & Jean McCaig are having a city change early in 2007 so this will be a chance for members to wish them well and thank them for all they have done for the group. Bob is also going to share with us their trip to South America.

2006 Armidale Bi-Centennial Arboretum Annual Report

Society members continued their commitment towards the development and maintenance of the Australian Plant Section of the Arboretum during the year.

Work at the Arboretum consisted of planting out, spreading sawdust, hand weeding, spraying weeds, pruning, watering and collecting rubbish.

Highlights of the year were the installation of a table and seating, towards which the Society donated \$1000, and the planting of *Wollemia nobilis*, a living fossil from the Jurassic period (200 million years ago). Since planting out the Jurassic pine has doubled in size.

Thanks to Armidale Dumaresq Council for the installation of the table and seating and their donation of the Wollemi Pine.

DETAILS:

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2004</u>
Total labour hours spent	79.75	136.5	120.5
Number of working bees	8	12	8
Number of volunteers	14	13	11
Number of plants	129	196	108
Approx wholesale cost of plants	\$580.50	\$733.50	\$440.00

Thanks to the following volunteers: P & J Rose, T Dennis, C & G Mulquiney, J & B Nevin, C & A Grigg, M Grigg, H Grigg, S Robertson, L Atherton, P Urbonas.

Pat Urbonas (Arboretum Coordinator)

From the Sheathers

Isotomes

Australia is home to ten species of the *Isotoma* genus. Five of them are native to New South Wales. Two are well known in cultivation.

Isotoma anethifolia is found in rocky areas north from Ebor. It is a perennial herb reaching a height of 40 centimetres. The stems are erect with light green, lobed leaves. Flowers have five petals that are fused into a tube about two centimetres long. They are white, sometimes with a pink tinge and perfumed. Flowers are carried for long periods.

Isotoma axillaris is known as the Rock Isotome. This species is found throughout New South Wales as well as Queensland and Victoria. Locally, the Rock Isotome grows in granite outcrops along the Point Lookout Road and in other places.

The Rock Isotome is also a perennial herb with similar foliage to *Isotoma anethifolia*. The flowers are tubular and about three centimetres long. They are pale to deep blue. The main flowering period is from September to May with sporadic flowering at other times.

Both species propagate readily from cuttings. Be careful of the sap as it may cause skin irritation.

Isotoma axillaris was cultivated, in England, in the 1800s. We saw plants for sale in a Birmingham market a few years ago.

Try both Isotomes in rockeries or native cottage gardens. Blue Banded Bees and Hawk Moths visit the flowers of both species.

Warren & Gloria

A Place to Visit

Planning a visit to Melbourne and looking for a place to visit – try the new Australian Garden at Cranbourne. Set on 363 hectares (not yet all developed) of remnant bushland. A spectacular design showcasing the beauty and diversity of flora from all around Australia on 26 hectares of which 11 hectares are now open.

This description in the Victorian newsletter of June 2006 whets the appetite well – ‘celebrates the colours, textures, scents, shapes and uses of Australia’s diverse plant life’.

‘As you walk around the garden you will be following the story of water in our land, starting in the desert – the Red Sand Garden – with its crescent shaped dunes, ephemeral lake sculpture and largely grey-foliaged plants. You pass the spiky leaves of *Doryanthes palmeri* – and suddenly you are in the Kimberley, as you then walk alongside the Escarpment Wall Sculpture, a massive and breathtaking 80 metre long rusted steel structure; the Rockpool Waterway, which bubbles out at the base of the escarpment, continues along its length and finally cascades into a deep pool. As you walk through this area, you will be able to draw ideas and inspirations from the five Display Gardens, which illustrate the diversity of our plants; the significance of water and how this influences plant selection and suitability; possible uses in home gardens, both now and in the future – and your children will be utterly delighted with the garden designed specifically for them, complete with its own ‘Hortasaurus’. A stroll up through the Serpentine Walk leads you to the Arid Garden where Rhagodias, Eremophilas and other plants too numerous to mention are found. Kids will love the Desert Discovery Camp as they unearth some of the buried secrets of the desert. Finally the Eucalypt Walk will lead you through a series of distinctive woodland rooms separated by narrow clearings; each ‘room’ demonstrates the beauty and distinguishing features of the main categories of eucalypts and explores our relationship with this iconic tree from a variety of perspectives. These areas are richly planted with other genera as well.’

John and I visited this recently opened garden (May 2006) and thoroughly enjoyed it – looking forward to seeing it again as it matures and the next phase of development -----Ed

To Prune or Not to Prune

On Sunday 26 November we all met at Gloria and Warren Sheather's home, Yallaroo, to glean from Gloria her hints about pruning that has taken her years of research and often puts the hairs on the back of Warren's neck on end. Have faith Warren we were all suitably impressed by Gloria's capabilities.

Wander around your garden often and tip prune as you go, especially young plants when planted out. By doing this you will make wonderfully shaped plants and produce plenty of cutting material for propagation of new plants later on.

First and foremost look out for birds nests and where the paper wasps have decided to build their homes – do not prune these bushes until another time.

If in doubt or a precious bush only tip prune very very lightly or another idea is to prune a couple of branches at the back of your plant to see how it recovers and go from there. You could also propagate your plant from cuttings before you take the gamble

Vary the pruning of same species that the birds like so that flowering is almost continuous eg Eremophilas.

If you do not mind not having your plant flower some times you can prune whenever you like but it is better to prune just after flowering, if you do not need any seeds to propagate.

Visit to Yarraman Valley

On Saturday 23 September, four of us visited Yarraman Valley at Tingha. Andrew Thompson had been on the block for several years and had become increasingly intrigued by the ecology of the area and was keen to put a name to many of the plants on his property.

We were surprised to find his block was adjacent to Vinnie Ford's block at Stannifer (a member) and shared many of the species of plants that we had found on Vinnie's block. The soil was granite based, freely draining, a creek running through with some swampy areas and granite domes.

We walked across the block with Andrew and found a large variety of species that we collected samples of, identified and labelled to be then photographed by Andrew later.

Some of these were:

Leucopogon nova-anglica, melaleuoides and muticus; Leptospermum microcarpum, polygalifolium, brevipes and microphylla; Hibbertia obtusifolia, villosa and species unknown; Wurmbia glandulosa; Mirbelia speciosa and pungens; Acacia pruinosa, fimbriata, viscidula, filicifolia, penninervis, implexa, leuoclada and leptoclada; Brachyloma daphnoides and saxicola; Brachycome stuartii and unknown species; Calytrix tetragona; Melichrus urceolatus; Goodenia rotundifolia; Stypandra glauca; Wahlebergia stricta; Diuris (donkey orchid); Caladenia ? caerulea; Petrophile canescens; Dodonea viscosa; Prostanthera nivea; Hakea microcarpa; Ozothamnus species; Kunzea parvifolia; Podolepis jaceoides; Pimelea linifolia; Cassinia quinquefaria; Lomatia silaifolia; Persoonia cornuifolia; Glycine clandestina; Hardenbergia violacea; Drosera peltata; Indigophera australis; Helichrysum apiculatum; Aotus subglauca; Patersonia sericea; Cheilanthes sieberi; Grevillea tritinata; Casuarina torulosa; Epacris microphylla; Bursaria spinosa; Macrozamia species; Callitris endlicheri; Zieria odorata.

There were many species of grasses and Eucalypts as well but not specifically identified.

Overall an interesting block with a diverse flora and not greatly degraded by agricultural activity. Thank you Andrew for the opportunity to inspect your block.

John Nevin

Wildlife Experiences in My Garden

Earlier this year whilst in my garden with trusty wheelbarrow and bucket of water I had stopped whilst observing a white-eared honeyeater in a tree nearby. I had observed this honeyeater in and about the garden on many occasions, seemingly not worried by my presence. I had to put a full bucket of water down on the ground in front of the wheelbarrow and I was standing behind. 'Whitey' (my name for my garden companion) landed on the edge of the bucket and had a drink. He (?) then flew onto the edge of the wheelbarrow. I was thrilled that this wild bird would deem me to be a friend.

Then some months ago I was in the garden with 'Whitey' in a bush nearby. I spoke to him and whistled and he flew around my head and back into the bush. I put out my hand and to my amazement he landed on my finger. I continued to see him each time I was out in the garden. Then in early October whilst bent over bucketing water into my aqua spike bottles with 'Whitey' in a bush nearby, he flew down, landed on my back and walked up to my shoulder. He then flew back to the bush and back onto my head and walked around my hair. I did not feel him pulling out any hairs but thought that might be why he was there. After that day I did not see him again for some seven weeks. Perhaps his nesting time was over!

These were truly moving experiences with local wildlife.

Among the many birds that visit my garden I recently, within one week, saw two birds I had not seen before – of course, they may have visited when I was not there! They were a scarlet honeyeater and a Rufus fantail. I only saw the honeyeater for a few moments in the red bottlebrush by the pond but the Rufus fantail stayed for two days. It is exciting to know that new birds have found the food in your garden.

Another recent experience was with the resident echidna (I know he is a resident because of the many diggings I see in the garden beds). I was looking out the lounge room window and saw the echidna walk over to the bowl of water I have on the ground for the birds and take a long drink – I had never thought about echidnas actually drinking water!!

Then this week I saw him again walking across the grass to the small pond. He walked into the pond and sat in the water near the edge for a few minutes (it was a very hot day). About an hour later I noticed him heading for the big pond where he took a long drink. I walked quietly to the other side of the pond to try to get a photo of him but he kept walking towards me and passed me so closely I couldn't get a photo. But the moment was worth more than any photo could capture.

Barbara Colledge

Uniting Church Garden

On 2 September a follow up planting completed the garden bed along the left hand side of the drive entering the church car park from Rusden Street. (see Oct/Nov newsletter). Those plants from the first planting on 25 November are growing well, survived the hail storm of 21 December and have had their first prune. Additional species planted in September were:

Leptospermum juniperina horizontalis; *Correa decumbans and reflexa*; *Westringia aff glabra* Wollomombi, *Prostanthera scutellarioides*, *Grevillea 'Pink Pixi'*, *williamsonii*, *juniperina* Booralong Creek, *lanigera* Miniature, *aquifolium* Lake Wartook, *acerata*, *confertifolia x sericea*, 'Grassfire', *bedgoodiana*; *Banksia marginata* Miniature; *Micromyrtus ciliatus*; *Dianella tasmanica*.

I hope to update on the plants progress during the year.

Pat Urbonas

Hailstorm 2006

The hailstorm on 21 December resulted in the death and injury to several hundred of my plants. Most affected were the small seedlings of mallee eucalypts, wattles, *Calothamnus* etc, which were just pulverised. Many pots and tubes were smashed and the surviving (so far) plants have had to be repotted into new containers.

The larger plants suffered defoliation and damage of varying degrees to trunks and stems. Many were damaged beyond salvation. Some eucalypts started to produce buds within a week, but with many plants its going to be a 'wait & see'.

The survivors have been pruned back to unaffected trunks and stems and then watered with half strength Aquasol and Seasol.

Whilst the hail wasn't as large or jagged as in 1996, it was the sheer volume that did much of the damage. In the garden, the mature Eucalypts fared the best, possibly because of their vertically hanging leaves, whilst large leaved exotic trees, including fruit trees, and wattles have been almost completely defoliated. The large casuarinas have also been badly affected. It will be interesting to see how the plants respond by next year.

The storm is an example of how important it is to spread rare or difficult to obtain plants amongst members. It only takes a catastrophe like this to reinforce this view.

This is an issue against the 'locking up' of plants as local catastrophes such as this can result in the loss of species and applies equally to bush plants, eg Wollomi Pine and Acacia 'Scarlet Blaze' that have been 'saved' by spreading them far and wide.

Pat Urbonas

Trip to Mount Norman

On Saturday 28 October we went to Mole Station for the weekend to pick up plants for the St Peter's Open Garden Weekend sale. A good body of our members, eleven in all, met at the Tenterfield Post Office at 9.45am. We then proceeded north to Wallangarra and then a few kilometres east to Mt Norman, situated on the southern end of Girraween National Park, just above Bald Rock.

David Caldwell was our guide and few of us had ever visited the area before. On a flat walk through Eucalypt woodland many interesting plants were noted including *Conospermum burgessiorum*; *Hibbertia elata*; *Leptospermum brevipes*, *minutifolium* and *flavescens*.

In one wet area there was an extensive colony of *Boronia microphylla* in full flower. As we proceeded we came across *Conospermum taxifolium*; *Comesperma retusum*; *Dillwynia phyllicoides*; *Aotus subglauca*; *Xanthosia pilosa* (form B) and a most beautiful *Dodonea* – *Dodonea hirsuta*.

The granite track then gave way to extensive sheets of granite with a diverse flora growing on it reminiscent of the Torrington area.

The flannel flowers (*Actinotus heliantha*) were in full flower with extensive displays of *Lomandra longifolia* in flower.

Also plentiful was *Leptospermum novae-anglica*; *Keraudrenia hillii*; *Hemigenia cuneifolia* (in flower, unlike the specimens at Severn River Nature Reserve); *Calytrix tetragona* – a little past its peak but giving an excellent display of its awns.

We found the rare large leafed *Leionema ambiens* in flower; *Homoranthus papillatus*; *Philothea myoporoides* ssp *epilosus*; *Pimelea linifolia*; *Laxmannia compacta*; *Callistemon pallidus* in full flower; *Thelionema grande*; *Kunzea obovata*, the rare *Bertya glandulosa*; *Stypanandra glauca*; *Prostanthera phyllicifolia*.

Growing on the edge of the granite sheets was an impressive stand of *Eucalyptus scoparia* undergrown by *Zieria arborescens*. *Ghania sieberiana* gave its usual showy display with red seeds prominent. Many plants of *Kunzea bracteolata* were beginning to break into flower.

The granite then became steeper, thinning out the group with some peeling off to inspect more of the lower growing plants and look at the scenery.

Those of us who persevered had lunch just below the summit and were pleased to find several large specimens of the rare *Prostanthera petrea* growing near our picnic spot.

Walking around the summit we had a good view of a peregrine falcon nesting on the summit and showing its displeasure at our arrival with its characteristic alarm call.

Plants on the summit were *Oxylobium arborescens*; the rare *Boronia amabilis*; *Kennedia rubicunda* and Blueberry Ash.

Rather than retrace our steps, we cut across to another granite dome, finding on the way *Chloanthes parviflora*; *Billardiera scandens var scandens* and *Pultenaea hartmannii* (Stanthorpe pea).

On the next dome we surprised a family group of five feral goats who viewed us from afar with cautious suspicion. We found a stand of the rare mallee eucalypt, *Eucalyptus codonocarpa*.

We then found the track going back to the picnic area where we regrouped, swapping stories of our finds over afternoon tea before heading off to Mole Station for the night.

Thank you David for showing us a most interesting and floristically diverse area we had not seen before.

John Nevin

Winter Trials!

Winter 2006 was a bit of a shocker with long periods of dry and severe frosts, including a week of temperatures between -5°C and -8°C and a low of -10°C.

I was involved with the selection and planting of species for Brian Carter's garden in Alexandra Street (Girraween area). Whilst not the coldest place in Armidale, it did highlight the difference morning sun and microclimate (brick walls, shrubs and trees) can make to the survival of plants in our harsh conditions. Society members often ask for advice on frost hardy plants and their survival can depend so much on microclimate. The following are some examples:

Exposed front garden:-

- Grevillea acerata* – unaffected
- Philotheca (eriostemon) myoporoides* – burnt to the base but re-shooting
- Correa decumbans* – burnt to the base, but re-shooting
- Baeckea crassifolia* – burnt to the base but re-shooting
- Stenanthemum scortechenii* – unaffected
- Correa alba* “Western Pink Star” – dead
- Melaleuca decussata* Dwarf form – dead
- Brachycome multifida* – dead

Morning sun protection:-

- Boronia megastigma* – unaffected
- Boronia* ‘Lipstick’ – unaffected
- Crowea exalata* forms – unaffected