



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group

June 2019

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Vice President's Report

This quarter has seen the most astonishing weather patterns all over the eastern states. We seem to have gone from fire, to drought, to flooding rains, almost in one week. Certainly not the weather for happy times in the garden! However, we have battled on, with our neighbouring group showing the Aussie plants they could gather to a wide audience at the Sydney Royal Agricultural Show, with commendable success, and with the workers at Illawarra Grevillea Park preparing for their Open Days in early May. Visitors saw that the Grevilleas really are laughing in North Bulli.

Do plan to visit the Blue Mountains this month and take in the special tours and talks being arranged by the local APS NSW Group. We are looking forward to proposing our member Lloyd Hedges as a Life Member, in recognition of his many years of service to the Society. His interests cover every objective set out for the State body, and members of local groups know the extent of his knowledge and involvement in conserving local flora and fauna. The Illawong RFS Gardens are a living illustration of what can be achieved by a small team of enthusiasts.



Let's hope that we get some significant rain soon, especially over the mountains where it is needed so much.

*Pam Pitkeathly, Vice President
(for MWG committee)*

Coming Events

- 8 June** Narelle Happ speaking on garden design, 1pm
- 15 June** Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS
- 20 June** Working Bee IRFS 9am
- 13 July** Explore the Tracks in the Royal National Park via Ken Griffiths' talk.
- 18 July** Working Bee IRFS 9am
- 20 Jul** Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS
- 10 Aug** Chris Lloyd talks about the program to reintroduce penguins to Eden's suburbs, 1pm
- 15 Aug** Working Bee IRFS 9am
- 17 Aug** Propagation workshop 1pm IRFS

Reports from Meetings

The Grevilleas are Laughing

The speaker at our February meeting, Brian Roach, began by informing us that after speaking to groups, generally Garden Clubs, for 25 years this was his 132nd talk!!



Grevillea sp, (M Olde).

The title of Brian's talk was "The Grevilleas are Laughing". Brian explained the story behind this title which occurred about ten years ago at Kangaroo Valley when he came upon a plant stall selling native and non-native plants. Brian commented on how hot it was and the young stall holder replied: 'Yeah, but the grevilleas are laughing!' A good title for a talk! Brian recounted some of his journey into Native Plants which began in 1974 when he was taken by a couple of friends to the Annual Plant Show then run by SGAP. He called it his 'Horticultural Road to Damascus'. Things have never been quite the same since he discovered the delights of Australian plants.

Now that climate change is well and truly upon us and the country is drying and dying, what can we plant that will best tolerate the summers of our future? Let's get back to the grevilleas. There are around 400 species of Grevillea, not counting about the same number of hybrids.

Here are some that Brian recommends, and by the merest chance, brought along for sale at the meeting. A good water-wise garden might include: *Grevillea lanigera*. The Mt Tamboritha form is a small compact bush, and one that is particularly hardy. It flowers in winter, one of the earliest species to come into flower, and the honeyeaters love it.

Grevillea 'Little Miss Muffett'. This small plant with upright growth and bright pink spider flowers

is a nice hardy plant. Believed to be a natural hybrid from around Collaroy.

Grevillea 'Lemondaze' and *Grevillea* 'Lady O' are produced by Peter Ollerenshaw. The latter was named after his mother. It is particularly successful in dry conditions and is suited to cold climates. *Grevillea* 'Honey Jo', a *G sericea* x *G linearifolia* is a hybrid which Brian registered with ACRA (Australian Cultivar Registration Authority) and named after his daughter Johanna, who passed away from a brain tumour, just before her 14th birthday. It is a cultivar with a surprising sweet perfume and is easy to propagate.

Other Grevilleas, which are also easy to propagate are:

Grevillea preissii - a low growing species with intense red flowers from sandy soils.

Grevillea 'Spider Mist' (*G. arenaria* x Fireworks), which came up as a seedling in Brian's own garden, is dense to the ground with soft foliage and at least one month of flowering.



Grevillea 'Spider Mist' (M Olde).

Grevillea vestita, is a beautiful winter flowering plant. This form, collected by Peter Olde in the garden of Keith Alcock in Perth, has soft pink flowers and grows to 1.5 m. Brian would like to recommend *Grevillea oldei* but it is a little difficult for some people to establish.

Other plants which thrive in dry conditions are the desert-loving eremophilas. *Eremophila* means 'desert loving' and is Australia's fourth largest genus. Good ones include:

Eremophila glabra 'Kalbarri Carpet', a prostrate plant with grey foliage and yellow bird-attractive flowers.

Eremophila glabra 'Morowa Gold'. This was growing in a native garden in York and a few pieces were sent to Brian. It is prostrate with intense gold flowers and green foliage.

Eremophila racemosa has attractive orange buds and pink flowers.

Eremophila maculata only grows to 50cm high.

Brian mentioned some other plants that are excellent for hot, dry conditions.

'Amazing Greys! How sweet the ground that displays a stretch of these'

One is the strong smelling *Homoranthus prolixus* 'Goldie Tops' which grows to 50cm high and flowers in late September-early November with rich gold flowers covering the plant.

Olearia languinosa 'Ghost Town' is good for a hot, dry spot.

Chamelaucium uncinatum x Verticordia plumosa 'Paddy's Pink' is extremely hardy, and, with its pretty pink flower heads, is a very popular cut flower. Another nice myrtaceous plant is *Thryptomene baeckeacea*, a prostrate plant that suckers.

Maireana oppositifolia and *Maireana sedifolia-chenopods* are both hardy grey foliage plants with potential in the cut flower trade,

Micromyrtus ciliata (Myrtaceae) flowers in August with small white flowers. It's easy to grow and hardy.

Leionema lamprophyllum has white flowers and lovely green foliage.

Melaleuca thymifolia, a plant that is great for native bees is as well as being very hardy. It has purple curl flowers and will tolerate a degree of bad drainage.

Isopogon anemonifolius. There is an excellent low form on the market at present with gold heads of flower over a long period.

Finally *Chamelaucium* 'Johanna's Christmas' is a hardy Christmas Bush which only grows to 2 m high.

Marg Olde

Georges Riverkeeper Tales

After Tony Wales' previous presentation to our monthly meetings, it was good to have him back for an update after spending more than eight years on the job. We heard of successes, difficulties and the new strategic plans for ensuring we have a clean river at least till 2022.

The George's Riverkeeper program started in 1979 and is a catchment management plan that involves eight different councils in the Georges River catchment area. This makes it a huge 960km² area to administer, with 45% being in natural condition and the other 55% given over to various uses. It is also home to four million people and the degree of urbanisation brings most of the current problems with rubbish along the river shoreline. It is estimated that 68 000 plastic containers a day are dumped in the Georges River catchment area. While cleanup activities cannot be carried out on

private property, it has been noticed that the container deposit scheme introduced last November seems to be having a good effect in reducing waste.



Cleanup activities at Horning St, Kurnell (See <http://www.georgesriver.org.au/Riverkeeper-Program.html>)

The four-year strategic plan recognises that stormwater runoff brings most of the pollutants into the river, so five focus areas have been identified to enable best practice environmental management for a liveable urban river. These areas cover Catchment Action program, River Health Monitoring program, Stormwater program, Research program and an Education & Capacity Building program. Annual reports will be produced, as well as factsheets, social media, website and publications. Our visitors passed copies of current publications to the audience and these gave an excellent overview of what has been achieved, as well as plans for the future.

The speaker's comments in accompaniment to photos of the river were, I felt, right on target for our group. I noted his emphasis on downcycling, not recycling plastic bottles: they can be reused up to five times only, and most end up as the fabrics in use today. The salt flush in the river is quite obvious as far up river as Como Bridge. In the past, dredging the river was common (Salt Pan Creek, Moorebank, the Moons) but we now realise that disturbing sediments is not good practice. Stormwater carries sediments down the creeks feeding into the river and so cleaning products, etc, end up in the river, often resulting in significant fish kill.

As a result of more extensive research being undertaken with universities, it is hoped that the understanding of fish habitat can be rewritten, so that planning can be more effective. For instance, Tony mentioned the taking on of interns as a result of obtaining a grant to study *Sporobolus virginicus*, Saltmarsh, which is needed as food by some 98%

of prawns, crabs and is even in the diet of blackfish. When dredging and landfill are permitted, organic detritus needed by the river bed feeders is removed, disturbing the whole base of the estuary food web. Taking into account the facts outlined by another eminent guest speaker on mangroves last year, I believe that such investigations are essential for effective management of the Georges River.



Saltmarsh revegetation undertaken by Sutherland Council (full report at <http://www.georgesriver.org.au/Riverkeeper-Program.html>)

In answer to a question about bush regeneration, Tony was able to illustrate how bell miners have driven out smaller birds like pardalotes, who eat the psyllids and lerps. These pests have now overtaken Eucalypts in some areas, so that dieback occurs.

He was also able to give us good news about the former Aboriginal Riverkeeper team, which is considered a real success and is being used as a Ranger model in future plans. It was amazing to hear that one of this team is now leading a very interesting life in a similar position on the Murray-Darling project, not one for the faint-hearted! If you missed the April meeting and this interesting talk, ask for a copy of the Georges River Report Card 2017-2018 and spend a happy hour checking on how the part of the river that you know best is performing.

Pam Pitkeathly

Other Activities

Gathering and AGM

Blue Mountains hosted the second APS NSW gathering for 2019 at Blaxland, including an interesting presentation by Greg Bourke on carnivorous plants and the AGM.

Greg, the co-author of *Australian Carnivorous Plants* is currently Curator-Manager at Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mt Tomah and Vice

President for Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand.

Recognition for Lloyd

The group is lucky to have such an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and diligent member as Lloyd Hedges. Although he has taken on many “administrative roles”, his forte is the more hands-on areas such as walks (feet-on?) and particularly propagation, as well as his great skill in forging links with other organisations such as National Parks, the waste centre at Lucas Heights and various other environmental projects. Now Lloyd’s contributions have been recognised with life membership of the APS.



As Pam Pitkeathly stated in her submission for Lloyd’s life membership; “Lloyd’s involvement with Australian native plants has never had a narrow focus. More than any member I know, he continues to show the connections between Australian plants, birds and animals and the need to conserve our flora so that diversity is preserved. He puts time into fostering good relations among neighbouring APS groups, conducting regular workshops for adults to improve their knowledge of propagation, into helping teachers and children plant out native gardens. His annual splitting of bee hives at Illawong is a grand occasion, not to be missed.

Lloyd and his team grow tubestock for sale to members, other groups, Illawarra Grevillea Park and Sydney Wildflower Nursery, thus giving our group the financial stability to offer scholarships, fund research and community workshops.

Considering the scope and length of his involvement with native plants, I believe that Lloyd Hedges is worthy of the award of Life Membership of APS NSW”.



Fortunately, APS agreed with Pam's assessment and duly granted Lloyd's life membership at the recent quarterly gathering. Congratulation Lloyd!

Pam Forbes

Keep a Lookout

Autumn is a great time to be out in the bush walking. It is a little cooler and some plants are starting to flower. Check out MWG Facebook for some images of what's looking good at the moment but here's a couple of standouts.

Out now in your local valleys *Acianthus exertus* is the earliest *Acianthus* species to flower around Sydney. But be warned, they are tiny, look for the heart-shaped leaves then get the magnifying glass out.



A. exertus (L Hedges).

This is also a great year for *Banksia*, with a spectacular display of *B. ericifolia* flowering.



B. ericifolia (P Forbes).

Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to the winter newsletter is Sunday 4 August.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or email mwfeditor@gmail.com) before the deadline. Preferred format is **unformatted** text in a **Word** file and photographs as .jpg.

Working Bees are held on the **second Thursday** of month at IRFB starting at 9am and include weeding, planting, mulching and munching. Come along, there is a range of jobs for all abilities and a chance for a chat and exercise while enjoying the wonderful display of flowers.

Propagation days at Illawong Rural Fire Station on each **Tuesdays 9am** for members and the **3rd Saturday 1pm** for the community are a great opportunity to be involved in interesting projects and learn new skills. Members can assist in MWG ventures or propagate species for themselves. Please contact Lloyd (95431216) for more details on these opportunities.



Keep up to date with our [Facebook](#) page or [website](#). **Meetings** are held at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters each month except January. These are on the second Saturday of the month at 1pm over winter. New members and friends are welcome.

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

<http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>

<http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/> .

Lloyd Hedges

News from Lucas Heights

SUEZ, the operator of the Lucas Heights Resource Recovery Park, was granted approval for its development application in 2017 to allow for an:

- increase in landfill capacity
- relocation the existing garden organics facility, and
- construction and operation of a new ARRT facility.

The approval also allowed for an increase in the receipt of green waste and garden waste from 55,000 to 80,000 tonnes per year. SUEZ summarised the proposed improvements to the operations at the Lucas Heights as follows.

- The New Illawarra Road landfill filling plan requires the existing Garden Organics platform to be relocated to allow for the continued operation of landfill.
- The Lucas Heights Garden Organics facility capacity will be further expanded to 100,000 tonnes per year using tunnel pasteurisation technology and covered maturation to further improve odour management of the composting process.
- The yearly input rate at the landfill will increase from 850,000 tonnes to 970,000 tonnes, until commencement of the ARRT facility's operation

The proposed modification is critical to SUEZ continuing its landfilling and green waste processing operations at LHRRP. Some native landscaping will be included in the modifications but they will rely mainly on existing tree stands for good appearance. The Park's approach road has extensive cassia, lantana, milk weed etc which will be cleared and maintained by SSC.

No noise complaints were logged and no major odour or dust issues have been raised, but any

complaints should continue to be made to the Park direct for immediate investigation and the EPA if you deem necessary.

The cash back scheme has reduced yellow bin tonnes but they still require full manual sorting. The green bin contents still require full manual sorting as well. A new green waste and potential food waste recycle facility (FOGO) with 30m x 30m x 8m high roofing on Heathcote Road side should be approved soon to supersede the original AART approval.

Nursery News

The Tip and Compound Nurseries and IRFS garden are still thriving despite the continuing dry weather. New helpers always welcome or drop in just to enjoy the flowers – grevilleas are starring at the moment, Lloyd's fantastic choice of foliage and maybe some passing wildlife from migrating honeyeaters to snuffling echidnas.

The Tip

The last few months have been eventful. The plastic roof of the polyhouse tore at the beginning of last year. It had been taped back together twice but it finally failed irreversibly. A new roll of plastic 13m long and 7.5 m wide was purchased and finally installed by Suez workers. It was a revelation to see how much light the new roof let in. It was quite a shock.



New polyhouse (L Hedges).

Also, the 30 year old benches supporting the propagation beds in the glasshouse have been replaced. A leaking fitting led to an investigation that revealed the rusted benches could no longer support the beds. Luckily the RNP offered us the benches from their defunct nursery. Between Pam F, Greg and Robin we were able to replace the old with the new (well, younger). A new heating unit was also installed.

So now we have a refurbished glasshouse and a reroofed polyhouse.



New benches in operation (L Hedges).



Eucalyptus caesia (P Forbes).



Allocasuarina ready for NP (L Hedges).

The plants propagated for the Glossies in the Mist have developed well and over 2500 have been picked up.

IRFS

The IRFS nursery's year has not got off to a good start either. With the rejuvenation of the gardens distracting attention, Jan and Anne have had less support than usual. Anne also cut her leg in an accident on the steps and it is proving slow to heal.

Rejuvenation of the mounds area is well underway. A ramp has been built up the third mound to facilitate barrow traffic, retaining walls have been built, soil added and mulched and the area largely replanted. But there is still some work to go.

The first and second mounds have also received much attention. The *Eucalyptus caesia* is in full flower and worth a look, as is the *Grevillea preissii*. In fact, it is quite a fine, floral autumn.



The firestation garden has been visited by a charming echidna (P Forbes).

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