



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group

May 2020

Contents

President’s message _____	1
Results of AGM _____	1
Coming events _____	2
Using Zoom _____	2
Reports from meetings _____	3
Science on <i>Endeavour</i>	3
The Menai ground orchid season _____	4
Some online options _____	6
Of interest _____	6
Can you contribute to the meeting? _____	6
Other activities _____	7
Nursery news _____	7

President’s message

It’s a given that time seems to go faster as we age, but over this quarter we have had to make major adjustments to our thinking, as well as our normal routines. Most things have changed, except the weed growth, but the hardy team members at Illawong RFS have found ways to manage social distancing and some essential chopping, shaping and dirt play on some of the more clement autumn days. If nothing else, the Covid19 virus restrictions have made us aware of the great climate that our region has to offer and the wealth of material about gardening and native plants that is available online. If you have been reluctant to use online technology, hesitate no longer; both audio and visuals can be much clearer via Zoom, or similar programs. This could well make meetings far more enjoyable for many of our regular audience so we may see some increase in membership. Let’s admit that virtual social occasions don’t require so much effort in setting up chairs or washing up cups! (We just have

to remember to smile sometimes when on camera.) Our recent appearance on Gardening Australia has resulted in several phone calls and emails asking about specific plants and our activities. I was pleased that we had comments about the extent of our volunteering efforts, which were very well outlined in the GA segment. Don’t forget to note in your diaries that APS NSW will be holding their next two regional meetings with the Sutherland Group in May and with Menai Wildflower Group in September. The dates are listed in the following pages of this issue. Here’s hoping we can all get together soon to see the great blooms on show in the gardens and not have to spend our days answering all those cheeky emails from friends and relatives!

Pam Pitkeathly, President



Scaevola sp., P Forbes.

Results of AGM

Our November AGM resulted in little change to office holders.

The 2020 management team is as follows –

President	Pam Pitkeathly
Vice President	Vacant
Secretary	Annette Tuckfield
Treasurer	Jan Riley
Publicity Officer	Marion Payne
Committee members	Mary Hedges (overseeing talks program)

	Marg Olde Alan Ferguson
Editor	Pam Forbes
Nursery Manager	Lloyd Hedges

Thanks to all these hardworking members whose time and effort supports the operation of our club and to all the volunteers looking after the garden and nurseries. And remember “many hands make light work”, so please contribute whatever you can to make their jobs easier. You may like to come along to the regular working bees or propagation days, report on one of the presentations or chair a meeting, write something for the newsletter or help with setting up and dismantling for meetings. Not all of these jobs are available in the current environment but hopefully we will be back to more normal operations later in the year.



Banksia marginata in Menai bush, P Forbes.

Coming events

Due to the ongoing Covid19 restrictions, planning has been disrupted. But we are aiming at monthly online meetings using Zoom. Other activities are constrained by distancing restrictions.

- 13 May Meeting 7pm Online. Members will receive an invitation via email. Brian Roach will discuss the best natives for Sydney**
- 16 May APS NSW AGM 2pm Zoom meeting with Dr Brett Summerell, on the Banks and Solander collection at Royal Botanic Gardens.**
- 10 June 7pm online. Russell Barret from RBG will introduce us to the flora of the Kimberleys**

The format, guest speakers and timing of meetings is still unsettled but the May and June meetings will be held online. While the online options may sound intimidating, Sutherland ran a successful meeting and our committee have become more comfortable with the Zoom platform after only a few short trials. It is important to be positive about the benefits and opportunities offered by this online option – we don’t need to venture out on cold nights for one!

Using Zoom

While we are unable to meet physically, we’d love to see you all at our online meetings. Don’t be intimidated; it’s not too hard especially if you have some clever IT help in your family (basically, someone under 40 should do).

Zoom training is also available at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

Here are some general notes –

Please try out Zoom or watch the tutorials before the meeting so you are familiar with its operation.

We will send you a link to the Zoom meeting in an email giving the meeting details, a link to it, ID and possibly a password. You do not have to get a Zoom account but if you have one you can join the meeting with the single click on the link. Otherwise you can enter the meeting ID and password manually.

We are only inviting APS members (Menai, Sutherland and East Hills) but if you know someone who would like to attend you can give them the link. Please **do not** publish the link generally (for example on your Facebook page) as this is a potential security risk.

MWG is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Sample only

Topic: April Meeting

Time: Apr 23, 2020 09:30 AM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99487731?pwd=aDJpWlhkZzdjNWVxYTAvMlI4ZEExvdz09>

Meeting ID: 994 9988 3731

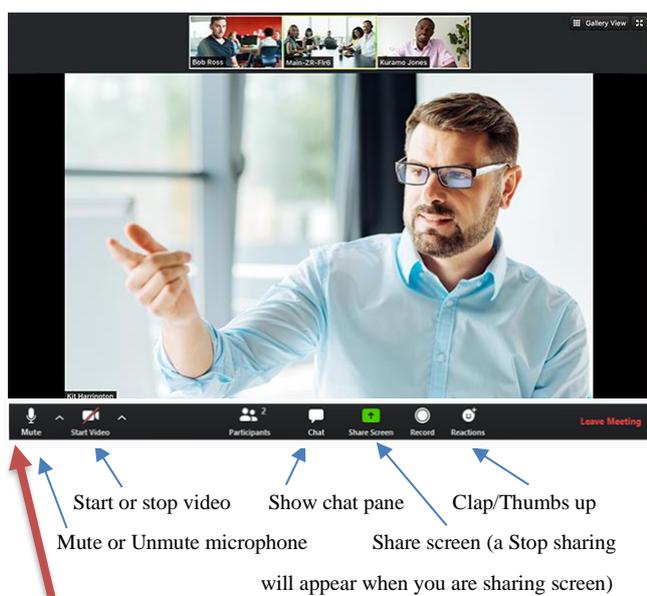
Password: 5xBcFo

Please click the link in the invitation to enter the meeting's waiting room. You may have to wait a short time before you are accepted into the meeting from the waiting room. Remember that there may be a lot of people trying to get in at once.

Give yourself time to settle in. Check that you can hear others when you enter and turn on your own audio and video if you want. You can chat before the meeting officially starts but watch out for everyone talking over one another.

All participants enter the meeting with microphone and video turned off. You do not have to turn either on to listen to the meeting. If you want to speak, remember to turn your microphone on as you enter (there is a test audio option which can be useful to check it works) and if you wish to be seen you can turn your video on.

Once you have joined the meeting, you will see the meeting control icons at the bottom of the meeting window. You may need to hover your mouse to bottom of screen to see these meeting controls.



Meeting controls are on bar at the bottom

Graphic from Zoom.com

The mute/unmute and video on/off are on the menu at the left. If you have your microphone on and you need to answer the phone, have another conversation or feed the cat ... please mute your microphone while doing so!

The meeting convenor may turn your microphone off at various times, for example so that the audience is not distracted by background noise while the main speaker is presenting.

You can chat (i.e. text) to other participants. Please note the option to chat to individual participants

rather than the whole audience. Some people are distracted by extraneous text conversations so please be courteous if using this facility.

You can change the layout of the screen but the person currently speaking will always be highlighted in some way.

Reports from meetings

Science on *Endeavour*

February was the only meeting we managed before Corona struck. Members Pam and Greg spoke to us on the various scientific studies carried out on Cook's voyage of discovery in 1770. Pam and Greg volunteer at the Australian National Maritime Museum which has created a series of presentations, as well as exhibitions and activities, to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Cook's voyage. Unfortunately, Covid19 has thrown all into abeyance, but hopefully the museum will be able to reopen later in the year when we might be able to organise a group tour.

The eighteenth century was a period of great scientific discovery and although Cook's 1770 voyage of exploration had several purposes, the prime motivation was the scientific observation of the transit of Venus. Observing this transit allowed astronomers to calculate the distance from the earth to the sun and from that, the scale of the whole solar system. After a fairly successful observation on Tahiti, Cook's next order took him south and east, searching for the mythical "Great South Land". Australia's subsequent colonisation by the British was a result of Cook's and Bank's exploration, reporting and charting of the east coast of Australia. But for wildflower enthusiasts, the most interesting aspect of the voyage was Sir Joseph Bank's scientific cataloguing of the wonderful new plants and animals discovered in the southern hemisphere. Banks was a was a rich, young aristocrat with a passion for natural history. He had paid for and assembled a scientific party of 8 including Daniel Solander and Herman Sporing, both students of the famous botanist Linnaeus, and artists Sydney Parkinson and Alexander Buchan. Linnaeus had recently formulated the classification system which we now use, dividing life into plants and animals, then further and finally into genera and species. With his team, Banks collected and took back 1500 illustrations, plus thousands of pressed plant specimens and preserved animals. During the 8 day stay at Botany Bay alone, Banks and Solander collected 132 plants. One hundred and fourteen can still be found *in-situ* in natural populations at a

number of locations across Kamay Botany Bay, including the iconic banksia, grevillea etc.



More information is available at the Sydney Botanic Garden, NSW Heritage and Kamay NP, Natural History Museum and many other sources.

Unfortunately, Banks' florilegium was not published till the 1980s when the British Museum of Natural History used the original 18th century copper plates to finally showcase to the world the amazing work of Banks' scientific team.

Editor

The Menai ground orchid season

With the recent rain and winter approaching it looks like it will be a good season for orchids. These make walks into treasure hunts but you need sharp eyes as they are small and often hiding.

The Greenhoods are prolific in Menai. Mostly they are found in secluded and shady, winter moist situations, but there are exceptions. We found a colony of the unusual Snake-tongue Orchid, only the second one reported in the Sydney region, after being found at Campbelltown. But Steve Deards showed me another colony at Bonnet Bay that he had come across years before. The Menai colony is on an exposed north facing, well drained slope. It is flowering well this year after taking a break during the drought.



Pterostylis ophioglossa, L Hedges.

The leaves of the Cobra Greenhood are evident in the Woronora valley and associated creeks, and the flowers will make a most impressive display. They are often joined later by the Tall Greenhood which can be seen in many moist, shaded situations. The Coastal Greenhood pops up in small numbers in varied situations as does the Sharp Greenhood. I have only seen the Trim Greenhood in Illawong in open forest.



Pterostylis grandiflora and longifolia, L Hedges.



Pterostylis nutans, L Hedges.

The Nodding Greenhood is hard to miss as it forms large colonies that can dominate moist winter situations.

For the scientifically minded, here is a list of the botanical names of these Greenhoods:

- Pterostylis*
- Snake-tongue -*ophioglossa*,
- Cobra - *grandiflora*,
- Tall -*longifolia*,
- Coastal - *oblonga*
- Sharp -*acuminata*
- Trim -*concinna*
- Nodding -*nutans*

The Parsons Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*) appears in heathland from May on. This tiny orchid's white collar often stands out amongst the moss on the heath edges.



Eriochilus cucullatus, L Hedges.

The Mosquito orchids (*Acianthus*) form prolific colonies amongst the leaf litter. While they have common names, these are used so rarely it is perhaps better to stay with the botanical ones. What catches the eye first is the heart shaped leaf only just above the litter. It is purple on its underside.

I usually notice *A. exertus* flowers early in the season around Illawong on the steeper slopes. They are followed by *A. fornicatus* in the deeper shaded spots, often in large colonies. *A. caudatus* does not seem to form such large colonies and is often difficult to pick out as though the sepal and petals are long, they are so slender they are difficult to see.



Acianthus fornicatus, top, *A. exertus*, middle and *A. caudatus* bottom, L Hedges.

The Helmet Orchids have a leaf that can be mistaken for a Mosquito Orchid leaf but it is round rather than heart shaped. Most flower towards spring but the Spurred Helmet orchid (*Corybas aconitiflorus*) is early and its little bald flower can be seen regularly in Bangor and other areas.



Corybas aconitiflorus, *Acianthus* leaf for comparison, P Forbes.

While most *Caladenia* flower in spring, if you notice a small white hand like orchid flower over the next few months it is probably Painted Fingers. It is usually on the upper benches in open forest rather than down near the creeks.



White and pink versions of *Caladenia picta*, P Forbes.

There are a couple of Ant or Wasp orchids that flower during this period but you need to take your own Hawk-eye to see them or take up crawling. These are the weird and deceptive orchids that have a labellum that looks and smells like the female of the insect species. When the male insect arrives, he is unceremoniously upended against the sticky pollen and which he then carries away to another flower. *Chiloglottis diphylla* and *seminuda* are very interesting looking plants on a micro scale but you need a good macro camera to get the full picture.



Chiloglottis seminuda, L Hedges.

I use Margaret Bradhurst's 'Native Orchids of Southern Sydney' as a reference. She still has some books available. Contact Margaret at mbradhurst1@bigpond.com. There is also information at NSW Flora Online <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/>

Lloyd Hedges

Some online options

Here are a few ideas to keep you occupied in isolation.

Find out about how stunning native hybrids are bred at Kings Park Botanic Gardens.

<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/one-in-a-million/12173936>

An "extinct" snail has been discovered on Norfolk Island.

https://australianmuseum.net.au/blog/amri-news/species-assumed-extinct-rediscovered-on-norfolk-island/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Members%20Monthly%20Newsletter%20May%202020&utm_content=Members%20Monthly%20Newsletter%20May%202020+CID_064eb27ed4a65d7887b027b6259f4374&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=READ%20MORE

Great podcasts are available from the Royal Botanic Gardens.

<https://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/science/branch-out>

Of interest

Deadline for contributions to the next newsletter is Sunday 2 August.

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

Subject to Covid19 restrictions –

Working Bees are held on the **second Thursday** of month at IRFB starting at 9am and include weeding, mulching and munching.

Propagation days at Illawong Rural Fire Station on each **Tuesdays 9am** for members and the **3rd Saturday 1pm** for the community, and 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. We also propagate at the Tip nursery on Monday morning. 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 Wednesday at 7pm in summer and 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

Can you contribute to the meeting?

We are asking for short contributions from members. These could be –

A photographic or video presentation on a plant, technique

- or place
- A plant or object in view of your computer's camera
- A Powerpoint or Prezzi slide show
- An interesting website
- Or anything that you can bring up on your computer screen

All combined with your commentary. You can share this content with the meeting by Sharing your screen.

We are planning that these contributions should be short and concise. As a general guideline they should be under 1 minute but discuss with meeting chair if you want longer.

We will need you to let us know if you want to contribute at least 48 hours before the meeting so we can schedule it. Please email mwfeditor@gmail.com with details of what you want to do (topic, duration and if you will be sharing content). Remember we are all learning so we don't expect perfection but be prepared and don't waffle! If you are contributing make sure you are ready for the meeting with any screen you plan to show ready to go and your commentary planned and practised (we can try it with you in a test meeting before hand). Make sure to check how long it takes.

Editor

Other activities

If you would like to try out a Zoom meeting, Central Coast APS will be holding their May meeting online via Zoom, on 9 May at 1.30pm. Mark Abell will speak on Aquatic and Riparian Plants of Sydney. MWG will be hosting the spring quarterly gathering on 12 September. At 1pm Phil Trickett, will talk on Isopogons and Petrophiles, with workshops on grafting and propagation.

Nursery news

The Tip and Compound Nurseries and IRFS garden, have ticked on over the summer and continue with reduced numbers and social distancing measures. Thanks to Marian, Anne, Jan, and Pam and the others who help under Lloyd's brilliant directorship. New helpers always welcome, once restrictions are lifted! And if you are stuck at home remember this is a great time to be planting while its still warm(ish?) and we have had some rain.

We are keeping up our supply of Allocasuarina for the Glossies in the Mist and our popular Flannel Flowers, White and Pink. With the cooler weather and the restrictions due to Covid19, operations have slowed down.

We did collect some *Angophora hispida* seeds, which have come up and will be ready in the spring.



Collecting and sorting seeds, then the seedlings tubed up, P Forbes.

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