

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group

...your local native garden club

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Conostylus candicans cv 'Silver Sunrise'

This ornamental little Western Australian is finding a well-earned place in gardens. It grows to a showy, half metre clump of silver-grey, slightly hairy leaves and throws up masses of these cute, yellow club-like flowers in spring/summer.

It grows in most well drained soils. Plant it in plenty of sun, though it doesn't mind a little shade. Prolonged periods of dry weather are not a problem and it tolerates frost.

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Diary Dates

December

Sunday 4th December Christmas Picnic Party at Wingecarribee Reservoir. Chicken, wine and fruit juice provided - bring something to share. Contact Kris to find out what is needed on the day. All welcome with partners and friends.

Thursday 9th - Artisans Night Market - from 5.30pm at **Sturt** (craft centre, Range Rd, Mittagong) is holding their inaugural Artisans Night Market when they will have all types of wares on sale. A wide variety of makers in a market style setting in Sturt's historic gardens. The night will include live music, food and drink on offer, plus the opening of two new exhibitions in Sturt Gallery and some great special offers in Sturt Shop. The perfect night before Christmas is at Sturt.

2017

January 23rd 2017 - First committee meeting of the year. 2.00pm at Kay Fintan's house, 2 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, Bowral. Non-committee members welcome as visitors.

February 2nd 2017 Don't miss our first meeting of the year. APS NSW secretary, Heather Mills, has agreed to make the trip to the SH to talk to us about the making of her beautiful native garden in the Hunter and a second garden in Sydney. I've had a sneak preview (photos shown at Tamworth meeting) and believe me, its wonderful!

About Heather Miles - from Garden Drum

Corporate consultant, passionate gardener, loves Australian natives and their design potential. Honorary Secretary of the Australian Plant Society NSW . Gets her hands dirty in a native garden in the Hunter Valley and an old fashioned flower garden in Sydney. Fascinated by the similarities between organisations and plant communities.

Together with Alix Goodwin from Blue Mountains group (Vice President of APS NSW) Heather has been instrumental in strategic planning for APS into the future.

Snippets

November AGM: Many thanks for your services our retiring treasurer, Brian Fintan and welcome to new Treasurer Bill Mullard. Thank you for volunteering, Bill! And thanks also to newly elected committee member, Louise Egerton. We look forward to working with you both on the committee. NB Committee now meets on Mondays in the afternoon - third Monday in the month at 2pm. The venue varies between committee members homes. (See Jan 2017 Newsletter)

Outings in 2017 - A decision has been made to change the day of our outings. Sunday outings have proven to be difficult for some, so we will change and have our outings on Thursdays. This will be easy to remember as it lines up with our Thursday meeting day.

The book about Mount Gibraltar: *The Gib: Mount Gibraltar, Southern Highlands*, is now available in full on the Wingecarribee Shire Council web site. It was published in 2007 and later reprinted by Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare under the auspices of the council. It provides a freely available, attractive and well researched social, industrial and environmental history of the site. An updating Appendix has been added that maintains the book's importance as a reference source for the community. wsc.nsw.gov.au go to the home page and ' search ' Mount Gibraltar. J Lemann.

October Excursion - Searching for native currants at Philtam Park

Fran Mullard

On the sunny, wind-free morning of Sunday, 2nd October, a group of fourteen APS members visited Tammy and Phil Worner's property, "Philtam Park", at High Range.

On arrival, we assembled at a pretty dam for morning tea and to discuss our action plan. The main thrust was to locate a group of *Leptomaria acida* (aka native currants - pic next page) plants and to harvest the fruit, which the jam-makers amongst us intended to turn into jam. (I must say that, on tasting the currants later, I did wonder at the ambition, so sour were they!) So, armed with plastic bags in which to collect the fruit, we set off at a meandering pace, taking in the scenery and the atmosphere and thinking how privileged we were just to be here on such a beautiful day, listening to the calls of Grey Shrike Thrushes and Olive-Backed Orioles and freely enjoying the Australian bush.

It wasn't long before a call of "I've found them!" sent us running.



Miranda was a successful and enthusiastic native currant picker.



Leptomeria acida (left) is a rather inconspicuous bush, easily passed by if you don't know what you're looking for, which I certainly didn't! We collected the currants and wandered on, stopping here and there to look at various plants. I was astounded at what you see when you are in the company of such a knowledgeable group.

Some plants which I admired along the way, and were new to me, were *Stypantra glauca*, with its purple, yellow-centred flower; *Isopogon anemonefolia*; *Dampiera* sp, with its beautiful, blue flowers and *Hakea laurina*. There were also some beautiful little red ground-huggers which turned out to be *Drosera* sp, sundew insect traps. The smooth-barked *Angophora costata* was pointed out as a tree worth noting, as it is not common to this area. I really enjoyed the morning and learned much in the process.

At around midday the group dispersed and the jam-makers set off to make jam, of course.

What a lovely surprise awaited us at the next APS meeting.....a little pot of native currant jam for each excursion participant. Thank you Jenny, Erica and George and Jonquil - it's delicious! A culinary triumph, I would say!

... from Jenny Simons, a note on the native currant, *Leptomeria acida*

Leptomeria acida is a 1.5 m high bush with green branchlets and tiny, barely visible leaves. It flowers with small red flowers in summer and ripens its fruit over winter. It is found on the coast and ranges of eastern Australia. Its habitat is dry eucalypt woodland in sheltered sites. The plant is a root parasite.

And a note on the jam making - It took us a whole hour to remove the tiny stems from the fruit, using our fingernails. In the course of this exercise we discovered some of the insect life that dwells on the currants: two types of small flying insects, one creeping insect and one worm-like crawling insect. The haul weighed in at one and three-quarter kilos, a great result and enabling us to make seventeen small jars of jam, providing one for each person who attended the outing. Because the second set of bushes that we found bore fruit that was less ripe, the jam has turned out a little more sour than usual, but is still delicious.

... from Sarah, a note on carnivorous sundews

Walking back to the cars over stony, sandy, partly-cleared ground at High Range, a few of us were delighted to find little patches of carnivorous sundew plants - *Drosera* sp. I've looked up my trusty Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants by Elliott and Jones, and process of elimination (most sundews come from WA or the tropics) leads me to surmise that we were looking at *Drosera pygmaea*, which grows in moist sandy soil in 'stunted



heathland'. Drosera are carnivorous plants which trap insects and some species, even small animals, using specialised leaf hairs. As the insect struggles, the hairs draw it inward and downward. Enzymes break down the insect's body and the soluble parts are absorbed by the leaf, providing nourishment for the plant. Amazing! This specimen is about to produce its tiny, white flower. The bud can be seen on Erica's fingernail.

October meeting - Fran Simons on the mixed garden

Sarah Cains

When Pat Hall unexpectedly had to cancel as our October speaker, the committee asked Fran Simons if she would kindly step in as replacement. Our spies had informed us that Fran has an interesting story to tell and that she had an excellent talk prepared. Her subject was combining exotics with natives in the garden. We knew this subject would be of interest to members as many amongst us grow plants from both spectrums.

Opening her talk, Fran made the observation that Australians do not sufficiently value our own plants. You often they are seen as being for bushland gardens and out of place in the formal garden. In Europe, these same plants are seen as the height of sophistication. She reinforced her point by showing us a photo of a top Parisian hotel with potted Australian plants greeting guests at the entrance. It was also noted that top grafted callistemons are 'best sellers' in England.

We were particularly inspired by the three year old Exeter garden Fran used as the model for her talk. Complimentary natives and exotics have been carefully selected and positioned to create a composition ably fulfilling the owners' brief for an 'abundant and soft' garden at the front of their house.

Thorough site assessment and preparation prior to planting was explained to be an essential in achieving a good result. In this particular garden, drainage problems had to be dealt with before planting. A few established exotics were allowed to remain in place (who could mattock out a healthy, mature top-grafted maple?!) and these formed a skeleton around which plants were added to build a pretty composition with the 'border look'.

Fran is particularly pleased with the performance of *Westringia glabra* (as distinct from the more commonly used *W fruitcosa*) as a subject for a small, clipped hedge. This hedge contains the garden along a sweep of driveway. Within, the natives performing successfully include *Phyllothea sp* (good for clipped shaping and hardy in most soils) - *Correa* 'Dusky Bells' and the *C. reflexa* cvs have done surprisingly well in damp ground - Waratahs cv 'Shady Lady', a great garden favourite for this district - *Prostanthera sp* - happily performing their duty of providing a spectacular massed flowering to welcome spring - *Dampiera* 'Cobalt Mound', *Lomandra* - many wonderful new cultivars (though don't plant them in poorly drained situations), *Clematis aristata*, can be straggly at the base but mass it up with close neighbours - *Alyogyne sp* have proved to be frost tolerant once established - *Acacia sp*, there is one for every garden and every position (and Fran is, after all, the daughter of our Wattle Queen, Jenny Simons!). But Boronias? No! These tricky Western Australians did not want to join in the fun, though one has agreed to grow in a pot.

This Exeter garden has achieved an admirable growth rate over three years and the 'before and after' shots had us all inspired.

A few hints from Fran:

- * Don't use lime or dolomite amongst natives. If you need a clay breaker use gypsum.
- * The interesting point was made that Fran has not found all natives to be phosphorus sensitive. But don't use fertilisers high in phosphorus near plants in the Proteaceae family (*Banksias*, *Grevilleas* etc). Also sensitive are *Hardenbergia sp*, *Alyogone sp* and some of the wattles.
- * Blood and Bone is said to be high in phosphorus and low in nitrogen - though Kris made the observation that she has used it successfully when diluted to the consistency of weak tea.

For help with plant selection, try the website gardeningwithangus.com.au and don't forget the excellent ANBG site anbg.gov.au

Thank you, Fran. We learned lots from your talk and enjoyed your lovely photographs. And extra thanks for stepping in for us at short notice - on a day when you'd had to drive to Canberra and back in the morning!

Notes from two Plant Tables - October and November

... Jenny Simons (Burradoo) sent this great piece on wattles for gardens

To our October meeting I brought several sprigs of wattle from my garden. I have rich red clay soil, but as I did some reading about these wattles I noticed that many also grow in very different soils. The small shrub ***Acacia accinacea*** Gold Dust Wattle (.3 - 2m) is a great favourite of mine. The leaves are tiny and the blossom occurs all the way along the little branches, turning the bush into a golden ball. It is from southern Australia. ***Acacia drummondii***, Drummond's Wattle (.9 - 1.8m) has delicate bipinnate leaves and flowers in rods. It is from Western Australia. Next in height are two wattles which have been bred as dwarfs in recent years. I also have their tree counterparts. ***Acacia cognata*** 'Bower Beauty' (1.5 - 2m) makes a fine, shapely circular shrub, always admired in my garden. It has thin drooping leaves. The flowers are pale and insignificant. It is a foliage plant. The other dwarf is ***Acacia howittii*** Sticky Wattle (1.5 - 2m). When I bought mine it had no cultivar name that I can recall. It is not 'Green Wave', which is a groundcover; it may be like a more recent release 'Honeybun'. It, too, is a shapely circular shrub, with lemon yellow flowers and attractive red tips to the new growth. It comes from Victoria. ***Acacia iteaphylla*** Flinders Range Wattle (to 3m) has greenish bark, narrow leaves, a weeping habit and masses of yellow flowers. It has the odd habit of criss-crossing some of its leaves after picking. It comes from South Australia. The rare wattle ***Acacia pubescens*** Downy Wattle (to 4m) is a spreading shrub, though mine has grown tree-shaped, that is, with a single trunk. It has masses of bright yellow flowers and looks a bit like the Cootamundra Wattle, though its leaves are green rather than grey. Hairy branchlets give it its popular name. It comes from a limited area of growth, from Bilpin to the Georges River area, and Woodford. ***Acacia pravissima*** Ovens Wattle (to 8m) is a tree with grey-green leaves, arching branches, small wedge-shaped leaves and golden flowers in long sprays. It comes from south-eastern Australia.

When each wattle has finished flowering it gets a prune, up to one third removed if necessary. The only exception is if I want to save the seed. If you are thinking of planting wattles, these or any others, you might like to visit my garden to see if they are what you are looking for - 4861 1767.



There has been some confusion over years with the labelling of *Calothamnus* sp. *C. quadrifidus* has four staminal bundles whilst *C. villosus*, in most cases, has five. (Elliott and Jones)

height of the plant. The *Calothamnus villosus* is growing very well if in a somewhat leggy, untidy fashion. It is in a position that lets the light fall on the fine hairs covering the leaves which gives a lovely backlit glowing effect to the whole bush. It flowers continuously and I've been cautious about pruning it but some members of the group have pruned theirs hard with success. When I next checked the bush I noticed that where I had tentatively pruned in a couple of places there were in fact new shoots which has given me encouragement that I can reduce its size without killing it. The bright orange of the standard and the equally bright pink of the keel of the pea flowers of *Chorizema cordatum* should clash but instead produce a lovely vibrant, rather zingy effect. In the garden it is sprawling over and through a couple of other shrubs in a semi shaded position but seems to be quite happy. Being a wilful gardener, I came home with the *Grevillea 'Poorinda Peter'* and then realised that I didn't really have space for it. Undeterred, I planted it and use the (frequent) prunings in the house where the zigzag leaves, often with bronze tips, last well. The deep pink toothbrush flowers are a bonus. The *Grevillea sericea* is a great medium shrub - ours seems to flower continuously for most of the year. It has the added attraction of being a local species. *Goodia lotifolia* is also a local species of pea with clear yellow flowers. It is about 2-2.5 m tall but is constantly spreading by underground runners. I had it in two places - one in full sun where it did very well for a couple of years until it became woody (I recently decided to remove it - all that remains is the part which went under the back fence into the neighbour's. The other, which I planted in filtered shade, is doing much better and is now forming a small thicket under some larger trees. The *Hypocalymma angustifolium* is a gorgeous little plant covered with pink and white flowers. I remembered seeing *Eriostemon australasius* in the bush years ago and really admiring the large pink flowers against the greyish foliage, and, never having seen them in a nursery before, was excited when I found two of the pink form as well as two of a white form at the Berrima nursery. I bought one of each and then in that wilful way went back the next day and bought the the other two. All four, though only small (about 40-50cm) have been covered in flowers for weeks.

...and from Pam Tippett, some news of beauties from her Bundanoon garden...

Before the last APS meeting I had a walk around the garden gathering samples of some of the more interesting plants in flower for the plant table. Among these were *Kunzea baxteri*, *Calothamnus villosus*, *Chorizema cordatum*, *Grevillea 'Poorinda Peter'*, *Grevillea sericea*, *Goodia lotifolia*, *Hypocalymma angustifolium* and *Eriostemon australasius*.

The *Kunzea baxteri* is a very lanky plant in the position I have it (filtered shade for most of the day) and has taken its time to flower though now it is, the flower spikes are quite a striking red with yellow tips on the stamens. I'm cautious about pruning it to make it bushier and may just leave it alone as the flowers can be seen from the house because of the



...at the November meeting, Sarah (Bowral town) talked about *Ricinocarpos pinifolius*

(reference - Elliott and Jones) Common name: the Wedding Bush: Natural habitat for *Ricinocarpos* sp is mostly low altitudes in light forest and heathland areas. Favouring acidic, sandy soils and sharp drainage, they are tolerant to moderate frosts. They like sun, but also some shade on a hot day and they don't need extra water except in extreme conditions. The Wedding Bush is highly decorative. In spring it covers itself in a mass of white flowers, providing strong contrast with the dark green foliage. They respond well to pruning, but remember not to spoil its lovely natural form. It makes a great small tree if judiciously pruned. We grew this plant successfully in a sheltered spot in our almost frost-free garden on top of The Gib. Photo at left: Presently our gardening activity is reduced to Kris's tiny plants in

pots so I was amazed when I found native insects in these *Ricinocarpos* flowers (cuttings from The Gib garden plant) in the middle of bitumen and exotic plant land! Just goes to show how important it is to spread natives far and wide to feed and accommodate native wildlife.

...Jane Pye is growing some interesting *hibbertias* in her East Bowral garden

Hibbertias are such cheerful plants, all low growing sub shrubs with bright yellow flowers in spring. I have tried growing many different varieties, and will share with you the most successful. There are also climbers (*H scandens* and *H dentata*) but these are not hardy enough for my garden. The soil has been improved and is over heavy clay, but reasonably well drained. Some extra water is given in dry weather.

Hibbertia pedunculata is an absolute star, with tiny (10mmx1mm) bright shiny laves that reflect the light. The large flowers are 5 petalled, scattered across the low surface of the plant on slender stems. It roots at intervals, and will spread to about 80cm across in sun. However, it is somewhat frost sensitive, and in my frost-pocket garden it shrinks a bit each winter before recovering. As a bonus it repeat-flowers throughout the warm weather when conditions are right.

Hibbertia cv 'Sun Drops' is a selection, rather hairy matt leaved and taller in growth. The flowers cover the plant up to 3 cm across, up and down the stems. The large buds and stalks have a reddish tinge which adds to the attraction. This too will repeat, but less so. My plant is about 30 cm high and 50 wide. It suffered no frost damage last winter.

A valuable groundcover is *Hibbertia truncata*, wider spreading and dense. It may grow higher over time, but mine is still about 20cm high and a metre or so across: it may just keep growing outward as it is at the moment. This one is completely frost tolerant, turning a reddish colour in cold weather. The flowers appear in September-November, smaller and fewer but still attractive. This is in morning sun, but seems happy too growing under and through taller plants.

November speaker, Dr Kevin Mills

Robyn Kremer

Who has heard of The Five Islands? They sound exotic and they are within a hundred km radius of our Southern Highlands. Why haven't we visited them?

The Five Islands Group was officially named in 1953. It consists of Flinders, Bass, Big, Martin and Rocky Islands. They are a few hundred metres east of Hill 60, a lookout and park at Port Kembla. They are administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Dr Kevin Mills, our November speaker, is well acquainted with their rugged but compromised beauty. He is Chair of the South Coast Region Advisory Committee of the NPWS Illawarra, which is based in Nowra. He has researched the Five Islands pre and post settlement history. One of the images he used in his talk was a landscape by Augustus Earle painted c1825 of rocky islands off an arcadian coastal landscape.

The Five Islands were created c6500 years bp (before present) after sea level rise. They are composed of volcanic rock formed c 300m years bp. Before white settlement, Aborigines camped & feasted on the islands' shellfish as evidenced by middens. Their dreaming recounts that five disobedient daughters were thrown into the sea by their unhappy father and so the islands were formed.

In 1797, George Bass, looking south from Wollongong, noted 5 Islands and in 1804, Barron Fields described the group as picturesque on the seaward side.

The first scientific survey of vegetation was conducted in 1980 and in 2005 seabirds were surveyed. Trees were never noted on the islands however sand dunes were in evidence.

Unfortunately European adventurers introduced Kikuyu grass, Bitou Bush, rabbits, pigs and cattle, badly degrading the environment of the larger islands. Mining Leases for shellgrit and sand were granted from 1925 -1940 resulting in erosion and probably leading to the introduction of kikuyu grass. NPWS dedicated the islands as a fauna reserve in 1960 however plants were not prioritised.

Shocking images of the seventeen hectare plateau on Big Island covered in c60cm depth of kikuyu and morning glory testify to the folly of that decision. In 2008, an eradication program began after nesting birds were observed strangled by the weeds' long tendrils. recently, in a trial area, NPWS have used aerial spraying of glyphosate on two hectares to destroy the kikuyu. Some native species are reappearing out of the dust.

Young Aborigines are employed to selectively weed and to plant *Lomandra sp* and *Banksia integrifolia*. Other species will be introduced. This important work is being funded partly through private and business philanthropy which is driven by an enterprising female NPWS Illawarra manager.

Big Island is a principal East Coast breeding area for penguins, silver gulls, pelicans, silver terns, raw spoonbills and white ibis. Flinders Island has a colony of Sooty Oyster Catchers since all rabbits have been eliminated. On the rocky southern face of Big Island, tetra folia, Correa Alba and pigface have survived providing tissue for propagation by the active Friends of the Five Islands.

These are very rugged islands in a rough sea, requiring the use of helicopters and time consuming safely procedures for landing NPWS staff and trainees. Our intrepid speaker described jumping from the hovering helicopter onto rocks; a far cry from the exploits of enterprising adventurers who swam cattle out there in years gone by! Sensibly, visitors are no longer welcome!

Geoff Allen and his Mt Gibraltar Garden

Sarah Cains



Geoff Allen is a proud local, having spent his whole life in the Southern Highlands. He will insistently tell you he is 'an ordinary bloke'. But he's an ordinary bloke with a nimble mind and sharp, practical intelligence. Also, he has the ability to seek out the place where good things are happening.

Twenty five years ago, the time when Geoff started his Mt Gibraltar garden, Jane Lemann initiated the Gib Bushcare group. It didn't take long for the genial, good-humoured bloke with the big garden on the



bend, to jump on board. And Geoff Allen has stayed the distance, applying his boundless energy to the project. As Field Officer for the group, he is a fearless fighter (a thorn in the collective side of The Council!) a passionate advocate for the reserve, and Jane's right hand man.

Soon after moving to the Gib, Geoff walked me around his block, merrily picking my brains about plants and assuring me he knew nothing about gardening - just needed something to do in retirement so decided to have a go.

From the outset I was impressed by his detailed garden plan. He pointed out the designated work area where he would preserve and use all organic matter from his block to make compost. He spoke of his admiration for the splendid tall eucalypts on his block and of his plans to add more natives to speak to them. He would make terraces and walls to deal with the considerable slope and use his plumbing skills to make water features. And he would make art for his garden, for the delight of visitors and to entertain his grandchildren. Being adjacent to the reserve, Geoff's saw his garden as having the extra dimension of providing additional feeding ground and habitat for wildlife.



Advancing years have dictated that Geoff and Janette must now find a new space to live where the garden will be a courtyard rather than a big, sloping block.

In the winter of 2015 all the plants in the above area were crushed by heavy snow and had to be removed. This is a complete replant and, after only one year the new natives are showing excellent growth. Next page photo, Geoff's artworks add colour and interest to his garden.

In late October, Geoff invited the Bushcare Group up the hill to walk around his completed garden. It was looking it's splendid best on a calm, spring day in the muted light so familiar to those who know and love The Glb.

On this visit I was struck by the way Geoff has pursued his original plan. These days, mature specimens of exotics sit under the towering eucalypts providing a strong framework for the garden. The addition of increasing numbers of thriving natives contribute vitality and texture and link the garden to the natural landscape. Rock walls and terraces meander down the slope away from the house, providing level spaces from which to admire the massive vista stretching away to the north. This is a fine example of the mixed garden. It tumbles below the house, a mass of well-grown plants, lively with Geoff's quirky artwork and twitching with birds and other natural life. Pathways, fountains and garden beds are lovingly constructed and maintained and many secluded contemplation spaces invite the visitor to rest and enjoy.



This is a lovely place to be.

Geoff is not a member of APS but we won't hold that against him! His advocacy for the reserve and the hundreds of natives he has planted in his garden see him qualify to be highlighted in this Newsletter.

November 'Get Together' at Macarthur

Sarah Cains



Macarthur President, Robyn Davies and our Erica Rink admire the flowers of beautiful specimen of Alyogne sp. in the Sexton garden.

Saturday, 19th November neatly missed, by one day, being a scorcher. A mild southerly change saw APS members from as far away as Central West, gather in pleasant conditions to enjoy two gardens in the Macarthur district. Because APS Macarthur is a small group, eight SH members made the journey down the hill to enjoy the gardens and give a hand on the day.

Peter Olde is a grevillea collector of note and his expansive garden displays these beautiful and complex plants in all their variety. Peter is a welcoming host and loves to share his garden with friends, particularly APS members with their interesting questions and sound knowledge base. Members enjoyed the huge variety of plants and came away replenished with knowledge and full of inspiration.

Tony and Penny Sexton hosted members looking for a sit-down and a cuppa after their expedition to Peter's garden. Their welcoming, shaded outdoor-living area easily accommodated all eighty people. Visitors enjoyed catching up with friends from other groups and exchanging plant gossip in comfort before exploring the immaculate garden Tony has developed over thirty



Splendid new growth on The Hinchinbrook Banksia, B plagiocarpa. This species was originally described in the 1860s but was 'lost'. It has been rediscovered on Hinchinbrook Island and the adjacent mainland.

Sexton garden.

highlighted on **ABC's Gardening Australia** in the 2017 season. Ben has agreed to speak to our Southern Highlands group in 2017, so keep an eye on the Diary Dates for next year (Jan Newsletter).

I recommend joining the Garden Design study group, in particular, because of the excellent Newsletter Ros

years. It is interesting for Highlanders to see plants in both gardens responding to such different soil and climatic conditions from our own. Though we are relatively close neighbours, many of the plants observed would not thrive, or even survive, in our gardens. Soils are generally thinner and sandier and the climate hotter and drier, though they do have frosts.

Thoughtful and knowledgeable garden design over years has seen these two gardens develop areas of micro climate which nurture the rare and unusual as well as familiar garden favourites. Walking around the gardens, it was possible to feel the different temperature and humidity zones produced by the plants.

Guest speaker, Ben Walcott is President ANPSA (parent body of APS) and group leader for the APS Garden Design Study Group. His wife, Ros, is the study group's Newsletter editor. In his talk, Ben took us on a journey of comparisons illustrated by a handful of benchmark overseas gardens. He then moved to their own experiences in developing their remarkable native plants garden at Red Hill in Canberra.

The Walcott's garden (photo right) has been featured on a postage stamp. Also, it will be



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A major afternoon tea was served after the Walcott's talk and we were pleased to see our contributions of fruit platters, cakes and scones so heartily enjoyed. Together with generous offerings from Macarthur group, they made quite a party for visitors to enjoy!

Graptophyllum excelsum is from Queensland and has been in cultivation for many years. A showy species, it is said to do well in a variety of garden conditions. It is not particular about soil types, but dislikes waterlogging. It grows well as far south as Melbourne in light shade or sun but will only tolerate light frosts. Makes a good pot plant. Let's hope Kris took some cuttings from this lovely plant in the Sexton's garden!

In the near future it will be our turn to host a two day event for APS NSW in the Highlands, so be ready to contribute your time and skills.

Many thanks to Macarthur Group, the Sextons and Peter Olde for a wonderful day.

Obituary - Sheila Forbes Micholson - 1.12.1922 - 9.8.2016

Wendy Johnston

There have been many tributes to the memory of Sheila who was a member of The Australian Plants Society for many years. In recent times we did not see her at many meetings due to indifferent health but her concerns for environmental protection, love of Australian Plants and the natural world were constant. There were many interests in Sheila's life; music and the performing arts, tennis, bridge, meals-on-wheels and a long association with the Friends of the Morton National Park.

Sheila was the founder of the Currabunda Wetland Project in Bundanoon - a marvellous and lasting achievement. Around the year 2000 she would drive past this very neglected land opposite Jordan's Crossing Park where mountains of weed and blackberry dominated the scene. Underneath, however, were three old farm dams and a small resident water bird population. It was thought that, with the co-operation of like-minded people and the Wingecarribee County Council, it could become a sanctuary for many kinds of wildlife.

Today after many years of clean up and regeneration it is, thankfully, home to a variety of water birds, duck and bird species, marsupials, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Its original mature tree canopy has been augmented over the years with plantings of eucalypts, acacias, callistemon, sword grass and other native plants.

Sheila's fulfilled vision of transforming a neglected site into a nature reserve is a testament to her community spirit and foresight. The site has become her permanent legacy to the people of Bundanoon.

Among a number of official awards for this project she received "The Premier's Senior Citizen Award" in 2008.

On a personal note, I found Sheila always a lady, a little reserved and a constant friend. She lived a full, interesting and active life and will be missed by her many friends everywhere. She will be long remembered with affection.

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This is the last Newsletter for 2016. The next one will be out at the end of January and will set out the programme for our 2017 activities.

Have a safe and happy Christmas and New Year break, with best wishes from you committee,

Kris, Trisha, Kay, Erica, Sarah, Louise and Bill.