

CALGAROO

October 2022



Eucalyptus parramattensis - Calgaroo

**Newsletter of the Parramatta and Hills District Group
Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd**

What's on for the rest of 2022

Saturday 22 October: Visit Phillip Baird's property – see below.

**Saturday 26 November 2 pm: Members' meeting and Christmas afternoon tea.
Speaker – Kevin Mills: "Ferns".**

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Visit to Phillip Baird's Country Property

Pip Gibian

On 22nd October we have planned a visit to Phillip Baird's property in an area called The Branch, which is north of the Hunter River and the township of Heatherbrae. The property is largely uncleared woodland featuring many eucalypt species and a wide variety of understorey plants. Closer to the Branch River, a tributary of the Karuah River, there are rainforest areas. Phillip has a botanist's list of all the species found on his property, and it is quite extensive. The last time we visited him, quite a few years ago, it was in Autumn and the *Banksia spinulosa* were flowering beautifully. This time we should see some of the plants that flower later in spring, such as callistemons, leptospermums, and melaleucas, along with lots of smaller plants. The car trip is likely to take two to two-and-a-half hours each way.

Directions: head north from Sydney along the M1 expressway, starting from Pennant Hills Road at Normanhurst, or Pacific Highway in Wahroonga. Follow the expressway until it ends, then turn right along the Pacific Hwy towards Taree (and Brisbane). Cross the big Hunter River bridge, and continue through Heatherbrae, a large, light industrial area. About 18Kms north of Heatherbrae turn left at the road to Gloucester, called Buckets Way, an apt name as currently, it is full of potholes. The road as far as Phillip's turn-off is pretty good. The first township, Booral, is about 27km along Bucket's Way (the name refers to the hills near Gloucester, which look a bit like a row of upturned buckets). At Booral there is a major right-hand turn to Bulahdelah. Take this turn. About 6km along this turn right into The Branch Lane. Phillip's property is on the left, about 4.5km along this road, and after a side street on the right called Warraba Road. Look for the property name, 'Parragilga' and 'Land for Wildlife' signs, and a green letterbox with 'John Deere' on it. His gate is after that. If you get to the Branch River, you have missed it.

Everyone needs to take their lunch and dibbles. Phillip will provide tea and coffee – take your own cup, please. He has offered to heat any food if needed, and there is a little bakery in the few shops on the right, off the road a bit, in Booral, if you want to buy a pie or something similar. Take suitable footwear to walk along fire trails. If you want to stop for a cuppa on the way, a very good idea to break the trip, there are a few options. In the middle of the expressway, there is a Service Centre where you can buy morning tea and also petrol, but it is very busy, and if you have your thermos, there is no nice quiet bit of greenery to sit at and have it. At the north end of Heatherbrae, there is a left turn to Raymond Terrace. If you turn down one of several left side streets from the main road in the commercial area, and go through the shopping area you reach the Hunter River, and there are parts of the park with seats on the banks of the river. You can continue through Raymond Terrace and join back into the Pacific Highway further north, so it is not much of a detour. There is also a roadside rest area further north on the Pacific Highway, a little before the turnoff into Buckets Way. There are several petrol stations in Heatherbrae if needed.

I suggest you email Jennifer (apsparrahills@gmail.com) to say you are coming, so Phillip has some idea of the number to expect. A bit closer to the event, it would be nice if those taking their cars and having empty seat(s), could email Jennifer to offer to take an extra passenger or two. This will limit the number of cars going, and especially will allow a member who is unwilling to drive that far to come on the trip.

(our timber plantation is another 100km further on)

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“If you throw a stone into a pool, the ripples go on spreading outwards.

A big stone can cause waves, but even the smallest pebble changes the whole pattern of the water.

Our daily actions are like those ripples, each one makes a difference, even the smallest.”

Queen Elizabeth II (1975)



CATTAI HILLS ENVIRONMENT NETWORK

CHEN Inc.

Come Along for a Nature Safari with CHEN!

For CHEN's monthly meeting, we have an ecologist to do a NATURE SAFARI NIGHT WALK with us, to spot wildlife, insects, and spiders that live within the bushland close to the Platypus Hub in Annangrove!

When: Thursday, the 6th of October

Time: 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Where: Annangrove Hall, Currie Avenue, Annangrove



[REGISTER HERE](#)

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Our Group's day of a Post-conference Tour

Pip Gibian

After the big ANPSA Conference in Kiama, one of the post-conference tours showed off the bush of the Sydney region. Our group was asked to organise one day of the tour in North-West Sydney, on Sunday 18th September.

Luckily the weather was perfect. The morning started with a visit to Boongala Gardens, the wonderful garden of Mal and Jenny Johnston. Mal took participants on a walk through his planted rainforest, and they had morning tea there.

After that, there was a bushwalk along the fire trail at the end of Jones Road, Kenthurst, where flowering was near its peak. We were the first to show off sandstone country

flowers, as the tour was yet to visit the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. The walk was capably led by Lesley Waite. Lunch was eaten at Ian Cox's place, with participants free to wander and admire his wonderful garden and surrounding bush.

The afternoon was taken up with a visit and walk in Windsor Downs Nature Reserve, south of Windsor, led by Jennifer Farrer with Pip Gibian assisting.

Windsor Downs is fascinating and very different from the rocky sandstone bush so familiar to us. It is flat with sandy clay soils, and the few existing rocks are mostly restricted to the waterways. It is tall, stately eucalypt country, containing a variety of different woodland types, some now endangered in the Sydney region, in which very little original untouched bush remains. Each woodland has its own set of understorey flora. It also demonstrates how most of the Sydney Basin would have looked before the arrival of Europeans.

Initially, the tour participants were shown a little of McCorms Trail, Shale-Gravel Transition Forest (endangered), where the predominant Eucalypt is an ironbark, *Eucalyptus fibrosa*. The understorey included *Jacksonia scoparia*, *Styphelia laeta* with its developing berries, and the endangered *Persoonia nutans*. The ripe fruit of the *Styphelia* (known as Five Corners) was a prized fruit for the Aborigines and early settlers alike.

The bus drove us onto the Hakea Trail, which leads into Castlereagh Scribbly Woodland (vulnerable). We walked past golden *Acacia elongata* in full flower

(pictured) and admired two endangered species of pea flower, *Dillwynia tenuifolia* and *Pultenaea parvifolia*, both in flower. There were many patches of the white orchid *Petalochilus* (previously *Caladenia*) *catenata*. Further along, we came to some historical remnants of the Riverstone Meatworks, which occupied this area for more than 100 years. Near its dam, there was a particularly floriferous patch with *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Pimelea linifolia*, *Boronia polygalifolia* and *Patersonia longifolia*. We were able to return to the bus via another trail and gate, through a damper section with paperbarks such as *Melaleuca nodosa*.



Our final stop was to view some Castlereagh Ironbark Forest (endangered) with yet another understorey. It was dominated by huge ironbarks with their dark, hard, deeply fissured bark. The understorey was brightened by numerous plants of purple-flowering *Prostanthera scutellarioides*, *Dianella* sp., *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, *Goodenia hederacea* and *Grevillea mucronulata*.

The participants on this tour came from five different Australian states, and seemed interested and pleased with their varied day with us.

Fleurs de Villes FEMMES
Jennifer Farrer

In August there was a stunning exhibition at the Calyx in the Royal Botanic Gardens. Members will remember that we visited this exhibition space to see an exhibition of Carnivorous Plants in October 2018.

This exhibition was a fresh floral celebration of 16 remarkable women. Some were household names, such as Kylie Minogue, Nicole Kidman and Malala Yousafzai. Included were two women who have contributed to the study of plants at the Gardens, Margaret Flockton and Dr Barbara Briggs. The creative tributes were mannequins clothed in fresh flowers, created by some of Sydney's favourite florists. The results were truly stunning.



Margaret Flockton

Margaret Flockton was the first botanical illustrator at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. Over her more than 25-year tenure there she completed more than 2000 scientifically accurate drawings of Australia's flora, and became the first female lithographer in Australia. She was a very private person and a quintessentially Victorian lady. She always wore a small magnifying glass (lupe) at her waist.



Dr Barbara Briggs

Dr Barbara Briggs is one of Australia's leading botanists. She has been at the Royal Botanic Gardens since she was 24 and has described over 51 new species. She introduced DNA Technology to the Gardens. She is a Member of the Order of Australia for services to science and professional associations.

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Remembering Teresa James

Teresa James worked as a botanist at the National Herbarium of NSW for almost 20 years before starting a consultancy business in 1998, specialising in flora surveys, plant identification and conservation assessments. An important part of her work was to engage with the community to increase awareness of biodiversity and threatened flora through publications, botanical tours and workshops. She regularly conducted bus tours of The Hills Shire to show residents the shire's threatened flora. Teresa passed away in 2019.

This is from Penrith City Council's Bushcare Bulletin, July 2022:-

Council celebrated the life and achievements of local legend Teresa James, a passionate ecologist, by naming a central reserve in her honour. Teresa's family, friends and colleagues joined Penrith Mayor Tricia Hitchen at the newly-named Teresa James Reserve at Claremont Meadows on Tuesday 14 June for the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. The plaque serves as a memory of Teresa's dedication to protecting bushland in Western Sydney, including the critically endangered Cumberland Plain.

Teresa James was a well-respected member of the Western Sydney Conservation Community. She held extraordinary knowledge of our native plants, which she actively shared with her contemporaries as well as the community at large in her efforts to increase the protection, knowledge and appreciation of these valuable environmental assets.

For the last two decades, Teresa was one of the most respected ecologists of the Cumberland Plain, making a significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of this critically endangered vegetation not just in Penrith but across Western Sydney.

Teresa played a key role in protecting the former Air Services Australia land at Vincent Road in Cranebrook and made a direct contribution to the conservation of the Blaxland Creek Corridor in Orchard Hills. She was regularly employed by Government agencies and councils as a botanical expert, and has worked closely with Penrith Council's officers on several flora assessments. She also shared her expertise through many workshops and Penrith Council and community interest group projects.

Teresa wrote and published guides on Western Sydney's bushland, and her '[Rare Bushland Plants of Western Sydney](#)' and '[Native Flora of Cumberland Plain Woodland](#)' are a treasure to anyone with a passion for Western Sydney bushland. Both books are available to borrow at Penrith City Library.

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A garden bed with sleepers!

At Bilby Blooms Native Plant Nursery



Here's Jennifer's excellent submission to Council regarding possible anti-environmental development at Fred Caterson Reserve, Castle Hill:-

Dear Mr Mayor,

I am Jennifer Farrer, a resident of The Hills Shire since 1987, currently Secretary of The Parramatta Hills Group of The Australian Plants Society and for 15 years the organizer and provider of The Hills Shire Guided Walks Program.

In July 2020 the previous Council considered a Draft Management Plan for Fred Caterson Reserve which was placed on public exhibition. This plan had been prepared in consultation with users of the reserve. In fact, the only users who were consulted were those who used the sporting and recreational facilities in the reserves principally the sporting clubs who were regular users. No attempt was made to engage with the large number of casual users who visited the reserve, particularly on weekends. This could have been done by surveying nearby residents and visiting the reserve on weekends to seek feedback from users. There was also no mention in the plan of how the significant bushland in the reserve was to be maintained at the same time as the sporting facilities were to be expanded.

Quite a few residents including myself sought to restore some balance to the Plan by pointing out the importance of the bushland as a recreational resource and also Council's custodial responsibility to continue to sustainably manage the bushland.

The Post Exhibition Report of 24 November 2020 acknowledges these responsibilities with responses such as "Proposed developments to be considered subject to funding and the items meeting required approvals and compliance." "The Draft Master Plan identifies the importance of this local bushland and is being developed with an intended balance of providing necessary sport and recreation infrastructure to existing populations whilst maintaining the ecology of the Reserve". "Future works to continue involving Council's Bushland Team".

However, the Management Plan which was adopted by the previous Council, has no strategies to achieve these statements.

Now we have a situation where word is that the rugby fields which were proposed in the Management Plan for the former Pony Club site and which residents assumed would be for community-based clubs, such as those currently using the soccer and cricket fields, are going to be an over-development of the site for a First Grade Rugby Club.

This appears to be happening without any ecological assessment of the site or consultation with local residents who will be impacted by traffic and other adverse effects such as evening training sessions under lights.

The bushland in Fred Caterson Reserve is of particular significance not only to The Hills but also to New South Wales. The site is on part of the Castle Hill Reserve which was set aside for community use in 1861 when the remainder of the Castle Hill Government Farm was subdivided and granted to free settlers. (The Showground and Castle Hill Cemetery are also part of this reserve). This prevented the bushland from being cleared for agriculture and preserved it intact for future generations.

This foresight by previous generations means that Fred Caterson Reserve contains vegetation communities that are now listed as critically endangered under the New South Wales Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. The proposed rugby fields will require clearing of two of these vegetation communities These are:-

1. Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest. Status Critically Endangered Ecological Community. Gazetted 31 May 2019. Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Act.

The soil on which the ecological community is found is of relatively higher fertility than the sandy soils derived from the Hawkesbury sandstone. For this reason, the Turpentine-Ironbark Forest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion has been selectively cleared for agriculture and urban development. It is estimated that only 4.5% of the forest present before 1750 now exists. Much of this is in small remnants under threat from further urban development.

2. Shale Sandstone Transition Forest. Status Endangered Ecological Community. Gazetted 28 November 2014. Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the Act.

Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest is the name given to the plant community which occurs on areas transitional between the clay soils derived from Wianamatta Shale and the sandy soils derived from Hawkesbury Sandstone on the margins of the Cumberland Plain. All sites are within the Sydney Basin Bioregion. It is estimated that 22.6% of its original habitat remains in the Sydney Basin.

In view of the small size of existing remnants, the threat of further clearing, and other threatening processes, it is likely that this vegetation community will become extinct in nature unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival cease to operate.

(www.environment.nsw.gov.au).

One of the dominant trees of Shale Sandstone Transition Forest is the Hard Leaved Scribbly Gum *Eucalyptus sclerophylla*. "This is one of the signature plants of Fred Caterson Reserve. Unlike the smaller more common scribbly gum of Sydney's sandstone country (*Eucalyptus haemastoma*), they are capable of growing into a 20m, straight trunked tree with a huge girth. Their age is unknown but they are likely to live for over 200 years. Substantial habitat hollows form in old trees. Like other large gum trees, they host a huge population of insects and spiders: eating the leaves and each other, as well as the birds and bats that feed on them. Large quantities of nectar and pollen are available when they flower between January and April. The hard, 4mm to 6mm fruits hold masses of seeds which are eaten by rosellas". (Virginia Bear *The Bushland of Fred Caterson Reserve*, Baulkham Hills Shire Council, 2007).

The former Pony Club site has a large number of these trees, some of them obviously very old.

As well as endangered vegetation communities, the site is also home to several endangered and threatened flora and fauna species. Two pairs of Powerful Owls nest in the Reserve. The Dural Land Snail can be found on unpaved paths on damp evenings. Vulnerable and endangered plants include *Epacris purpurascens*, *Eucalyptus Sp. Cattai*, *Persoonia hirsuta*, *Acacia pubescens*, *Pimelea curviloba* and *Pultenaea scabra ssp biloba* (pictured). New developments in the reserve will particularly impact this last plant. The only location where it grows is behind the cemetery. Plans for



the proposed new access road from Gilbert Road will need to ensure that this population of less than 10 plants is preserved.

It appears as though Council is only looking at the open space at Fred Caterson Reserve as a resource for further development. Its value to the community is far greater than this.

- It is a counterbalance to the “heat island” effect of our suburban development.
- It is a bushland recreation venue within easy reach of residents. The COVID pandemic has taught us how important it is to have local places for people to walk and destress. The practice of “Forest Bathing” developed in Japan is gaining more and more local practitioners.
- It is original bushland linking the present with pre-colonial times.

In the past Council has applied for and received substantial grants to manage weed invasion in the Reserve and to plant additional trees and other vegetation. The financial and human resources expended to achieve this will be a waste of time if the Reserve is overdeveloped. It would be preferable for a facility with the developed infrastructure that the Eastwood Rugby Club requires, to be located at The Showground which has already been cleared of most vegetation and is already accessible to large volumes of traffic.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet you and discuss these issues further.

Kind regards

Jennifer Farrer

Secretary
Parramatta Hills Group
Australian Plants Society

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Our 50th Anniversary

Jennifer Farrer

On Saturday 24 September we celebrated 50 years since the Parramatta Hills Group was established. The venue was the Muirfield Golf Club, where we had a panoramic view over the golf course trees and greens. 34 guests sat down to a delicious two-course meal followed by tea and coffee and birthday cake.

Guests included current members, representatives from the NSW Region Board including President Heather Miles and former members including former Presidents Mark Ferrington, Wendy Goonan and Sue Gibbons. We were particularly pleased to welcome Ted Newman who was one of the main workers behind the successful Wildflower shows in the 1980s and 1990's, and at 98 years of age can still work the room.

Our guest speaker was Brian Roach, who informed us that our Group is the second to be established in The Hills. The first one was started in 1958 but only lasted until 1963. He gave us an entertaining account of his conversion to gardening with native plants and some of his adventures along the way.

Three of our members, Jean Wright, Pip Gibian and Jennifer Farrer, gave some reminiscences of their time in the Group. These are reproduced in this edition of *Calgaroo*. The anniversary cake was cut by Pip and Jean as they have both been members since the 1970s

During the celebration, there was a continuous loop PowerPoint presentation of photos of our Group's activities over the years. This was prepared by Alan Wright and will be added to in future years. We hope to show this at our November meeting.

Inevitably the date did not suit everyone and so there was quite a long list of apologies including some last-minute ones. Another one of our longstanding members, Doreen Tan, was prevented from coming by an outbreak of COVID at the respite facility where she was living. We are hoping she will be able to come to our Christmas afternoon tea on 26 November. The apology from Maria Hitchcock has already been published in an earlier edition of *Calgaroo*

These events don't happen without a lot of work beforehand. Your committee was responsible for all the planning and decisions. Special thanks go to Ben Turco for researching and organising the venue, Joan Hayes for preparing the invitations and icing the cake, Pip Gibian for making the fruit cake and the gluten-free cake and providing the plants for the raffle, Ian Cox for providing the flowers for the table decorations and Heather's bouquet.

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Harry Loots, an APS NSW board member and State Treasurer, provides this account and photos:-

99-year-old Ted Newman was working the room today. We were at the Golf Club in North Rocks to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Parramatta Hills Australian Plants Society (APS) group. Today Ted had a walking stick with him but he usually walks about without it. He has a 200-metre drive from the road up to his house. He lives on a few acres with some very large trees. I don't think that he climbs them anymore.

Pip Gibian, a plant propagator with an extraordinary fertile touch, baked two cakes for the occasion. One was a fruit cake with an icing and marzipan topping. The signage was edible. She also baked a gluten-free almond, ricotta and lemon cake. Pip's talents are amazing!

Cutting the cake: Jean Wright and Pip Gibian

Jennifer Farrer and Joan Hayes organised this event with Jennifer governing the event as mistress of ceremonies. Activities ran right to schedule.

Brian Roach, a noted raconteur, reminisced about his growing Australian plants and the people he had met. It was a long address although not as long as a two-day closing address he had once given a jury. Brian made us laugh.



Merle Thompson, the long-standing APS membership officer, who knows everything and everybody, helped Brian with facts. Without Merle's knowledge, we would be living in a world of romance.

The cast of personalities was greater than this, and I enjoyed speaking to as many as possible. I was able to renew old friendships and initiate new ones.



Ted Newman with Joan Hayes



Heather Miles and Jennifer Farrer



Merle Thompson and Mark Ferrington



Ian Cox and Brian Roach

Reminiscences

Jean Wright (delivered by Alan)



Arriving in Australia from the UK as “New Australians” as we were called in 1969, we were impressed by the gum trees we saw all around us in Eastwood, so when we moved to our new house in Baulkham Hills the following year, we decided we had to have some of these for our large block, which was totally devoid of vegetation. We discovered that the Forestry Commission sold tubestock Eucalypts for a small sum of money, so we planted seven of them, including a Sydney Blue Gum, all around the yard, about one to two feet from the fence. We also had exotic hibiscus, poinsettia and even a banana tree!

Over time, we noticed many other plants which we had never seen before, and around 1977 we went to a display of Australian Native Plants in Peakhurst which we had seen advertised, and as they say, the rest is history. We found out that there was a meeting of the Society for Growing Australian Plants in our area, so I went along to the Castle Hill Community Centre in Old Castle Hill Road, where the meetings were held at that time, and found the hall full of people of all ages, tables with plant pieces on them, other tables set out for supper, and an interesting meeting, a lot of which went over my head as a newcomer. I couldn't wait for the next meeting – I was hooked!

I remember Harley Wood and his wife Una. Harley was President in 1979 and I appreciated his dry sense of humour. I remember Fred and Norma Johnston, Sally Donnellan, John Evans, Gordon Brooks and, of course, Pip Gibian from those early days, and many more whose names are lost in the mists of time. Gordon and Gloria lived just around the corner from us for many years, and we watched with interest as their lovely native garden developed, as most of it was visible from the street.

The Eighties was a very busy time for our Parramatta and Hills Group, with the Castle Hill shows, and the propagation needed, which was often at Fred and Norma's. The Group also entered a float in the Orange Blossom Festival, with Gordon as driver and me as passenger. Around this time, 1983, I became treasurer until 1986, when Audrey Taggart succeeded me. Narelle Hulbert edited Calgaroo around this time, and I remember going with her to the “Taj Mahal” as the very grand Castle Hill Council Chambers was called by locals, as we were allowed to use their very modern printer to print our magazine.

I was one of the merry band who joined Narelle's team at the Cumberland State Forest to establish a demonstration garden, which was officially opened by Mayor Bernie Mullane in 1989. I also remember a visit with the Group to Burrendong Arboretum, and a trip to Canberra to the Botanic Gardens.

There were many Plant Sales at a variety of venues, and lots of visits to members' gardens. We changed our meeting venue at the end of the Eighties to Jasper Road briefly, then to Baulkham Hills North Public School, where I assumed the role of tea-lady, which was not an insignificant task, as I had to bring two large urns with me from home, plus all the supper

requirements, and in addition, had to fill the urns with cold water from a tap attached to the outside of the building, heat them up, then empty them at the close of the meeting. Not bad in summer, not so good in winter. Those were the days when I had muscles!

In 2001 we moved our venue to Barton Hall, in the Anglican Retirement Villages in Castle Hill, where I was Librarian for the Group for a number of years. More recently, of course, we have been meeting in the very aptly named Gumnut Hall, which is quite adequate for our present attendance. Quite different from those early days of 80 or more at meetings, when Australian native plants were the thing to grow, and people had large gardens. New homes and rebuilds leave very little room for gardens, and our own garden is one of the few left in our street.

What happened to our seven original gum trees? All gone now, removed one by one by a young man who worked for Prospect County Council as a tree feller. In the days when you could do such things without permission, of course. Nowadays we don't make quite so many mistakes in where we plant and what we plant. But you can't always trust what's printed on the label, can you?

In conclusion, I have learned so much from our visiting speakers, our bush walks, and our many other activities, and enjoyed the company of others who also love and appreciate our beautiful and unique Australian flora.

Reminiscences

Jennifer Farrer



I joined the Society for Growing Australian Plants in 1972 when I acquired my first house and garden on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. It was an automatic thing to do really because my father and uncles already belonged.

In 1987 I moved to Sydney and bought a house that already had some native plants in the garden as well as roses and lawns. I began to replace the exotics with some of the plants that I had loved in Victoria. In 1988 we had lots of rain (more than I had ever seen in my life actually until this year). My favourite Victorian plants started to drown and die.

In April 1988, as part of the Bi-Centennial Celebrations, SGAP put on a wonderful Banksia display in the Botanic Gardens. This event was nearly washed out in the aforementioned rains but we went along and squelched around in the mud and not only enjoyed the display but met Klaus Engelhard who was very sympathetic to my tales of lost plants. He invited me to come along to the Parra/Hills meeting, which at that time was held in the Castle Hill Community Centre just up the road from where I lived.

I was particularly taken by the program of bushwalks which Klaus and Alan Galvin organised every month. I fell in love with the Sydney wildflowers and tried to go on as many walks as I could fit in.

In 1990 Klaus, Alan and Ted Newman organized a week-long trip to Green Patch at Jervis Bay. Many of the Group's members came along and camped or stayed in their vans. It was a wonderful opportunity to see native plants growing in their native habitat and to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the South Coast. Most important for me was the chance to really get to know the Group's members and appreciate the depth of their knowledge. I really had been socialized into the Group and when I was asked to join the committee at the AGM at the end of that year, I began 16 years of holding every position on the committee (except Treasurer).

As well as the monthly bushwalks, I really enjoyed the time when we all worked together on a project. In the 1990's under the guidance of Ted Newman and with other members, who all seemed to seamlessly make things happen, we staged annual displays and plant sales at the Graham and Sandra Ross Garden Shows at the North Rocks Blind and Deaf School, at the Native Plant and Garden Spectaculars at Rouse Hill, and at The Hills Shire Council on Australia Day. It was in preparation for events such as these that I learnt all I know about preparing and assembling cut flower arrangements from the masters – Pat Kenyon and Gloria Brooks.

My involvement with the Australian Plants Society directly led to my last career change, when tiring of corporate life in the early 2000s I trained as a tour guide, and started a business where I could share my love of the Sydney bushland with people on guided walks. Without the knowledge shared with me by so many members on those SGAP bushwalks I would never have been able to do this.

This venture became so successful that I retired from the Committee at the end of 2007 and my involvement became quite spasmodic except for the regular monthly propagation sessions at Bidjiwong Nursery. When I started to scale back the walks business in 2019 (a smart move as it turned out!) I came back to the Committee, enjoying it enormously and looking forward to great times ahead.

Reminiscences

Pip Gibian



I joined SGAP, as it was then, in 1977. We had bought our 5 acre/2.2 hectare, uncleared bush block, cleared a very small area, and moved into our project house late in 1976. Right from the start we had decided to plant a native garden. I had some background, as my mother in particular was interested in native plants, and my parents had joined the very young society in the 1950s. My husband, Tom, was a gardener from childhood, but on the upper North Shore, amid azaleas, magnolia and blue spruce. Despite this, he decided that planting anything but native plants would look stupid in our setting.

We discovered that the few native plant nurseries were all a long way away. They included the Parry's nursery, Floralands, in Woy Woy, the original Forest Native Nursery started by John and Penny Rose, Dave's parents, in Duffy's

Forest, and Cranebrook Native Nursery run by a Dutchman, Ton (Anton) Peters, at Cranebrook.

In 1978 our children were aged 5, 4 and about 8 months. The mother of a new school friend offered to take me to a ParraHills meeting. The speaker talked about palms. He was one of those speakers with at least 2 carousels of slides – “click...this is such and such, click...this is such and such, click...” and so forth for a very long time. The other mum apologised profusely on the way home for the boring meeting. Never-the-less I kept on attending. I had actually started trying to propagate my own plants during the last pregnancy, and was having some success.

At that time the group was very large and active. I did not realise initially just how much knowledge and expertise some of the members possessed. When I joined the group in 1978, the members included Max Hewitt, with encyclopedic knowledge, John Evans, who often won the Native Garden Competition, run by SGAP, Ray Page, Maria Hitchcock, Betty Rymer and Gordon Brooks. Ray Page and Gordon Brooks were later presidents of the group, and also on the NSW executive. Maria moved to Armidale and is still very active in the promotion of native plants. Betty was very active within the group, and later was sought after to design native plant displays. This included displays for international events, such as the world conference on Banksias. She would design a display, and then it would be Ted Newman who worked out how to build it. It is great to see Ted here with us today, aged 98. They were a great team and the results were fantastic. Later Ross Doig, already a member of the North Shore Group, also joined ParraHills. He was plant steward at meetings for many years, and demonstrated his immense knowledge and gardening experience. In those days many members were propagating plants at home. I remember that if you wanted to take home a bit from the plant table, you had to be mighty fast getting there at the end of the meeting.

Tom and I opened out little nursery, initially a week-end retail business, late in 1978, despite, I must confess, remarkably little knowledge. This resulted in my non-attendance at many of the weekend group activities. Activities included bush walks, and garden visits, with occasional more extensive events. I remember one walk to Lane Cove National Park. Big Gordon piggybacked my youngest, then aged four, for part of the way, much to her delight. I also remember a very enjoyable weekend trip to Canberra to visit the National Gardens, then quite new and impressive, particularly the rock garden. The group became increasingly involved in the enormous annual SGAP garden shows, like those at the Nurserymen’s headquarters in Rouse Hill. It then ran at least two successful shows at Castle Hill.

From late in the 1980s, I attended meetings much less as the responsibilities of family, my own business and the nursery mounted. Hence, I cannot add much to the history of the group from then. Once the children left home, I had the time to return to participation in the group.

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*Thanks to Joan Hayes for the three photos above.
I’ve lots more photos of our 50th celebrations, but because this Calgaroo is getting lengthy, to see them you’ll have to wait until the November Calgaroo.*

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ANPSA Conference at Kiama

Ricki Nash

Every two years the Australian Native Plants Society Australia (ANPSA) holds a conference which is hosted by each state in turn. In 2019 it was held in Albany, Western Australia, and approximately 330 delegates attended. It was the turn of APS NSW last year, but due to COVID-19, it was postponed until September this year, where it was held at the Kiama Pavilion on the beautiful NSW south coast, attracting approximately 360 people from all parts of NSW, interstate and overseas.

The theme for the conference was 'Australian Flora- Past, Present, Future', which aimed at taking participants 'back to the past to gain insight and appreciation of this land from thousands of years ago, including the evolutionary history of the Illawarra, its geology and plants - to experiencing the beauty of the world and the threats it is currently facing from fire, weeds, feral pests, population growth and development. Finally, onto the future, whereby solutions to better protect and enhance Australia's unique floral heritage through regeneration, advances in horticulture, education, plant resilience, seed and plant conservation are being explored and developed, to protect not just ourselves, but all generations to follow'. (Reference: ANPSA Online Conference Notes).

The Conference commenced on Saturday, September 10, with a complimentary tour of the Kiama region for delegates who were attending for the entire week, where they visited Shoalhaven Heads winery, the Berry School Nursery, and Bombo Headland. On Sunday, everyone, including members of the general public, were able to purchase native plants, most of which were indigenous to the Illawarra region, and later, a special cocktail evening was held at the Pavilion to welcome all the delegates. At this event, the Mayor of Kiama, Neil Reilly, welcomed everyone to the Conference and Kiama, and then Liz, wife of the incoming ANPSA President John Aitken, together with Christine Middleton and Sal's Pals entertained guests with a song she composed about the Conference's emblem, the Gynea Lily, much to the delight of all present!

In between the sessions where there was a program of guest speakers, delegates also had the opportunity to attend pre and post Conference Tours to destinations such as the World Heritage Blue Mountains, Lord Howe Island, the Warrumbungles and the Pilliga, Sydney Sandstone Flora, and the South Coast NSW. These tours were paid for by the attendees and were usually between 5-7 days duration. Some of the people I met during the week over morning tea shared how much they enjoyed their time on Lord Howe Island and also the Blue Mountains World Heritage area.

Wednesday and Friday were also designated as complimentary excursion days for delegates who were attending for the week. The choices included full-day trips via coach to either Royal National Park (Wattamolla and Audley); Barren Grounds Nature Reserve including Minnamurra Rainforest and the Robertson Rainforest; Jamberoo Native Nursery, Minnanurra Rainforest and Illawarra Grevillea Park; Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve and Kamay/Botany Bay National Park; Shoalhaven Heads Area; Fitzroy Falls and the Robertson Rainforest; Silky Oaks (Peter and Margaret Olde's property) and Robertson Rainforest; or the Australian Botanic Gardens at Mt Annan and the Illawarra Grevillea Park. A guide accompanied each tour and provided information about the specific areas and sights along the way, and a lovely morning and afternoon tea and lunch were provided.

Jim and I attended the Conference on Monday and Tuesday, and joined the Day Trip to Barren Grounds Reserve, Minnamurra Falls and the Robertson Rainforest on Wednesday. I had particularly wanted to go to Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, as the last time I had visited was in the late 1980s when I had attended a Bird Banding workshop with the NSW Field Ornithologists Group (now Birding NSW), and I remembered the lovely heathlands through which I'd walked. Back then, there was a sandstone cottage where people could stay overnight if attending for a weekend. The stone cottage is still there but as far as I could make out is not in use.



Boarding the day excursion coaches



The old stone cottage

Barren Grounds is also where there have been numerous sightings of the elusive and threatened Eastern Ground Parrot, but unfortunately, it was not seen by anyone on this occasion. However, we did see some spectacular views and some equally beautiful wildflowers with our guides Tom Jordan and Lyndal Thorburn, who have been associated with the Reserve since the 1980s.



Barren Grounds Nature Reserve heathlands -



and viewed from the escarpment

At Barren Grounds Nature Reserve - *Bossiaea rhombifolia* (left) and *Helichrysum elatum* (right)



Before we got to Barren Grounds, we drove to Minnamurra Falls – well worth a visit if you have never been to this beautiful location in Budderoo National Park, which is a subtropical and warm temperate rainforest. We took the Lyrebird Loop Trail which wound upwards through the forest on a well-marked trail complete with suspension bridges and trail guides pointing out various plants and landscape features. Ancient Red Cedars (*Toona ciliata*), Strangler Figs (*Ficus obliqua*) and giant Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistona australis*) were but a few of the highlights, together with the quiet deep pools of



water and mossy boulders.

Left :
Headwaters of
Minnamurra River
flowing through
Minnamurra
Rainforest in
Budderoo NP



Right:
Giant Red Cedar
(*Toona ciliata*) -
Minnamurra
Rainforest

We enjoyed morning tea outside the Visitor Centre, which has some interesting posters and gifts to purchase. From here we continued to Native Grace Plant Nursery at Robertson just outside the township, which has been newly established by an energetic couple. This is a speciality native plant nursery where plants such as Grevillea, Banksia and other native varieties can be purchased onsite or online. The nursery also offers garden design and installation services across the Southern Highlands by qualified horticulturalists and landscape designers.



Browsing in Native Grace Nursery Robertson

Whilst half of our group stayed here and enjoyed a beautiful lunch and a treat from their onsite café, the other half was met by a local guide and taken to Robertson Rainforest Reserve, or Brush as he referred to it, for a walk through this remnant endangered ecological community. The rainforest is a warm or cool temperate rainforest, with quite a dense structure dominated by Possumwood (*Quintinia sieberi*), Sassafras (*Doryphora sassafras*), Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and Featherwood (*Polyosma cunninghamii*). Shrubs included Tree Violet (*Hymenantha dentata*), Prickly Coprosma (*Coprosma*

quadrifida), and Brush Pepperbush (*Tasmannia insipida*). At ground level, there is a variety of ferns.



There are two main stands of Robertson Rainforest in the Southern Highlands, the main site is here on the outskirts of the township on the Robertson Plateau, and the other site is on the higher parts of the Cambewarra Range, where it is less widespread. It also occurs elsewhere in the Sydney Bioregion. The rainforest prefers highly fertile soils derived from basalt and basanite, on gently undulating parts of the Robertson Plateau at an altitude of between 500- 700 metres. There are about 400-600 hectares of this remnant rainforest still surviving, with most of it occurring on private land, hence it is quite fragmented due to development from farming activities, and subdivision for urban use. Other threats include invasion by non-native species (weeds and exotics), grazing and trampling by deer, impacts from climate change such as reduced rainfall, drying winds and increased storm events; disturbance from inappropriate collection of bush rock and pile burning/fire regimes (Reference: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/).

Robertson Brush

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday were full programmes whereby delegates listened to a variety of speakers at Kiama Pavilion, which is located on the coast where beautiful views of the beaches and ocean could be enjoyed from the car park and the verandas around the Pavilion during our breaks.



Inside the Kiama Pavilion



Outside the Pavilion

Starting early on Monday, September 12, we received a Welcome to Country from Gwenda Jarrett a traditional owner, on behalf of the Dharawahl and Yulaga peoples on whose country the Conference was being held. Gwenda is from the Gerringong area, and stepped in to help when Aunty Joyce Donovan could not come due to a funeral. Gwenda's Welcome

was followed by a talk from Jane Stroud, the CEO of Kiama Shire Council, who has a very strong interest in the environment, sharing that she had previously undertaken studies in English Literature and Environmental Planning. She expressed the importance of retaining old stands of forest and rainforests in the region, spoke highly of the local Arboretum, and especially the work undertaken by the Shire's team of arborists who are involved with all the Significant Trees and restorative work being undertaken. One of her other interests is the link between indigenous stories and songlines with the environment and native flora.

ANPSA Conference stage right, arrangement by Jill McLeland, photo by Marie O'Connor

The Keynote Address was delivered by Professor David Keith, Professor of Botany at the UNSW, who works as a botanist and ecologist in the areas of vegetation dynamics, population and ecosystem modelling and fire ecology. His talk centred upon the past, present and future of Australian plants. As part of this topic, David spoke about the history of Australia's flora from the time of Gondwanaland through to the present. He shared with us the reasons why Australian plants are unique. This includes aridification (xeromorphic traits), nutrient poverty (scleromorphic traits), fire regimes (pyromorphic traits) and isolation. It is now known that sclerophyll forests have been here for around 100 million years together with rainforests. Alpine herb fields have existed for around 2-5 million years, but due to climate change will need to undergo adaptations for upward migration.

Since colonisation, one of the big vegetation losses has been grasslands and grassy woodlands, and during this time there have been 26,242 plant species introduced to Australia. There are about 3,000 weeds of national significance (WONS) and 6,000 plants behaving like weeds, especially overseas but not so much yet here in this country.

Amongst indigenous plant species, 1,402 are listed under the EPBC Act; 37 species are extinct, 2,200 are listed as critically endangered, 559 endangered and 585 are listed as vulnerable under the IUCN classification. David also shared that at least 60% of plants endemic to Australia have not yet been assessed, and the extinction rate is more than likely underestimated.

In terms of the future under climate change, things will be difficult, especially for plants, animals and marine species, especially with the projected shifts required for these organisms to move to higher latitudes and altitudes and whether they will be able to adapt in time to survive. Intensifying drought conditions in Australia will have a significant impact on forest ecosystems that are predicted to contract. For instance, the Jarrah Forest in South West WA will come under threat due to changes in soil composition, resulting in the inability to hold sufficient water to meet the needs of the trees.

Our next speaker was Dr Tim Morrow, a recently retired meteorologist with the Bureau of Meteorology, who spoke on the topic '*An ancient forecast*'. Tim provided us with an



example where aboriginal people living in the southwest of WA about 35,000-40,000 years ago wore possum skins to keep warm from the freezing weather conditions. Amongst his interesting slides was one depicting the position of the continental shelf from about 25,000-16,000 years ago when all the river tributaries coursed its surface. It took people five days to reach the coast as it was two hundred miles further east than where it is today! So often we read about undersea mountains, volcanoes and canyons, but it was also interesting to learn about the existence of river systems too!

Associate Professor Scott Mooney from the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the UNSW spoke to us about '*Fire, humans and climate as drivers of environmental change in eastern Australia*'. In short, there are concerns that although fire has shaped the Australian landscape for many years, in more recent years such as with the 2019-20 Bushfires, under human-induced climate change, we may be moving to a period of more intense fires increasing in frequency which will interrupt the in-ground seed bank and change the composition of forests and other vegetation types as we know them today. Part of his work involves taking core samples from the sediments in elevated peat swamps. The presence of charcoal layers helps with assessing and determining fire frequency. If you would like to know more about this fascinating subject, one of the books recommended was '*Flammable Australia: Fire Regimes, Biodiversity and Ecosystems in a Changing Environment*' by Ross Bradstock. CSIRO Publishing.

After lunch, we had the pleasure of listening to Clarence Slockee from Gardening Australia fame who spoke about '*a day in the life of First Nations People, thousands of years ago*'. He shared about the indigenous plants which can be safely eaten and especially about his native rooftop garden in Sydney's South Eveleigh precinct, which has more than 2,000 plants, with more than 60 being edible and having medicinal qualities. He currently runs his own landscape design company known as Jiwah, which employs young Aboriginal people. He also shared that when aboriginal women go out into the bush to forage for food, before they pick any of the berries or other fruit from a plant, they ask it for permission to do so. Not all the fruit is harvested, some is left behind so it can fall to the ground and germinate naturally.

Following Clarence, we had the pleasure of learning about some of the APS Study Groups. The first speaker was Dr Lyndal Thorburn on behalf of the Eremophila Study Group, who shared that the Group was celebrating 50 years and there was to be a cake-cutting ceremony later in the afternoon for members. Lyndal mentioned there are about 245 species of Eremophila, with the blue, purple, pink and white flowering plants being pollinated by insects, with birds pollinating the orange flowering varieties. If members are enthusiastic about grafting, then Myoporum is a good species to use as rootstock for attaching the scion. However, one of the issues with propagation by cuttings and grafting is the loss of genetic diversity. Nurseries are currently selling *E. racemosa*. In the wild, this species has yellow buds with pink flowers, but the nurseries are selling their version which has yellow buds and white flowers. The Study Group is currently working with ABG at Mt Annan to conserve the species in the wild. The Group has good links with the Arid Gardens Arboretum in Port Augusta SA, and is also planning to approach the National Arboretum in Canberra. In addition, it hopes to raise education about eremophilas with the Canberra Institute of TAFE and Local Government Associations to encourage growing the species in home gardens.

From the Grevillea Study Group, Peter Olde described the botanical work and theory surrounding Grevilleas as being in a 'state of flux' from a taxonomic viewpoint. Previously taxonomy was based on morphology, i.e., physical attributes like size, shape colour and body structure. He mentioned the work of Robert Brown and advised that Australia's flora is based on Brown's taxonomy. Although we can key a species out with the use of botanical keys, using genetics is fast outpacing this method in helping botanists to decide the correct species/genus for certain plant groups through the process of DNA barcoding, which is based on DNA sequencing. Peter spoke about Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution through to the work of American paleontologist Joel Cracraft and his research into fossilised pollens being used to date the age of plants. Grevilleas have a long history, and one such example given was *Grevillea hilliiana*, also known as White Yiel Yiel, which is endemic to north-eastern NSW, and was first described in 1857 by Ferdinand von Mueller.

Our final speaker for the day on behalf of Lawrie Smith, the coordinator of the Garden Design Study Group, was Ellis Stones who spoke about the history of garden design in Australia. He mentioned the Eltham period which saw native plant gardens being designed by people such as Edna Walling and Gordon Ford. Also mentioned was Marion Blackwell in Western Australia and her work in designing bush gardens, and Sam Cox with his naturalistic garden style. Bruce Mackenzie with his unique 'Spirit of Place' designs where he responded to the local environment when working at a particular site. Lawrence (Lawrie) Smith, AM, was involved with the streetscape and parklands in Roma Qld, also the inner-city areas of Brisbane, and the Longreach Walkway, which runs beside the Matilda Highway from the edge of the township into the town itself. Mention was made too about the work of Phillip Johnson in creating gardens that were both sustainable and functional. He has also won awards at the Chelsea Garden Show.

Tuesday morning saw delegates attending open forums/chat rooms across two sites, one at the Pavilion and the other at the Kiama Anglican Church Hall on the other side of the oval. There was a choice of 13 guest speakers, and each of us had the opportunity to select five presenters. Jim and I listened to Prof Martin Backor from the Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Slovakia speak about the biological and ecological role of lichens which live in a symbiotic relationship between an algae and a fungi. Martin pointed out that lichens produce many unique compounds that have important biological, ecological, and pharmaceutical roles. This may include antimicrobial activity, anti-herbivory, chelating of heavy metals and UV light screening.

Following Martin's talk, we met with an energetic speaker by the name of Patsy Nagle who currently works as a Ranger for NPWS and also with the University of Wollongong in the Janet Cosh Herbarium. She is also a member of the Menai Wildflower Group and helps in their nursery. She also assists students and volunteers with plant identification, undertakes pest and weed control, and is also involved with post-fire rehabilitation. Patsy describes herself as having 'a long love affair with Australian Flora'. At the back of the room, Patsy had laid out a variety of brochures about plants of the Illawarra Region and encouraged everyone to pick up a copy.

From here we headed quickly over to the Anglican Church Hall to listen to Dr Kevin Mills speak about the impacts of climate change on the rainforests, especially in the Illawarra region. In Australia there is only about 20,000 square km of rainforest. Rainforests have not adapted well to severe droughts or being burnt severely, as we saw in 2019-20 with the bushfires along the entire length of the Great Dividing Range, where 35% of rainforest was

burnt. Moving forward into the future with climate change it will be the extremes in temperature that matter the most and how frequent these events occur. When driving south, the rainforest structure changes from dense woody vegetation to less-woody plants. As the rainforest disappears, sclerophyll forest begins to proliferate. Kevin has written several books, one titled '*Rainforest of the Illawarra District*'.

We then heard from Dr Janet Pierson who trained in Montana USA and currently works as a senior ecologist with a team of two botanists for the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. This was a great talk and one which I enjoyed immensely, as it was about providing safe havens both inside and outside a feral-proof fence in the Pilliga Scrub. Although most of her work has involved fauna such as Bettongs at Mulligans Flat just outside Canberra, they are also looking at plants, in particular the Donkey Orchid and the Cobar Greenhood, which are both listed as critically endangered, and have been found growing inside and outside the fence.

After a scrumptious morning tea, we listened to Catriona Bate and Phil Trickett (Isopogon and Petrophile Study Group) talk about grafting techniques for native plants.

For the afternoon sessions, we had a very interesting talk from Aunty Joyce Donovan, a Wodi Wodi and Dharawal elder, who spoke about native plant medicines of the local Illawarra area together with the protocols and customs for their use and how in turn the plants are linked to the culture of the South Coast people. One interesting topic was the use of spider webs (minus the spider) for assisting with forming a blood clot following scratches from say walking through the bush. Also, Native Pig Face (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*) can be used as an antiseptic and also for sore throats as a gargle. The pith from the Cabbage Tree Palm can be used for a sore throat and the fibres used to make fishing lines. Aboriginal people were healers, and the bush to them was like a pharmacy. Today they can no longer obtain many of their native medicinal plants due to urban development.

Jane Fountain, the ANPSA Study Group Coordinator, also spoke about the various study groups and pointed out the brochures about each of these groups to the delegates if they were thinking about joining a group.

Warwick Varley briefly shared about eucalypts. By profession, he is an arborist so has a wealth of knowledge garnered across 34 years and has lived in the Illawarra area since 1984. He also teaches at TAFE and is the leader of the Eucalyptus Study Group. Over 50 species of eucalypts exist throughout the Illawarra Region and soil and temperature play a big part in what species grows where.

Finally, we heard from Karlo Taliana who set up the online Banksia Lovers group which has 20,000 members. He is also a member of the Banksia Study Group. Wherever possible he promotes the Study Group to members who come online to share their insights and photos about Banksia. A discussion ensued about the different types of Banksia, and many in the audience who had some depth of experience also contributed to the discussion.

The three days were certainly full of things to do and it was a real experience to attend such an event and learn from the experts, meet new friends and catch up with others met from meetings and trips elsewhere via the wonderful world of Australian native plants. Many thanks to Heather Miles (President of APS NSW) and all her hardworking team for the wonderful organisation which went into making the entire conference so successful. The next Biennial Conference for ANPSA will be held in Victoria in 2024, so get ready!

Dream grows into a rainforest

From the Sydney Morning Herald eEdition, 30 September 2022

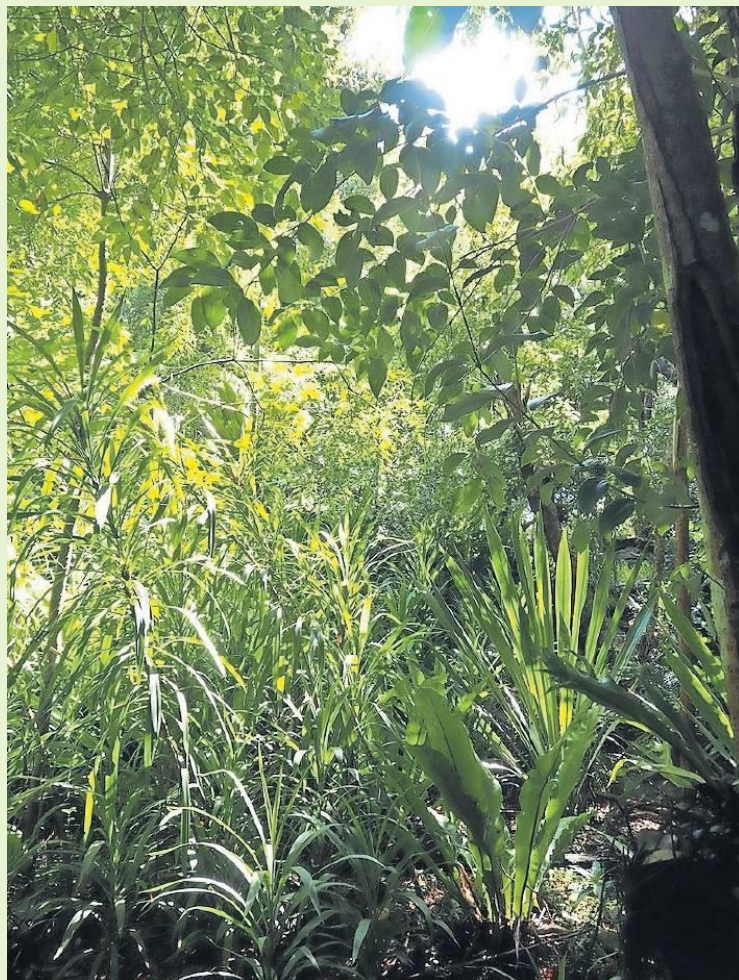
The Johnstons' vision, hard work and patience has paid off, writes **Robin Powell**

Malcolm and Jenny Johnston were holidaying in Currumbin on Queensland's Gold Coast when intense horticultural envy struck. "I had to have a rainforest," says Malcolm. "We cut our holiday short."

Forty years later the rainforest has engulfed the house and spread along the creek at the bottom of the Kenthurst property. Elegant Alexandra palms, slow-growing walking stick palms and glossy cabbage tree palms line the watercourse. Figs and lillypillies, cordylines and doryanthes stretch for the sun.

Staghorns and orchids cling to the trees, birds nest ferns settle on rock ledges, and mosses colonise the damp. It is hard to believe this was all lantana and privet when Malcolm first dreamed of his own rainforest.

Both Johnstons have a deep connection to this place. They were neighbours as kids, playing in the bush and working in the citrus orchards. The garden is on land run as an orchard and open-range poultry farm for three decades by Jenny's relatives, the Cadwells. Her Uncle Sid was an orchardist and native plant pioneer whose early grevillea hybrids Sid Cadwell, Boongala Spinebill and Jessie Cadwell are still popular garden plants.



Malcolm and Jenny named their own garden Boongala after Uncle Sid's Annangrove nursery, and as you'd expect there are plenty of grevilleas in the sunny gardens above the rainforest gully. Curved beds form a kind of amphitheatre of flower and foliage, ameliorating the drying winds and creating a microclimate in which a wide range of native plants flourish.

What was a dust-blown chookyard now attracts a whole other set of birds. In fact, the first thing you notice on entering the garden is the chorus of birdsong. Casuarinas lure black cockatoos to feast on the seed pods; grevilleas and banksias draw nectar-lovers such as honeyeaters, lorikeets and parrots; and the shelter the shrubs provide encourages finches, whipbirds and wrens to set up home.

A Californian twitcher recently visited and was Malcolm thrilled to tick 17 different birds off his list, including the double-barred finches which hop on and off a perch on the sunny edge of a thicket of grevillea.

The garden is a mighty achievement of vision, hard work and patience, and Malcolm has lost none of his enthusiasm for it. The garden is open Monday to Friday for a month in spring, and on open days he can be found answering questions from visitors keen to replicate the magic at home, and leading twice-daily tours of the rainforest, pointing out the bush foods he enjoys, the new plants he has put it in, the rarities and favourites.

There are still a few more opportunities to see the garden this year before the gates are closed on Monday October 12. Bring a picnic to enjoy at tables and chairs set under the angophoras, and plan to shop. When the garden is open the Johnstons return to their retail nursery past with a sensational selection of native plants for sale, as well as tube stock propagated at Boongala.

For more ephemeral treasures give Jenny 24 hours' notice and she'll cut a beautiful bunch of blooms from the garden to your budget. Check boongalagardens.com for details.

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Share your stories . . .

What have you been doing?

Email me at itcox@bigpond.com for the next *Calgaroo*.

* * * * *

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our Country, the people of the Dharug Nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since time immemorial. We honour and celebrate the spiritual, cultural and customary connections of Traditional Owners to Country and the biodiversity that forms part of that Country.

* * * * *



Parramatta and Hills District Group

Secretary: Jennifer Farrer apsparrahills@gmail.com 0407 456 577

Editor: Ian Cox itcox@bigpond.com

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