

THE AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

THE STORY

OF THE

CENTRAL COAST GROUP

COMPILED BY

**Alan Hodge
August 2005**

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PREAMBLE:

The following is an attempt to trace the development of the Central Coast Group of the Australian Plants Society from its revival in 1972. To call it "**The History of the Central Coast Group**" is perhaps too pretentious; after all, it is a mere 30 odd years since that date, too short a time-frame, really, to talk about "history". Therefore, I have given this paper the title of "**The Story of the Central Coast Group**".

I was impelled to undertake the task by the realisation that there are now no surviving members of that small original band who, in April 1972, re-animated a local chapter of the then Society for Growing Australian Plants. As each year goes by, the "elders" who formed and led the group in its early days have grown fewer in number, and their important collective memories have become lost to us. It was deemed to be important, therefore, to go back through the group's archives and relate in some form of connected narrative the developments that have led us to the group as it is currently shaped.

It must be acknowledged just how faithfully these archives have been recorded and kept by succeeding office-bearers of the group. The records of attendance at meetings, the minutes of proceedings and the past copies of monthly Newsletters all constitute a rich source of detail about the way in which the activities of the local group have been conducted in the past. This archival detail has been corroborated by consultation with long-term members of the group, and with other former office bearers who are no longer active in the group's affairs.

It has been a noteworthy feature of the Central Coast Group all through its existence, that it has attracted people to become members for a widely varying range of reasons; many only stay briefly as members; but many others throw themselves energetically into the group's affairs, in some cases, allowing this interest in the Plant Society to take over their lives. It is an unfortunate reality that in many cases, active, enthusiastic workers have "burnt themselves out" and gradually withdrawn from participation. This observation is no doubt true for most community organisations like ours.

The nature of growth on the Central Coast over recent decades has imparted a distinctive set of characteristics to our membership. For a long time, the district had an excessive proportion of holiday-makers or owners of "weekenders" on a rural, fruit-farming, timber-getting base. Then it became a dormitory community of lower-cost housing for workers who enjoyed the life of the coast, but found that commuting left them little time for involvement in community activities.

The area became attractive to couples in retirement; many converted their weekenders to more permanent homes; and others sold well in Sydney and bought here. The group gained a number of new members from this cohort, as they were motivated to create new gardens with more Australian native plants, in keeping with the nature of their surroundings, or as they became interested in learning about the flora of the local bushland.

Younger couples set up house in the area as an alternative to outer Sydney suburbia. Contemporary impulses for water-saving gardens or for environmentally attractive native gardens brought a number of these younger couples to join the group, but they often found it hard to balance growing families, commuting and other commitments with an involvement in a community group.

The group has been singularly fortunate over many years in the number of professionals in the field of botany and horticulture that have been attracted to take out

membership. This has been and remains a strong element in the ongoing support and encouragement that the Central Coast Group has always been able to offer newcomers.

In undertaking this project, I have been greatly assisted by current and former members who have readily supplemented my reading of the archives with their own recollections and insights from the time of their involvement in the conduct of the group's affairs. I express my gratitude to Anne and Peter Turner, Andrew Sourry, Rhys and Julie McGregor, Nola (Parry) McPherson, Dan and Jane Massey, Ross Worrall, Cathy Cole, Ian and Elaine Slade, Lorna and Don George, Audrey Taggart, John Connor, Barbara and Andrew Melville. I would especially like to thank Barbara for her meticulous and painstaking proofreading of the text.

The completion of this project is due in large part to the ready co-operation of these members. I have asked a number of these people to verify facts and events, but any opinions, conclusions, assumptions or assertions that are offered are completely my own.

This monograph has to be regarded as a work in progress, and any errors of fact or interpretation need to be identified and remedied.

**Alan Hodge
Wyoming
August 2005**

1. FORMATION OF THE GROUP:

The Society for Growing Australian Plants was formed in 1957, first in Victoria and soon afterwards in New South Wales. (In this state, the society was popularly known by the acronym **SGAP** until 1995, at which time the trading name was changed to **The Australian Plants Society**). Growth in the size of the membership was slow in the early years.

In the late 1950s, a tentative move was made by the late Lois Sourry and others to form an affiliated branch of SGAP (N.S.W.) on the Central Coast, but this lapsed during the 1960s for want of support. Lois was very active at the time in the Flora and Fauna Protection Society. A number of her colour photographs of local plants were sent to the then Editor Bill Payne for publication in the SGAP journal "Australian Plants." (see Appendix 1) Unfortunately, there are no detailed records in our archives of this earlier attempt to form a local branch of SGAP.

In early 1972, Mrs Ollie Parry, (from the former "Floralands" Native Nursery on Woy Woy Road, Kariong) extracted from the membership lists of SGAP N.S.W. the names and addresses of members resident on the Central Coast, and contacted these people and other likely interested persons, inviting them to a meeting on 21 April 1972. Nine people attended the meeting, and there were apologies from another seven unable to attend, but interested in joining. They voted to form the Gosford Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants.

At that time, Mrs Parry was the senior Vice-President of SGAP N.S.W. She was elected President of this new Gosford branch, and Stan Oakes Secretary/Treasurer.

Membership fees of the new Group (separate from fees for SGAP N.S.W.) were set at 0.50 cents per annum. The sum of \$20.00 had been held in trust by the N.S.W. executive of SGAP since the earlier failed attempt to form a branch, and this was made available to the new group.

At the meeting of 2 September 1972, it was decided to change the name from "The Gosford Group of SGAP" to "The Central Coast Group of SGAP", this name being deemed to be more representative, now that members were beginning to join from the Woy Woy peninsula, Wyong Shire and The Entrance.

2. EARLY YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT:

By the time of the first Annual General Meeting, held on 9 March 1973, there were 17 members present.

At this meeting, Irene Vale-Lane was elected President; she had joined SGAP in 1967 in Grafton, shortly before she and her husband relocated to the Central Coast. (See Appendix 2) She joined the Central Coast Group at its second meeting in May 1972. Don Baxter was elected the Secretary/Treasurer at this first AGM.

Mrs Ollie Parry was elected President of SGAP (N.S.W.) early in the same year.

These early years of the new group's existence were understandably the time for a number of "firsts" that were to set the pattern which succeeding generations of members have followed:

- On 2 September 1972, the name was changed from "Gosford Group" to "Central Coast Group" to better reflect the growing membership from the Woy Woy peninsula, the Entrance and the Wyong Shire.
- The first bushwalk organised by the Group was held on 4 February 1973, a trip to the Watagan Mountains.

- The first floral display was held by the Central Coast Group at the Gosford Show on 22-23 September 1973.
- The first raffle of a native plant at a general meeting of the group was on 18 August 1973. The plant was donated by Perce and Ollie Parry.
- The first approach to the group for assistance in establishing a native garden in a public space was from the Niagara Park Progress Association on 11 May 1973. (The plan was later abandoned in March 1976)).
- By the end of 1973, attendance at the last meeting for the year was 24.
- The first invitation to another district group was extended to the Newcastle Group on 18 August 1974. They were entertained at the Vale-Lane property in Kariong, and went for a wildflower ramble in the adjoining Brisbane Water National Park.
- The group's library was inaugurated on 19 May 1975, with four books donated by the then President Lyn Parry.
- The first visit to inspect members' gardens was held on 8 June 1975.
- Following a discussion on the merits of various local native plants, the Flannel Flower was chosen as the proposed group floral emblem on 19 May 1975 (later replaced by *Epacris longiflora* and *Callistemon linearis*).
- At the same meeting, it was decided to print and distribute to members a Newsletter, to be sent out every alternate month.
- Also on 19 May 1975, a set of Group Rules was adopted by the meeting. (No copy of these rules is to be found in the archives)
- Ian Slade was appointed as the first Librarian on 11 July 1975, to oversee the borrowing and return of books in the Group's growing library collection.
- At that meeting, members were urged to enter their gardens in the Gosford Spring Garden Competition.
- At the meeting of 21 September 1975, Ross Worrall, a Research Horticulturalist at the Department of Agriculture's Research Station in Narara, proposed that a propagation group be established.
- From 1 September to 4 September 1975, the Central Coast Group joined with Floraland's Native Nursery at Kariong in mounting a floral display of spring flowers in the Imperial Centre, Gosford. This was to be the first of many such involvements by members in displays of Australian native flowers.
- By the time of the last meeting of the year in November 1975, attendance was 45 members and visitors.
- From the start of 1976, plants were brought in to meetings for display on the Specimen Table, where they were identified and described by a "Steward", usually one of the more knowledgeable members of the group.
- On 21 March 1976, members mounted a working bee in the grounds of Henry Kendall Historic Cottage in West Gosford, to prepare for the planting of a native garden.
- On 2 June 1976, the Management Committee moved to formalize the arrangement that had been the practice since the inception of the Central Coast Group in 1972, namely, that general meetings of the group would be held every alternate month. On the other alternate months, business/committee meetings would be held, in order to keep business matters to a minimum at general meetings.
- In July 1976, it was decided to keep any proceeds from the sale of plants propagated by members in a separate account, and use these funds to purchase propagating materials such as pots, potting mix, peat moss.
- On 5 August 1976, Ross Worrall began holding a 12-week course of two-hour sessions one night a week at The Entrance High School on native Australian plants.

- For the last meeting of 1976, on 12 November 1976, 56 members and visitors were in attendance to hear Inez Armitage speak about Acacias of the South-east Region.
- At a Committee meeting in December 1976, it was proposed that the Central Coast Group produce a book on the flora of the Hawkesbury Sandstone area. (This project ultimately was abandoned)
- In October 1977, the group's bank balance stood at \$550.00; it was decided to invest \$300.00 of this in a fixed term account with the N.S.W. Permanent Building Society.
- On 11 November 1977, the group held its general meeting for the first time at the Horticultural Research Station, Research Road, Narara.
- On 6 July 1978, members personally propagated and donated 1400 tubes and pots of native plants, for sale at a street stall in the William Street Plaza, Gosford. The profit from this day was \$626.00.

From the above resume of initiatives that were undertaken in the first five years or so of the group's revived existence, it may be seen that, since those early years, the patterns that were set have largely formed the blueprint for the conduct of the affairs of the Central Coast Group. Members have come and gone; the administrative committee and group executive have changed regularly, but the meetings of the group and the nature of its activities have mostly followed the lead that was given in those years by our pioneer founding members.

It is informative to examine some of the changes in the group's meetings and activities since its inception.

3. CONDUCT OF THE GROUP'S MEETINGS:

3.1. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:

Until June 1976, meetings were held on alternate months.

The meetings were conducted from the outset as business meetings, with a reading of the minutes of the previous meeting, and discussion based on motions before the chair. In the minutes, there is regular insistence that the business part of the meeting should be kept short, in order to proceed with minimum delay to a guest speaker's presentation or a program of illustrated slides of native plants.

Such a regimen could not have been better designed to guarantee that any visiting members of the public would be unlikely to catch any enthusiasm for growing Australian plants.

On 2 June 1976, it was decided that in future, general meetings (without a business component) would be held on the second Friday of alternate months throughout the year, and in the other months, a business meeting would be held. This "business" meeting soon became virtually a meeting of the management committee of the group.

This was the pattern that was maintained until 1983. In August 1983, it was decided to hold the general meetings once a month from February to November, and celebrate an end-of-year Christmas meeting in December. There would be no meeting in January, when many members were likely to be away on vacation. Committee meetings would be held at other times.

This is the arrangement that, for the most part, has persisted until the present.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Central Coast Group was held on 9 March 1973. The election of office-bearers and presentation of an Annual Report and Financial Statement continued in either February or March of each year until it was decided on 13 February 1987 to transfer the Annual General Meeting to November of each year. In

1997, the Annual General Meeting was held in December in conjunction with the normal monthly meeting. This became necessary because the constitution of the State body required the financial books to be closed at the end of October, and it was proving too difficult to get the books audited in time for our Annual General Meeting.

In 2001, the Annual General Meeting was held on the first Saturday in December, and followed by the end-of-year Christmas Party. There was no normal monthly meeting in December, so as to avoid the congestion on members' social calendars at this time of year.

This is the system that has prevailed since that time.

3.2. MEETING VENUES:

The first meetings were held in members' homes, or in the tearooms at "Floralands" Native Nursery, Kariong. This was fine while the membership was small, but as it grew steadily, larger premises were needed. For some years, meetings were held in the Kariong Progress Hall, and from 10 January 1975, in the Presbyterian Lower Hall, Mann Street, Gosford. On 11 November 1977, the general meeting was held for the first time at the Horticultural Research Station, Research Road, Narara, and this has remained the regular venue for meetings until the present time.

In 1987, the new Visitors' Centre at the Horticultural Research Station was opened by the then Premier of New South Wales, Barry Unsworth. The group held its first meeting in the new venue on 8 May 1987. To mark this event, the group presented to the Station Manager Mr Bill Trimmer a framed print of *Banksia serrata* from the Joseph Banks *Florilegium*, to be hung on the wall of the Visitors' Centre. It features there still.

As an aside, it is curious that, as far as can be ascertained from reading archival documents, every meeting of the group has been held in the Gosford City area; the group has not held a single general meeting in the Wyong LGA.

This curious anomaly stands despite the early decision taken after only five months of renewed existence on 2 September 1972 to change the group's official name from "Gosford Group" to "Central Coast Group" so that both Gosford and Wyong communities would be included.

There have always been members drawn from both Local Government Areas. But even today in 2005, there seems to remain an implicit orientation of the group's activities to the Gosford City area. Only bushwalks in the Watagans, Munmorah State Recreation Area or Wyrabalong National Park at Bateau Bay or North Entrance have taken members into the Wyong Shire. I cannot find any single explanation why this geographical bias should have persisted.

3.3. PROGRAM AT GENERAL MEETINGS:

3.3.1. GUEST SPEAKERS:

The earliest meetings of the newly formed group commonly featured presentations of slides of native plants. The first guest speaker invited to a meeting was the then State President, Mr Duncan who, at the group's third meeting on 2 September 1972, spoke about the aims and activities of the Society for Growing Australian Plants. At the next meeting, Perce Parry from "Floralands" lectured on the propagation and cultivation of Waratah and Christmas Bush. The pattern of having a Guest Speaker was set by the end of that first year of the group's new existence; these guests often came from Sydney or Newcastle, were frequently persons with particular expertise in a specialist field, or a

knowledgeable local member with particular expertise or experience. Some of the regular visitors over the years were Frank Hatfield, Max Hewitt and Peter Olde from Sydney, Peter Vaughan and Paddy Lightfoot from Newcastle; Angus Stewart and Jeremy Smith from Gosford have given regular presentations over the years.

At the January 1977 meeting, Don McGillivray spoke about grevilleas. Don, a long-term resident of the Central Coast but never a member of this group, was later to publish his ground-breaking book on grevilleas in the early 1990s, complemented but not superseded by Peter Olde and Neil Marriott's three volume Grevillea Book in 1994.

On occasions, advertised guest speakers have been able to attract a larger than usual audience of outsiders to a general meeting, with a presentation of particular interest. On 12 November 1976, Inez Armitage, a well-known authority on the Banksias of South-eastern Australia, was able to attract 56 members and guests to hear her speak. Vic Cherikov, well-known authority on "bush tucker", attracted such a crowd to the meeting room at the Horticultural Research Station for the April 1995 meeting that there was standing room only. Vic had offered free tastings of a range of bush foods, and was understandably overwhelmed by this response to our usual advertising in the local press.

The group has always been singularly fortunate in the number of its members who were professionals, with academic training and/or professional involvement in the nursery industry or horticultural research. They have been, and continue still to be a rich resource of expert knowledge that the group has been able to tap into for guest presentations, and to act as Stewards on the Specimen Table. These members have always, without exception, been willing to share their knowledge and expertise with newcomers to the field.

It is worth recording the names of some of the persons who have contributed so much in this respect over the years; many of these have given guest presentations:

Perce and Ollie Parry	Ross and Lyn Worrall
Joan Doney	Greg Lamont
Milton and Shirley Larven	Jonathan Lidbetter
Lyn Parry	Jonathon Steeds
Ian and Elaine Slade	Angus Stewart
Nola and Brian Parry	Jeremy and Martin Smith
Thelma and Bruce Wallace	Catherine Daley
Mark Snodgrass	Pat Parish
Peter McIntyre	Robert Payne
Deidre Jinks	Rhoda and Harry Jeavons
Graham and Dot Camp	

In this connection, it is also necessary to record the names of some other members, not professionals in the nursery industry, but who have brought to our meetings an encyclopaedic knowledge of local flora and/or of nursery-grown native plants. The late Irene Vale-Lane was one such source of knowledge (and inspiration) to many newer members. Another is Isabel Boughton (previously Isabel Perry), with her vast knowledge of the flora of the Central Coast bushland. These two, like the others listed above, have helped to make the Central Coast Group rather special in the amount of specialist knowledge always readily available.

At times, a popular alternative to having a guest speaker was to feature a panel of five members who would introduce their favourite plant and talk about its characteristics and its cultivation.

3.3.2. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS:

Attendance at the inaugural meeting on 2 April 1972 was 9 people. A year later, 24 people attended, thus making it impractical to continue meeting in private homes. By 1975, attendance was regularly between 35 and 50 people, including visitors.

For special occasions, attendance was greater than normal. As mentioned in the preceding section, the meeting on 12 November 1976 was attended by 56 members and visitors to hear Inez Armitage speak about *Acacias*. When Vic Cherikoff came to speak about "bush tucker" at the September 1993 meeting, and provide samples of his lines of bush foods, a massive 110 people turned up, and filled the meeting room to full capacity.

Despite the influences of factors like inclement weather, holiday weekends and the relative drawing power of different topics and individual guest speakers, attendance continues to hold regularly to just under or over 50 people. Some visitors and guest speakers are surprised to find this number in attendance, but it is rare for a monthly meeting to be fewer than this regular number.

3.3.3. SPECIMEN TABLE:

From the beginning of 1976, members were encouraged to bring to the meetings specimens from their garden for display on a Specimen Table, so that members may either further their knowledge or just admire a particular species in flower. Up till then, with meetings being held in members' homes or in a variety of venues, this "Show and Tell" had only been a spasmodic feature of the general meetings. From 1976 onwards, the display of specimens has been a regular feature at meetings.

New members have been encouraged to bring in plants for identification and advice on growth habit. "Stewards" have taken on the role of helping in this identification and education; these have been people with wide knowledge of garden plants and local bushland, like Irene Vale-Lane, who served as Steward for many years, Brian Parry with his knowledge of nursery plants and Hawkesbury Sandstone flora, research horticulturalist Jonathan Lidbetter, Cath Daley with her encyclopaedic knowledge of all the best cultivars and Bruce and Thelma Wallace with their knowledge of the nursery trade.

This generous sharing of knowledge has grown over time to be a strong characteristic of the Central Coast Group; new members have always been able to tap into this vast store of accumulated knowledge, and thereby extend their own.

There was a period during 1994 and 1995 when it was difficult to conduct a satisfactory Specimen Table. The Horticultural Research Station was subject to an incipient infestation of the damaging Western Flower Thrips. As a condition of the group's continuing use of the meeting room, we were obliged to bring all vegetative material in a sealed plastic bag or envelope, having first sprayed the material with pesticide. Unsuccessful attempts were made to find a suitable alternative venue. The Thrips danger passed, and our Specimen Tables continued as before.

The number and range of species on the table have varied with the seasons; late summer and early autumn, when flowers are becoming scarcer in the garden, have always tended to see specimens dwindle in number. From late autumn into winter and spring, the number of species brought in by members is often embarrassingly large, in that a catalogue of the species on the table takes an unduly large amount of meeting time.

To help in identification, and to reduce the need to mention every single plant, members have been encouraged to label their specimens for the sake of the newer members, thus aiding them in the extension of their knowledge and identification skills.

At times, the species that are brought in are listed in the regular monthly Newsletter of the group, sometimes with a description of the plant and its characteristics. This was especially the case when Rhys McGregor was Secretary and subsequently President of the Central Coast Group; his regular assembly of detailed descriptions of the species exhibited on the specimen Table, and his helpful growing notes were a much-appreciated feature of the monthly Newsletter during his period of office.

The Specimen Table has continued to be a vital feature of the program at general meetings.

3.3.4. "WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?":

This segment at monthly meetings in recent years has been in response to a perceived need to give members a more formal opportunity to ask for help with a particular gardening problem, instead of leaving it up to them to approach one or other of the "experts". It was hoped that this specific chance to ask for help or advice would prove to be of more assistance to newer members.

The knowledgeable ones among the membership have always been more than willing to provide this help.

As long ago as January 1985, member Rhoda Jeavons wrote to the committee suggesting the inclusion of a regular Question and Answer session at each general meeting to service this need for members to get practical help; it has been included in the regular evening program at irregular intervals, becoming a regular feature during the early 1990s.

3.3.5. PLANT SALES AND RAFFLES:

From the earliest days, plants were either sold to members, or awarded as prizes in a raffle, as a way of raising additional funds. At times, the plants were donated; but increasingly, as more and more members became involved in propagating their own plants, tube stock from members' own hands became the norm. For a brief period in the 70s, members were invited to bring in plants for sale, and proceeds went into funds for purchasing propagation materials, but over time, the raffle at the end of each meeting became the norm.

The raffles have made it possible for members to acquire plants that are often unavailable in the nursery trade, and some quite rare plants were circulated by this means. For example, a number of members were able to acquire through the raffles tubes of the rare variant of *Parahebe derwentiana* (now called *Derwentia*) that was first gathered and brought into cultivation by Joan Doney in the 1970s. An especially good form of *Scaevola aemula* was introduced to the group by Wilma and Jim Thomson in the 1990s, and many of our members continue to grow and propagate this excellent form of ground cover.

Currently, these raffles regularly add some \$80 to \$100 to the group's funds at each monthly meeting, and go a long way towards helping to pay for the issue of the group's monthly newsletters.

Another fund-raising venture has been June Strong's ongoing donation of jars of homemade jams and pickles for sale at monthly meetings, the source of additional welcome funds.

3.3.6. PLANT OF THE MONTH AND BOOK OF THE MONTH:

At a Committee meeting on 6 January 1983, it was agreed to include a regular Plant of the Month segment at each monthly meeting. Members were asked to volunteer to give a short presentation about a favourite plant, usually one that was in flower in their gardens. This gave newer members a chance to contribute to the meeting, and often involved them in a little bit of research about the plant, its genus and plant family.

It has always been a popular feature.

Starting at the general meeting in March 1992, a Book of the Month segment became a regular feature of the program at meetings. This began as an attempt to make members more aware of some of the books available for consultation in the library, and over time has broadened to allow many members to introduce us to valuable or unusual books that they have encountered in their reading, as well as making us more aware of new publications when they first appear.

3.3.7. LIBRARY:

The Central Coast Group's library was initiated on 9 May 1975, with a donation of four books by Lyn Parry and, shortly after, Ian Slade was appointed as first Librarian 11 July 1975.

Funds were regularly allocated for the purchase of new additions, and the stock of books grew steadily. There have been periodic exhortations in the group's Newsletter, reminding members that the borrowing period is one month, and urging members to return books.

At the Annual General Meeting in 1986, Librarian Robyn Cummings outlined the operation of a new card system designed to regularise the borrowing procedures. Despite regular stocktakes and tighter control on borrowing, there have been inevitable losses of books over the years.

For many years, the successive librarians brought the books from their home to each meeting, an onerous and unwieldy system. After May 1987, the library was housed in a secure cupboard that became available for our use in the newly opened Visitors Centre at the Horticultural Research Station. This relieved librarians of the burdensome cartage of books to meetings.

The library had a massive expansion in 1989, when the committee voted to spend \$500 on new books. Most newly published books, at least those relevant to the general reader, and which pertain to native plants, are added to the Library as funds permit. It has continued to provide members, especially those who are newly interested in learning about Australian plants, with an invaluable source of detailed information, and continues to be regularly used.

3.4. GOVERNANCE:

Guidelines for the conduct of the group's affairs were approved on 11 July 1975, based on accepted rules for procedures at meetings. Unfortunately, there is no copy of these rules to be found in the group's archives.

In 1977, a questionnaire was sent to members with their monthly Newsletter, canvassing opinions about preferred activities and components of general meetings. Equally unfortunately, there is no copy of this questionnaire or analysis of the results in the archives.

In January 1979, a new constitution was drawn up by the executive of the state SGAP (N.S.W.) for ratification at the Annual General Meeting that year. However, the Central Coast Group had no constitution of its own by which the group's affairs were directed.

At a Committee meeting on 8 December 1993, then Secretary Rhys McGregor moved that a Group Constitution was needed, in order to formalize the conduct of the group's activities. He undertook to check with the State Office of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (N.S.W.) that such a constitution did not already exist, separate from the State's constitution.

President at the time Don George joined with Rhys and others in producing a draft constitution, which was circulated to members on 1 June 1994. After some delay in incorporating suggestions from members, and submitting the member-approved document to the State Council, certain sections had to be rationalized to make them compatible with the constitution of SGAP (N.S.W.). A final version was included for members' perusal in the May 1999 Newsletter as "Rules of the Central Coast Group" and approved by State Council in June 1999.

Meetings and activities of the Central Coast Group have been conducted in accordance with this set of rules since that date.

During 1993, as a by-product of these deliberations about rules and governance, it was decided to canvass members' opinions about the preferred ways of conducting meetings and the activities that members desired to participate in.

A draft questionnaire to elicit members' opinions and preferences was prepared by Committee member Alan Hodge, approved by the Committee and sent to members with the Newsletter in May 1994. A summary of the returns was given in the June 1994 Newsletter. Results of the questionnaire helped the then management committee to assess the extent to which the range of activities undertaken by the group was responding to members' wishes and preferences.

A briefer survey of members' unmet needs was made in November 1998.

In 1995 and again in 1996, members of the group's executive attended SkillShare Workshops in Collaroy, Sydney. These were conducted by State Council in order to involve district groups in sharing their experiences, problems and solutions. Rhys McGregor organised the 1996 workshop, and a number of our members presented papers.

During 1996 and 1997, SGAP (N.S.W.) agonized long and hard over the choice of a new and less cumbersome name for the society. *Ausplants* was a popular alternative with many, but this turned out to be already held by a commercial entity. The final choice was to declare the trading name for the society **The Australian Plants Society**, and this has remained the name to this present time. (It is not able to be shortened to the acronym APS, because this is the property of The Australian Psychological Society). From the issue of June 1997, our Newsletters and our letterheads bore the official name The Australian Plants Society - Central Coast Group and the official emblem of the State body, the Waratah, and our traditional emblem *Epacris longiflora* and *Callistemon linearis*.

3.5. FEES, FINANCES AND MEMBERSHIP:

When the group was re-established in 1972, the sum of \$20, held in trust by the State office since the earlier attempt to start a group in the 1960s, was paid to the newly formed group. A membership fee for the Central Coast Group was set at 0.50 cents per member. This was separate from the membership fee to join SGAP (N.S.W.).

This fee was increased to \$1.00 per member in May 1975 and to \$2.00 per family unit in December 1976. By 1986, the membership fees for the Central Coast Group were \$3.00 per household, while subscriptions for SGAP (N.S.W.) were a further \$15.00. It was noted in November 1983, when this latest increase began, that running costs for the group were \$3.50 per member, to cover printing, postage and sundry costs.

From the mid-1980s, all State and district group fees were rolled into one; from each of the various categories of membership fee, \$5.00 was returned to the district group for the running of its activities, and the remainder went to the State. This district group fee later rose to \$7.00.

The group's funds increased modestly and steadily during the 1970s, largely due to plant sales that were conducted in association with the various displays of native plants with which the group was associated. By 1977, the total was \$550.00, in 1985 \$1936.25 plus the library valued at \$300.00. The total funds available had increased by February 1988 to almost \$2600.00, as a result of ten years of annual displays and plant sales. By the end of 1994, the total balance of cash and bank accounts was \$4359.96.

After the membership fees for the Central Coast Group were incorporated within the fee structure of SGAP (N.S.W.), the proportion of the annual fee that is returned to the district groups has not been nearly enough to fund the activities of these groups as well as issue a regular Newsletter and pay for its postage. Every district group like our own has to pursue fund-raising activities, just as the Central Coast Group does. Some have done this with spectacular success; our more modest steady increases in funds over time have been largely due to these annual flower shows and sale of plants that have been a feature of the group's calendar since the very earliest days of its existence.

This excess of income over expenditure has enabled the group to support various ventures outside the group's immediate sphere of activities. SGAP and the Australian Plants Society have long supported financially the Burrendong Arboretum outside of Wellington. Our group debated for some years whether it too would devote money annually to support the Arboretum; in 1986, the committee voted not to give such support, but this decision was later rescinded, and an annual grant was made. It currently stands at \$800.00 per annum. The group has also made grants to the Australian Conservation Foundation, and supported the work of horticultural researcher and member of the group, Jonathon Lidbetter for research into the propagation of *Eriostemon australasius*.

From that modest attendance of nine at the inaugural meeting in 1972, membership of the group has grown steadily over the years; a decade later, the total stood at 40 paid-up financial members; by 1988, there were 57 households with membership, representing 75 members in all. The increase continued steadily during the 90s, and by 2000, there were about 160 members.

Although the total number of members has grown, the average attendance at meetings (as noted above under Attendance at Meetings) has remained static just above or below 50. It has been an ongoing problem to ensure that new members continue their interest and involvement. The "wastage" rate of cancelled memberships has been really quite high, and this remains an issue of concern to each succeeding management committee and executive. Thus far, there has been no single reason to account for this regular and substantial tendency for many new members to fail to find in the Society and the group's activities what they hoped to gain from their membership. They attend regularly for some little time, then their interest lapses, and eventually they do not renew their membership.

3.6. PUBLICITY:

In the earliest months of the Central Coast Group's formation, the membership grew by word-of-mouth information on its existence. As noted earlier, attendance at meetings grew from 9 to 17 by the end of the first year.

The group mounted its first floral display in the second year, on 22 September 1973 at the Gosford Annual Show.

Ever since, public displays of native plants and sales of potted plants have been perhaps the most effective means of publicizing the group's existence and activities. (see Flower Shows and Displays in the following section) At many of the later displays, brochures have been available to hand out to interested visitors, outlining the work of the Society and the activities of the Central Coast Group. Many new members have joined over the years after collecting information from a display or festival.

Local newspapers have agreed from time to time to carry community announcements detailing the date of a general meeting and the guest speaker who was featured, and to publish articles about growing Australian plants that were contributed by various members. At one time, it was proposed that paid advertising in the press might help attract more new members, but this was not deemed necessary. Currently, press and radio are both used to publicise announcements about monthly meetings in community information segments.

Various publicity initiatives have been proposed over the years, and some of them implemented, but not repeated; for example, - offering a \$100 cash prize for a local schools' essay competition as a form of advertising; or offering prizes for native gardens entered in Central Coast council garden competitions; or offering assistance to school principals on the Central Coast with their planning and establishment of school gardens featuring Australian plants.

All these ideas were tried, but have not continued as regular means of publicising the group's existence.

In the early 1990s, Shirley Kemble was instrumental in having the group's name and emblem incorporated in a range of T-shirts and windcheaters, for purchase by members as a form of promotion. Many members still wear these. Later, an embroidered pocket became available to be attached to tops as a way of identifying members as being part of the staff at Flora Festival time. These have all served as good publicity.

Local nurseries have agreed from time to time to carry (unpaid) advertising for the group's meetings, and local businesses like the Australian Geographic Shop have carried our brochures.

Local library branches have regularly agreed to carry notices about the Group's activities; periodic temporary displays have been mounted in library branches, and selected members have accepted invitations to speak to meetings of library subscribers, or at schools and community discussion forums and to various gardening groups on the Central Coast.

More than any other single venture in the group's annual calendar, our presence at the annual Australian Springtime Flora Festival at Kariang has potentially exposed the Australian Plants Society's aims and the Central Coast Group's activities to the widest public audience. Attendance over recent years has regularly been in excess of 60 000 visitors, and a large proportion of these has visited the group's display and sale of plants. Brochures and membership forms are available for distribution, and each year has resulted in at least some new members joining our ranks.

The most recent publicity initiative has been the establishment of a website (www.australianplants.org) for the Central Coast Group. Member Syd Fabri set up the

site, in conjunction with a small committee of interested members, and maintains it, with regular updates of Newsletters, details of Guest Speakers and forthcoming fixtures, information on local bushland and recommended tracks for bushwalks, and reproduces the Fact Sheets that have been produced since 2001 (see under Publications and Research).

The site attracts a growing number of Internet inquiries about the Central Coast flora and about specific Australian plants, playing an increasingly important role in the group's publicity machine.

4. ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES:

4.1. BUSHWALKS, HERBARIUM AND DATA BASE OF CENTRAL COAST FLORA:

The first bushwalk organised for the members of the newly reformed Central Coast Group was held on Sunday 4 February 1973, in the Watagan Mountains. Since that time, these outings have been a regular part of the group's program of activities, and have always proved popular.

They have served to give members a better knowledge of the local flora, especially in the different National Parks and bushland Reserves with which the Central Coast is blessed. Over time, many members have used the walks to improve their plant recognition skills, and to extend their knowledge of the distribution of the local flora in the wild.

The National Parks in the area – Brisbane Water, Bouddi, Wyrabalong, Popran and Dharug, State Forests like Strickland, Ourimbah, Olney, Wyong, and Reserves like the Munmorah State Recreation Area, Katandra Reserve, Rumbalara Reserve, Kincumba Mountain Reserve, Blackwall Mountain Reserve, Wambina Nature Reserve and Colongra Wetland have provided endless hours of enjoyment to parties of our members and their friends.

In the warmer months, when it is sometimes too hot for extended walks, the group has gone by ferry to Dangar Island in the Hawkesbury and to The Basin in Pittwater, and to Palm Beach and Barrenjoey Headland. There have been outings by launch on Tuggerah Lake and up Ourimbah Creek, and on Brisbane Water.

For some time in the late 1980s, Brian Parry conducted mid-week walks in Brisbane Water National Park in the area adjoining "Floralands" Nursery. Unlike the Newcastle Group, whose mid-week walks have remained a popular activity, these mid-week walks did not take on, and the monthly walks have most often taken place on the Sunday following the regular monthly meeting..

The group was fortunate to have Isabel Boughton (Perry) as bushwalk convenor all through the 1990s and beyond, when she shared with so many of us her knowledge of the best local wildflower rambles, and her vast knowledge of local flora.

It has been the custom at irregular intervals to invite members of other district groups of the society to join with the Central Coast Group on one of their walks, thus getting to know members of other groups and promoting some of the gems of the Central Coast flora.

As an extension of this bushwalking activity, Isabel, in partnership with Audrey Taggart, began a long-term, on-going project to create a Herbarium of specimens of flora of the Central Coast Region. From early 1993, specimens were collected (with permission obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and local councils), pressed and dried, mounted on chemical-free backing paper, and accompanied by a botanical description, seeds, and a photograph. Two duplicate sets of some 600 species have so

far been placed in the collection. One set was lodged in the Rumbalara Field Studies Centre, Donnison Street, Gosford (now called the Rumbalara Environmental Education Centre) for use by school students and the public, and a second set is housed on the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle.

These herbarium collections are an invaluable resource for teachers and students involved in ecological studies of the Central Coast Region.

Periodic mid-week collection walks have been held as an adjunct to the task of collecting specimens for the Herbarium collection.

As a further offshoot from the regular weekend bushwalks, a database of the flora of the Central Coast has been initiated, with a description of each species, when it flowers, and the locations where it has been found.

This initiative grew from a proposal in January 1993 by committee member Alan Hodge that a record should be kept of plants that were seen and identified during the monthly bushwalks. He developed a field study guide and began to list plants seen and their location together with a brief description. The list was extended by reference to all the existing flora lists that could be found, especially those undertaken by professional botanists and others that had been done as part of Environmental Impact Statements.

This database was taken over by Diana Dean in 2001. She has since continued to add further entries and to fill out the descriptions and locations. The complete list to this point is available on CD. The project is ongoing. There have been suggestions that the data thus being collected should be accompanied by precise satellite-generated bearings for each plant. Although it is possible that this may become a future extension of the database, there is a danger in providing such precise information about the location of some of the rare or endangered species that are listed in a database that is available for public consultation.

It may well be that future students of the Central Coast flora will find value in this database in comparing what plants they can locate in a general area, and comparing their findings with those plants listed in the group's database from an earlier time.

4.2. OUTINGS AND EXCURSIONS:

The first group outings, as indicated earlier, were day trips to areas like the Wattagans, Frazer Park (now Munmorah State Recreation Area) and Muogamarra Reserve at Cowan.

In September 1979, members went on a weekend camping trip to the Myall Lakes.

All-day coach trips have been arranged, with costs at times subsidized from group funds. Such attractions as the Newcastle Botanic Gardens and the Wetlands Centre, Shortland; Illawarra Grevillea Park at Bulli; Mount Annan Botanic Gardens and Mount Tomah cold climate garden; the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden and the Stoney Creek Range; Joseph Banks Native Reserve, Kareela; Native Plant and Flower Show, Rouse Hill; John Hunt's Native Garden at Annangrove.

Longer trips have been undertaken by coach to the Snowy Mountains, to Canberra as guests of the ACT District Group, to Burrendong Arboretum at Wellington, the Warrumbungles at Coonabarabran, Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve in the Blue Mountains, and to Barrington Tops.

4.3. PLANT PROPAGATION:

It was first mooted in September 1975 that a propagation sub-group should be established as part of the group's regular activities. The new sub-group flourished,

obviously responding to a common desire among the membership to learn how to become more adept at propagating their own plants from seed or from vegetative cuttings.

The popularity of the activity was fostered by the help and enthusiasm of professionals like Ross Worrall and others who generously shared their expertise.

Tube stock propagated by members was regularly placed on sale at the end of general meetings, and the proceeds donated to group funds. It became a regular feature at meetings to conduct a raffle of these young plants for group funds. In July 1976, it was decided to place the monies so raised in a separate account, and use the account to purchase propagating materials – plastic tubes, potting mix, peat moss, coarse sand etc – for the use of the propagators. This practice was later discontinued.

With increasing expertise amongst members, propagated plants were assembled for sale to the public at periodic plant stalls and displays. The first such stall was held in the William Street Plaza, Gosford in September 1977. This was such a success that it was repeated in September 1978; members propagated over 1400 plants, and these were sold for a profit of \$626. For the 1979 plant stall at the same location, members used Shirley and Milton Larven's nursery in Holgate for a potting-up day

In October 1983, a propagation table began to be set up at the end of general meetings, and the cuttings were placed in the mist tent at the Horticultural Research Station and tended by Ross Worrall. (Permission to continue this practice was withdrawn by Station management in October 1985).

By 1984, propagation- and potting-on days had become a major feature of the annual calendar, and the venue for plant stalls had changed to Marketown in Henry Parry Drive, Gosford. In that year, a team of members gathered at Floralands nursery in April to pot on over 1000 young plants. Gail Ransley was convenor of the display of native flowers and the sale of plants; they netted \$719 profit that year. Gail convened annual displays and plant sales at Marketown each year until 1988, with the regular injection of funds into the group's accounts from the profits of these shows. The propagation days at Parry's nursery were an established feature of the Central Coast Group's calendar, and the cuttings were 'grown on' in the mist tents at the nursery, and potted up later as tube stock.

This practice continued routinely under succeeding convenors Norman Kemble and then Cath Daley; by 1991, there were over 3000 plants potted up ready for sale, and cared for at Parry's Floralands Nursery. The profit from that year's plant sales at the Springtime Flora Festival at Kariong was \$1867.30.

In October 1993, Festival Convenor for that year Audrey Taggart reported that the propagated plants on sale at the Festival fell short of professional quality, though most of them had been sold. Nevertheless, 3000 cuttings were again put down at Floralands in December 1993. At the 1994 Flora Festival, the tube stock was again considered to be less than commercial quality, running the risk of giving the Society a reputation for producing less than excellent plants.

The practice of producing our own plants for sale was discontinued after this date; instead, tube stock was purchased from professional suppliers and on-sold at succeeding Festivals.

This decision needed to be made for commercial reasons and for the sake of the wider Australian Plants Society and its reputation; but it ended a decade of annual large-scale plant propagation. As a direct result of these propagation days and the potting-on days that followed, many new members were introduced to the finer points of plant propagation under the tutelage of professionals, and were thus able to develop their own expertise.

In more recent years, it has been necessary to mount special Propagation Days, when newer members could be given the opportunity to learn the skills. However, there seems not to be the same enthusiasm for propagation as prevailed earlier when members had a clear-cut goal in producing plants for the annual displays, and this must be a matter for regret.

Member John Randall has acted for a number of years as the Curator of the Seed Bank, held by State headquarters of The Australian Plants Society. He voluntarily cares for the stocks of seed of native plants, regularly receives and stores new donations of seed, and responds promptly to requests from members and others for seed stock. This is a service that is free of charge to members of the Society.

4.4. FLOWER SHOWS AND DISPLAYS:

The first recorded wildflower show on the Central Coast was held as long ago as 18-20 September 1885 in William Parry's Assembly Hall in Mann Street, Gosford, near the site of the present-day Hotel Gosford. Ferries brought visitors from Sydney for the occasion to see "the finest display of wildflowers and ferns ever exhibited in the colony", as it was described in the Sydney press at the time. All the plants on show had been picked in the wild around the district. There were letters published in the Sydney press, criticising the way native flora "was being wrenched from the countryside to provide for such shows", but Gosford was not mentioned by name. The criticism did not seem to be taken too seriously, at this time when the bush and its flora seemed "indestructible and never-ending in its vastness". (Reference: Historical Records of the Central Coast of N.S.W. – Agnes Fagan's Diary 1885, published by the Gosford District Local History Study Group 1991)

Participation by the newly re-formed Central Coast Group in flower shows and displays was integral to the group's calendar from its very early days. It may well be maintained that of all the activities that members of the group have engaged in, these shows and displays are by far the ones that have laid most claim on members' energies and enthusiasm.

The group's first display of native plants and wildflowers was held 22-23 September 1973, as part of the Gosford Show, and repeated in 1974. The group participated regularly in exhibitions held by the state branch, for example, in 1976 at The Kings School, Parramatta and at those held at Macarthur Girls' High School from 1978.

In September 1975, the Central Coast Group joined with Floralands Native Nursery in mounting a display at the Imperial Centre, Gosford.

On its own account, the group held a display and sale of plants in the William Street Plaza at the end of September 1977. All the plants sold had been propagated by members themselves. (See above Propagation). In 1978, members supplied 1400 plants for the stall, and their sale realized \$626 profit. For the 1979 stall, tube stock was purchased and later potted on for sale in addition to members' own propagated plants.

In September 1982, members of the group helped Brian Parry pick wildflowers from the land at and behind Parry's "Floralands" Native Nursery, to send to the SGAP Flower Show being held at Peakhurst. Parrys had long been licensed pickers of local wildflowers. In 1947, Perce and Ollie Parry had in fact been granted Licence No. 1 by the N.S.W. government to pick and sell native flowers gathered in the wild. All blooms were required to carry a tag such as we see now on native orchid and tree ferns on sale in nurseries.

As detailed in the previous section, Gail Ransley was the convenor in September 1984 of the group's first of a series of flower shows to be held at Marketown. Members

propagated over 1000 cuttings at a working bee; these were later potted on and grown for sale, netting a profit of \$719. Next year 1985, the profit was \$882 and a raffled potted plant netted \$151.

This pattern was by now established as a regular and major part of the group's calendar. Each year, a propagation day was held in early summer at Floralands. The cuttings were held in mist tents at the nursery, ready to be potted on as tube stock when they were ready in the following March. Nursery staff tended this tube stock until the display and stall in the September. By 1986, the number of tubes for sale had grown to 1800, and profit that year was \$1301. These propagation and potting-on days would regularly involve some 20 to 25 members, including a number of new members each year, who used these opportunities to develop their own propagation skills under the guidance of experienced and skilful propagators.

In May of 1987, the group was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the Australian Springtime Flora Festival. The first Flora Festival was held at Mount Penang in September 1987, and the group planned to make a modest token participation a week after its regular flower show and stall at Marketown. In the event, this usually successful Marketown show suffered from poor patronage due to opening of the newly completed Erina Fair complex. The Committee decided that future displays and sales of plants would be better held in conjunction with the Springtime Flora Festival. Our involvement has continued until the present.

For the 1988 Flora Festival, Norman Kemble acted as convenor. In August 1989, a Flower Show was also held at Bay Village Shopping Centre at Bateau Bay in order to vary the venue. Irene Ho was convenor, but despite the energetic participation of a number of our members, the results were disappointing. The group's participation in the Flora Festival was suspended that year for want of support in consequence of the pressure on members' time for participation at multiple festivals.

Cath Daley assumed the convenor's role for a very successful show in 1990, when 3000 cuttings were grown on at Floralands. In 1991, profit from the sale of plants reached \$1867.30.

Other convenors since that time have been Julie and Rhys McGregor, Gwynne Holdgate, Thelma and Bruce Wallace, Audrey Taggart, John Connor and Elsie Bartlett. Dot and Graham Camp have regularly helped design the layout for the display, and provided plants and landscaping materials, and Cath Daley and Thelma and Bruce Wallace have supplied professional expertise.

In 1994, the tube stock that was propagated for sale at the Flora Festival was held to be of inferior quality, and had the potential to put the reputation of the whole Society at risk. It was therefore decided that in future years, all tube stock and potted plants for sale would be bought in from wholesale suppliers, and sold on at retail prices with a modest mark-up on each item. This has continued to be the practice until the present.

This change of policy has had a number of effects: the regular annual propagation days and potting on days would no longer take place, and newer members were denied these opportunities to learn propagating skills. The potential profit margin from the sale of tube stock propagated by members was to fall after 1994; however, since that year, the Flora Festival Committee has granted our group the use of a large marquee at no cost, thus helping to offset the drop in profit from sales. The energies and enthusiasm of members would no longer be summoned for the propagation days; instead, these energies have been called on to staff the display and sales tables over the four days of the Festival. In each of the recent years, over 50 individual members have participated on the Festival roster, many of them serving in numerous time-slots.

This sale and display of plants turned into quite a large-scale operation, requiring a lengthy planning period and engagement of the skills and enthusiasm of a large number of members. As each year has come and gone, the group acquired more equipment in the form of display stands, countless jars for holding display specimens and a growing range of visual materials to serve as background in this large marquee. Rhys McGregor assembled a large selection of colour photographs of local flora and assorted group activities, many of them from the collection of long-term bushwalk convenor Isabel Boughton (Perry). Rhys spent untold hours having these enlarged, then mounted and laminated in a long-lasting form that has been used over and over in the years since.

Individual members had always generously undertaken to store group resource materials in their own homes or businesses. In later years, the volume of equipment made this volunteer storage too onerous, and the group was forced to lease storage space for this equipment, at considerable expense.

A different kind of display was mounted in 1994 for the Australia Day celebrations on the waterfront in Masons Parade, Gosford on 26 January. Members supplied plants from their own gardens, as specimens or in floral arrangements, and other plants that they had propagated were on sale to the public. This effort was repeated in 1995.

Also in 1994, our group participated in the Australian Conservation Foundation's Greencoast Environmental Festival that was held at Kincumba Mountain Reserve, with a display and sale of Australian plants.

In August 1995, a similar display and sale of plants was mounted as part of the opening ceremony of the Rainforest Walk in a regenerated section of Ourimbah Public School. Barbara and Andrew Melville convened this display. Members Deidre Jinks, from the Sydney Rainforest Centre at Ourimbah, and Peter Clifford, from the Red Gum Forest regeneration group at North Entrance, acted as consultants to the school.

In November 1999, Audrey Taggart led a team that set up a visual display featuring native plants at the Australian Reptile Park at Somersby, as part of their month-long "Festival of Wildflowers". It attracted a deal of favourable comment.

The foregoing account of the flower shows, displays and festivals in which the Central Coast Group has been involved over the last 30 years provides some small indication of the man-hours that this involvement represents on behalf of the cause of promoting Australian plants. It has been the group's major vehicle for publicising its activities, and helping more people to grow native plants. These shows enlisted the energy of many, many members over the years, but over and above the aim of promoting native plants, the major direct benefit to the group has been the funds that have been generated by the sale of plants. This single source of income has been the main contributor to the present healthy state of the group's finances and has made it possible to pay for the issue of monthly newsletters.

As a secondary benefit, these flower shows and festivals provide an opportunity for members who participate to form ever closer bonds of friendship with other members, especially with newcomers to the group.

4.5. GARDEN VISITS:

These have been an irregular feature of the group's scheduled list of activities.

The first such visits were held in June 1975, with a day spent in members' gardens at Pearl Beach, with a picnic lunch between.

It became regular practice when members entered their gardens in local gardening competitions to arrange a visit to prize-winning gardens. One such garden was that of Betty and David Price at McMasters Beach; their conversion of a block of grazing land

into a landscaped native garden won first prize in the Native Section of Gosford City Council Spring Garden Competition in 1994. It became a showplace that many of us have enjoyed visiting a number of times. Theirs was one of the places included in the list of show gardens in the National Open Garden Scheme over a number of years.

On occasions, members with larger gardens and bushland blocks have opened their homes to provide hospitality to members of other visiting groups, combining a morning tea, a luncheon venue and a pleasant garden to stroll in. The popularity of this activity has waxed and waned over the years. One has the impression (but no concrete evidence to substantiate it) that garden visits have rather taken a secondary place in the calendar as other activities and concerns of the group have more completely filled up members' available free time.

4.6. PUBLIC NATIVE GARDENS:

There have been periods of intense discussions, earnest proposals and occasionally, energetic and enthusiastic working bees, all directed at creating public garden spaces on the Central Coast that feature native Australian plants. The group's first initiative in this matter was in 1976, when a working party prepared garden beds around Henry Kendall Cottage in West Gosford for the Gosford Historical Society. A number of shrubs and trees were supplied and planted by working parties from the group, and tended for some time by then Secretary Barney Waters.

During 1980, Gosford City Council had proceeded to develop Rumbalara Reserve on the top of Mount Mouat above the Gosford CBD. Joan Doney, in her capacity as president of the local branch of Greening Australia, had been involved in helping to plant native trees and shrubs on this somewhat unforgiving hilltop terrain, helped by members of the Central Coast Group. There is a plaque in place, testifying to Joan's efforts, and some of the plantings from that time have survived and thrived, but many were lost due to inadequate after-care. (See Involvement in Conservation for greater detail).

A sub-committee was established by the group in 1982 to select sites suitable for a public native garden. Its recommendations were: around the community centre on the hill above Marketown, behind the Henry Kendall High School site on the slopes below President's Hill Lookout, and the small undeveloped area on the east side of Gosford Railway Station (before this was redeveloped in the course of reconstruction of the Station and its surrounds as the present-day Burns park).

A General Meeting of the group in June 1982 accepted the third alternative as being the most suitable for giving the best publicity value for native plants, and negotiations began with the State Rail Authority. Through 1983 and 1984, the committee made strenuous representations to the State Rail Authority and to Gosford City Council on this project; plans were drawn and lists of suitable plants were formulated. The matter of funding remained an insuperable barrier, and after many fruitless meetings and frequent correspondence between all parties, the scheme was shelved in frustration. There were attempts to revive this project in November 1986, but these were short-lived.

In November 1984, a proposal was discussed at a general meeting for the dedication of land at Mount Penang, Kariong for a possible Botanic Garden. This idea was not developed, and it is ironic to think that it has taken another 20 years and a massive allocation of State Government funds to bring the Mount Penang Parklands into being.

In 1986, the group was made aware by visiting speaker Ray McGrath of the weed infestation that was taking over a piece of almost pristine bushland in Cappers Gully on the hillside above Radio 2GO in Henry Parry Drive, East Gosford. It was decided to

approach Gosford City Council with a request to be allowed to undertake maintenance of a section of the gully. Subsequently, Secretary Peter Turner organised a series of working bees to clear some of the weeds, and plantings were made on the lower slopes of that undeveloped southern face of Mount Mouat. (See Involvement in Conservation for more detail).

In 1987, the group became involved in planning for the development of plantings of native shrubs and trees in the grounds of the soon to be completed Laycock Street Theatre in North Gosford. Norman Kemble, who had previous experience designing native gardens in Melbourne, offered to prepare a landscape plan. His plan was accepted, and during 1988, working bees from the group completed the planting. A roster of members was set up for watering and maintenance of the new gardens. There were some early plant losses, replacements were installed, but it became difficult to continue to find volunteers for ongoing unpaid maintenance.

Residents of a retirement village in Niagara Park approached the group about helping to create a native garden under some large trees in the village. Norman Kemble drew up a ground plan, with lists of suitable plants and an estimate of costs. The Department of Housing was unable to provide finance for the project, so it was abandoned.

Clarence Ormsby, on behalf of the Multicultural Youth Project, asked the group to help with plantings beside the creek at their Ourimbah Project. The group purchased and planted several trees. After initial damage during a storm, these were later bulldozed by a university contractor working on the adjoining site. The whole project seems to have subsequently stalled.

While there have been fewer initiatives in recent years for the group to be involved in public native gardens, it is no doubt a fact that the advocacy by the Australian Plants Society of the use of Australian flora in public areas has helped change the policies of bodies like the Road Transport Authority and local government bodies.

4.7. INTER-GROUP EXCHANGES:

Since that early visit from the Newcastle Group on 18 August 1974, the Central Coast Group has exchanged visits with and from other district groups at irregular intervals. These visits have never been an integral part of the annual calendar; thus, they have never become so institutionalised as to be held with regularity. They have tended more to be the initiative of individual members of the management committee through contact with other groups.

The visits have most often been with neighbouring groups, like Newcastle or North Shore, or for special occasions such as visits to regional gardens or invitations to share in local bushwalks or to check the progress of experiments with long-stem planting in Katandra Reserve (see Involvement in Conservation).

The recent state "get-together" meetings of regional groups, held so far in Newcastle and in Nowra have brought district groups into a closer contact and an occasion to share their common interests.

4.8. GARDEN COMPETITIONS:

From the earliest days of the group's revival on the coast, members were encouraged to enter regional gardening competitions, especially the annual Gosford and Wyong Spring Garden Competitions. The group ran its own garden competition in 1976, and the winner was Vern Frampton.

In the late 1970s, the Central Coast branch of the N.S.W. Nurserymen's Association decided to promote a native plant that was representative of the Central Coast. They chose a grevillea that had originated in Vern Frampton's garden in Wamberal. *Floralands* had been selling it for some years under the name "Frampton's Hybrid". (It was renamed *Grevillea "Coastal Glow"*, and a pictorial label was printed.) After it was propagated in some quantity, various nurseries around the Central Coast purchased the tubes and subsequently sold the stock. It is widespread in many local gardens. (Source: Ian Slade)

In 1978, the committee wrote to Gosford City Council recommending that a new section should be added to the Spring Competition of that year specifically for a native garden. Brian and Nola Parry, Joan Doney, Irene Vale-Lane, Milton Larven and Norman Kemble were some of the group's members who acted at various times as judges for local competitions.

Betty and David Price won first prize in the Native Garden section at the Gosford City Council Spring Garden Competition in 1994, and the next year, the Kemble and Austen families won first prize in the "Good Neighbours" Section of the same competition for their new jointly developed garden at Kincumber. Also in 1995, Wilma and Jim Thomson won the Native Garden Section at the Wyong Council Spring Garden Competition, as well as the prize for best large garden managed without paid help. They won awards again in 1996 and 1997. In 1997, Marea and John Duruz won an award for a new native garden in the Wyong Council Garden Competition.

It would seem that in more recent years, there has not been the same enthusiasm for entering gardens in these competitions, as more and more people change over to growing Australian plants and there seems no longer to be the same novelty value in showing a native garden. There may well be other contributory reasons, like the shortage of assured water supplies and the increased costs of using reticulated water for a garden, or the increased incidence of both parents in a family working full time.

4.9. ADVICE AND HELP TO COMMUNITY GROUPS:

Since the revival of the Central Coast Group, there have been many requests for assistance with advice and labour from community organisations and especially from schools. Such requests often came to the group through the association of one or more of its members with the particular organisation.

This was the case with the first such request for help in 1973 from the Niagara Park Progress Association. Schools that have enlisted help from the group include East Gosford, Chertsey, Woy Woy, Wyoming, Central Coast Grammar, Ourimbah, Central Mangrove.

Surplus plants that had been propagated by members were at times donated to schools, and plants were donated to the Crommelin Arboretum at Pearl Beach in its early days, and again following the disastrous bushfire there in December 1990.

During 1995, Cathy Cole spent two hours a week as volunteer at Gosford High School, helping to teach elective students propagation skills.

There were working bees at the Everglades Swamp in Woy Woy, and as outlined above (see Public Native Gardens) at Henry Kendall Cottage, West Gosford, in Cappers Gully, and at the Laycock Street Theatre, North Gosford. The group joined with other community groups and Wyong Council in September 1992 in work on the Ridgeway View Estate at Tumbi Umbi.

4.10. PROMOTION OF NATIVE PLANTS:

Throughout its 30 years of existence, the Central Coast Group can fairly be said to have amply fulfilled this stated aim of the Australian Plants Society, namely to promote the growing of Australian plants. The group's presence at displays and festivals (See above under Flower Shows and Displays) has been prompted by this desire to promote native plants, at the same time earning funds for the conduct of the group's activities.

The group's readiness to accede to requests for advice and help from community groups, schools and progress associations (see below) have helped in this promotion.

Radio and press publicity of the group's meetings and activities have been enhanced by the willingness of the press to publish feature articles submitted by members about native plants and their cultivation. These articles have been a frequent but spasmodic part of fulfilling the aim of promoting Australian plants, with items submitted by such members as Irene Vale-Lane, Greg Lamont, Joan Doney, Norman Kemble, Peter Turner, Gary Rowe, Cathy Cole and Bruce Wallace.

As part of the same aim, the group has undertaken to lobby different organisations on the issue; Rhys McGregor and Shirley Kemble made representations to Supermarket chains and to florists about falsely marketing floral arrangements as "Australian Natives" when they included exotics such as proteas, sometimes having to combat the argument that being Australian-grown, proteas qualify as "natives".

In the lead-up to preparations for the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Rhys McGregor had correspondence and meetings with Event Co-ordinator Ric Birch, in company with members of the Australian Native Flower Growers Association, to try to ensure that Australian plants would feature in the landscaping of the Olympic site and in the winners' floral bouquets. Norman Kemble also had correspondence with the Olympic Committee on the same issue.

4.11. PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH:

As the group became more firmly re-established, and the pattern of regular activities and interests was accepted by the membership, a range of ideas began to be put forward for involving the group in possible publication of data on the flora of the Central Coast, and even in conducting its own research projects.

In December 1976, it was proposed to the management committee that the group initiate a project for publication of a book about the flora of the Hawkesbury Sandstone. The state committee of SGAP and some other district groups were contacted, and some of these offered to become involved. Subsequently, other initiatives elsewhere made this worthy project less urgent, and the anticipated financial strains on the small Central Coast group made its completion unlikely.

For the next decade, there was no attempt at further publication by the group; instead, its energies were more involved in propagation, in flower shows and in promoting the growing of Australian plants through its display of flora and its sale of potted plants and tube stock.

In 1986, ex-President Gary Rowe undertook to compose a list of "easy-to-grow" plants suitable for the Central Coast, and to publish this in the Newsletter, for the benefit of newish members.

It became part of a kit that was presented to new members when they took out membership, together with a brochure about the Society and the group. This kit was updated and improved several times over the next few years.

In February 1989, the committee encouraged members to support a planned project by Brian Parry to produce a brochure about growing Australian annuals. A year

later, Nola and Brian Parry published their book "Cottage Gardening with Australian Wildflowers", with line drawings by Irene Vale-Lane.

During 1996, on the initiative of President Audrey Taggart, work began on a project to produce a brochure that listed reliable Australian plants that were suitable for Central Coast conditions. To this end, selected members were asked to provide a list of their ten favourite reliable shrubs or trees. A committee collated these, and under the guidance of Education Officer Pat Parish, an initial list was drawn up and member Syd Fabri devised a table giving information about the plant, colour of the flower, preferred growing conditions and its height. A full list of members' favourite plants was published in the Newsletter.

The following year, Dot Camp took over the project and to complement the master list, commissioned various members of the group to write an accompanying fact sheet on a range of topics:

- Getting started
- Central Coast Plants for the Garden
- Attracting Wildlife to your Garden
- Coastal Plants
- Australian Plants for Fire-prone Central Coast Gardens
- Container Plants
- Ferns for Central Coast Gardens
- Acacias for Central Coast Gardens
- Orchids for Central Coast Gardens

After considerable negotiation, Dot was able to arrange for Gosford City Council to typeset the original brochure and these fact sheets, and funds were made available by the Waste Board to add art work and print an initial print-run. Copies have been distributed to the public through Gosford and Wyong Councils; they have been placed on display in libraries and nurseries, and handed out at the Flora Festival.

Since that time, additional fact sheets have been added to the list, and extra copies have been printed with funding from Gosford and Wyong Councils. New Facts Sheets continue to be produced.

This has been the most ambitious publishing venture that the group has undertaken, and its success has been largely due to Audrey Taggart's initiative and ongoing support, Syd Fabri's technical prowess, Rosemary Wright's art work, Bruce and Thelma Wallace's horticultural assistance and, above all, Dot Camp's dogged persistence in seeing the task through.

Conducting research has not really been within the competence of the group's membership, being mostly amateurs, knowledgeable though some of them have been.

Individual members with the requisite expertise have engaged in research. Ross Worrall, research horticulturalist with the Research Station at Narara, has had a long research career at Narara, both during and since his leading involvement in the group's management. His research projects include work on Blandfordia, Lechenaultia, Scaevolas, Actinotus, Waratah, Christmas Bush and Kangaroo Paws, often with the aim of making plant material available for commercial production, in order to reduce picking from the wild.

In mid-1981, member Greg Lamont, another research horticulturalist at Narara, undertook a research project on *Boronia serrulata*, the much prized "Native Rose". It was eagerly sought in season by the floristry industry, and there were fears that intense harvesting in the wild would undermine its viability. Greg sought to research ways of improving its rate of propagation, so that nurserymen could produce plantation-grown supplies for the trade.

During 1994, David Tierney presented research into the Somersby Prostanthera, as part of his university degree. David found an isolated population of this elusive plant, later to be named *Prostanthera junonis*, on and near an industrial site at Somersby that was due for further development. His research was aimed at testing the plant's possible "rescue" through propagation from vegetative cuttings and from seed; both methods proved to be problematic. (The N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service later allocated funds for measures to ensure the plant's sustainability).

In 1995, Thelma and Bruce Wallace assisted a local conservation group, which was devoted to preventing the extension of the runway at Warnervale Airport that would necessitate clearance of bushland that was rich in native species. They undertook a species count as part of that group's campaign.

Member Jeremy Smith of the Wildflower Farm, Somersby, undertook research during the 1990s into the Gymea Lily *Doryanthes excelsa*, in an attempt to create a technique for shortening the time between propagation and the first flowering. This had become an urgent necessity, in order to facilitate the production of plantation grown flower-heads by nurserymen, so that the often indiscriminate over-harvesting in the wild could be reduced. His research is continuing.

In 2001, Jonathan Lidbetter, another horticulturalist at Narara, began research into improving the form and viability of *Eriostemon australasius*, with the same intention as Ross Worrall's many projects, Greg Lamont's earlier project on Boronia and Jeremy Smith's work on Gymea Lily, to encourage plantation growth of this sought-after flower and thus reduce picking in the wild. Jonathan was supported in this research by a grant of \$3000 from the Central Coast Group's funds.

At various times, the group has also given more modest financial support to the Australian Conservation Foundation and to the Burrendong Arboretum at Wellington.

A different kind of research-oriented activity was initiated in October 1994 by member Lorna George. She convened a meeting of interested members to initiate a "Plants-in-Pots Interest Group" as a sub-group within the Central Coast Group. It has continued meeting three times a year to the present date. Lorna continued as convenor until 2003, when Thelma and Bruce Wallace, and then Barbara and Andrew Melville, took on this role.

Some of this sub-group have taken up membership of the Container Study Group of the national Australian Society for Growing Australian Plants.

Over the years, a number of small scale experiments have been conducted, yielding conclusions about such particular quandaries as: comparisons of proprietary potting mixes, and their relative value for money; potting-up into small or over-size pots; effectiveness of a range of fertilizers; soil porosity of different mixes; effects of pruning regimens; what plants do well in water-well pots.

In all, these practical experiments have yielded quite an impressive body of results that add to the interest group's success with growing plants in containers.

4.12. EDUCATION:

Many of the activities of the Central Coast group have an educational thrust; some of the following are referenced elsewhere and described in some detail: -

- Featuring expert guest speakers at monthly meetings
- Plant of the Month and Book of the Month segments
- What's your Problem segment
- Stewards' descriptions of plants in the Specimen Table segment

- Fact Sheets distributed through local Councils and at Festivals
- The group's web site
- Propagation Days
- Guided bushwalks and specimen collection days
- Advice to community groups

Other specifically educational undertakings have been initiated from time to time.

In August 1976, member Ross Worrall organised a 12 week Evening College course at The Entrance High School for some 15 or so students, a sizeable number of whom were members of the Central Coast group. The course consisted of basic botany, a brief taxonomy of Australian native plants, and lots of practical opportunities for plant identification and propagation, both within course time and during field excursions. Ross subsequently developed this material for courses that he conducted for the Department of Agriculture through the Horticultural Research Centre at Narara.

From March 1996, long-term member Joan Doney prepared a series of 14 papers that were published in the group's monthly newsletter, setting out in layman's terms various aspects of the botany of Australian plants. These articles were then the subject of a further question and answer session at the following monthly meeting. Although Joan had no formal qualifications as a botanist, she had made a lifetime study of the botany of native plants, since her early days working for David Gordon on his property in Queensland (the original source of *Grevillea Robyn Gordon*), and during the time she owned Sydney's first plant nursery at Galston, selling exclusively Australian native plants. She had long acted as a plant collector for the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

Joan's health was seriously fading by the time she commenced this educational program, but she persisted doggedly with the articles until October 1997.

In 1999, Bruce Wallace submitted for inclusion in the monthly newsletter a series of instructive articles on the topics of Watering Regimens, Potting Mixes, Nutritional Needs of Plants and Soil pH Levels.

The following year, Bruce ran another series of articles in the Newsletter under the title "**Understanding the System of Botanical Names**", which was much appreciated by members.

As part of its policy of supporting conservation and educational initiatives, the Central Coast group agreed in April 1996 to donate the sum of \$1,000.00 to help cover the costs of publishing a Wattle Day book for schools. This was a joint project of the Society for Growing Australian Plants and the Gould League of Bird Lovers.

Long-term member Irene Vale-Lane was a gifted watercolour painter. In pursuit of a broader knowledge of the Central Coast flora, Irene (known to her friends as "Rene") taught herself the botany of local species by completing a series of 56 exquisite watercolour illustrations, detailing the foliage, the buds and flowers, and the seed and seed casings, all accompanied by a written description.

To commemorate the 21st anniversary of the group's formation, Rene generously made a gift of these precious drawings to the Central Coast Group, and gave the group the copyright for their reproduction..

They are now lodged in the archives of Gosford City Library for safekeeping. Laminated colour copies have been made of the illustrations, and they are available through the library on a CD. A copy of this CD is held in Gosford City Library for public use, another is held in our group's library, and another is available for student use at the University of Newcastle Ourimbah Campus. The laminated copies have often been mounted in visual displays of native plants at festivals and shows.

During 1996, committee member Cathy Cole collaborated with Neil Dufty and Ross Wellington, Education Officers attached to the Rumbalara Field Studies Centre, Gosford, an agency of the N.S.W. Department of School Education, to produce a Wattle Day Kit for distribution to schools.

Plastic pot manufacturer REKO generously donated a large quantity of plastic propagation tubes. Regional funds were made available for the purchase of a range of Acacia seeds of species indigenous to the Central Coast region. In late 1996, staff of the Field Studies Centre distributed to every primary school on the Central Coast a package containing 100 propagation tubes, a quantity of seed-raising mix, 100 assorted Acacia seeds, instructions for seed preparation to obtain best germination, information sheets on each wattle, hints on care after germination, and a leaflet with advice on use of the Acacias in landscaping and for attracting native birds.

Dufty and Wellington continued to monitor the progress of the initiative in the course of their regular visits to schools during the following year.

In the latter years of the 1990s, Cathy Cole also acceded to a request for help from Gosford High School, and over a period of 3 years, she spent two hours a week working with elective students at the school farm, teaching them propagating skills and supervising their program involving propagation of a range of Australian native plants from seed and from cuttings.

Over the years, many members have responded to requests from local schools for talks about native plants and for practical workshops on propagation and on landscaping. From time to time, members have helped pupils develop a native garden at their school, or to regenerate an area of natural vegetation within the school grounds by extending the planting of native species.

5. NEWSLETTER:

The first newsletter to be circulated to members of the Central Coast Group was sent out on 19 May 1975. At this time, meetings of the Group were being held every two months, and the newsletter was sent out before each two-monthly meeting. The group regularly received newsletters from other regional groups. Records of the early newsletters held in our archives are unfortunately fragmentary.

They were obviously typewritten, in this era before photocopiers and personal computers, and reproduced through the generosity of members who had access to copying technology of the time – spirit duplicators or typewriter-imprinted wax masters to be reproduced on a Gestetner duplicator. The early newsletters consisted of a single page and then two, with details of forthcoming general meetings, outings, garden visits, working bees etc and editorial comment on the changing seasons in the garden.

An early innovation was to have printed commercially a three-colour title page incorporating the group's floral emblem, designed and drawn by Irene Vale-Lane, and featuring the emblems of Gosford City and Wyong Shire, *Epacris longiflora* and *Callistemon linearis* respectively. These were then used for the front cover of each newsletter from February 1983. After August 1983, newsletters were issued every month.

Over time, editors of the Newsletter have been:

1978	Milton Larven
1978-1981	Vicki Worrall
1982 - 1986	Gary Rowe
1987	Sue Lamont

1988	Anne Turner
1989 – 1990	Julie McGregor
1991 – 1993	Rhys McGregor
1994 – 1996	Alan Hodge
1997 – 1998	Melanie Hendricks
1999 – 2000	Joan Harden
2001 - 2003	Alan Hodge
2004-2005	Elsie Bartlett

With the growing availability of photocopiers in the 1980s, it became possible to reproduce cheaply interesting items copied from other publications – newspapers and magazines, scientific papers and especially from the newsletters of other district groups of the Society with whom, increasingly, we were regularly exchanging journals. By the later years of the 1980s, the size of our Newsletter had grown to four, sometimes six pages, with lots of cut and paste, and the use of line drawings to illustrate the text.

As the number of members of the Central Coast Group increased, at the same time as the size of the Newsletter grew, it was becoming a costly exercise to issue a newsletter every month. Assistance was given for a while by the state office of SGAP (N.S.W.) in Sydney, where the requisite copies were printed at no cost. This arrangement, however, was terminated in 1988.

For quite a few years, the journal was printed through the generosity of various members' place of work, where they had access to a photocopier at minimal or no cost. Between 1994 and 1998, Alan Hodge printed the Newsletters on his son-in-law's copier at cost, and from 1999 to 2002, Anker Aaso, who had access to a high speed copier at work and had reached an agreement with his employer about costs, which were nominal, printed them in his lunch hour. But ultimately, by late 2002, the Newsletter had to be printed commercially, imposing quite a burden on the finances of the group. By this time, membership of the Central Coast Group had grown to over 160, and the cost of printing and postage was a major expenditure.

At the time of writing, Gosford City Council assists through its scheme for supporting community groups; four times a year, the Council's printery prints our Newsletter at no cost. The other issues are printed at cost at the offices of the Central Coast Community Environmental Network.

Over the years, the various editors have experimented with a variety of formats and included an assortment of different features: Gary Rowe was inventive in thinking up quizzes and crosswords on native plants, creating a deal of interest and enjoyment. The Newsletter has frequently been a vehicle for urging members to participate more in the Society's activities. This has been particularly the case when members were being asked to give their time and energies to mount displays and flower shows, and the propagation and potting-on days associated with these. It has been used to exhort members to attend the Annual General Meeting each year, informing them of the Committee positions to be filled.

Some editors have taken to writing monthly editorials; these have sometimes been quite sententious, raising controversial issues in the hope of encouraging members to debate these. Among these vexed issues that were aired at various times were:

- the attitude of the Society to the growing of exotic plants in our gardens. Growing Australian plants exclusively was an ideal held by some purists, but it was a view that alienated many new members when they heard their much loved camellias or roses being sneered at

- the esoteric distinction between preservation of native species by cultivation and conservation by preserving bushland in its natural state
- the use by florists and supermarket chains of Proteas in floral arrangements designated "Australian Natives".
- the long-term effect of large-scale removal of seeds and flowers from bushland in national parks and reserves.

From the earliest issues of our journal, editors have made a point of summarising the presentations of our guest speakers, for the benefit of those members unable to attend the general meeting. This service has regularly been extended to include a résumé of special features of the general meeting program, like the "Plant of the Month" and the "Book of the Month". Of particular value to members has been the listing of plants that were on show on the Specimen Table at the meetings, at times with accompanying brief descriptions and growing notes such as those supplied by Rhys McGregor over a number of years.

Throughout the archival record of the minutes of Management Committee discussions, there is repeated reference to the increasing cost of continuing to send a newsletter to each member every month, as the membership steadily increased, the number of pages swelled, and the cost of postage grew at regular intervals. Every discussion appears to end with the consensus that the cost is warranted because of the sense of cohesion that the regular newsletter seems to promote. No matter what it costs, this vehicle for communicating with members has always been deemed essential, for keeping members informed of the group's activities, for promoting discussion and for exhorting members to join in when their collaboration is needed.

Most recently, moves have been initiated to transmit the text of each month's Newsletter electronically to members with e-mail addresses and who wish to receive their Newsletter in this form. The cost saving in postage will be considerable in the long run

6. INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION:

Over the years, SGAP (and later, The Australian Plants Society) has been criticized in some quarters for not being more active as a conservation lobby group.

It is fair to say that SGAP began as a group more committed to the concept of conservation of Australian flora through cultivation than to direct action in manning the barricades or confronting the bulldozers in order to protect specific sites and habitats. Its membership has generally been, shall we say, somewhat past the first flush of youth; this has not prevented individual members of the Central Coast Group, with a particular interest in conservation of a site of special significance, from being very active as conservationists.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there were strenuous efforts made by local residents and by various conservation groups to prevent sand mining on the peninsula at North Entrance. Individual members like Peter Clifford and Andrew and the late Lois Sourry were active in these moves. When plans were formulated in 1987-88 to develop the North Entrance peninsula as a 240 hectare tourism complex, with golf course, tennis courts, bowling greens, helipad, marina and lake water sports centre, a new lobby group, the North Entrance Preservation Society, was instrumental in producing a two volume environmental impact statement, which spelt out the uniqueness of the littoral rainforest of the so-called Red Gum Forest between the lake and the ocean front. The impact statement also included the damage already done to the area by fringe development,

and lists of flora and fauna to be found there. Even today, this study could well still serve as a model of what needs to be done to preserve a unique habitat.

This lobby group's work resulted finally in the gazettal of the area as the northern part of a new National Park, the Wyrabalong National Park at North Entrance and at Bateau Bay.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Gosford City Council set about developing Mount Mouat, the abrupt hilltop overlooking downtown Gosford. Joan Doney was the Central Coast's representative on the development committee, which comprised representatives of Gosford City Council, Gosford Rotary Club, Sara Lee Limited, and the Central Coast Group of the Australian Plants Society. Joan involved a number of her fellow members in working bees at the summit of what is now known as Rumbalara Reserve between Gosford City and Springfield. They worked to clear unwanted weed growth from the area, and planted a wide selection of native shrubs and trees. Evidence of their work is still to be found around the car parks that can be reached via Dolly Avenue, Springfield. There is a commemorative plaque half hidden in shrubbery, celebrating the devotion and inspiration of Joan Doney.

Throughout 1983, a number of members of the group were active in supporting Brian Parry in efforts to dissuade Landcom from bulldozing swathes of rich, virgin Hawkesbury Sandstone bushland in order to clear land for housing in the proposed suburban development of Kariong. This was an area that the Parry family had "harvested" regularly for 50 years; they were licensed to pick wildflowers to supply the Sydney markets. It adjoined their land at "Floralands" on the Woy Woy Road, where they had developed over the decades their "orchard" of Waratah shrubs, from which they could annually pick over 60 blooms from each "tree" for the floristry trade.

Their efforts were rewarded with some success: the area set aside for the school site was more selectively cleared, leaving segments of the original vegetation. Most of this rich patch of native bushland was however cleared for development as the suburb of Kariong.

A measure of the perceived priorities within the Central Coast Group can be gauged from the minutes of a committee meeting of July 1988; a motion was passed endorsing the general consensus that the group should be more oriented towards cultivation than conservation. The latter was thought to be better left to other organisations.

Late in 1987, and all during 1988, a group of members lobbied strongly to persuade Gosford City Council not to proceed with a proposed plan to develop Cappers Gully, on the south side of Mount Mouat and behind the present premises of Radio Station 2GO. Ann and Peter Turner, Dorothy Lambertson and others presented a petition to Gosford Council, recommending that the native vegetation on the hillside be preserved, instead of being cleared to form an amphitheatre music shell, with recreation parklands and an aviary of native and exotic birds. Regeneration work was undertaken by Turners, Kembles, Jeavons, Larvens, Lambertsons, Masseys and Joan Doney; they planted Banksias, Acacias and Prostantheras that had been propagated by members. The Council plans did not proceed.

During the 90s, our group, like the Australian population at large, seemed to become more focussed on environmental issues; guest speakers were regularly invited to speak on environmental, rather than purely horticultural topics. Various individual members had looked enviously at district groups like the North Shore Group, with its Wildflower Garden at St Ives, the Newcastle Group, with its Hunter Botanic Gardens and the Wetlands Centre, and the Blue Mountains Group, with its Glenbrook Native Plants Reserve. These groups had these natural areas to serve as a focal point for their members' interest in conservation work.

In a Newsletter editorial in November 1996, Alan Hodge addressed the possibility of the group's securing access to a segment of natural bushland, and making it the focal point for the group's conservation endeavours. He invited debate and comment from members. In the event, the idea aroused a modicum of favourable comment from members, but nothing concrete developed from it at first.

In 1997, Ena Middleton initiated a regeneration working--group of like-minded neighbours to work on degraded land at the northern end of Wambina Road, Matcham. Out of this early bush regeneration project, Wambina Reserve was later created by Gosford City Council.

In February 1998, our group joined the newly formed Central Coast Community Environmental Network. This loose union of a wide range of community groups on the Central Coast, all sharing an interest in the conservation of the rich natural environment of the area, grew out of an initial meeting in the Central Coast Leagues Club under the auspices of the local chapter of the Australian Conservation Foundation. Over 80 delegates from a wide range of community groups with environmental concerns attended.

The network has gone from strength to strength in the years since its inception. From its offices on the Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle, it has been remarkably active, under the leadership of John Asquith, in promoting research initiatives and attracting government funding for specific projects.

The Central Coast Group, especially Audrey Taggart and John Connor, have supported this conservation work. Member Barbara Melville has worked part-time and as a volunteer in the office of CCCEN.

As part of this support, our group held a propagation day in May 1998 to pass on propagating skills to members of other community groups involved in CCCEN.

In early 1998, our then President Audrey Taggart was approached by the Natural Resources Manager of Gosford City Council with an invitation for the group to become involved in bush regeneration work, helping to restore the depleted buffer zone that adjoins the rainforest above Seymour Pond in Katandra Reserve.

The Committee agreed to be involved for a one year trial, and the first regeneration day was held on 1 August 1998, with 15 members of the group turning out to make a start on the huge task of removing invading exotic species and replanting the area with local species. The team received its first briefing on safety precautions from Council's Bushcare Officer Amelia Jones. Our group's involvement with this project has continued ever since, albeit with fewer stalwarts regularly devoting their energies to the work.

In 2002-03, experiments were conducted using the techniques of producing long-stemmed nursery stock that had been pioneered by Bill Hicks for riverine regeneration in the Hunter Valley. The same techniques were applied to producing tube-stock of rainforest plants, grown from seed or seedlings collected in Katandra Reserve, and these were then planted in deep, over-size holes, watered in, protected from wallaby attack by stout wire guards, and left to survive. In collaboration with Gosford City Council Bush Regeneration Officer Geoff Bakewell, a study was made in 2003 of the effectiveness of the technique, with promising results. Further research into the effectiveness of the technique is being undertaken by Geoff Bakewell, and by ecology students of Dr Anita Chalmers at the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle.

The experiments are continuing at Katandra, and the use of long-stem plants is generating a certain amount of interest in other district groups of the Society and among other bush regenerators.

In 2000 and 2001, a number of members joined with staff researcher Chris Lacey of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in a search for specimens of the threatened

Somersby Prostanthera *P. junonis*. This was part of an exercise in mapping the range of the species, as a preliminary to a long-term project to ensure its survival in the wild.

The most recent conservation initiative in which the group has been involved is to join in the formation of a Plant Rescue Service on the Central Coast. This concept, pioneered in the Blue Mountains by Mikla Lewis, consists of a team working on a site that is soon to be developed for housing or industry, removing young plants and seed material, taking cuttings to pot on, and saving leaf litter, rocks and logs, before the bulldozers move in.

The idea is to hold these materials to sell back to the owners and occupiers after the development is completed, in an attempt to retain the local gene pool of plant material and to preserve as far as possible the flora of the original site. Our involvement is continuing, through member John Randall's service on the new group's committee.

7. HONOURS AND AWARDS TO MEMBERS:

Over the years since the inception of the Central Coast Group, a number of its members have been honoured by the award of distinctions for their contribution to the cause of Australian native plants.

In 1973, Mrs Ollie Parry, the original convenor of the first meeting of the reconstituted Central Coast Group, was elected President of the State body SGAP (N.S.W.). In 1974, Ollie and husband Perce Parry were made Life Members of the Society.

In 1975, Milton Larven was appointed editor of the State journal "Native Plants".

In 1981, Perce and Ollie Parry were awarded the Order of Australia for their contributions to the promotion of Australian native plants.

In February 1980, Joan Doney was elected Vice President of SGAP (N.S.W.). In April 1981, Joan was made a Life Member of the Central Coast Group (while this was permissible under the State Constitution).

In 1982, Joan was accorded Life Membership of SGAP (N.S.W.)

Gary Rowe, Secretary of the Central Coast Group in 1980-81 and President in 1983-84, was editor of the State journal "Native Plants" between January 1982 and February 1986.

From April 1986 until 1990, Norman Kemble was Editor of "Native Plants".

During 1989, Irene Vale-Lane designed floral emblems for Gosford City and Wyong Shire, *Epacris longiflora* and *Callistemon linearis* respectively, and the designs were presented to the Mayor of Gosford and Wyong Shire President during that year. (These are the two flowers that figure in the emblem of the Central Coast Group). Wyong Council subsequently changed its floral emblem to the present Flannel Flower.

In mid-1989, Brian and Nola Parry of "Floralands" Native Nursery were made Life Members of the Central Coast Group.

In November 1990, Brian and Nola Parry published "Cottage Gardening with Australian Wildflowers", illustrated with line drawings by Irene Vale-Lane.

At the end of 1992, President Don George accepted an appointment as Chairman of the Central Coast Area Health Board.

In early 1992, Norman and Shirley Kemble were nominated as Life Members of the Central Coast Group for their long service in Victoria and New South Wales to the Society. Their Life Membership of SGAP (N.S.W.) was ultimately confirmed at the State Annual General Meeting in May 1996.

On the nomination of the Central Coast Group, SGAP (N.S.W.) declared Irene Vale-Lane as a Life Member of the State SGAP at the Annual General Meeting in May 1994, in recognition of her long service to the cause of Australian plants. (see Appendix 3) Towards the end of 1994, John Randall became Seed Bank Officer for the SGAP (N.S.W.).

In 1996, former President of our group Rhys McGregor was elected as a Vice-President of SGAP (N.S.W.).

In 1996, Julie McGregor accepted the position of Convenor of the ASGAP Study Group Container Plants.

In the Australia Day Honours list in January 1999, Joan Doney was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her work in conserving Australian native plants.

In 2001, Andrew Sourry received the Order of Australia Medal for services to the conservation movement.

In 2002, Jonathon Steeds became President of the Australian Native Flower Growers' Association.

Jeremy Smith, long-standing member and principal of the Wildflower Farm Somersby, was State President in 2002 and 2003.

On 13 December 2003, at the Christmas meeting of the Central Coast Community Environmental Network, Audrey Taggart received the annual "Bat " award for "outstanding all-round achievement in helping to protect the environment".

John Connor was re-elected President of the Central Coast Group for the third time in December 2003, and was elected State President in May 2004, and again in 2005.

In 2005, Jonathon Steeds was elected State Vice-President and Robert Madden was elected State Treasurer.

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8.1. APPENDIX - 1:

- PRESERVATION BY CULTIVATION -

The Genesis and Growth of the Australian Plants Society

Gwen and Roger Elliot

The Australian Plants Society came into being as the Society for Growing Australian Plants in 1957. The previous year the writer on Australian plants for "Your Garden" magazine, Arthur Swaby, had made the suggestion, in the April 1956 issue, that a society for the "growers of Australian plants" be formed. The response was most encouraging and an inaugural meeting was held in the Horticultural Hall, Victoria Street, Melbourne, on March 12 1957. About 200 people attended, and the Society was established. Many of the early members were also affiliated with the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Within the next few years, regional groups were formed throughout Australia. One of the phrases frequently used to describe the aims and objectives of the Society was "**Preservation by Cultivation**". The Parry family, who operated an Australian plant cut-flower farm and nursery at Kariong via Gosford in N.S.W., had originally used this motto, and it was subsequently adopted by the SGAP with their blessing.

Today the Society has active groups operating in all states. In Victoria, there are 27 regional groups that meet regularly to hear guest speakers, share information, organise excursions and garden visits, participate in displays, flower shows and the maintenance of local reserves. There are 29 regional groups in New South Wales, 20 in Queensland, 14 in South Australia, 14 in Western Australia, 4 in Tasmania, 1 in Canberra and 1 in the Northern Territory.

In addition to these, there are 29 different study groups. Some concentrate on particular plant families, such as the Australian Daisy Study Group and the Palm and Cycad Study Group; others focus on specific genera such as *Acacia* and *Epacris*, or topics like Australian Food Plants, Containers, Garden Design or The Rainforest.

In recent years, several states voted to change their name from **The Society for Growing Australian Plants** to **The Australian Plants Society**. This change has not been made by all groups; some retain the older name, while others, like the Western Australian group (known primarily as **The Wildflower Society of Western Australia**) have an individual name. However, all groups are under the same umbrella organisation – **The Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants**.

In an organisation of this size, with a history of nearly 50 years, many, many people have made a significant contribution to the society, and to the interest in growing Australian plants. An impressive number of these people have also contributed to the literature now available on our Australian flora. Many past and present members are well-known through their writing. They include the Boddy family, A.E. Brooks, Bill Cane, Jean Galbraith, Ivo Hamnett, Alby and Hyam Lindner, Fred Rogers and Arthur Swaby in Victoria/Tasmania; Inez Armitage, Alex Blombery, George and Peter Althofer, Thistle Harris and the Parry family in New South Wales; Dave Gordon in Queensland; members of the Ashby family, Ken Stuckey and others in South Australia; plus Rica Erickson, Alf Gray (also Victoria) and Ken Newby in WA – to name but a few from a very long list.

The Australian Plants Society has played a major role in increasing the available knowledge on our native plants and stimulating the upsurge of interest in the Australian

flora. From its beginning, the APS provided an opportunity for enthusiasts to meet together and share information on both plants and cultivation experiences. In those early years, information on the growing of the Australian flora was extremely limited. Very few books on Australian plants were to be had, and horticultural colleges, in the courses they offered, made little or no reference to the uses of Australian plants in cultivated gardens. For many Australian plant enthusiasts, it was necessary to find information for themselves and in this endeavour, the Society for Growing Australian Plants played a major role.

In 1959, a quarterly magazine with the simple title "**Australian Plants**" was launched. Illustrated with eye-catching colour photographs, each issue was eagerly awaited by SGAP members. Under managing editor Bill Payne, who held that position from the very beginning (*until recently - Ed*), the publication is now approaching its 200th edition, and is available with membership or by separate subscription.

Many Australian plants have been introduced to cultivation, not only by the nursery industry, but also by individual enthusiasts and members of the society. Botanists undertaking the study of particular plant families and genera have frequently received invaluable help from the society and its enthusiasts. Indeed, the society and its members have often been instrumental in setting up municipal parks and reserves to display Australian flora, with volunteers providing countless hours of unpaid contribution in this regard.

Today the Australian Plants Society continues to play a very positive role in the sharing of information on Australian plants. Its membership is primarily in Australia, but there are also quite a number of overseas members, particularly in Europe and the USA. The quest for information continues, as does the enthusiasm for introducing Australian plants into gardens and nurseries.

Recent years have witnessed an ever-increasing environmental awareness as ongoing development in Australia has seen many species threatened with extinction. There is now a strong interest in cultivating indigenous species, that is, those native to a particular area, rather than those simply native to the broader region of Australia. This goes hand in hand with more general environmental awareness and recognition of the vital links between plants, insects, birds, mammals and indeed our own human health. Further, the Australian Plants Society plays an important role in promoting the conservation of plant habitats as well as encouraging the planting of native Australian species.

Further information on your nearest group can be obtained from the ASGAP Internet site – <http://www.farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP>. Alternatively, you can write to PO Box 357, Hawthorn, Vic. 3122.

(This article was published in the magazine "Australian Garden History" Vol 13 No 6 May/June 2002)

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8.2.

APPENDIX - 2:

- A TRIBUTE TO LOIS SOURRY -

Sue Agnew

Secretary, Mid-North Coast Group of SGAP

"Long-time SGAP members will be sad to learn of the recent passing of Lois Sourry, a dedicated conservationist and native flora and fauna enthusiast.

Since I was a child, Lois was an inspiration to me to study natural history, and in particular, Australia's flora and fauna.

A resident of the Central Coast for 35 years, Lois was tireless in her struggle to preserve the beauty of the area. She was involved in Gosford Wildlife Society as President for 8 years and Secretary for 8 years. As chairperson at a meeting of conservation bodies in the mid-1950s, she moved for the formation of Brisbane Water National Park and was the first secretary of the steering committee on the original Board of Trustees for both Brisbane Water and Bouddi National Park Trusts.

In 1958, Lois sponsored the formation of the Gosford Branch of SGAP, standing down in the late 1960s (although remaining a patron) to take on other special issues¹. Lois had been preparing colour slides for SGAP publications for over 11 years, her most recent contributions appearing in **Australian Plants** March 1987 edition. In addition, she has written a number of books, including "Saving our Wildflowers", "Saving our Wildlife" and "Trees of the Australian Bush".

One of the issues that took up a considerable amount of her time in the 1960s was her involvement as Secretary of North Entrance Preservation Society in their fight to keep rutile mining out of the North Entrance Red Gum Forest Area. The eventual result was a Privy Council case, which was won by Wyong Shire Council, thus preserving the area.

Lois was also a foundation member of the National Parks Association (N.S.W. branch) and assisted in the inception of the recently formed Central Coast branch.

Travelling widely throughout Australia, Lois and her husband Andrew were constantly adding to their already vast knowledge, and also attended numerous courses in various aspects of flora and fauna, most recently on rainforest species and regeneration. Lois was enthused by recent *Banksia* atlasings and travelled widely throughout N.S.W. to record sightings.

All of us who loved the beauty and diversity of Australia's unique flora and fauna owe a debt of gratitude to Lois Sourry for her unceasing efforts to preserve the environment for all to enjoy and appreciate."

(Text of an obituary in the Central Coast Group's newsletter of 1 February 1988, shortly after the death of long-term member Lois Sourry)

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¹ This refers to the original attempt to form a branch of SGAP on the Central Coast, which came to a temporary halt in the latter half of the 1960's – Editor.

8.3.

APPENDIX - 3:

- 21ST BIRTHDAY OF CENTRAL COAST GROUP -

Irene Vale-Lane

INTRODUCTION

So the Group has come of age!

I look back over the last 21 years, and think of what I have learned and what pleasure I have received from belonging to the SGAP, and I hope that many of the younger members will have similar feelings in the years ahead.

I first joined the Society in 1967 in Grafton, but had no direct contact with native plants until we bought the Kariong property in late 1969. Having been born and bred in England, all these different flowers were both a joy and a challenge to me.

Beginnings

I was delighted when Mrs Ollie Parry sent me a note about the possible formation of a Gosford Group (of the SGAP). It seemed that she had searched the membership records to see just how many members were living in the area, and then contacted them. There had formerly been a Gosford Group, but this had lapsed for want of support, and the rebirth began with 9 members attending the first meeting at Mrs Parry's home, the tearooms at Floralands (*the site of the former Parry family native plant nursery on Woy Woy Road, Kariong*). Mrs Parry became the first President.

Development

From then on, meetings were held on alternate months at members' homes, and then at Kariong Hall and Floralands, and we slowly increased the number of members until we reached the magic number of 16, which entitled us to representation at Regional level.

It soon became necessary to find a fixed, more central meeting place, and we hired the Presbyterian Church Lower Hall in Mann Street, Gosford, financing the fees by holding a "bring and buy" stall and a raffle at each meeting. Unfortunately, there was a change of Minister, and the new Minister, a dour Scot, forbade any raffles and stipulated heavy insurance. Our finances were very low, only \$45 at one stage, so something had to be done, and we were very grateful when we learnt we could use the old hall at this present venue (*that is, the Horticultural Research Station, Narara*) before the new Temple Kiely Building was established. We had, in the meantime, decided to rename the group the Central Coast Group as being more widely embracing.

Early Memories

In the early days, we were fortunate in having a hard-working secretary-cum-treasurer-cum general factotum, the late Don Baxter, and then we had the first of our younger members, Dr Allin Hodson, a zoologist at Sydney University, and his wife Anne, who kindly made their Erina property available for the Christmas Party. Anne was not only an interstate-level equestrienne, but an extraordinarily versatile handy woman, and she welcomed the advent of the Group with enthusiasm and became adept at propagation. I am telling you this as, in a recent letter, she tells me that she has planted many hundreds of native plants on the 85 acre property in South Australia, and that many

of them are the offspring of plants from the members of our group. So, you see, we have travelled far afield.

Next, we had Ross and Vicki Worrall, and Barney Waters, all hard workers until their growing family commitments intervened.

Financial Matters

To raise some money, I suggested that we might try a Saturday morning street stall, so we booked a site in William Street Plaza. Members arrived with their contributions in every conceivable size and shape of pot or tin. The public welcomed this first opportunity to buy native plants at a stall and were very supportive, and the plants sold, in spite of the amateur presentation, and this made our bank balance a lot healthier.

Later, plant sales were held at Wyoming and Bateau Bay shopping centres, and several times at Marketown. These latter sales were enhanced by a wonderful floral backdrop set up by many willing helping hands under the guidance of Nola and Brian Parry.

These displays sometimes produced some amusing remarks. I recall standing next to two ladies who were very interested in a small white-flowered plant, *Pseudanthus pimelioides*, brought in by Greg Lamont, and they were carefully looking for a name-tag. Suddenly, one of them exclaimed, "Oh, it's a Lamont", having seen Greg's name on the pot. I had visions of them going on a wild-goose chase around the nurseries, trying to buy a "Lamont", so I had to tell them that this was the name of the owner.

Now, of course, the Group has its flower-show and sales at the time of the annual Springtime Flora Festival, at Mt Penang, and you all know just how much work goes into that, but how rewarding are the financial results and the gaining of new members.

Projects and Activities

Early in the activities of the Group, we staged a display board of local Hawkesbury Sandstone flora in the Imperial Centre, Stockland Mall. I had persuaded the haberdashery department in Myers to save their empty plastic button tubes in which to hold the flowers, all properly named. We thought glass test tubes too risky. This display created a lot of interest, and I watched elderly ladies wallowing in nostalgia in front of flowers that they had not seen since their childhood days.

Emblem

When it was decided to choose a floral emblem for Gosford, many suggestions were made by the public; one of them was for Crepe Myrtle! It was decided however that a native plant should be used. Accordingly, I made line drawings of six possible species, and these were printed in the local paper, with an invitation to the public to phone in their votes. At the time, we displayed living specimens in Myers, who kindly made space available for two weeks. (The late) Joan Doney and I manned this stand, answering questions, as well as giving a plug for the Group, and I must confess that we did a little persuasive talking to get *Epacris longiflora* chosen.

The choice was made on the grounds that it is exceptionally long flowering, and that it can readily be seen along the roadside in many parts, and did not need to be searched for in the bush, and for its distinctive form and colouring.

Library

As our finances improved, we started a library, which now offers members a wide range of excellent books, many of them expensive, so that all members can now enjoy books that might not otherwise have been available to them.

Public Contacts

We were involved in the garden at Laycock Street Theatre. We have supplied judges for the Native Garden section of the Spring Festival Garden Competition, and speakers for several organisations. We had contact with schools, and donated prizes for various projects. We donated plants for the Pearl Beach Arboretum.

We had some disappointments. Firstly, we remade the garden at Henry Kendall's Cottage at West Gosford, doing all the heavy construction work and planting, and Barney Waters undertook the job of watering until the plants had become established. Unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding with the Historical Society in regard to the ongoing maintenance, they thinking that we would continue to be responsible, but we felt that we had done our share.

Then there was a mooted idea to beautify the railway embankment at Gosford Railway Station, but this never got off the ground owing to lack of co-operation between Council and Railway officials.

We had hoped to make our mark at Rumbalara Reserve (*above Gosford City Centre*), but this was an abortive effort. When we arrived on the day of the official opening, we came with spade and plants, only to find that we had been allotted a plot near the car-park in rock-hard ground where mattocks and crowbars would have been more appropriate. We knew that the plants had no hope of surviving under such conditions. This was a negative effort, but you can't win them all.

Outings

We had occasional outings and garden inspections, but thanks to the initiative of Isabel Perry (*now Boughton*), recent years have seen the introduction of monthly bushwalks, which give members the chance to learn about the local flora at first hand, and to meet informally. My only regret is that my creaky knees no longer allow me to participate. It really is a case of the spirit being willing, but the flesh weak!

Then there have been wonderful trips to the specialist Botanic Gardens at Mount Annan and Mount Tomah, and the Hunter Region, all most enjoyable.

Guest Speakers

This was a real problem in our early days, but in their usual generous fashion, Frank and Jean Hatfield came as our first guests. Later, we had Dr Gordon Cousins whose obituary you may have read in a recent State Newsletter. Then in his 70s, he travelled down from Newcastle, to our home in Kariong on the darkest, wettest night possible, when he could well have been excused for not turning up, but turn up he did, with armfuls of specimens, which were eagerly snapped up at the end of the meeting.

He spoke about propagation, and we were surprised to learn that he used coal ash instead of sand, it being readily available in his area. He was a lovely man – so knowledgeable but so unassuming.

I recall telling him how I would go up into the bush and find something new, then come down and pore over Beadle (*an early authority on identification of east coast plants*) trying to identify it. Then I would come to with a start and realise that it was time to get dinner. He smiled and patted me on the shoulder, saying, "Don't tell me you haven't a tin opener, my dear."

A sequel to this was our first get-together with the Newcastle Group, when they came to our Kariong property. After morning tea, we all spent several interesting hours in the bush; in the garden, my *Acacia spectabilis* was the envy of all, and many members took a trip to nearby Floralands Nursery to buy a plant.

Another early speaker was Phillip Green whom many of you will remember for his audio-visual show "A Barrington Tops Experience" about two or three years ago. I first met Phillip when he was about 17 or 18, and doing marvellous bird photography. His series on the courtship of the Satin Bower Bird was widely acclaimed and reproduced. He just turned up at an open day at our place, and this encouraged me to ask him to be our guest speaker. This was his first contact with the Group, and he began to get interested in native plants as a different field for his photography. He was always a welcome visitor to our home, and we spent many happy hours wandering in the bush, where he would go to endless trouble just to get the right shot.

Although not a grower, his interest in native plants has developed, and when engaged on a particular project, has never been afraid to ask for information, knowing that it would be readily forthcoming from the Group. For instance, when he was commissioned to supply slides of local wildflowers for the cover of the forthcoming telephone directory, he rang me to see if he could bring the slides and the Telecom manager, to make sure they had positive specific identification.

He also did a weekly series for the local newspaper, called "Tree of the Week", and here again, he contacted SGAP for information.

As the Group has prospered, we have been able to have the services of many top-line speakers, covering a wide range of topics, and these have been enjoyable and informative.

Some Earlier Members

We have had many good members who, for one reason or another, are no longer fully involved. Perhaps that new native garden has become established, or other interests and/or commitments have intervened, or maybe a move to another district.

I cannot hope to remember them all, but some who come to mind are Lyn Parry, Milton and Shirley Larven, Gary Rowe, Greg Lamont, David Errington, Peter and Anne Turner, Dan and Jane Massey, Gail Ransley, and not forgetting those who have passed on – Ollie and Perce Parry, Errol Thurston and my husband Ron.

The Present State of the Group

If you look around tonight, you will see that all age groups are represented, and it offers great hope for the future. Particularly welcome is the active involvement of so many newer members in the running of the Group. This will be tremendously important in the two major projects in hand. Firstly, the establishment of a local Herbarium, which is being organised by Isabel Boughton and Audrey Taggart. Secondly, the inventory of local flora, with location, date of sighting and description, which is being undertaken by Alan Hodge. Both these mammoth ventures will prove invaluable to future native plant enthusiasts, and a source of learning for children.

This group has grown from strength to strength, this proving the old saying ..."Great oaks from little acorns grow".

(Text of an article by Irene Vale-Lane that was published in the Central Coast Group's monthly Newsletter in April 1993, on the occasion of the meeting that was held to mark the 21st anniversary of the inaugural meeting to establish a branch of the (then) Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) in the Central Coast Region).

(Rene was a founding member of the Central Coast Group, and, it is believed, was the only surviving member of that small group until her death in January 2003, aged 84).

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8.4. APPENDIX - 4:

- THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS -

- ITS BEGINNINGS ON THE CENTRAL COAST -

Irene Vale-Lane

The N.S.W. branch of this nationwide society was inaugurated as far back as 1958 by a few dedicated people who loved our native flora, and wished to preserve it and develop it.

Gradually, area groups were established in affiliation with the N.S.W. regional body, and today, these local branches form a large part of the total state membership of SGAP.

The activities of the Society have always been broader than the name implies. Each local branch pursues its own preferences, but in addition to propagating and growing Australian plants, they all share a general involvement in learning and teaching about our flora, promoting displays and exhibitions, conducting research into local species, exploring local stands of native bush and improving their identification skills.

There was originally a Gosford Group, but this fell into decline. On the initiative of the late Mrs Ollie Parry, the group was re-formed in April 1972.

It will be remembered that both Mr and Mrs Parry were awarded the Order of Australia for their pioneering work with native plants.

It was therefore fitting that Mrs Parry should be the first President of the new Group, which began with a modest 9 members. Soon, numbers grew to include interested members from the Woy Woy peninsula, the mountain areas, and from Wyong Shire, as well as the central parts of Gosford and suburbs.

Consequently, it was felt that the branch should be renamed the **Central Coast Group**, in order to reflect the wider membership.

The "style" of the monthly meetings of the Central Coast Group of SGAP has evolved over the years. To judge by the steady increase in membership, the current format seems to be receiving members' approval: a first-rate guest speaker, regular features like Plant of the Month, Book of the Month, Plant Identification and a fund-raising raffle of specimens propagated by members. There is still room for members to make suggestions for other kinds of activity.

The regular bushwalks in the district, occasional bus-trips and the annual display and sale of plants at the Flora Festival make for a very full calendar.

No wonder, then, that the Central Coast Group of SGAP is flourishing!

(This is the text of an article that was published in the November/December 1992 issue of the Newsletter of the Central Coast Group).

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8.5. APPENDIX - 5:

**- ACCEPTANCE SPEECH - IRENE VALE-LANE -
- LIFE MEMBERSHIP OF S.G.A.P. (N.S.W.) -**

At a barbeque that was held at "Floralands" tea house, Kariong for Canberra visitors on the evening of Saturday 20 August 1994, Jim Boswell, President of the N.S.W. region, presented Rene with her Life Member's badge. This is the text of Rene's acceptance speech in reply:

"Firstly, I must thank our Central Coast Group for nominating me for this totally unexpected award, and the Regional council for granting the award, one which I shall always value.

When I joined SGAP in 1967, there was little interest among the general public in the cultivation of wildflowers, nor was there much concern for conservation and environmental matters. But all this has changed, and people from all walks of life are becoming aware of the need to preserve our unique flora and its habitat.

It seems to me that there are three groups who all share the same care for preserving our heritage, each in their own way. There are the **Conservationists** who work to protect significant habitats; there are the **Regeneration Groups** such as Greening Australia, who work to restore areas that have already been damaged; then there are the **Growers**, like members of SGAP, who grow plants mostly in their own gardens.

At one time, our Society was somewhat reluctant to be involved in conservation issues, but this has now changed, and all levels of interested people act together in a complementary way.

We have all seen in recent years the rape of large tracts of virgin bushland...you don't have to look beyond this area where we are tonight (*i.e. Kariong*) to see just what greedy developers can do. Here, there was once land rich in endemic species like Christmas Bells, Native Rose and Sydney Boronia and so many more. They have all gone, never to return, leaving hundreds of bare blocks.

This may be an opportunity for the Society to branch out and make direct contact with residents, explaining the need for compensatory plantings. Only two or three native plants in each garden would help restore the supply of food and shelter for the local fauna, adding beauty at the same time.

Such an approach could be made quite simply by the nearest local group to such developments, offering to send speakers to talk to interested new residents at local Progress Association meetings. Any area where there has been total destruction of bushland for housing could be targeted by district groups of SGAP.

Another change, but a pleasant one, is the growing interaction between groups at a social level as we have this weekend with our Canberra visitors. I hope you will look back on the beauties of our Central Coast with pleasure.

I offer my best wishes to you all, and my sincere thanks for this honour."

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8.6. APPENDIX - 6:

- VALE - JOAN DONEY -

'A tribute to long-term member Joan Doney'

Audrey Taggart

(published in the December, 2000 Newsletter)

Joan Doney passed away in her sleep on 1 November 2000, after a lifetime of devotion to the Australian natural environment, especially our native plants. She developed her interest as a child, and began experimenting with propagation, leading her to open a native nursery at Hornsby Heights in the mid-1950s.

When Bill Hicks called a meeting to form the Society for Growing Australian Plants in New South Wales (in 1958), Joan was at that meeting and was elected to the executive. She has served in many roles at State and Group levels, including State President, Group President, Calytrix Study Group Leader, and has been a member of North Shore, Harbourside and Central Coast Groups.

Joan's propagating skills were well known, especially with "the difficult ones" which she grew for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. She was awarded a Life Membership in 1982 for her contribution to the Society and her work with native plants.

She settled on the Central Coast (in 1976) and became a respected and active member of the community. She was instrumental (with Irene Vale-Lane) in Gosford City Council choosing *Epacris longiflora* as their floral emblem. She was a leading light in the formation of Greening Australia and a member of the Wildlife Conservation Foundation whilst still maintaining her loyalty to SGAP Central Coast Group. She retained her passion for the environment even when she was unwell, and was always keen to know what the Group was doing.

Joan was a teacher at heart, and was always willing to share her knowledge with others. She has made a wonderful contribution to the understanding and preservation of our natural environment.

Joan was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Honours List for 1999 for her services to the environment, a fitting tribute to a true Australian. She will be missed by all who know her, but her legacy will be long-lasting.

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APPENDIX - 7:

- OBITUARY - IRENE VALE-LANE -

Alan Hodge

(Published in the Newsletter February, 2003)

Members of the Central Coast Group of the Australian Plant Society mourn the passing of Irene Vale-Lane, a long-term member of the Society. Rene died in mid-February. A number of us attended her funeral.

"Rene", as her friends knew her, was born and educated in England. She came to Australia with her husband, and after some time on the Central Coast, they moved to Grafton. In 1969, they moved back to Kariong, where they bought a 1½ hectare property adjoining the Brisbane Water National Park. Their property shared the same rich array of Hawkesbury Sandstone flora.

She had joined the newly formed Society for Growing Australian Plants in 1957, soon after its foundation. In 1972, she joined with members of the Parry family and a handful of others to re-form the Central Coast Group of the Society. Rene was the last surviving foundation member of that group.

While continuing to care for her family, Rene was able to indulge her twin passions – studying the local flora, and doing detailed botanical illustrations of Central Coast plants. Her watercolour painting had been a lifelong hobby, and she now combined this with her growing knowledge of botanical detail to produce paintings of plants and the structure of their flowers and seeds.

She devoted endless hours to fostering the activities of the Plant Society, actively propagating local plants, sharing her growing knowledge unstintingly, serving as President and holding other offices at various times. For years, she acted as Steward on the specimen table at the group's monthly meetings, where the identification and description of local and other native flora was a regular feature. She gave lectures in schools; she helped conduct sales of potted plants in shopping centres and community precincts, actively promoting the value of growing Australian plants. She helped organise the Annual Flower Shows of the group, the forerunners of our annual display and sale of plants at the Springtime Festival in Kariong.

Rene was an inspiration to new members. I, for one, was at first in awe of her knowledge and the depth of her scholarship. This feeling soon changed to one of gratitude for the ever patient explanations that Rene was always willing to give. You never had the feeling that she was "showing off"; she only wanted to share her enthusiasm.

She was instrumental in designing the original floral emblems for the local government areas of both Gosford and Wyong, and incorporated her designs for *Epacris longiflora* (Gosford) and *Callistemon linearis* (Wyong) for the original logo of the Central Coast Group.

As an illustration of her local knowledge, when the Royal Botanic Gardens conducted a survey of the flora of the Brisbane Water National Park, Rene was able to supplement the botanists' list with 72 extra species that she herself had found in the Park. She explained this as being due to her almost daily walks in the Park, where she knew the location and habits of plants through her regular observations.

In 1986, her husband's failing health made it necessary for them to leave Kariong, and relocate to Erina, where she established a new garden.

In 1994, to mark the 21st anniversary of the formation of the Central Coast Group, Rene generously donated her folio of 56 exquisite watercolour paintings of local flora to the Plant society. In the same year, she was accorded Honorary Life Membership of the New South Wales chapter of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (as it was then).

These paintings, with Rene's approval, were subsequently lodged in the archives of the Gosford City Library for safekeeping and proper conservation. The Library has had a CD made of the paintings, so that they are more easily available to public access.

Failing eyesight and increasing frailty forced Rene to discontinue her artistic efforts, and eventually, to move into residential care. She was no longer able to attend meetings, but her legacy outlives her: the willingness to share knowledge that is the hallmark of our group, and the enthusiastic promotion of the conservation and cultivation of Australian plants that she instilled in us.

Rene's passing marks the end of an era; our direct link to the very formation of our district Group. With others like Joan Doney and the Parry Family members, she belongs to a select group whose vision and dedication created the climate for the present widespread adoption of native plants in our gardens and in the horticulture industry.

Farewell, Rene, and thank you.

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8.8. APPENDIX - 8:
- "FABULOUS FLORALANDS" -

"Floralands" at Gosford has held great historical significance on the Central Coast over its 83 years of operations.

The Parry family's farming and cultivation techniques in the Central Coast area are synonymous with local history, and heralded the beginning in the middle 1880s with Griffith Parry of their dynasty in nursery and farming circles. His son, William Parry, took a block of land at Kariong in the early 1900s and transformed it into a thriving fruit and vegetable farm.

In 1904, his son Henry took up a piece of prize land adjoining his father's property that was to be later called "Floralands".

Henry Parry in later years became known for his community interests, especially in farming interests and his ownership and involvement in local sandstone quarries. He selected the "Floralands" site because of its promise for the future with an abundance of flora, fauna and a reliable water supply.

Henry's younger brothers Perce and Les were also actively involved in the business after completing their studies. The boys would go at 3am to pick up their flowers before returning to sell them to employees of the Gosford Railway. This continued for many years until Perce branched into bigger things, although Les continued his dedicated work until 1970.

In 1926, Perce purchased the Kariong property from his brother Henry. He then promoted his flourishing empire of flowers and fruits in the area, and built a residence on the property. Perce married Olive Kari in 1927, and together they ran "Floralands" up until the recent death of Perce.

It was a nationally renowned establishment, and both were awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1981 for their dedicated service.

Now, in 1986, "Floralands" is situated on five hectares adjoining Brisbane Water National Park.

From its retail nursery, (the family) supplies a range of over 1200 varieties of wildflower plants, reputed to be the largest selection available in Australia. A display garden behind the retail selling area has been planted for stock plants and customer inspection.

Perce Parry was the pioneer in Australia in the matter of preserving Australian plants or flowers by cultivation and propagation.

His son Brian is the current proprietor of "Floralands"; he is the fourth generation of the Parry family to run the historic establishment.

(This is the text of a newspaper article published in the "Gosford Star" and which was used by Brian and Nola Parry in a presentation to a general meeting of the group on 8 May 1987, in which they outlined the history of the family's "Floralands" Nursery that was then located on Woy Woy Road, Kariang)

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8.9. APPENDIX - 9:

- NOMINATION OF SHIRLEY AND NORMAN KEMBLE -

as

- Life Members of the Society for Growing Australian Plants -

Friday 17 May 1996

(Edited text of the nomination presented to the State Annual General Meeting by President of the Central Coast Group, Rhys McGregor)

Norman and Shirley Kemble joined the Society in Melbourne in 1967, as members of the Waverly Group. Their first contact with the group was at a flower show in Melbourne Town Hall. This contact has led to a lifelong devotion to the appreciation and conservation of the Australian flora. The Waverly Group was then small, and the Kembles soon became active on the committee. Using his professional expertise in the advertising industry, Norman soon took over the editorship of the Waverly Group newsletter. He was soon able to change it from a handwritten, purple, spirit duplicated process to a typewritten format, which it still retains. Norman was Newsletter Editor for a period of five years.

Norman was also involved in creating and putting together audio-visual presentations.

Through their involvement in doing landscape work for schools etc through SGAP, the Kembles formed their own landscape design business, doing domestic and commercial work, and using Australian plants exclusively.

A five-year term as Vice-President followed, with both Norman and Shirley serving on the Flower Show Committee. Up until then, the Waverly Group flower shows consisted of single specimens in jars. Drawing upon their new career in the landscape industry, they were able to incorporate landscape design features in these flower shows.

They were also heavily involved in the group's activities such as bush walking and maintenance of local reserves in Mount Waverly.

Norman and Shirley moved to New South Wales in 1981, and soon became active members of the Central Coast Group. Their first involvement was as delegates to the N.S.W. Council in the same year. They retained this position until 1989.

In 1986, Norman took on the role of Editor of "Native Plants" (the State branch newsletter), which he edited until 1990. In those pre-computer days, proof reading was a slow process, which occupied both Shirley and Norman for countless hours.

In addition to their positions on the State Council, they served in many roles on the committee of the Central Coast Group. Shirley was President in 1987-1988, while Norman was President in 1990.

Norman has served a number of terms as Vice-President, his final term expiring in 1994. He and Shirley have always been involved in the organising and design of our annual exhibition.

At the group level, the Kembles have been tireless workers for the Society. They have always been available to offer their services on rosters for group activities, often the first to volunteer.

Norman and Shirley were accorded Life Membership of the Central Coast Group in 1994, for their dedication and service to the local group and to the community.

In the broader community, they have been tireless workers for the promotion of not just Australian plants, but more wide-ranging environmental concerns. The Kembles have made themselves available to talk to many groups and garden clubs about Australian plants, and in particular, landscaping with Australian plants

They are long-serving, active members of the Australian Conservation Foundation, the National Parks Association, Friends of the Botanic Gardens and Greening Australia. Each year, they have entered their garden in the annual Wyong or Gosford Council Spring Garden Competition, as well as participating as judges.

The Kembles have made a significant contribution to SGAP (N.S.W.) through their involvement with the Central Coast Group and the State Council.

I commend Norman and Shirley Kemple for the award of Life Membership of the Society for Growing Australian Plants."

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8.10. APPENDIX - 10:

- RULES OF THE CENTRAL COAST GROUP -

1. Name

The name of the Group is: **The Society for Growing Australian Plants (New South Wales) Ltd Central Coast Group**, (hereinafter called **The Group**)

The Group is a district sub-branch of "The Society for Growing Australian Plants (New South Wales) Ltd" Australian Company Number 002 680408 (hereinafter called **The Company**).

The Company operates under the business name: **Australian Plants Society**.

2. Rules

2.1 The Group shall have its own set of rules, but these rules should be read in conjunction with the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company, and shall not be inconsistent with the Memorandum.

2.2 Amendments to these Rules must be submitted in writing to the Committee. After discussion by the Committee, notice of such proposed amendments shall be given to the Group by way of the next Newsletter.

2.3 Amendments to these rules:

- a) shall not be made except by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present at a meeting called for that purpose; and
- b) are subject to approval by the Council of the Company.

3. Aims

The aims of the Group shall be the same as the aims of the company, which include:

- a) To foster and promote appreciation, study and participation in growing and propagating Australian native plants
- b) By any lawful means to foster, support and promote the preservation and conservation of Australian native plants
- c) To encourage the use of Australian native plants in home gardens and public places
- d) To improve Australian native plants as garden subjects
- e) To interest the nursery industry in propagating and supplying Australian native plants to the public
- f) To increase and disseminate general knowledge of Australian native plants.

4. Membership

The categories of membership shall be the same as those of the Company:

Membership Qualification:

4.1 Only members of the Company may be members of the Group

4.2 A member of the Company shall be deemed to be a member of the Group

- a) upon receipt by the Group of that member's District Group Rebate; or
- b) upon payment to the Group of an amount equal to the District Group Rebate

4.3 Membership application shall be made in writing, signed by the applicant upon the prescribed membership form

- 4.4** Every application form shall be accompanied by the payment of the first annual subscription fee, and entry fee (if any)

Cessation of Membership

Membership shall cease:

- a) on tendering a notice of resignation; or
- b) if the subscription of a member is not paid after a period of three (3) months after it became due

5. Fees and Subscriptions

- 5.1** Members shall pay an annual subscription fee, which shall be determined by the N.S.W. State Council
- 5.2** Annual subscriptions shall be due on the anniversary of the commencement of membership

6. Accounts, Funds and Property

- 6.1** Operation of the Group Bank Account(s) shall require the signature of at least two (2) of three (3) Committee members who have been authorized for that purpose by the Committee
- 6.2** The books of the Group shall be open to inspection by any member upon seven (7) days' written application to the Committee
- 6.3** The financial year of the Group shall close on 31 October
- 6.4** The audited statement of Group accounts shall be published in the Group Newsletter
- 6.5** The income and property of the Group shall be used solely towards the promotion of the aims of the Group as set forth in these Rules
- 6.6** No portion shall be paid or transferred by way of dividend or bonus or otherwise to the members of the Group

EXCEPT

The payment of remuneration to officers or members of the Group for repayment of out-of-pocket expenses

- 6.7** An auditor shall:
- a) not be a Committee member
 - b) be an experienced bookkeeper or a qualified accountant
 - c) examine all accounts, vouchers, receipt books and other financial records
 - d) furnish a statement on the financial position of the Group at the Annual General Meeting, and
 - e) offer advice to the Treasurer

7. Meetings

- 7.1** Types of Meetings:
Meetings of the Group shall be
- a) General Meetings, and
 - b) Business meetings, being the Annual General Meeting, Special General Meetings and Committee Meetings
- 7.2** General Meetings:
General Meetings of the Group shall be held monthly, with the exception of January, and shall not require a quorum
- 7.3** Annual General Meeting:
An Annual General Meeting of the Group shall be held in December each year

The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be to :

- a) confirm the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
- b) receive the Annual Report(s) and Financial Statements
- c) elect the Committee members for the following year
- d) consider any other business that may be brought before the Annual General Meeting
- e) the quorum for the Annual General Meeting shall be 20% of the financial membership

7.4 Special General Meetings:

Special General Meetings shall be convened by the Committee at the written request of ten (10) financial members

A request by members for a Special General Meeting shall:

- a) state the purpose of the Meeting
- b) be signed by the members making the request, and
- c) be lodged with the Secretary of the Group

A Special General Meeting shall be convened within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the request by the Committee

No other business other than that specified in the notice convening a Special General Meeting shall be conducted at the meeting

A quorum for a Special General Meeting shall be 20% of the financial membership

7.5 Committee Meetings:

The Committee shall meet separately no less than six (6) times per year

The business of the Group, other than that conducted at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting, shall be conducted by the Committee

The quorum for a Committee Meeting shall be five (5) members of the Committee

8. Meeting Conduct

8.1 No business shall be transacted at any meeting unless the appropriate quorum is present

8.2 The President shall preside at all meetings of the Group. If the President is unavailable, one of the Vice-Presidents. If no Vice-President is available, then the members present shall elect one of their number to preside

8.3 At any meeting, a resolution put to the vote of the meeting shall be decided on a show of hands unless a poll is requested (before or on the declaration of the vote).

If a poll is called, it may be taken in the manner prescribed by the presiding officer at the meeting.

The result of the poll shall be recorded as a resolution of the meeting.

8.4 Each member present shall only be allowed one vote.

8.5 No member shall be allowed to vote if their status is unfinancial.

8.6 No motion passed at any business meeting shall be rescinded at any subsequent business meeting unless notice of the intention to propose such a rescission has been given to the Committee.

9. The Committee

9.1 The conduct of the Group's business is the responsibility of the elected officers, known as the Committee (see Clause **7.5**)

- 9.2** The Committee shall comprise:
- a) the President
 - b) two (2) Vice-Presidents
 - c) the Secretary
 - d) the Treasurer
 - e) the Delegate to the council of the Company
 - f) the Newsletter Editor, and
 - g) other Officers elected to the committee at the Annual General Meeting
- 9.3** The Committee shall have the power to fill any Committee vacancy
- 9.4** Each member of the Committee shall hold office until the beginning of the Annual General Meeting following the date of the member's election, at which all Committee positions shall be declared vacant by the Returning Officer. Members of the Committee may stand for re-election at the following Annual General Meeting, providing that the position of President shall not be held by the same person for more than three (3) years in succession. After a period of one year, such person may stand for re-election as President.

10. Election of Committee Members

- 10.1** Nomination of candidates for election as Committee members of the Group
- a) may be made in writing , nominated and seconded by two members of the Group and endorsed by the candidate on the prescribed nomination form and forwarded to the Secretary of the Group fourteen (14) days prior to the Annual General Meeting; or
 - b) may be called from the floor at the Annual General Meeting
- 10.2** The Committee shall appoint a Returning Officer, who is not a candidate, for the conduct of the election of the Committee and other officers.
- 10.3** Election of Committee members shall be by acclamation, except in the case where more than one candidate has been nominated for a position. This position will be elected by ballot of financial members present. (see Clauses **8.3, 8.4, 8.5**)

11. Powers and duties of the committee

- 11.1** The business of the Group shall be managed by the Committee.
- 11.2** The Committee shall exercise authority to act on behalf of members of the Group between General Meetings, subject always to the authority of the Group to amend or reverse a decision of the Committee.
- 11.3** The Committee shall determine the business and order of business at each meeting of the Group.
- 11.4** The President may, at any time, on the request of three (3) members of the Committee, summon a meeting of the Committee.
- 11.5** The Committee may delegate any of its powers and functions to one or more sub-committees consisting of members of the Group to undertake specific tasks.
- 11.6** The notice of each General Meeting shall be forwarded to each financial member through the Newsletter, at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- 11.7** Agenda items for General Meetings, Annual General Meetings and Committee Meetings are to be submitted to the Secretary fourteen (14) days prior to each meeting. The agenda for each Committee Meeting shall provide for General Business.
- 11.8** The Secretary shall:

- a) forward a notice of meeting and agenda to each Committee member seven (7) days prior to a Committee Meeting, and
- b) place a notice of meeting in the latest Group Newsletter, except in the case of an emergency meeting.

12. Duties of Committee and Elected Officers

12.1 President

The President shall

- a) preside at all General, Special General and Committee Meetings when present, and shall have a casting vote only, but shall be eligible to vote in elections
- b) prepare and present an Annual Report for the Annual General Meeting
- c) rule on the validity of all actions and proposals

12.2 Vice-President(s)

The Vice-President(s) shall

- a) assist the President in discharging duties
- b) act on behalf of the President during the President's absence, and
- c) preside over meetings during the President's absence

12.3 Secretary

The Secretary shall

- a) register with the N.S.W. State Secretary, after the Annual General Meeting each year, the names and addresses of the Committee members
- b) summon the Annual General Meeting, each General Meeting and each Committee meeting
- c) conduct and keep a record of all correspondence of the Group
- d) record and distribute the minutes of each general and Committee meeting, except where a Minute Secretary has been appointed for that purpose
- e) prepare and distribute agenda of each Committee meeting
- f) keep a record of attendance at each General and Committee meeting
- g) give written notice to the State Secretary of the person elected as Group Delegate and of any change in the person so elected. Notice shall be given prior to the first Council Meeting attended by the Delegate
- h) maintain a register of the assets of the Group and their location

12.4 Treasurer:

The Treasurer shall:

- a) keep a record of all monies received and disbursed
- b) furnish a progress financial report to each Committee meeting
- c) present accounts for payment to the Committee for approval
- d) keep a separate banking account in the name of the Group
- e) present an annual financial statement of accounts at the annual General Meeting
- f) forward to the Company Co-ordinator a copy of the audited Annual Statement no later than 31 January
- g) deposit all monies received by the Group within twenty-one (21) days of receipt
- h) forward membership details and payments to the State Membership Officer

12.5 Librarian:

The Librarian shall:

- a) develop and oversee the Group Library Policy
- b) keep a record of publications purchased by or donated to the Group
- c) be responsible for the care and maintenance of the Group collection
- e) maintain a borrowing record of the publications in the Group collection
- f) carry out a regular stock take of the Group collection

12.6 Newsletter Editor:

The Newsletter Editor shall:

- a) take responsibility for the production and distribution of the monthly Newsletter
- b) post subscription renewal notices to members

12.7 Membership Officer:

The Membership Officer shall:

- a) maintain a current membership list
- b) forward membership renewal notices to the Newsletter Editor

12.8 Delegate

The Delegate shall:

- a) represent the interests of the Group at meetings of the State Council
- b) report proceedings of the State council to the Committee meetings
- c) have discretionary powers to vote at State Council meetings on all business items in the absence of advice from the Committee

12.9 Publicity Officer:

The Publicity Officer shall:

- a) be responsible for the promotion of the Group
- b) forward publicity articles to the media
- c) forward notices to the media advertising forthcoming group events
- d) furnish the State Publicity Officer and the Editor of "Native Plants" and "Australian Plants" with all the relevant information concerning the Group

12.10 Program Officer

The Program Office shall:

- a) develop the program of activities and guest speakers each year
- b) liaise with the Publicity Officer regarding the promotion of Group activities

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8.11. **APPENDIX – 11:**

- GOLDEN RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER PLANTS -

*(Formulated over time at meetings of the sub-group **Plants in Pots** and presented to members as part of a presentation at the monthly meeting in December 1997)*

1. Know your plant, its family, natural habitat and growth pattern, preferred soil and water needs.
2. Choose best quality potting mix and vary it to suit the plant's requirements.
3. Perfect drainage and an open mix. Don't stand pots on bare ground. If in a saucer, raise the pot above the water level. (Members have had mixed experiences with water-well pots)
4. Group pots together for protection from the sun and for ease of watering. Cover the top of the pot with mulch – tan bark, gravel, small stones, pieces of wood, etc to prevent drying. Heap mulch up around pots, or place small pots inside bigger pots or in holes cut in an upturned foam box.
5. Watering is best done (after first testing the mix for dryness) by soaking it in a bucket / tub / drum until bubbles stop. Drain well, do not over-water, avoid tipping water from saucers back into the pot (it may contain harmful salts).
6. Rotate pots for even growth. Move them regularly to maximise appropriate sunlight, shade or light.
7. Fertilize regularly: a weak mixture of soluble Aquasol or equivalent fortnightly in the growing season, or spray the foliage weekly to force the pace. Vary the type of fertiliser used - fish-oil, Seasol, liquid organic mix or urine-based, etc.
8. Add slow-release pellets (native Osmocote or equivalent) to the potting mix. When re-applying, do not leave pellets exposed to light on top of the pot; cover with mulch.
9. Tip-prune most species regularly to maintain shape and for compactness. Do not cut into old or firm wood. Remove weak growth. Check regularly for pests – scale, ants, sooty mould, mealy bugs, caterpillars, etc.
10. Hanging pots need more water. The addition of Wettasoil or equivalent to the mix can help absorption.
11. Check pots regularly for earthworms (Re-pot with fresh mix if needed); ants (soak in Thiodan solution or equivalent); grubs (physically remove grubs and prune roots); root aphids or fungus (soak in Fongarid or equivalent).
12. Put used potting mix out in the weather so that salts and pathogens can leach out. Then add it to the garden rather than re-use it.

13. Be realistic about the number of pots you can care for adequately, given the time-consuming and regular attention they need.

And most reassuring of all

14. If a plant dies, be assured that

YOU PERSONALLY WERE IN NO WAY TO BLAME!!!!

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8.12. APPENDIX – 12:

- PLANT OF THE MONTH - SEPTEMBER, 1997 -

Jim Thomson

(Jim and Wilma Thomson transferred their membership from Parra-Hills Group when they moved to the Central Coast and developed a new native garden in Dooralong Valley. They rapidly found a place among the group's best plant propagators, supplying the raffle table for a number of years. Jim found a welcome reception as the group's resident humorist, both in person and in his writing. This is an example of his style.)

The Plant of the Month is a mint-bush. It grows only about 1.5 metres tall, but spreads out 3 metres or so. Its features are an excellent mid-purple colour, pleasant leaf scent and the fact that it starts flowering in early August and is still flowering strongly a month later when most mints are thinking about putting out their first blossom. And what is the name of this plant?

Well, thereby hangs a tale.

The plant that led me to decide to call it plant of the month was not labelled. I consulted my sometimes trusty card system, and found that roughly where the plant was blooming, a plant named *Prostanthera incana sens lat* had been planted. I relate very strongly to plants called "**something sens lat**" because, as far as I can work out, **sens lat** is botanist-speak for "for want of a better name". I picture Botanist A saying to Botanist B "Well, really, George, I haven't got a clue what that plant you brought in is. There's a rough chance that it might be a form of *Prostanthera incana*". Call it *Prostanthera incana sens lat*.

That's talking my kind of language, in a manner of speaking.

It turned out that the *Prostanthera incana sens lat*, which I was going to bring in as Plant of the Month, was really *Prostanthera incana sens lat sens lat*, in that, in another part of the garden, I came across an identical plant clearly labelled *Prostanthera 'Poorinda Pixie'*. Another identical plant, not labelled, appeared in my sometimes trusty card index as *P. 'Poorinda Pixie'*. A fourth plant was labelled in the same way. So the evidence that my Plant of the Month was not *Prostanthera incana sens lat* was now quite strong. I found this very disappointing because, as a plant namer, indeed as a namer in general, I am definitely a **sens latter**. I even find myself using this approach with people. For example, when I was new to this group, I tended to confuse **Norman Kemble** and **Alan Hodge**. Well, to look at them, they could be twins, couldn't they? No? Anyway, on one occasion I approached one of them and said, in a **sens lat** kind of way "Hello, Norman." The person that I had approached said that he preferred to be known as Alan.

I wasn't at all offended; I merely retired to a convenient corner to think about it, and decided that, very likely, the gentleman in question was named Alan, and that I should try to call him that in future. It struck me too that the fact that people can say what their name is, makes them easier to name than plants. When I say to a plant "Hello, my beauty. What's your name?" I normally receive no reply. This results in us **sens lat** people tending to be somewhat diffident and lacking in confidence, fortitude and resolution.

If, for example, I have tentatively identified a plant as a grevillea and someone – anyone -- comes along and says "Don't be a dill, Jim. Any fool can see that is a boronia," do I defend my position? No. I say "Yes Sir (or Madam). Thank you, Sir/Madam. Boronia it is then." Not very macho.

All of this, however, can change. One day, I am sure, someone will come up and say "Isn't this a nice Westringia, Jim?" And I will look behind the flower at the calyx and see, not the open fingers of a Westringia, but two hands, fingers together, and I will say firmly and with confidence, resolution and fortitude "This is not a Westringia. It is a Prostanthera." Nor will any amount of grovelling and begging get me to change my mind. I will say, "It is definitely a Prostanthera. And **stop grovelling!**" – macho as anything

Which brings me back to Plant of the Month. There may still, perhaps, be just the slightest shadow of the **sens lat** in calling it, as I now do, **Poorinda Pixie**, but I have looked at the calyx, and I can say to you with full confidence, fortitude and resolution. **It is definitely a Prostanthera!**

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8.13. APPENDIX – 13:**- OFFICE BEARERS OF THE CENTRAL COAST GROUP -**

YEAR	PRESIDENT	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1972	Ollie Parry	Stan Oakes	Stan Oakes
1973	Irene Vale-Lane	Don Baxter	Don Baxter
1974	Irene Vale-Lane	Don Baxter	Harold Jay/ Lesley Waters
1975	Lyn Parry	Barney Waters	Lesley Waters
1976	Lyn Parry	Barney Waters	John McRae
1977	Milton Larven	Barney Waters	John McRae
1978	Milton Larven	Margaret O'Neill	John McRae
1979	Joan Doney	Margaret O'Neill/ Gary Rowe	Shirley Larven
1980	Joan Doney	Gary Rowe	Shirley Larven
1981	Ross Worrall	Gary Rowe	Cliff Rudkin
1982	Ross Worrall	Greg Lamont	Cliff Rudkin
1983	Gary Rowe	Greg Lamont	David Errington
1984	Gary Rowe	Greg Lamont	David Errington
1985	Greg Lamont	Peter Turner	David Errington
1986	Greg Lamont	Peter Turner	David Errington
1987	Shirley Kemble	Peter Turner	David Errington
1988	Shirley Kemble	Peter Turner	David Errington
1989	Dan Massey	Rhys McGregor	Dorothy Lamberton
1990	Clive Austen	Rhys McGregor	Isabel Perry
1991	Norman Kemble	Rhys McGregor	Isabel Perry
1992	Don George	Rhys McGregor	Isabel Perry
1993	Don George	Rhys McGregor	Isabel Perry
1994	Rhys McGregor	Simone Murray/ Cathy Cole	Audrey Taggart
1995	Rhys McGregor	Julie McGregor	Audrey Taggart
1996	Rhys McGregor	Julie McGregor	Tom Edgerton
1997	Audrey Taggart	Alan Hodge	Tom Edgerton
1998	Audrey Taggart	Thelma Wallace	Tom Edgerton
1999	Audrey Taggart	Thelma Wallace	Syd & Evelyn Fabri - acting
2000	Thelma Wallace	Diana Dean	John Pinnock
2001	Thelma Wallace	Diana Dean	John Pinnock
2002	John Connor	Diana Dean	John Pinnock
2003	John Connor	Diana Dean	John Pinnock
2004	John Connor	Max Maughan	Robert Madden
2005	Graeme Ingall	Max Maughan	Robert Madden

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