



Australian Plants Society

South East NSW Group

Newsletter 154

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Corymbia maculata Spotted Gum and
Macrozamia communis Burrawang

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Next Meeting

Saturday 2nd November 2019

Plants and Vegetation of Montague Island

At ERBG Staff Meeting Room 10am

Paul Hattersley, APS Member and also a Volunteer Guide for Montague Island, had originally proposed to lead a tour onto the island to discuss relevant conservation issues. However, as insufficient members expressed interest in taking the boat trip, this had to be cancelled, and likewise therefore, the planned activities at Narooma.

Plans for our next meeting have now changed and we will meet at ERBG staff meeting room at 10am for morning tea, followed by a presentation by Paul at 10.30am:

"The plants and vegetation of Montague Island, seabird conservation, and the impacts of weeds and other human disturbance and activity".

The history and heritage of Montague Island, including the light station, will also be weaved into the talk.

Paul apologises to those who wanted to join the field trip on Montague Island, but with low numbers the economics of hiring the boat proved unviable.

Following Paul's presentation, we will conduct the Show and Tell session (please bring your garden plants in flower) and after lunch, open discussion, end of year notices, and a walk at gardens to see what has happened over the past 12 months. Members might consider dining at the Chefs Cap Café, recently opened in its new location by the lakeside.

Hopefully, the revised venue will enable more people to come to our last event for this calendar year.

Also, hopefully the presentation might whet people's appetite to visit Montague Island at a later date.

Last Meeting, Canberra Odyssey

Members met at the Australian National Botanic Garden for our planned walk, and we were joined by Sue Sullivan's daughter Kate, and well known members of Armidale APS, John and Barb Nevin who had called at the gardens to catch up with family, on our informal stroll.

President Dianne, who had organised the activities for the weekend, led us from the Visitors Centre, past the Brittle Gum lawn and Gondwanan plants, through the Acacia section to the broad expanses of the Eucalypt lawn, where over 70 species of iconic Eucalypts are grown. By this time the group was spread like Brown's cows, members variously exploring the fine detail of this plant or that, photographing flowers or trying to find elusive labels to discover just what plant was being observed.



Di managed to get most of the group together at the Red Centre garden

Regathering at the impressive landscape of the Red Centre garden, we meandered through the Sydney Region flora, displayed boldly with massive sandstone boulders providing impressive structure.

The Proteaceae trail led through various Grevillea, Banksia, Hakea and Lomatia displays, and from here we branched off past the Native Bee Hotel to immerse ourselves in the floral wonder of the Rock Garden before wandering through bushy tracts to the main path and the café, where some stayed to enjoy the fare, whilst others headed back to the carpark picnic area.

***Acacia lineata* is a hardy shrub occurring naturally west of the Great Divide. At ANBG the plant is growing in competition with Eucalypts, but manages to put on a spectacular display, and was much admired.**



***Hibbertia stellaris*, a delightful W.A. species now rarely grown**



The scrambling climber *Hibbertia empetrifolia* occurs locally, and would be a worthwhile addition to our gardens. Does anyone grow it anymore?



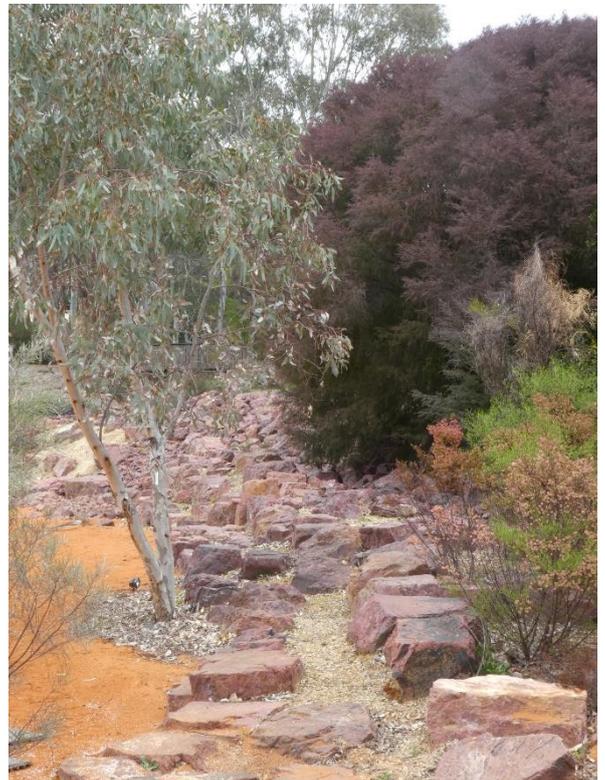
A tough low spreading shrub from coastal southern WA and SA, *Lasiopetalum discolor* was once a popular garden plant, now rarely grown.



To fully appreciate the gardens, one needs more than the 3 hours we allowed.

The many recent innovative landscape installations are quite spectacular, and deserve much more detailed inspection than we were able.

If Dianne wasn't keeping us to schedule, we might not have made it to the Walcott garden before dark.



A brilliant interpretation of the red centre escarpment country at ANBG

Yellow of *Pultenaea altissima* and white of *Clematis aristata* make a stunning statement in a shaded garden. Both are local plants we could easily accommodate.



The brilliant colours of Western Australia's heath country, purple *Calyrix leschenaultii* and orange *Eremaea acutifolia*. Both would make stunning container plants.



Epacris calvertiana ssp. versicolor

***Asterolasia asteriscophora* "Lemon Essence"**

***Prostanthera ovalifolia*.**

We were met by Ben and Ros Walcott on arrival at their Red Hill property for a viewing of their extensive native gardens. The following article was written by Ros, and is presented largely unedited.

“This property was first developed in 1926, when a small house was built on the 9300 square metre block, and a number of *Pinus radiata* were planted around the perimeter in the early 1930’s.

Other large conifers were planted at the front of the property, including a now magnificent Portuguese Cypress, *Cupressus lusitanica*.

The property was purchased by the French government and used as their Chancery office for many years. Ben and Ros purchased the property in 2001, and the planting of their garden began in July 2003. The garden is planted almost entirely with Australian plants, with a very few New Zealand plants. (Apart from the pre-existing exotic trees, they have also added a few fruit and nut trees.)

The original design of the garden was the work of Helen Cohen, who was also part of the firm creating the architectural design of the house, as Ben and Ros wished to integrate the design of both house and garden.

The question was, what sort of garden did we want to create?

They came up with a set of ideas that ultimately determined the nature of the garden.

Over a period of 2 years, from 2001 to 2003, in consultation with Helen by email and letter from America, where they lived at the time, a plan was developed for the garden with basic design principles including:

- The garden would contain mostly plants native to Australia.
- There would be little, if any, lawn. Where we needed open space we would have a meadow of grasses, forbs and lilies.
- The garden would be attractive to birds and other wildlife.
- Plant foliage and shape would be more important than flowers, even though flowers were needed to attract many of the nectar feeding birds.
- We would attempt to retain all rain water on the property for use in the garden
- There should be some open water in the garden to attract wildlife.
- There should be no enclosed ‘garden rooms’ but rather different areas that flowed into each other.
- There would be more emphasis on the natural rather than the formal in our garden design, including wide paths in curved shapes.
- Whilst we acknowledge that most native plants require trimming, they should only be trimmed to enhance their natural shape, not to create any formal shapes.

These ideas were derived from our feelings about all the varied gardens we had seen, and what we found attractive about them.



Welcome from Ben



and Ros



A garden of surprises, full of small bird’s chatter

Our architect, Wal Kostyrko, sited our new house turned 90 degrees to the original house, facing north-east to catch the winter sun along the whole length of the house. Wide eaves at the correct level ensure that the summer sun does not overheat the house. The original trees on the block had received no maintenance for decades and needed attention. With advice from Dr. Robert Boden (ANBG) a number of trees were removed from the block, and others pruned in 2003.



Photo Sue Knight



Photo Di Clark

Over a 6 month period, from July to December 2003, the basic planting of 2500 plants, including 40 trees, was completed. The soil is pH neutral and high in clay content. All gardens had extensive soil improvements, including lots of Dynamic Lifter, to help plants cope with the clay soils. Thirty 15 cubic metre truckloads of wood chips were spread over the gardens in the first year. In the 16 years since the original garden construction, we have spread at least another 10 truckloads of 'forest litter' each year, which has improved the soil structure immensely.

Planting has continued at a reduced rate since the original plantings, and Ben and Ros now have over 5000 plants, representing about 850 different species. The meadow, 650 square metres in area, was planted with over 20,000 grasses, lilies and forb seedlings, in November 2003. The soil was not amended in this part of the garden, as ripping the ground would have encouraged more weeds. The meadow planters used a drill to make holes, then added a gel containing both water and nutrients, before planting the seedlings. The meadow landscape was rewarding several times each year,

Able Landscaping was hired to complete site preparation and initial planting, and the Elvin Brothers, David and Ian, constructed the rockwork around the large and small ponds from rock quarried at Newline near Queanbeyan. All drainspouts from the roof and run off from the extensive granite paving are diverted into the three pond system, where rainwater is mixed with bore water to run the irrigation system. We use drip irrigation occasionally where practical, but mostly a microjet system for the planted areas.



A couple of the original trees of the area, *Eucalyptus mannifera*, were maintained to provide visual balance, and a place for birds to rest securely

but was the most difficult part of the garden to maintain, continually infested with *Ammobium alatum* and weedy grass species.

In 2014 the last of the *Pinus radiata* had deteriorated to the point where it required removal, which meant driving a 200 tonne crane through the meadow garden for access. Therefore we finally decided to redevelop the meadow as garden beds. Grasses were removed, top soil with all the weed seeds dug out, the area dug over, further topsoil added, as was irrigation and a mulch of pebbles. The beds were surrounded with swales filled with large river pebbles to ensure excellent drainage. These beds are planted with low growing **Eremophila**, daisies and other colourful plants. Another area of lawn has also been removed and redeveloped in a similar fashion.



Ben enthuses over a favourite plant



A great change of level, with sympathetic use of local rock

species, quite an impressive achievement. She mentioned her thrill at recording a breeding pair of Australian Hobbies, and expects that more will be attracted as the garden matures.

Recent additions include a greenhouse and 2 shadehouses for orchids, and for growing seedlings.

Both Ben and Ros are adamant that the making of garden has been an intensely interesting, occasionally frustrating, and mostly enjoyable experience. Both expect to continue learning about Australian plants and their growing requirements for years to come.

As past leaders of the Australian Garden Design Study Group Ben and Ros show their garden has much to offer visitors by way of aesthetics and plant choice.

When we consider the design principles recorded above, are they not the very ideas we should all be considering for our own gardens?

Ben and Ros have learned a great deal about the Red Hill property in the last 16 years. They say their garden is a living, changing artwork. The variety of shapes and textures that the garden presents is very pleasing, but as with all gardens, it is never finished. In general, very few plants have been lost to cold and frost. The majority of plant losses occurred during January and February, not because of the lack of water, but they expect excessive heat. **Of course, plants die, or they grow too big (they haven't read the label), or they don't appreciate our conditions, so don't grow well, if at all, so they get moved, or removed.**

This presents an opportunity to try new things, and take advantage of new plants.

(Ben and Ros recommended we call in at Cool Country nursery in Pialligo on the way home, as they have an ever increasing range of Australian plants to try. Note that many of us on this trip did just that, to the detriment of our bank balance, but some I am sure found some very interesting treasures.)

One of the great joys of having a garden filled with Australian plants is the range of birds and other native animals enticed to visit. Ros is an avid bird watcher, and over the years has been recording the species which visit.

From an original count of 35 species, to date her list stands at 107



Looking very *Grevillea* like, *Hakea purpurea* from NSW and Q'land, is a favourite haunt for smaller birds, safe from attack by wattlebirds

Plants in containers



Some of the burgeoning collection of container plants which Ben and Ros have established, for plants which they find difficult to maintain in their open garden.

A well established Wollemi pine, *Wollemia nobilis*, with developing fruiting cones, accompanied by a trailing *Rhodanthe anthemoides*, a very happy white waratah, *Telopea speciosissima*, and a dwarf form of *Banksia grandis* preparing to flower.

Having relinquished leadership of the Australian Design Study Group, Ben and Ros have now taken on the leadership of another Study Group. They now lead the Australian Plants for Containers, which has been in recess for some time.

They note that members of this Study Group focus their activities on investigating and trialling those Australian plants that may be suitable for growing in pots and other containers.

With a trend to smaller gardens, or for members who live in units or apartments, growing Australian plants in containers is a great way to have a small garden of native plants. Also, growing in containers allows us to cultivate plants that otherwise won't tolerate local soil conditions.

Membership of Study Groups is open to all financial members of the Australian Plant Society. If you have an interest in joining the Container group, contact Ros, roswalcott5@gmail.com or Ben, benwalcott5@gmail.com to be added to their email distribution list.



Forest 20 Planting commenced 2009

Welcome to the
Southern Tablelands
Ecosystems Park (STEP)

Regional Botanic Garden



On Sunday we met early at the National Arboretum. Our first destination was the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park Regional Botanic Gardens, which displays 16 species of Eucalypts typical of the forests and woodlands of the Southern Tablelands regions of NSW and the ACT. These trees are arranged in bands representing their natural position in the landscape. Within the trees is established demonstration gardens displaying a selection of understorey species typical of the forests, woodlands, grasslands and ephemeral wetlands of the tablelands. These gardens display local native plants suitable for gardens, and there is generally always some species in flower throughout the year.



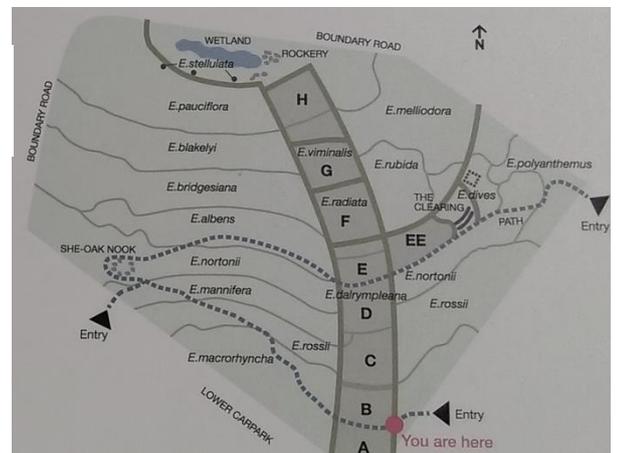
Di and Sue, with reassurance from Barry, discussing which flower this is. Some of the group stayed with the leader during our visit.

Any member wishing to receive a copy of the plant list for species grown at the STEP garden can do so by emailing a request to the editor.



***Banksia serrata*, looking ancient beyond its years.**

From the STEP garden we headed to the Village Visitor Centre and the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia.



Map of the Eucalypt bands of the STEP gardens

Most are aware that the art of Bonsai is to create an illusion of a full sized, old tree, in miniature. Penjing, which means 'pot scenery' uses multiple trees, and may include rocks, miniature ground covers and also figurines or objects to complete a story.

Of the 80 or so displays, about 20% are Australian plants, including Eucalypts and Angophora, Banksia, Callistemon, Casuarina, Acacia, Melaleuca and Leptospermum. All plants on show have been donated or loaned to display in the collection by the artists and their families. The oldest tree in the collection dates from 1880, and is quite an impressive sight.

Ben and Ros had agreed to meet us at the Terra Australis Garden for 11:30 am. Development of the display garden was sponsored by the Australian Native Plants Society (ANSPA) ACT. Designed by the current leader of the Garden Design Study Group, Laurie Smith A.M., Landscape Architect, the Terra Australis Garden celebrates the varying Australian landscape through landform, rockform and plant species.

Ben spent some time enthusing over the garden and its potential, and explained how the design evolved. The intended interpretation of our continent became obvious as he spoke.

The garden features a cascading rock pond, a small ephemeral salt lake, a central rock formation representative of the Great Dividing Range, and a range of Australian plants demonstrating the diversity of flora found throughout the land.

The garden is still very new and raw, having been constructed in 2018, and opened by Angus Stewart in November of that year.

The design concept for the garden “conventionalises the basic form of the Australian continent”.

The oval garden represents the island coastline and the Great Dividing Range sweeps across the continent from north east to south, physically expressed in a subtle landform.

Within this geographic form, the design philosophy has been to create and interpret selected environments and plant communities of Australia that are known to be suitable to withstand the rigours of the Canberra climate.

The intent is to invite the viewer to ‘explore’ the flora of Australia by meandering along the pathway from north-east to south-west, crossing the Great Divide to experience a representative selection of the flora and the land formations of the ‘regions’ traversed.

These ‘regions include

- **Tropical coast and hinterland**
- **Subtropical coast and hinterland**
- **Temperate coast and hinterland**
- **Temperate montane**
- **Southwest Western Australia coast and sandplains, and**
- **Outback Australia**

The central pathway, seen to the right, incorporates panels with words from the poem “My Country” by Dorothea Mackellar.



Granite, sandstone and basalt rocks and boulders are used to represent the Australian Landscape.



With regard to exploration of Australia's diverse regions, the perimeter pathway recalls the voyage of discovery around the coastline by many mariners throughout history.

The plant species in the garden are chosen for their unique qualities in representing varying native flora from around Australia. The majority of the plants have been donated from nurseries around Australia, and have been carefully selected, placed and planted by ANPSA representatives.

There are 2 large specimen trees in the garden, *Xanthorrhoea glauca* and *Macrozamia moorei*, both of which are estimated to be hundreds of years old.

The garden and plantings will change over time, particularly as a canopy and resulting microclimate start to develop.

Despite their already busy lives, Ben and Ros have found time to assist with the development of, and maintenance of this small display garden, and to also supplying some plants for the project.

There is no such thing as a maintenance free garden, and this project, being in so open a space and subject to incursions of children attracted by the rocks for climbing and the water for splashing, will no doubt test the patience of the volunteers who undertake the work.

Ref: <https://www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au/living-collection/gallery-of-gardens/the-terra-australis-garden>

Trees and shrubs planted in the Terra Australis garden

Acacia acinacea, *Acacia covenyi*, *Acacia glaucoptera*, *Acacia howittii* 'Canberry Honey Bun'

Acacia leprosa 'Scarlet Blaze', *Acacia verticillata*

Adenanthos sericeus 'Platinum'

Banksia spinulosa 'Cherry Candles', *Banksia spinulosa* 'Coastal Cushion'

Brachychiton populneus

Callistemon 'All Aglow', *Callistemon* 'Great Balls of Fire', *Callistemon* 'White Anzac'

Chamelaucium 'Lady Stephanie', *Chamelaucium* 'Paddy's Pink'

Chrysocephalum semipapposum

Correa baeuerlenii, *Correa pulchella* 'Minor'

Dicksonia antarctica

Eleaocarpus reticulatus pink

Eremophila 'Beryl's Blue', *Eremophila glabra* 'Bellalla Gold', *Eremophila longifolia*

Eremophila maculata 'Aurea', *Eremophila maculata* 'Compact Lemon',

Eremophila glabra 'Hello Cocky'

Eucalyptus leucoxylon 'Rosea', *Eucalyptus neglecta*, *Eucalyptus pumila*

Eucalyptus puerulenta 'Baby Blue', *Eucalyptus risdonii*

Grevillea 'Lady O', *Grevillea plurijuga* 'Purple Haze'

Gymnostoma australinum

Hakea francisciana *Hakea* 'Stockdale Sensation' *Hakea* 'Pin Ball'

Leptospermum 'Copper Glow', *Leptospermum* 'Mesmer Eyes'

Macrozamia moorei, *Melaleuca thymifolia* 'Pink Lace', *Myoporum floribundum*

Olearia aff. *lanuginosa*, *Philotheca* 'Flower Girl', *Pimelea nivea*

Prumnopitys ladei 'Mt. Spurgeon Black Pine'

Rhagodia 'Grey Edge', *Rhagodia spinescens*, *Senna barronfieldii*, *Westringia* 'Deep Purple'

Xanthorrhoea glauca

Accent plants and ground covers

Adenanthos cuneatus 'Flat Out', *Anigozanthos flavidus* Landscape Orange,

Brachyscome multifida pink, *Brachyscome* 'White Delight'

Casuarinaglauca prostrate

Chrysocephalum ramosissimum, *Kunzea ambigua* prostrate, *Lomandra* 'Lime Tuff'

Scaevola 'Mauve Clusters', *Scaevola* 'Super Clusters', *Stemodia florulenta*

Xerochrysum bracteatum Yellow