



**Menai
Wildflower
Group**



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group December 2016

President's Report

As the end of the year approaches, it is nice to reflect on the wonderful experiences we have had in 2016. It has been a real pleasure to be involved with such an active and welcoming committee, along with members who have been a big part of the essence of the group.

Get ready for our end-of-year Xmas Party on the 14 December and celebrate with your fellow members.

The highlight for the year for Sharon and me was the visit to Tamworth for the APS NSW Get-together. It was a well thought-out event and such a lovely place to visit.

I thank and welcome the newly elected committee members for the start of the 2017 season. We have already had some great ideas of what we can do to have a fulfilling calendar for the members.

The compound nursery has really gone ahead leaps and bounds with East Hills group sharing the facilities and contributing to the maintenance of the garden bed areas.

Keep in mind 25 February 2017 for the APS NSW quarterly gathering which will be hosted at the Illawong RFS by Menai Wildflower Group with the guest speaker supplied by APS NSW. It will give us a great opportunity to show off the compound nursery and garden mounds. This event will be an additional meeting to our scheduled one earlier in the month.

On behalf of all the members of the Menai Wildflower Group we wish Jayne Rixon and her family all the best for her recovery at this difficult time.

Jason Cockayne



Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

3 Dec Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

3 Dec Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**14 Dec Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Christmas Social Evening
6pm start; bring a plate to share**

4 Feb Working Bee at IRFB 9am start

4 Feb Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**8 Feb Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Guest Speaker – TBA
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From the Treasurer

APS NSW has increased the membership fees starting from 1 January 2017 as follows: Individual \$56, Individual concession \$48, Joint \$66, Joint concession \$58. An updated MWG renewal form will be posted on the MWG website after Xmas.

Sharon Pearson

Christmas Social Evening

When you come to the Christmas Social Evening on 14 December remember that the start time is 6pm.

Don't forget to bring your own eating utensils, plate, meat, drink and something delectably delicious, either sweet or savoury, to share with your fellow gourmands.



Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to next newsletter will be Wednesday 23 Jan'17.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or e-mail forbes100@gmail.com) before the deadline.

Working Bees at IRFB start at 9am and include weeding, mulching and lunching.

Propagation days are now a regular part of running the nursery at Illawong Rural Fire Station. The next two will be at 1pm on Saturdays 3 December and 4 February.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery. Please contact Lloyd Hedges if you wish to start attending.

The Group's Website Home Page can be easily accessed by doing a Google search

using the phrase "Menai Wildflower Group" and selecting what should be the first option offered.

Visit a neighbouring group

When you joined the Menai Wildflower Group you became a member of the NSW APS and therefore are welcome at other APS group meetings, bushwalks, etc. This gives members a lot more activities to participate in.

Visit the APS NSW website www.austplant.com.au/ and check out what other districts are doing, particularly our neighbours:

Easthills <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/> and Sutherland <http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/>.

Lloyd Hedges

The outgoing editor says thank you for the mug and tray depicting *Canis diversa*.

From our florist

Helen Patience is enduring a period of enforced bedrest after surgery. To keep her from tearing out her hair, we asked her for some ideas about flowers for Christmas for this newsletter. Here they Are:

Xmas flowers

Australian flowers and foliage to use and are available for Christmas decoration.

Fresh Flowers.

Flannel flower (*Actinotus helianthi*)

Kangaroo paw (*Anigozanthos*),

BANKSIAS -candlestick, *baxteri* cone(dried or fresh),*baxteri* (green),sceptre.

Christmas bells (*Blandfordia grandiflora*)

Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum*

gummiferum) Waxflower (*Chamelaucium*)-Purple Pride & Snowflake, South Australian daisy (*Ixodia achilleoides*)-white, Scarlet feather flower (*Verticordia brandis*)-red.

Paper daisies (*Xerochrysum*, *Rhodanthe manglesii*, *R. chlorocephala ssp. Rosea*)

If you are lucky enough you might get some Grevillea-(any colour.)

Foliages.

Mistletoe (*Amyoma* 36 species, *Dendrophthoe* six species, *Notothixos* four species) included in the 90 species native to Australia. Europe has only one variety.

Woollybush (*Adenanthos cygnorum*) is now used as Christmas trees.



Woollybush

Eucalyptus –any. Some last longer than others.

Tetragona -long lasting.

Fuchsia gum (*Eucalyptus forrestiana*)



Fuchsia gum

Woody pear (*Xylemelum angustifolium*)

Geebung (*Persoonia longifolia*, *Persoonia virgata*) Umbrella fern (*Sticherus*

flabellatus) Holly oak (*Xylomelum*) Wallaby tails, Kangaroo tails, Spear grass (*Xanthorrhoea spp*)-fresh or dried.



Wallaby tails

Don't forget dried gum leaves make great gift tags and gum nuts enhance place cards.

Helen Patience

October Guest Speaker

Pink Flannel Flowers Where are we up to? with Lloyd Hedges

Lloyd became interested in flannel flowers in the 90's, and was particularly interested in smoke germination of seeds, in propagating the well-known Sydney flannel flower, *Actinotus helianthi*.



Flannel flowers are in the carrot family which includes lots of herbs, including hollow-stemmed annuals and biennials. They are related to parsnip, coriander, parsley and celery, and natives *Trachymene*, *Xanthosia* *Platysace hydrocotyle*.

The pink flannel flower, *A forsythii*, is a bit of a mystery. It has a limited distribution, in the higher parts of the Blue Mountains and inland from the Shoalhaven, but it is very irregular in flowering and many native plant enthusiasts have never seen it.



We were alerted to a population of the pink flannel flowers a couple of years ago, at Narrow Neck, in the Blue Mountains, by David Forbes, who was told about them by a ranger friend. We followed the directions and found them off a little dirt road, and they were stunning, profuse, and extended for hundreds of metres on land that had obviously been recently burnt. We saw them later on another site, near Newnes. Lloyd gathered some seeds. A year later, no sign of the flowers, though we did see a couple of the plants near the edge of the site.

Conditions – after fire, more light, decreased competition for water, increased fertility, possible ash-bed effect, mineral availability increased.

The sites where we have seen them were southerly aspect, altitude about 900 metres, shallow soils of decomposing sandstone, on

the lower edge of the heath, in association with plants such as *Banksia oblongifolia*, in areas with a higher rainfall than Sydney and lower temperatures.

Propogation – initially Lloyd tried the same techniques he uses for *A helianthi* – soaking fresh seed in smoke water and sowing on vermiculite/perlite mix and then placing them on heated benches, automatic misting.

This produced 11 plants from several hundred seeds, germination after four weeks. They were pushed along by half-strength Aquasol spray every two weeks, and tubed while still tiny, only the first true leaves sprouting, potting mix standard Debco with 30% perlite.

They were potted up to 300mm while small to reduce transplant shock, and variations in the potting media tried.

Results. Of the 11 plants germinated initially, 9 made it to flowering. They flowered well and produced seed, and the only insects observed visiting were ants. The plants were visibly dying as the last flowers opened, ie strictly annuals, unlike *A helianthi*. The media mix didn't make much difference; the most vigorous plants from the potting mix with perlite, the least from crushed sandstone.



Follow up germination trials, with seed that had been placed in frig or freezer, with and without smoke germination and aging of seed, produced no germination, a wipeout. After a year, a further trial, in March – same month as initial germination trial, produced 50% germination.

Further trials are ongoing. There are likely to be several inhibitory factors involved. Temperature at sowing time may be important. The latest batch of pink flannel flowers is flowering erratically. Some put out a few flowers during winter and with spring raced through flowering and are now dying. Is this due to the difference in climate? And will the seeds be fertile, do they need vectors, which may not be around at this time?

Actinotus helianthi can survive for several years, but *A forsythii* is strictly an annual. It may have potential as a bedding plant, but does not seem very reliable in Sydney, like other Blue Mountains plants. Being an annual restricts its horticultural attractiveness.

Mary Hedges

November Guest Speaker

There was no guest speaker because the time was taken up by AGM, plant show-and-tells, and thinking about our much-loved fellow member laid-up in hospital.

A glider at Joan Sutton's.

We set up an IR camera to see if we could find the cause of some strange colour changes on the rock. We got photos of several critters but this was the most interesting one. I am not sure what this species of glider is.



Nursery Report

We are now just completing the new propagation bed and it will be on-line for the next propagation afternoon on December 3.

This more than doubles the available bed space and with the additional hardening off bench it provides a sizable increase in our capacity.

To make use of this we are hoping to get another morning or afternoon propagation group going at the IRFB to produce extra stock.

Seedlings for Dharawahl and Five Islands National Parks

On Monday 21 November Marian W tubed up the first seedlings for Dharawahl NP. First were some Hakeas and Allocasuarinas. Next week we expect to be tubing up *Leptospermums polygalifolium* and *juniperinum*.

Hopefully some Scribbly gums will follow.

Following on *Banksia integrifolias*, Lomandras and Chenopods for Five Islands which are offshore from Wollongong project to help out the Little Penguins and White-faced Shear Water recovery plan.



Here are the first of many seedlings we are tubing up at the Tip Nursery for the Darawahl National Parks Autumn planting. These will be followed by the plants for the Five Islands NP (off Wollongong) where they will be used to replace the kikuyu grass which is such a menace for nesting Little Penguins and White-faced storm petrels.



Robin Tuckfield setting up the 'Falling Leaf' sensor that controls the mist jets in the new propagation bed. This new bed will increase our propagation space by 150%. Beside the propagation bed there is additional bench space with automatic watering.

This increase in facilities will allow us to form a week-day propagation group at the IRFB to complement our propagation afternoons on the first Saturday of each month which are open to the public. Several people have expressed interest and Pam Pitkeathly is coordinating this group. We hope some people whose interest is spiked by the Saturday workshops may move on to the week day group. The format of the group will be decided by those interested so contact Pam on 97719789 or pit.keath@bigpond.com.

Lloyd Hedges

Group Meetings

Meetings are held at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade each month except January. Most meetings are held on the second Wednesday at 7:00pm. The three winter meetings: June, July, August are held on the second Saturday of the month at 1pm.

The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.



Illawong Rural Fire Station

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary,
PO Box 3104 Bangor NSW 2234

Website is www.menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au

E-mail is menaiwildflower@austplants.com.au

President	Jason Cockayne	9570-8559
Vice President	Pam Pitkeathly	9771-9789
Secretary	Annette Tuckfield	9543 - 1490
Treasurer	Sharon Pearson	9570-8559
Editor	Pam Forbes	
APS-NSW Delegate		
Publicity Officer	Marion Payne	9543-1040
General Committee	Margaret Olde	9543-2242
	Jan Riley	
	Mary Hedges	9543-1216