

Spring 2011

BOTANIC NEWS

FRIENDS of the ROYAL BOTANIC
GARDENS MELBOURNE INC.

GROWING
FRIENDS'
PLANT SALE
September 24 - 25



EUCALYPTS AND NATURE'S
SMALL WONDERS
Exhibition 1 - 16 October

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Friends congratulate the new Victorian Governor, the Honorable Alex Chernov, AO, QC, on his appointment. Traditionally the Victorian Governor has been the patron of the Friends, and shortly after he was sworn in, the Friends invited Mr Chernov to be our patron. We are delighted to announce that he has accepted the invitation. As Friends' President I had a very pleasant afternoon tea with the Governor and Mrs Chernov (who was already a member of the Friends) and they are both very interested in the organisation and its activities.

Welcome to all members of the Friends who have joined recently. I hope to see many of you at the New Members' Welcome coming up on 21 September. This is a great opportunity to meet members of the Council and committee conveners and also to find out how you can be involved with the Friends. Following the welcome the Voluntary Guides will be providing a guided walk of the Melbourne Gardens.

I was thrilled to be part of the two combined events held recently with the Cranbourne Friends. They are such a

wonderfully enthusiastic group and both the talk given by Professor Stephen Hopper, Director of RBG Kew, and the Australian Garden at Chelsea presentation given by Jim Fogarty were a resounding success. I hope to get a closer look at the Australian Garden when I take part in the planned self-drive visit to the Cranbourne Gardens later this spring.

The Friends have recently celebrated their first new online membership. Yes that's right, you can now join online, plus you can also easily renew your membership online. Check it out on the website www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org.

Also keep up to date with Friends' activities through our monthly *eNews* bulletin. Make sure the Friends have your current email address so you don't miss out.

Spring is the season of new growth when most Melbourne gardens are at their peak. Our Spring Plant Sale occurs early this year, over the weekend of 24 – 25 September, timed to coincide with the RBG Melbourne's Spring Open Day on the Sunday. Our nursery is full to bursting with interesting plants ready for your garden.



Why don't you bring your family and friends, and a picnic lunch, and make a day of it?

Following the wonderful success of the *Eternal Order In Nature: The Science of Botanical Illustration* exhibition held in July and August, the Friends are now enthusiastically working towards the opening of the next exhibition of botanic art – *Eucalypts and Nature's Small Wonders*. A number of years ago our artists undertook to paint the eucalypt collection in the Melbourne Gardens. Since then we have held a number of insect-painting workshops, and now the combination of these two pursuits will culminate in this amazing exhibition, to be held from 1 – 16 October 2011 in the Domain House Gallery. Our classes and workshops in this artform continue to be incredibly popular, including regular Beginners' Workshops.

I am looking forward to the Friends' Annual General Meeting on Monday 14 November at the convenient time of 6pm, my first as President. The evening starts with a glass of wine, savouries and the chance to catch up with friends. At the meeting we will

announce the 2011 winner(s) of the Friends' Scholarship, which will be followed by an interesting speaker. It is a night well worth attending. In the meantime, happy gardening!

Cathy Trinca

Annual General Meeting

The Friends' Annual General Meeting will be held at 6.00 pm with refreshments at 5.30 pm on Monday 14 November 2011.

Nominations for Council may be made by obtaining a nomination form from the Friends' office. Council members are elected for two years. This year Richard Kirsner (Vice-President), Richard Smith (Secretary), John Goodwin, and Marta Salamon (Ordinary Members) are due to retire. All are eligible for re-election.

Nominations are to be lodged with the Secretary at Gate Lodge by Friday 14 October 2011.

Richard Smith, Hon Secretary



Photo: Janet Thomson

Vice President Susan Brookes, President Cathy Trinca and Prof. Stephen Hopper, FLS, Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

FROM THE GARDENS

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Gold Medal for the Australian Garden at Chelsea

The Gold Medal success of our Australian Garden display at the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show in May continues to bring grins to the faces of many RBG staff! The wonderful result came after almost two years of dedicated work by staff throughout the organisation – in horticulture, fundraising, marketing, finance, and logistics and administration. Their commitment was

matched by the excellent team of contractors, RBG staff and volunteers in London who laboured under the encouraging eye of Jim Fogarty, the garden's designer, to ensure the garden was presented to the highest standards.

The Chelsea construction and planting team worked long hours, usually from 7.00 am until 8 pm and sometimes later, with an average of 15 people on site each day right through from 2 May until completion on 21 May. Some tasks took days to do – for example, the Mansfield stone fireplace took two masons four days to build, and the same men then spent another four days selecting and placing by hand thousands of stones in the pebble paths.

Preparing and 'polishing' the plants before and after planting were also painstaking: any browning stems were removed by hand from dozens of *Lomandra* clumps, all yellowing or damaged foliage was cut from plants, and old frond bases on the *Livistona* palms were cut back, excess

palm fibre removed with scissors, and the frond stubs literally polished. And once construction and planting had been completed, the whole garden was carefully checked for final detailing, including vacuuming the stonework to remove any surplus mortar, washing the pavilion floorboards, manicuring the red sand at the front of the garden, and ensuring all the plants were in prime condition.

The judges' medal decisions were made public early on the morning of 24 May, and we arrived about 7.15 am to find a Gold Medal certificate had been attached to our garden's sign – great jubilation amongst the team! The Australian Garden faced tough competition on Main Avenue, so it is a source of pride that Australia's first show garden on Main Avenue was exhibited by the RBG and that it won a Gold Medal. Jim Fogarty's dramatic design inspired by the Australian Garden at RBG Cranbourne certainly took the attention of the judges – one

Front cover: Painting of Eucalyptus tetracorys by Sandra Sanger.

Gold Medal Certificate from the Royal Horticultural Society for the Australian Garden.



The dry waterhole, red sand and 'Salt' sculpture by Edwina Kearney and Mark Stoner began the Australian Garden's 'journey of water' theme.



Philip Moors introduces Jim Fogarty, designer of the Australian Garden, to Her Majesty The Queen. The Queen is accompanied by Elizabeth Banks, RHS President. Photos: Jay Watson



FROM THE GARDENS

commented it was “a triumph” – and also the many thousands of visitors who came to see it, including the excited group of Melbourne and Cranbourne Friends on their ‘English Gardens’ tour!

Every year the Queen and other members of the Royal Family visit Chelsea, and we were honoured to be on her Show itinerary this year. I met her, together with Elaine Canty and Michael Hamson from the RBG Board, and Jim Fogarty. She asked about the plants displayed in the garden and where we had sourced them, and remembered the views of RBG Melbourne from Government House when she was last visiting Melbourne. The garden was also visited by several other members of the Royal Family including Princess Alexandra, the Duke of Kent, Princess Michael of Kent, Prince Andrew and Princess Beatrice, and Prince Edward and the Duchess of Wessex.

All the plants and salvageable materials from the Australian Garden have now been transported to Capel Manor Garden at Enfield,

about an hour’s drive north of London. The garden will be re-established there and put on public display for the next five years or so as part of Capel’s popular ‘gallery of gardens’. The design, many of the plants, and the promotion of the Australian Garden at Cranbourne will therefore continue to delight thousands of visitors – including those Friends who can add it to their future UK travel itineraries! Re-building the garden began in July.

The project could not have been undertaken without the major funding provided by the Victorian Government, Macquarie Group, and an anonymous donor, together with additional financial support from Tourism Victoria, Maxwell & Williams, City of Casey, RM Williams, and many individual donors. I thank them all.

Working Wetlands

Construction of the wetland to ‘biofilter’ incoming stormwater at the eastern end of the Ornamental Lake was delayed for some weeks due to problems building the wetland’s

retaining wall across deep silt on the lakebed. The wetland has now been completed and will soon be planted with indigenous species. Silty conditions have also hampered the construction of three pump ‘wells’ which are needed to circulate water within the Lake and up to Guilfoyle’s Volcano Reservoir. The pumps and their associated tanks have to be buried on the Lake margins, and the 3-4m deep holes in soft ground will require temporary sheet-piling during the excavations. Work is nearing completion for the pump well on Phoenix Point near The Terrace, and will then move to Picnic Point and Long Island. This stormwater capture stage of Working Wetlands will be completed by the end of the year, and I am most appreciative of the major grant being made by the Friends to support the project.

Guilfoyle’s Volcano has now had an impervious plastic liner installed to stop water seeping through joints in the bluestone rockwork of its ‘caldera’. The seepage was causing problems with plant health and surface



Photo: Cathy Trinca

drainage. Several courses of bluestone are still visible above the top of the liner. We have also taken the opportunity to review the size and planting of the floating islands in the Volcano, and new islands will be installed in the coming months.

*Philip Moors,
Director and Chief Executive*



Photo: Philip Moors

The Australian Garden was highly popular with the Chelsea crowds.



Photo: Jay Watson

The sky-blue ‘river’, fire-pit and gorge garden and lush plantings to the Australian Garden’s ‘water-journey’ theme.

HERBARIUM DISCOVERY

A Journey of Discovery at the National Herbarium of Victoria

Imagine that you are wandering happily in a spectacular garden, when you stumble upon a mysterious building; a portal that leads you into the world of the great botanical explorers, adventurers and scientists of yesteryear. How fascinating would it be if that portal also held vast and invaluable scientific treasures, collections gathered by the very hands of both past and recent explorers and their assistants, keys of deep significance to documenting and preserving the future of the plants we depend upon for our own long-term quality of life and the natural environment we live in?

Would you be amazed if that portal building and its secrets had existed for decades, if many of its contents were centuries old, and if it was located on the doorstep of our great city of Melbourne, and yet it was hardly known outside a community of learned botanical and horticultural scientists and boffins?

It all sounds like the stuff of Alice in Wonderland, Hollywood, a science fiction novel, or one of those epic historical adventure tales.

Yes, I have found such a place, and no, I'm not in a state of altered consciousness. It may surprise some to know that this portal has lurked secretly behind the imposing walls of the National Herbarium of Victoria at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne since Sir Macpherson Robertson funded



Specimens on display during a recent tour of the National Herbarium of Victoria.

the building's construction in 1934, to house the expanding collection of dried plant specimens that had first been established in 1853 by Ferdinand von Mueller (the first Government Botanist of Victoria). The collection today comprises over 1,200,000 botanical specimens gathered by eminent and accomplished botanists and explorers since well before the first landfall by Europeans upon Australian shores.

These dried and mounted plant specimens, along with an extensive collection of botanical literature and a series of stunning botanical artworks are known as the State Botanical Collection, which is protected by the *Royal Botanic Gardens Act 1991*.

It was only in 2010 that huge signs, (part of the Herbarium Discovery Walk,) were erected on the northern wall of the Herbarium, bearing intriguing images and stories that inform curious passers-by about the mysterious contents and activities within. My own discovery commenced on

the day I started work at the Gardens when Director and Chief Executive, Dr Philip Moors, took me on a winding walk deep inside the building, to finally arrive somewhere in the middle of its dense array of imposing cabinets that protect the enormous collection of specimens. Opening a cabinet, Dr Moors gingerly extracted an ancient cotton tape-bound file of thick, dark cardboard to reveal a dried plant specimen, carefully glued to a sheet of yellowing paper bearing faded identification notes.

As Dr Moors explained, I struggled to absorb the reality – this was a plant that had been personally gathered and recorded by ship's botanist Sir Joseph Banks during the landing of Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* at Botany Bay in 1770 (originally 'Botanist Bay'), on the epic southern voyage that was ostensibly intended to observe the transit of Venus and discover new lands for the British realm.

Here, before my very eyes, was a real, surviving physical

piece of the history of one of the first extended European landfalls in Australia including the discovery of flora and fauna never before seen by Europeans. Dr Moors went on to share several other specimens from the early collections made by Banks and his Swedish assistant and botanist Daniel Solander, as well as specimens from other intrepid exploring botanists including the great Ferdinand von Mueller – the German pharmacist and



Banksia serrata (Saw Banksia) collected in 1770 by Banks and Solander, Botany Bay

HERBARIUM DISCOVERY

botanist who was appointed the first Government Botanist to the colony of Victoria in 1853 and the first Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens in 1857.

Being neither botanist nor scientist, my own economics and marketing background provided little basis for an understanding of botany and the significance of a collection of dried plants. Nevertheless, an awareness had indeed started to emerge during Dr Moors' tour. This dawning of understanding has now become a growing appreciation of the great wealth of information and stories that are both vital insights into Australia's past, and essential resources for how we manage the state of the Australian environment and protect its future survival.

Here was a collection of around 1.2 million real examples of plants, (over 800,000 of which were gathered in Australia,) that stretched from the gatherings of dedicated recent and present-day botanists, back to the distant past. Some of the collections are plants, lichens and fungi that existed and thrived prior to any of the impacts of European civilisation. Even I could see the great value of the picture it painted of the undefiled, original Australian 'bush' – before the progressive extinction of species due to such impacts, and long before scientific evidence showed that human-induced climate change was dramatically increasing the threat to the plants that still survive within the bio-diversity that we enjoy today.

This State Botanical Collection seemed to me to be an irreplaceable time capsule, yet a living and dynamic one that is being continually updated with new plant discoveries and knowledge.

The early collections compiled by exploring botanists such as Banks and Solander, Allan Cunningham (King's Botanist to the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, 1816) and many others, were more than just a record of passing interest or exotic curiosities for the amusement of European socialites and aristocrats. They were intrinsic to the core objectives of the lengthy and dangerous voyages undertaken by explorers such as Cook in the *Endeavour* and William Bligh in his *Bounty*. The discovery of new plants represented potential new agricultural commodities

and resources to be shipped back to Great Britain and Europe for the enrichment and empowerment of colonial empires. Consequently it was of great strategic, political and economic importance to the monarchs, governments and admiralties of the day.

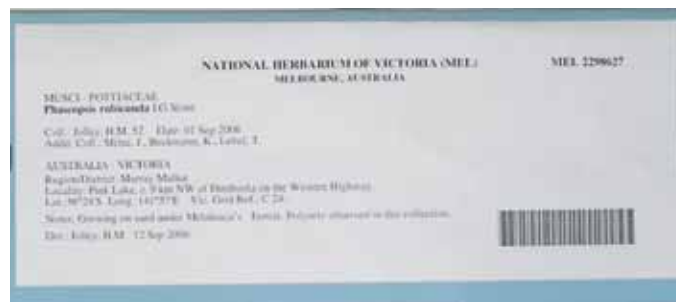
Of such importance were new plant species to nineteenth-century exploration that during the later voyage to the South Pacific made by commander, Lieutenant Bligh, in 1787, the great cabin on the *Bounty* – usually reserved for the comfort of the ship's commander – was completely given over for use as a plant nursery. Bligh himself was relegated to a much smaller cabin usually reserved for a senior officer. The purpose of the expedition itself was, in fact, to secure healthy living bread plants for transplantation as

a food source for the hungry American colonies. Expedition patron Sir Joseph Banks, (who had become the President of the Royal Society in 1778 after his antipodean voyage with Cook and collection of plant discoveries from New Holland had catapulted him to scientific celebrity status in England), saw the commander's comfort as secondary to the voyage's great botanical and commercial objective.

Other specimens in the Herbarium open windows that bring other intriguing times in Australia's history to life. An interesting one is *Stenopetalum lineare* (Narrow Thread-petal). This plant was collected by Ferdinand Mueller at the Lefevre Peninsula on his first expedition after arriving in Adelaide, South Australia, in December 1847. It is identified by Mueller in his own flowing, ink-quilled, cursive collecting notes as "...the first plant I collected in Australia, causing me to apply the trivial name 'gratulatorium'" (meaning thanksgiving or celebration).

These historical tales are wonderful, but I've become equally fascinated by the role being played by the Herbarium scientists and researchers in the use of its extensive collections of Australian and exotic dried plant specimens for the conservation and management of our present-day natural environment in Victoria and Australia.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne's Collections Branch recently successfully applied for a funding grant to have a number of botanist's notes on algae specimens



Phascopsis rubicunda (moss) collected by H. Jolley on 1 Sep 2006 at Pink Lake, Victoria, c. 9 km NW of Dimboola



HERBARIUM DISCOVERY

from the *Characeae* family, which had been badly charred in a fire some decades ago, professionally preserved. I asked the scientists why these specimens were considered so important? After all, to obtain a grant we needed a stronger reason than just keeping the collection in good order – although that is important. As I listened, I learned that this family of water-based plants is actually critical to our understanding of protecting threatened and endangered inland water systems – of which we unfortunately have many. In my layman’s terms, I started to understand that because the plants from this family require very specific water conditions and flows, nutrients and micro-climates to survive, their existence or absence in aquatic systems can tell scientists whether those systems are in good or poor health, what changes are occurring because of bio-degradation, and what

strategies we need to put in place to protect and save those systems.

Restoring these botanist’s notes was therefore a critical tool in managing our environmental future!

While the different practical uses that are regularly made of the Herbarium’s reference collection of plant specimens are too numerous to be listed here, protecting rare and threatened species from extinction is perhaps one of the most important. *Senecio georgianus* (illustrated below centre), collected in 1817 by Alan Cunningham in the NSW Central Tablelands, is now extinct. The Herbarium’s specimen is one of few examples of its existence, a poignant reminder that species survival is anything but guaranteed. Other specimens have assisted in the identification, mitigation and control of dangerous invasive and weedy species and their impacts on native

eco-systems and commercial crops. Indeed, Herbarium staff recently utilised a sample of Mexican feathergrass (*Nassella tenuissima*) to identify and prevent its inadvertent marketing under another name by a major plant retail chain throughout Australia, effectively preventing millions of dollars per annum worth of damage to Australia’s commercial crops, and inestimable environmental damage.

Herbarium Collections Manager Dr Josephine Milne often uses the phrase ‘secrets of the Herbarium’. Discovering but a few of these secrets has certainly been an engaging and rewarding experience. I highly recommend learning about and supporting the vital work that is taking place behind its imposing walls – and the good news is that you don’t have to be a botanist to do so.

Robert Packer, Manager, Development

Below left: *Stenopetalum lineare* (*Narrow Thread-petal*) collected by Ferdinand von Mueller on Lefevre Peninsula, South Australia, on 16 December 1847

Below centre: *Senecio georgianus* (*Grey Groundsel*) collected by Alan Cunningham in the NSW Central Tablelands, 1817

Below right: *Marsilea drummondii* (*Nardoo - an aquatic fern*) collected at Cooper’s Creek (collector unknown) during the expedition led by Alfred Howitt which rescued King, the only survivor of the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition

Images for this article courtesy of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.



EVENTS



What Makes American Gardens 'American'?

**ILLUSTRATED TALK
BY TIM RICHARDSON**

Thursday 8 September at 5 for 5.30 pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$15 Friends and AGHS members \$25 Non-members.
RSVP by Wednesday 7 September on enclosed booking form or download one from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Wine and savouries will be served before the talk.

English landscape critic and garden historian Tim Richardson investigates the development of the North American garden from the 18th century to the present day. The talk is based on Tim's book *Great American Gardens*, and will certainly throw up comparisons with the historical development of gardens in Australia.

Tim is in here for the Australian Landscape Conference where he will be discussing conceptual landscapes and gardens and the sustainability agenda. His many

books include *Avant Gardens* which chronicles the conceptual garden movement or gardens of ideas. He is a trustee of the GHS and chairs various committees.

Tim is one of very few speakers from the Australian Landscape Conference available for a public lecture. Conference Director, Warwick Forge, rates Tim as one of the most provocative and brilliant speakers he has heard.

Note: This is a joint event with Australian Garden History Society.



Inside the National Herbarium of Victoria

**GUIDED TOUR WITH
DR PINA MILNE**

Tuesday 20 September at 10 for 10.30 am
Meet at Gate Lodge
COST: \$15 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 14 September on enclosed booking form or download one from the Events page on our website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Book early as numbers are limited.

After morning tea and introduction at Gate Lodge, we will walk to the Herbarium to observe the intricate and detailed mounting of specimens; work carried out by dedicated volunteers.

Dr Pina Milne will then discuss the work of the scientists within the Herbarium and the importance of its specimen collection, not only to their work, but also to historians and botanical artists. A selection of Herbarium specimens will be on display

and Dr Milne will inspire you with stories and discoveries associated with this unique collection.

Note that this is a strictly limited number entry so please book early to visit this important area of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

If, after booking, you find you are unable to come, please ring the Friends' office on 9650 6398 because we will have a waiting list.



Fit Friends Ramble

RIPPON LEA

Tuesday 11 October
Meet at 10.10 am at Rippon Lea
192 Hotham Street, Elsternwick at the front gate.
Cost: \$20 \$30 Non-members
Includes tour of mansion and garden.
There is some parking available in Hotham St and Elm St.
5 minute walk from Rippon Lea station (Sandringham line)
Tram Route 67, Stop 41.

The mansion was built by Sir Frederick Sargood in 1864 for his family. In the 1930s it was redecorated and expanded by Louisa Jones. The house is located in a sweeping garden with a lake and waterfall, a heritage orchard and fernery.

We are to meet at the entrance to the house for a fascinating tour viewing period rooms with authentic furnishings. We will see surprisingly modern bathrooms and comfortable sitting rooms. Then we will be accompanied

by a gardener to explore the historic garden. Although the grounds have been reduced in size over the years, the remaining fourteen acres provide space for wide lawns, mixed flower beds, fruit trees and ferns. Coffee will be available at your own expense, in the café, at the conclusion of our visit.

EVENTS



Spring Talking Plants

RHODODENDRONS: SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

Friday 21 October at 10 am
Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive
Cost: \$10 \$15 Non-members
RSVP by Tuesday 18 October
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Refreshments will be served on arrival

Rhododendron species and hybrids have flowers of almost every colour imaginable – including many shapes and sizes – deep reds, pale pinks, creams, yellows, pure whites, rich purples and combinations of these. Some flowers are spotted, while others have a bold flare in the throat giving a two-toned effect.

Rhododendrons hold their flowers in groups called trusses and many are strongly perfumed. The species vary greatly in hardiness

depending on their location and altitude. In Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea and Australia another group called *rhododendron vireya* is found. These require a milder climate and are suitable for growing in Melbourne gardens.

A knowledgeable person from the Rhododendron Society of Victoria will discuss the cultural needs of a wide range of rhododendrons, including the ones most suitable for Melbourne gardens.



Sharing with the Community

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY RICHARD BARLEY, CEO, OPEN GARDENS AUSTRALIA

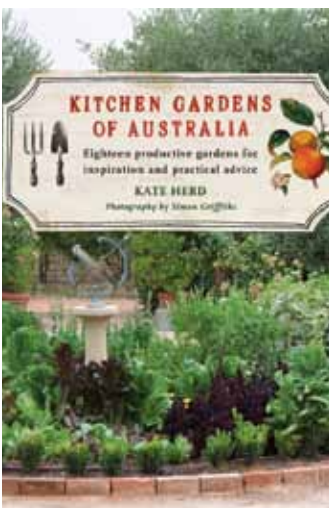
Wednesday 26 October at 10 for
10.30 am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$15 \$25 Non-members.
RSVP by Friday 21 October
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Morning tea will be served before
the talk.

Open Gardens Australia (previously known as Australia's Open Garden Scheme), is a not-for-profit organisation that opens outstanding private gardens and organises garden-themed events for public enjoyment around the country.

More than 250,000 visitors enjoy the open gardens each year together with significant numbers attending booked events and other activities. Open Gardens Australia has about 10,000

gardens on its books, with new gardens being discovered all the time. There is an Open Gardens Australia garden open somewhere in Australia most months of the year.

Richard will give an illustrated talk about the value of public accessibility to gardens in Australia's diverse regions and their role in connecting communities. He will also discuss the future plans and directions for Open Gardens Australia.



Kitchen Gardens of Australia

ILLUSTRATED TALK BY KATE HERD

Tuesday 8 November at 6 for 6.30 pm
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
COST: \$15 \$25 Non-members.
RSVP by Friday 4 November
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org
Wine and savouries will be served
before the talk.

Why bother growing your own food? Let Kate Herd, author of *Kitchen Gardens of Australia*, show you why produce gardening matters in this age of fast, ultra-processed and industrial food. Many of us, it seems, are busy creating backyard cornucopias, replacing lawns with orchards and constructing school and community gardens.

As well as extolling the benefits of growing your own herbs, fruit and vegetables, Kate will discuss aspects of design and

maintenance of the productive garden as she presents illustrated examples of the kitchen gardens she has visited in Australia and overseas. Enjoy the gorgeous photos of edible gardens, some traditional, others innovative or eccentric, while hearing what motivates gardeners to get their hands dirty and what challenges they face to bring produce to the table.

Kate's book, with beautiful photographs by Simon Griffiths, will be on sale at the event.

EVENTS



Spring Guided Visit

TO THE GROWING FRIENDS' NURSERY

Friday 18 November at 10:30 am
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
COST: \$5 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Wednesday 16 November
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Late spring is an ideal time to put in some new plantings ready for Christmas, particularly as our nursery currently holds a wide selection for the home garden.

This visit is especially suitable for new members and others who are not familiar with the whereabouts and workings of our Growing Friends' Nursery. There are always several helpful members of the Growing Friends on hand to give advice.

Join us for a delicious morning tea at Gate Lodge and meet new Friends and likeminded garden enthusiasts, after which we take a stroll through the Gardens to the Nursery. If you missed our spring Sale, this a great time to buy your plants.

It's a good idea to bring some strong carry bags for your purchases.



The Australian Garden Cranbourne

SELF-DRIVE VISIT

Thursday 24 November
Meet at the Reception Desk of the Visitors Centre at 10.30 am for a guided tour
Melway: Map 113, H10
COST: \$10 \$15 Non-members
RSVP by Tuesday 15 November
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

Following the award of a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show, we are providing you with an opportunity to enjoy a guided tour of the world recognised Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. This is a self-drive trip, with free entry to the Gardens. Bring your own picnic, or enjoy morning tea and/or lunch at the Café (at your own expense). You will see the iconic landscapes that were transposed to the Show

Garden at Chelsea, as well as a sneak preview of the construction work in stage 2 (which is planned for opening in mid 2012). Since the opening of the Australian Garden in 2006, the planting design has matured. This beautiful garden of native plants, which is becoming a showcase for Australian horticulture, will be at its best at this time of the year.



An Evening of Bird Spotting

GUIDED WALK WITH DAVID PLANT

Tuesday 29 November at 5.30 pm
Meet at Gate Lodge (opposite Shrine)
Refreshments will be served.
COST: \$15 MEMBERS ONLY
RSVP by Friday 25 November
on enclosed booking form or download
one from the Events page on our
website: www.rbgfriendsmelbourne.org

This very popular walk will once again be led by David Plant, our esteemed bird watcher. Meet at Gate Lodge and after refreshments enjoy a leisurely stroll around the beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens with time to appreciate the sounds and sights of the early evening. We will begin our walk in the Long Island area looking for the various water birds which make this locale their home. We will then stroll around the Ornamental Lake and back up to Nymphaea Lake keeping our eyes and ears

open for bush birds, such as wattle birds and lorikeets.

We will have an opportunity to observe the wonderful initiatives in water management undertaken by the Gardens, and to see some remarkable features in the Gardens not normally obvious to the walker. We will then return through the Australian Border to Gate Lodge.

Be sure to bring binoculars.

GROWING FRIENDS

**Nursery Open Days
in Spring**
**Friday 2 September,
21 and 28 October
and all Fridays in November
between 9 am and 1 pm**

By the time you read this issue of *Botanic News* the Growing Friends' Spring Sale will be a little over 3 weeks away, so please tell all your friends about the interesting plants we sell. Also, are you aware that Friends of RBG Melbourne may visit the Growing Friends' Nursery on most Fridays to buy plants, or just to browse? See box above for dates and times.

Michael Hare, Convener

PLANTS WE GROW – ROSEMARY

Rosemary is a wonderful herb. It's easy to grow and definitely enlivens any dish you use it in. A native to the Mediterranean coast of Southern Europe, it has been used as a flavouring and an all-purpose medicine from Roman times.

Meat from sheep which have grazed on salt laden rosemary is still highly prized, and we recreate the dish by rubbing our leg of lamb with salt and cooking it on a bed of rosemary. Its forms range from the tall columnar *R. 'Miss Jessop's Upright'* to the trailing and ground covering *R. 'Huntingdon Carpet'*.

Definition

Rosemary is a perennial herb with highly aromatic narrow evergreen leaves, 2-4 cm long, bunched around woody stems. It is treasured for its

masses of small lipped flowers borne along the stems which are madly attractive to bees. Rosemary blooms from spring through summer to autumn. The colour varies from white, famous at Sissinghurst, through pinks, to, more commonly, purple and blue.

Cultivation and Propagation

As rosemary is easy to propagate and grow in



Mediterranean type climates such as ours, it is a great landscape plant for beginners. It is pest resistant, drought tolerant, once established, and needs little extra feeding. Rosemarys are an excellent choice for patios and balconies, spilling over terracotta pots.

Rosemary can be propagated from seeds, cuttings and by layering. At the Growing Friends we use cuttings taken in spring and autumn from the best looking tips of healthy plants. At home I use the lazy way – layering. Just take a low growing branch, strip off the leaves in a patch and damage the bark before pinning down that section with a bobby

pin and covering it with soil. Cuttings and layers generally have good roots after two months and can be potted on, or planted where they will receive care until they are well established.

Most woody perennial herbs don't need much pruning if you've been harvesting them all year. To keep them vigorous, cut out non-leafy stems and any damaged wood once you see new growth appearing in spring. Rosemarys make wonderful hedges and the compact forms such as *R. 'Prostratus'* have been used as topiary since Roman times.

Uses

I use it most as a cut flower. When all else in the garden looks drab, the sinuous line of *R. 'Prostratus'* makes an excellent table decoration.

Rosemary is frequently used as Christmas decorations in homes and churches. To signify love and fidelity brides wore a headpiece of rosemary entwined with flowers and the groom and guests all wore sprigs of rosemary. Sprigs are still given to mourners at a funeral to throw into the grave to signify remembrance.

Rosemary is an important constituent of Eau-de-Cologne and is made into an all-curing elixir by infusing young tips and flowers in wine for 4 days.

Preserving

To have herbs on hand to add a layer of complexity to the food we prepare is such a joy. Chop rosemary finely and freeze in tightly wrapped plastic bags labelled with name and date. It can be used as for the fresh

herb within two months.

Drying concentrates the flavor (1 tsp. dried = 4 tsp. fresh). Pick healthy stems mid-morning in autumn. Remove weak leaves and insects. Tie into a bunch and cover with a paper bag with a few holes punched into it. Hang it upside down in a warm airy place for two to three weeks. Strip the dried leaves and place in a labelled container. It is best used within a year.

Come to the Growing Friends' Nursery on Fridays and buy some rosemary. Why not grow a hedge to take advantage of all the bees it attracts and the perfume as you walk past? At Growing Friends we grow *R. officinalis* and the following varieties: 'Albus', 'Blue Lagoon', 'Huntingdon Carpet', 'Miss Jessop's Upright', 'Prostratus', 'Rosea', and 'Tuscan Blue' and more recently we have added the compact landscape forms, 'Salem', 'Pont de Raz', 'Boule' and 'Mozart'.

These will also be available at our Spring Plant Sale on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 September. We will be happy to meet you there.

Pam Smith, Herb Specialist



ILLUSTRATORS

Classes

Term 4 will start in the week beginning Saturday 15 October. Classes will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and in the daytime on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays (two sessions each day - 2.5hr), Thursdays (one 2.5hr session) and Fridays (one 3hr session).
2.5hr classes: \$290 (incl GST)
Friends: \$240 (incl GST)
3hr classes: \$335 (incl GST)
Friends: \$285 (incl GST)

We recommend that students without prior experience in botanical illustration complete a Beginners' Workshop before entering Term classes.



Whirlybirds

The Whirlybirds is a group of botanical artists who meet each Tuesday or Thursday in the Whirling Room Studio.

At present most artists are working towards an exhibition due to open on 1 October in Domain House. This exhibition, presented by the Friends, features Eucalypts grown in the Gardens and subjects from natural history. It will run for two weeks during the school holidays and should be included when you visit the Gardens.

The project has been open to all botanical artists who have expressed an interest in submitting their work. The results are beautiful.

If you are a botanical artist and member of the Friends and are interested in joining us please contact Sandra Sanger on 9598 9532.

Workshops

ALL CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS WILL BE HELD IN THE WHIRLING ROOM STUDIO, OBSERVATORY GATE
For bookings and further information, please contact the Friends' office on 9650 6398.

Insect Illustration (Beginners) with Kate Nolan
Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 October
10 am to 3.30 pm
Cost: \$204 Friends \$155

Painting insects can be a wonderful way to enhance a botanical illustration and indeed insect illustration is a fully-fledged art all of its own. In this course we give you the techniques to handle those weird and wonderful little creatures and take you, step by step, through the process of painting beautiful and fascinating illustrations of them. All skill levels are very welcome.

We will concentrate on the watercolour painting method and will touch on some other media used to illustrate insects. Some locally available specimens will be supplied and you will be given the chance to purchase from a wide selection of exotics.

A materials list will be supplied on application.



Insect Illustration (Advanced) with Kate Nolan

Thursday 6 and Friday 7 October
10 am to 3.30 pm
Cost: \$204 Friends \$155

Insect illustration, like all arts, can be taken to extremes of skill and difficulty. In this course we will explore many of the more challenging aspects, such as the best ways to capture the effects of iridescence, pitted surfaces, or transparency. We look at the practical difficulties of locating, identifying and using rare specimens, or illustrating extremely small or large specimens. Students who so desire can choose and bring their own specimen or can select and purchase in class.

A materials list will be supplied on application.

Above left: Euphilus geoffroyi 'Turquoise weevil' painted by Fiona Clark. Below left: Tagesoida nigrofasciata 'Stick insect' painted by Karen White. Below right: Male Giant Dragonfly painted by Sandra Sanger.



Botanical Illustrators

QUARTERLY MEETING

Excursion: The Basaltica Waterwise Garden and Habitat Trust

Tuesday 13 September, 2011.
EITHER meet at the carpark, Gate 3, 21-43 Barnes Road, Altona North by 10.15 for 10.30 am OR, having arranged to be part of the carpool, before 9.45 am at RBG carpark.

The Habitat Trust, ph 9290 1704, will host the meeting, and the speaker will be its co-ordinator, Ross Mellor, who will talk about the geography and rainfall of the area. We will also visit the botanic art gallery, where Helene Wild is the artist in residence. After lunch there will be a guided inspection of the waterwise garden featuring plants indigenous to the area. An optional extra is a self-guided visit to the Newport Lakes Native Nursery, 2 Lakes Drive, Newport, ph 9391 0044. Wear suitable shoes and clothing. The visit will go ahead if it rains.

Cost \$5.50. Pay on the day.

All Botanical Illustrator Friends are welcome.

Morning tea provided, BYO lunch. RSVP: For acceptances, enquiries, carpool offers, contact Lyn Gras at Whirlybirds, or phone 9561 7072 mob 0418 564 232 or email lyngras@hotmail.com by Tuesday 6 September.

ILLUSTRATORS

The Great Melbourne Telescope

At the Botanical Illustrators' last quarterly meeting, Jim Pollock, Vice-President of the Astronomical Society of Victoria (ASV), and Convener of the ASV's Great Melbourne Telescope (GMT) Restoration Group, gave a talk on the history of the GMT, the process of restoration, and the possible fate of the building (currently the location of the Whirling Room Studio).

The GMT was a very large (48" diameter) reflecting telescope made in Ireland by

Thomas Grubb. It was installed at Melbourne Observatory in 1869. It had a 30-foot long wrought iron tube, magnified from 200 to 1,000 times and was moved by clockwork. Sadly, the plans have been lost. The building, with its retractable roof moved by pulleys, was erected around it.

Although the telescope successfully made many important discoveries, underfunding and the depression of the 1890s limited the publication of many results. The GMT's bronze mirror and long focal ratio limited its use in the emerging era of photography.

As Melbourne grew, light pollution became a problem, as did the incessant stream of visitors wanting to look at the night sky.

By 1910 the GMT had fallen into disuse. It was sold for scrap value (£500) to the Mt Stromlo Observatory near Canberra in 1945.

It was re-erected, fitted with a new 50" Pyrex mirror and new bearings and upgraded a number of times. In the 1980s, the Museum of Victoria acquired the redundant pieces. By the 1990s, the telescope was again being used for world-class astronomical research.

In 2003, Mt Stromlo was burnt out by bushfires. The '50" reflector telescope' (formerly the GMT) was reduced to lumps of metal, and its beautiful mirror to shards.

In 2007, the ASV, Museum Victoria and the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne investigated the feasibility of rebuilding the GMT and re-installing it in its original home. The few remaining pieces of the GMT were recovered from the burnt-out remains at Mt Stromlo in 2008 and added to the collection of parts in Melbourne. About 85% of

the original is now at hand. The telescope will be restored to its 1869 appearance but incorporating 2011 technology, including a new 48" mirror. The original mirror, probably the last great metal mirror in the world, will be displayed nearby.

When complete it will be a working telescope for the education and inspiration of the public, especially young people. A team of about 20 volunteer astronomers, engineers and specialists regularly works at a Museum Victoria facility. An advisory panel helps guide the whole enterprise, which will take several years and perhaps \$3 million to complete.

It is hoped that the restored GMT will become a magnet for visitors, who will inspect it in daylight and look through it at night.

After showing us the remaining plinth in the GMT House and answering many questions, Jim joined us for morning tea that extended to lunch. It is clear that botanical artists, already known as lovers of nature, extend their fascination to the night sky.

Tax-free donations may be made to the project via Museum Victoria.

Roslyn Glow



Photo: Meg Miller

EON Exhibition Opening

The Eternal Order in Nature: The Science of Botanical Illustration exhibition was officially opened on Monday July 25 by Professor David Mabberley (photo below, speaking), currently Keeper of the Herbarium, Library, Art and Archives, at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and from August, Executive Director of the New South Wales Royal Botanic Gardens Trust. The opening was attended by over 220 people including many of the artists from around Australia who had been invited to exhibit. Cathy Trinca, the President of the Friends, welcomed the guests, including the Governor's wife Mrs Chernov and visiting delegates from the XVIII International Botanical Congress. She acknowledged the enormous efforts of Mali Moir and Amanda Ahmed, curators of the exhibition, the Exhibition Committee members and the many volunteers who have assisted in bringing this exhibition together. She also thanked the exhibition sponsors for their generous

donations. Cathy then invited Professor Mabberley to open the exhibition.

Professor Mabberley talked about the history of botanical art and the impact of artists, such as Albrecht Dürer, in making artists look again at the actual plants rather than reproducing copies of copies. He spoke about the impact of Ferdinand Bauer and other illustrators who had developed innovative and revolutionary approaches to botanical illustration. Professor Mabberley expressed his delight at the continuing development of such approaches as evidenced in this exhibition, praising the overall high level of presentation of the artworks. He finished his speech by declaring that the calibre of the works reinforced Australia as one of the hotspots for the worldwide resurgence of botanical illustration.

Thea Clark

Cathy Trinca, President, Professor David Cantrill and Professor David Mabberley opening the exhibition.



Photo: Wal Hansen

These businesses and organisations kindly offer discounts to Friends on PRIOR presentation of their current membership cards, which are not transferable.

The Gardens Shops at RBGM offer 10% discount on all Members' purchases.

Terrace Tea Rooms, RBGM, offers Members 10% discount on all purchases. www.terracereception.com.au

National Gallery of Victoria offers 10% discount at the NGV shop and \$10 off NGV annual membership (new membership only). For membership enquiries contact 8620 2233 or email: members@ngv.vic.gov.au

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is offering tickets at 10% discount to current Friends' Members for its Melbourne Sunday Afternoon concerts. Book online, www.aco.com.au Remember to mention Friends' membership when booking by phone.

Discounts are subject to change without notice. List is current at July 2011.

Botanical Creations

122 Grange Rd, Glen Huntly
Ph: 9571 9922
10% off all plants

Bulleen Art and Garden

6 Manningham Rd West, Bulleen
www.baag.com.au
10% off plants, 5% off other goods (excludes paving/retaining walls, tanks and turf)

Cloudehill Nursery - Gardens - Restaurant

89 Olinda-Monbulk Rd, Olinda
www.cloudehill.com.au
10% off plants only

Collectors Corner (at Garden World)

810 Springvale Rd, Braeside
www.gardenworld.com.au
10% off all plants, Collectors Corner only

Cultivate Nursery, Florist & Gifts

Rear 91-93 Doncaster Rd, North Balwyn
www.cultivatenursery.com.au
10% off everything

Feldspar at Trentham B&B

via Daylesford
www.feldspargetaway.com.au
10% discount off accommodation

Garden of Eden Nursery, Cafe & Antiques

365 Ferrars St, Albert Park
www.gardenofedennursery.com.au
10% off everything (cash)
5% off everything (credit cards)

Glasshaus Nursery/Design/Florist

52 Stanley St, Richmond
Ph: 9421 4100
10% off plants and cut flowers

Green-stay – innovative products for the landscape gardener, architect and builder

www.green-stay.com.au
10% discount on any garden products. Order on website or phone 1300 976 664. Mention Friends' Membership.

Lister Teak Garden Furniture

22 Industry Court, Lilydale
Ph: 9735 4010
Free 100-page colour catalogue of Cotswold Furniture Collection. Free delivery.

Peonies & Picnics – quality tools, specialised gardening books

8 Howe St, Daylesford
Ph: 5348 1882
10% discount.

Sculptured Steel Custom Metalwork

www.sculpturedsteel.com.au
10% off custom-made pieces

Sue Jarvis' Gallery & Botanic Garden

24 Blackwood Lane, Gembrook
By appointment Ph: 5968 1567
10% off artworks

Town and Country Gardens

1280 Malvern Rd, Malvern
Ph: 9822 9704
24 Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn
Ph: 9816 9300
www.townandcountrygardens.com.au
10% off plants over \$20 only

MEMBERS

Warning- Myrtle Rust

A new plant disease has been identified in Queensland and New South Wales. It is a rust that infects the family *Myrtaceae* group of plants which primarily include Eucalypts, Corymbia, Melaleuca (ti-tree and paperbark) and Callistemon (bottlebrush). The disease has been named Myrtle Rust.

This rust first emerged on the Central Coast of New South Wales in April 2010, and has so far been detected along the NSW South and North Coasts and into South East Queensland and as far north as Cairns. It is a native of South America, and is also present in Hawaii, Florida and Mexico.

Due to the increasing number of locations in which Myrtle Rust has been detected, and its expanding host range, further spread of the disease is anticipated.

If untreated, the disease can cause deformed leaves, heavy defoliation of branches, die-back and stunted growth.

Myrtle Rust has been

identified only about 300km from Victoria. Recent modelling based on climatic elements identifies coastal areas of East Gippsland, South Gippsland (Wilson's Promontory) and the Otway Ranges as potentially the most susceptible to the rust as their climates suit the establishment and spread of the disease.

Wholesale, forestry and Landcare native nurseries may provide an ideal microclimate with an on-going supply of susceptible young foliage with long periods of leaf wetness.

While a Victoria-specific response plan is under development, and many nurseries are regularly being surveyed for visual symptoms of Myrtle Rust, the RBG is also developing a response system to deal with the appearance of the rust in the Gardens.

It is therefore important that all Friends, and particularly our Botanical Illustrator Friends, do not bring vegetation from these families into the Gardens for study, identification, illustration or floral decoration. This is because Myrtle Rust is

highly transportable, not only by wind or through nursery stock, but also by cars, flower arrangements, bushwalkers, bees, and animals which run in the bush with their owners.

To report suspected Myrtle Rust please phone the Exotic Plant Pest hotline on freecall 1800 084 881, or take electronic photos of the suspect material and email to

plantprotection@dpi.vic.gov.au with your contact phone number.

Some important web sites are:

1. <http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/forestry/pests-diseases-weeds/diseases/myrtle-rust>
2. http://www.outbreak.gov.au/pests_diseases/pests_diseases_plant/myrtle-rust/national_host_list.html
3. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust>

Alternatively, type 'myrtle rust' into your search engine.

Meg Miller, with thanks to Michael McNab and various websites.

New Members' Welcome

Wednesday 21 September at 10 am
Mueller Hall, National Herbarium
Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra

Please join us for the New Members' Welcome! Invitations will soon be sent to all recently-joined Friends to come to our next 'Getting-to-know-you' gathering. Drinks and nibbles will be served while you mingle and meet other new Members. Learn about the Friends' wide range of activities in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, with conveners of all groups to hand to provide information. Finish up with a special tour of the Gardens with an expert voluntary guide.

All those who have joined the Friends since our last welcome, and those who have already requested an invitation to a daytime welcome, will automatically receive one. If you have not been able to attend a previous New Members' Welcome and would like to come this time, you are warmly invited as well, so please call our office on 9650 6398 and we'll make sure you are invited.

Photos: Dr Louise Morin©CSIRO Ecosystem Science



Myrtle Rust on Eucalyptus globulus.
The infection is as a result of controlled environment testing



Myrtle rust on Eucalyptus regnans

Friends' Membership Prize

Congratulations to individual member Margaret Stribling, of Camberwell, who has won the Friends' Membership Prize offered for the second quarter of 2011. Margaret, a Friend for 12 years, has won a year's free membership.

At the end of each quarter in 2011, all who have paid their membership fee by the due date will be eligible to win this prize. The next draw will be held at the end of September.

September

- 2 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 8 Talk - Tim Richardson
- 20 Insiders' Walk - Herbarium
- 21 New Members' Welcome
- 24 Growing Friends' Plant Sale 10 am to 4 pm
- 25 Growing Friends' Plant Sale 10 am to 3 pm
- 25 RBG Melbourne Spring Open Day

October

- 1 Eucalyptus Exhibition opens
- 11 Fit Friends' Ramble - Rippon Lea
- 16 Eucalypts Exhibition closes
- 21 Taking Plants - Rhododendrons
- 21 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 26 Talk - Richard Barley
- 28 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm

November

- 4 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 8 Talk - Kitchen Gardens
- 11 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 14 Annual General Meeting
- 18 Guided Nursery Visit
- 18 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 24 Self-Drive to Cranbourne
- 25 Growing Friends' Nursery open 9 am to 1 pm
- 29 Twilight Walk - David Plant

December

- 7 Christmas Cocktail Party at Gardens House

Note: The Friends' Inclement Weather Policy states that outdoor events may be cancelled and the Nursery will not be open for sales if the temperature is predicted to be 33°C or above.

BOTANIC NEWS is produced quarterly for Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Inc. which was formed to stimulate further interest in the Gardens and the National Herbarium and to support and assist them whenever possible.

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For further information
contact the Friends' office
9650 6398 for details.



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Photo: Jennifer Marshall