

Flourish

Supporter News Spring 2023



ISSUE 14

Meet our new Director
and Chief Executive!

An 80 year legacy

Spring orchid tour



Royal
Botanic
Gardens
Victoria



The new Woodland Picnic Area nature playground at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne is now open and ready to inspire the next generation of nature lovers. It's a place where children can safely explore their skills and abilities, and fall in love with nature.

The playground, designed by Andrea Proctor Landscapes, is located in the Gardens' Conservation Zone and is made from recycled resources from the Gardens, as well as locally sourced materials.

ABOVE
Children enjoying the new nature playground.

COVER
David Harland.

Welcome to Flourish Spring

Dear supporters,

It's a pleasure to write my first Flourish foreword as Director & Chief Executive of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

Long ago, I decided that I wanted to use my skills for the greater good and positively impact the world. I am interested in what makes organisations tick – and inevitably it is the people. When you find a place where the people, their values and the mission of the organisation have clicked, you find magic and it is this which really excites me about the Gardens.

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria is one of only a small number of global gardens that piqued my interest. Coming from the Eden Project, I was looking for another garden that was trying to make a difference and, from afar, I had been watching with interest what Tim Entwisle and the team were doing.

My joy at joining this special organisation was compounded with the realisation that the Board and the team are very much committed to continuing the Gardens' traditions, and yet not holding them in aspic; committed to unifying the science, culture, entrepreneurialism and interpretation of a modern botanic garden. This, coupled with trying to ensure (given that we know a thing or two about plants and the climate!) that we are talking about the key issues *du jour* – whether that is climate resilience, food security and safety, water, biodiversity, soil, health and wellbeing, education and so on.

I see the role of botanic gardens evolving to be more active and confident in our assertions about the role of nature on planet earth. With Melbourne and Victoria growing, we want to be part of that vibrancy across the State.

Some of you will have noticed that I am not a botanist or a horticulturalist. I am hoping that – surrounded by some of the best plant experts in the business – I can bring new perspectives to the organisation, whether that's through entrepreneurialism or innovation. What I can say for certain is that I will bring a world view, a sense of humour and I am looking forward to it with boundless enthusiasm.

I look forward to meeting you all at the end of year event.



Best wishes,

David Harland
Director and Chief Executive
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Tecoma Gate

A Legacy Inspired by an 80-year neighbour

Theatre historian, author and former head of the Performing Arts Museum, Frank Van Straten AM has been living opposite Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne since he was six years old. Now, at 87, Mr Van Straten and his partner Adrian Turley's donation has allowed the Gardens to create a beautiful new entry at the Tecoma Gate.

"The Gardens are our front garden," said Mr Van Straten. "My parents built this home in 1942. You could hear kookaburras and cicadas everywhere. In those days wealthy people rode horses around the Tan, which was covered in tanbark and horses pulled the mowers inside the gates."

"There were lots of kids in the area and my parents told me that elves, goblins and fairies lived at the Gardens and came out after the gates closed, so I used to fantasise about all these little creatures that lived there," he said.

He recalls how his beloved nanny, Edith Morris – or Morrie – used to take him to the Gardens for a picnic or to meet friends and play cowboy games.

"There was a gardener there who made us bows and arrows and headdresses from swan's feathers. "It was a wonderful time." he said.

To help foster that sense of wonder for future generations, Frank and his partner of more than 50 years, Adrian Turley, generously gave \$350,000 to fund the new Tecoma Gate project. The gate, designed by the Gardens'

landscape architect Andrew Laidlaw, pays tribute to the designs of early director William Guilfoyle.

"Guilfoyle used Araucarias on the hilltops, waterlilies on the lake, undulating lawns, Palm Lawn, Fern Gully and its pavilion, Temple of the Winds and other features, which I have represented on the gate," says Andrew. "The grasses are a nod to the Indigenous landscape that would have been here before the Gardens."

The detailed artisan gate is surrounded by new plantings including Echinopsis Pachanoi (pole cactus) and other succulents, new paving, including a large mosaic tile by artist David Wong featuring arid plants and succulents inspired by historical sketches. This will signify entry to the Arid and Drylands precinct, which includes Guilfoyle's Volcano, and the Arid Garden.

"It's lovely to be working with Frank and Adrian, we involved them in the process and presented the early designs to them," Andrew Laidlaw said. "It is a beautiful project full of detail and love and I hope visitors will pause and enjoy the artwork and it will act as a transition for people to come into this very rich and diverse place".

Frank reflects, "It commands you to come in and explore. I think it's a work of genius. It's so beautiful and it replaces a gate that wasn't inviting at all."

Frank and Adrian encourage others to make gifts to the gardens for the benefit of all.



“We hope that by supporting the Gardens we inspire others to do the same,” said Adrian, who often walks through the gardens. “We’re just so thrilled to have helped make this project a reality.”



ABOVE
Frank and Adrian with the new Tecoma Gate.

RIGHT
Frank in the Gardens aged around 3 years old.



“There’s nothing better to support and I want the good works to continue for eternity... forever!”

ABOVE
Betsy Polasek with her goddaughter Donna Osbourne.

Supporter Spotlight: Betsy Polasek

Betsy Polasek, a lover of Victorian High Country, called Mt Buffalo home for two decades. Betsy has long been an avid supporter and admirer of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. Betsy is also a member of the Perennial Gardeners, a group of dedicated supporters who have made the decision to leave a gift to the Gardens in their Will.

Betsy's love-affair with the Gardens began when she was very young. She fondly remembers coming for picnics with her mother and aunt. The highlight of these visits was feeding the swans. Betsy recalls her school excursions to the Gardens when she was studying across the road at Melbourne Girls Grammar. With a twinkle in her eye, she cheekily mentions that she along with friends would come into the Gardens and fish for yabbies.

Betsy's love for nature came from her mother, a keen gardener who completed a horticultural course at Burnley. This passion for plants burned bright in Betsy and she would often take a few days off from her busy schedule of managing Tatra Gifts to study there too.

After retiring, Betsy had a lot more time on her hands which allowed her to engage deeply with the Gardens, especially with her goddaughter Donna who is a Gardens Volunteer. Betsy vividly remembers coming to every plant sale that was organised by the

Melbourne Friends. They used to be first in line and would take back barrel loads of plants from the sale.

Betsy has always felt the Gardens are an integral part of Melbourne. She says, "It is a very tranquil place". Whenever she had overseas visitors, she would bring them to the Gardens and proudly show her relatives their magnificence.

She enjoyed walking through the Gardens, in particular the Fern Gully. Ferns have been a favourite of Betsy's and, when the Gardens approached her about upgrades to Fern Gully and a new Sensory Garden in 2018, she was thrilled to support this project. It felt personal, she explains. Betsy enjoyed being part of the project, as it not only gave her an insight into the workings of the Gardens but instilled a deep sense of belonging.

Reflecting on her years of engagement and enjoyment, Betsy made the meaningful decision to leave a gift in her Will to the Gardens. She had heard about gifts in Will and mentions assuredly that the whole process was quite simple once she had the information on suggested legal wording.

Betsy felt including Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria in her Will was a natural continuation of her annual giving. She says, "There's nothing better to support and I want the good works to continue for eternity... forever!"

Events

Lighting Up Winter



We brought many donors together to celebrate the launch of Lightscape in June.

Minister for Environment, Hon. Ingrid Stitt addressed the gathering along with Board Chairperson Chris Trotman, before being one of the first to experience this year's all new light trail.

LEFT
Minister for Environment, Hon. Ingrid Stitt with Chairperson Chris Trotman.



Attendees dined on delightful Curtis Stone Events catering, paired with beautiful flowers supplied by Interflora from the stunning Royal Botanic Gardens floral bouquet range.

Lightscape has been an extremely positive event for the Gardens for the past two years, driving visitation, revenue and awareness of the Gardens, with a new audiences flocking to see the lights.

RIGHT
Philip and Deborah Sewell.

Tim Entwisle's Farewell



Supporters came together at The Terrace to bid farewell to Tim Entwisle as he heads into retirement.

Penny Fowler *Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Deputy Chairperson* recalled the many achievements during Tim's tenure. Farren Williams *Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation Chairperson* told guests about how

Tim starts each Board meeting with an example of fascinating flora for the Gardens. And longtime Gardens supporter Sally Browne talked about Tim's impact on the Gardens and who he is behind the scenes – including his love of punk music!

We raise a glass and wish Tim all the best in his retirement adventures ahead!

LEFT
Sally Browne with Penny Fowler and Farren Williams.

RIGHT
George and Joan Lefroy with Janet Lilley.



Spring Orchid Tour

Discover our award winning Orchid Conservation Program

Dr Noushka Reiter has led a globally recognised conservation program dedicated to protecting highly endangered native orchids since starting her first research role at Cranbourne Gardens in 2015.

Her research has focused on the conservation of threatened Australian flora, in particular understanding their ecology to improve the success of re-introduction of endangered orchids to the wild. Applied research from Noushka and her team of staff and volunteers has improved the outcomes for many species of threatened plants in the wild, establishing new populations of these rare and fascinating species.

Globally, native orchids are one of the largest plant families. In Australia 17% of plant species considered nationally endangered are orchids. Noushka explains that several specific biological interactions need to occur to ensure the affectionately termed 'fussy' species can reproduce.

Firstly, orchids have no seedbank as they have the smallest seed of all angiosperms. Secondly, they are highly reliant on mycorrhizal fungi for growth and survival. And thirdly, they have a very specific relationship with their pollinators, male thynnid wasps and gnat flies.

The effects of land clearance, habitat degradation and climate change have led to many orchid species being threatened.

The Orchid Conservation program requires a full-time nursery person and a research assistant to help to establish ex-situ collections and has been generously funded by donors. Noushka is joined by eight dedicated volunteers in the laboratory and nursery as well as 50 enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers who assist the team to monitor plants and conduct winter planting. Together, the team grows up to 10,000 native orchids each year.


Currently, 78 nationally threatened species are being cultivated by the orchid conservation program and the team aim for the same success story as the *Caladenia colorata*.

A donor tour of the Orchid Conservation Nursery will be held at Cranbourne in September. This tour is a wonderful opportunity for donors to hear more about the incredible work Noushka and the team are achieving, whilst being able to see the orchids in full bloom!

In Australia 17% of plant species considered nationally endangered are orchids.

LEFT

Dr Noushka Reiter in the shade house at Cranbourne Gardens.

An aerial photograph of a botanical garden. The foreground is dominated by a large area of bright red soil, which has been prepared with several circular and rectangular beds of light green, low-growing plants. A long, narrow strip of similar plants runs diagonally across the middle of the red area. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall, green trees. A paved path or road is visible near the forest edge. The overall scene is well-lit, suggesting a sunny day.

In 2023 we offered an opportunity to respond to the challenges behind us as well as those ahead. The importance of plants and green space has never been more apparent, both for our own health and wellbeing, as well as the planet's. At Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, we will continue to strive towards a future enriched and sustained by plants.

It is through the generosity of our donors that the Gardens continue to flourish.

Show your support today by making a fully tax-deductible donation as we continue our efforts in world-class science and horticultural research, landscapes and public programs.

YES, I would like to support the Garden's mission to see life enriched and sustained by plants.

Title First name

Last name

Address

State

Postcode

Email

Phone

Date of birth

I will give \$

via: *(please tick)*

Cheque *(enclosed)*

Visa

MasterCard

American Express

Card no.

Expiry date / CVC

Cardholder's name

Signature

Please send me information about including a gift to the Gardens in my Will

I have already included a gift to the Gardens in my Will

Please tear off and return to:
Private Bag 2000,
South Yarra Victoria 3141

To donate online, please visit:
rbg.vic.gov.au/make-a-donation/



All donations of \$2 or more
are tax deductible

Mycology in Lights

Lightscape visitors were able to step into the fantastic world of fungi with The Fungarium installation.

Mushrooms of all sizes decorated the hillside and tiny mushroom lights sparkled amongst the undergrowth. On the path, images from the amazing world of fungi were projected, selected from photos taken by contributors to iNaturalist – the online social network of naturalists, citizen scientists and biologists.

Fungi are one of the great branches of the tree of life. Fungi are classified in a separate kingdom, comprising more than 130,000 known species and several million species yet to be formally named.

Fungi are right at home in Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria as we are a centre for mycology – the study of fungi. Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria has its very own Fungarium, which contains more than 100,000 dried specimens of fungi located in the National Herbarium of Victoria as part of the State Botanical Collection.

In collaboration with citizen scientists, our mycologists support conservation of rare and endangered fungi by locating new populations and monitoring known populations.

We are also proud that the Fungarium shines a light on the brilliant work of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria mycologists Dr Tom May and Dr Camille Truong.



Royal
Botanic
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Victoria

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