

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



August 2020

NEXT EHG MEETING:

7.30 pm, Wednesday 5 August 2020

MEMBERS' NIGHT – ZOOM MEETING

Our President says:

'We don't have a formal speaker so I would appreciate if some of you would be prepared to talk about some aspect of your garden or just show images of plants you may have in your garden or have seen recently in our nearby parks.'

'I will send out an email about the Zoom meeting arrangements.'

WELCOME to the August 2020 edition of the APS East Hills Group Newsletter.

This issue includes a Note from the President, an affectionate look at Banksias and Birds, a stroll in Kings Park in Perth, and a trip to a local garden with a large Blueberry Ash! We also have details of an actual live physical APS event – with special COVID-appropriate restrictions – see page 6. Also on page 6 is an invitation to North Shore Group's Zoom meeting on Friday 14 August.

Next issue I'd like to include some words and photos about Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea*). If you have any good photos or could write a few paragraphs about Grass Trees you have grown or seen, please send them to me by about 25 August. Thank you!

Stay well! I hope to see you at our East Hills Group Zoom meeting on Wednesday.

Jan Douglas
Interim Editor
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<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you are all well and coping with these difficult times. Some of you may have heard the radio broadcast about Karl Schurr's coronavirus experience - if not, it is still available on a podcast, see <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/why-we-shouldnt-be-complacent-about-catching-coronavirus/12430946>. Karl has endured a terrible experience, let's hope his recovery progresses swiftly.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to play havoc with our activities. We still cannot have any face-to-face meetings and so for the foreseeable future, Zoom meetings will be the norm. The next regional group meeting is scheduled for the 12th September and is being hosted by the Menai Wildflower Group. The Board has recently had discussions about holding the meeting in the current conditions and it is likely that the face-to-face meeting will be cancelled and replaced with a Zoom meeting. I think, based on the risk of community transmission of the virus and the age bracket of our members, avoiding close personal contact is a sensible move.

It is hard to believe that this time last year, we were concerned about the dry conditions and the impact it was having on our gardens and the local environment. Already, there were fears of a bad fire season and we all know what transpired. Now, after the good summer rains and more recent east coast lows our gardens are thriving. Since the summer rains many plants have decided to flower notwithstanding that they are not supposed to flower in Autumn. I have noticed that our *Indigofera australis* plants are starting to flower – haven't they read the instructions - they are not supposed to flower until Spring! We also have a Robin Red Breast Melaleuca, *M. lateritia*, which is a summer-flowering plant and it is now in flower – all very peculiar.

Keep safe and enjoy our gardens and parks – being outdoors is probably the safest and most rewarding activity we can do at present.

We will hold another Zoom meeting starting at 7:30pm on Wednesday 5th August. We don't have a formal speaker so I would appreciate if some of you would be prepared to talk about some aspect of your garden or just show images of plants you may have in your garden or have seen recently in our nearby parks. I will send out an email about the Zoom meeting arrangements.

Graham Fry
President, East Hills Group

FROM OUR JULY MEETING APS EAST HILLS GROUP MEETING – WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020

Notes recorded by Liz Cameron

Meeting opened at 7.35 pm with an online attendance of eight - Boyd Webster, Ellie Smith, Marie O'Connor, Jan Douglas, Dave Crawford, Dorothy Luther, Graham Fry, Liz Cameron.

Apologies from: Tony and Kate Porritt, Ashlie Stephenson, Des O'Connor, Chris King.

Graham Fry thanked Jan for producing the last four newsletters, despite her wish to step down from the editorship at the end of last year.

Graham reported on the proceedings of an APS NSW Board Meeting the previous week.

Graham noted that East Hills Group usually sends donations to a number of environmental groups at this time of year and asked members to consider appropriate recipients.

Three members then gave short presentations: Dave Crawford – A Stroll Through King's Park; Dorothy Luther – The Blueberry Ash in her garden; Graham Fry – Banksias and Birds.

FROM OUR JULY MEETING
A STROLL IN KINGS PARK

David Crawford

Dave presented a selection of photos from Kings Park, Perth. The photos were taken in September 2019 when Dave and Jan travelled to Western Australia for the ANPSA conference and spent a week in Perth before joining a bus tour to Albany for the conference. The photos included colourful mixed plantings, imaginative mosaics featuring banksias and acacias, and a range of other Western Australian plants. A few of the photos are shown below.



Above: View of Perth from Kings Park; Flowers and seed pods of *Acacia glaucoptera* (Flat Wattle)



Above: Colourful mass plantings, *Eucalyptus macrocarpa* (Rose of the West), *Eucalyptus youngiana* (Large-fruited Mallee), *Conospermum wycherleyi* (Smokebush)



Above: Banksia mosaic, *Banksia blechnifolia* (Southern Blechnum Banksia), Acacia mosaic

FROM OUR JULY MEETING
BANKSIAS AND BIRDS

Graham Fry

We live in a free-standing house in suburban Hurstville and are fortunate to have plenty of space for a garden. As well as the beauty that native plants bring to our environment, our plantings have always had a wildlife-attraction element, primarily for birds, but for insects as well. Our property currently has around 150 plants growing on it, ranging in size from groundcovers to 12m high trees. The east coast banksias are native to our area and so I have grown some of them, not always with success! However, three species have gone well, they are:

| Species | Common Name | Year Planted | Size |
|---|-----------------|--------------|------|
| <i>Banksia serrata</i> | Old Man Banksia | 1996 | 12m |
| <i>Banksia ericifolia</i> "Little Eric" | Heath Banksia | 2005 | 5m |
| <i>Banksia integrifolia</i> | Coast Banksia | 1984 | 12m |

Of interest to us is how the wildlife have used these three banksias. We keep daily records of the birds that are in or flying over our property and so we have reasonably good records of what plants the birds are using.

The oldest Banksia, *B. integrifolia*, flowers mainly during autumn and winter but can often have a few flowers on it at other times as well. It is popular with honeyeaters, particularly Red Wattlebirds and Noisy Miners. This species does not retain the seed once it ripens and so it is not generally attractive to seed-eating birds like parrots.



Photos above show three stages in the development of *B integrifolia* flowers, a cone after the release of seeds, and a mature tree near Snake Bay, South Coast NSW. Photos: Jan Douglas

Our *B. serrata* is a large tree, it flowers in early summer around November/December, however, disappointingly it doesn't seem to attract many nectar-feeding birds. It may attract possums, but we have not seen them in the tree. While it does retain its fruit, it doesn't seem to attract many parrots, perhaps because the flowers were not fertilised. I know from speaking with Jan and Dave that *B. serrata* on their property are used by parrots so perhaps ours it not typical.

The third banksia, *B. ericifolia*, while sold as a low-growing form, is now level with our roof! Disappointingly, I have found it virtually impossible to prune, as no new growth emerges low down on the trunk. As a result it is very leggy with a bare trunk and all the foliage at the extremities. But it is the most popular banksia in our collection: during flowering honeyeaters and Rainbow Lorikeets come into the flowers and at night we have seen Ring-tailed Possums in the tree, we assume taking nectar. But it is the seed that is very popular: for the last five years from around April to June, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos have frequented the plant. They break

off the fruit cones and then systematically extract the tiny seeds and are often in the tree for over an hour. We know when they have visited, as the ground is strewn with debris from their activities!



Photos above show flower spikes of *Banksia ericifolia*, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos with cones, and dropped cones, leaves and twigs, all in Graham and Liz's garden. Photos: Graham Fry

Overall, our banksias are an important component of our garden and they give us great pleasure, particularly when the cockatoos are visiting.

FROM OUR JULY MEETING RE-IMAGINING THE GARDEN

Dorothy Luther

Dorothy described her property, on the site of a former dairy, as being wall-to-wall clay. This has suited the Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*) which has grown very large and become a major feature of the backyard, providing good shade in summer. Unfortunately it is difficult to grow anything beneath it and Dorothy asked for suggestions to overcome this problem. This led to discussions of other members' experiences with Blueberry Ash, and a variety of suggestions for making best use of the area. One suggestion was plants in pots, grouping different-sized pots around some very large ones; another was to install permeable paving for a shady entertaining area with a few large pots of shade-loving plants for decoration and to define the space. Another option would be to prune some lower branches which would let in more light and might increase the area under the tree that is readily accessible.



Above: Flowers of Blueberry Ash (Photo: Jeff Howes, <https://resources.austplants.com.au/plant/elaecarpus-reticulatus/>);
Leaves and fruit of Blueberry Ash (Photo: John Tann, Wikimedia Commons
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d5/Elaeocarpus_reticulatus_2.jpg)

COMING EVENTS

Because of the Covid-19 outbreak, there are few face-to-face meetings to report. However,

- **North Shore Group is having a Plant Sale on 23 and 24 August unless raining** – special timed bookings are required to meet COVID-19 restrictions – see <https://www.austplants.com.au/> for details and <https://www.austplants.com.au/event-3923366> to book;
- A visit to **Peter and Margaret Olde's magnificent garden, 'Silky Oaks'**, is on the cards for Saturday 10 October – more details will be included in future newsletters.

Some meetings are being held on-line, using Zoom. For details, see the APS NSW e-newsletter (which you should be receiving by email), and look out for an email from our President inviting you to our monthly EHG meeting for August. Also, **North Shore Group invites you to their Zoom meeting at 7.45 pm on Friday 14 September**. The meeting will feature a talk on native bees in the wild by Michael Batley and a plant identification segment using photos from the Bobbin Head walk. To join the Zoom meeting use this link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84873584169>. The meeting ID is 848 7358 4169.



Photos above: David Crawford

EAST HILLS GROUP CONTACTS

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