

Flourish

Supporter News Autumn 2022



ISSUE 11

Fighting Fungus
Wonderful Water
Light in the Night



Royal
Botanic
Gardens
Victoria



US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken visited Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne recently to meet with Director & Chief Executive, Tim Entwisle and hear about First Nations heritage and culture.

Aboriginal Programs Facilitator, Jakobi, took the Secretary on an Aboriginal Heritage Walk, where he learned about preserving biodiversity, climate change impacts, bush foods, and other important native plants and their uses to Aboriginal people. Jakobi also showed the Secretary various First Peoples' artifacts, including tools, possum skins and other cultural implements.

ABOVE

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken with Aboriginal Programs Facilitator, Jakobi at Melbourne Gardens.

COVER

Chris Russell, Executive Director Cranbourne Gardens, Chris Trotman, RBG Board Chairperson, Harriet Shing, Secretary for Water, Pauline Richards MP, Member for Cranbourne and Tim Entwisle, Director & Chief Executive RBGV open up the taps to the recycled Water Treatment Plant at Cranbourne Gardens.

Welcome to Flourish Autumn

A typically busy start to the year for Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, with VIP visits, new projects and some fantastic award wins.

In March, we were crowned Australia's best 'Major Tourist Attraction of the Year' at the QANTAS Australian Tourism Industry Awards. This demonstrates not only how important parks and gardens are to locals as we emerge from the pandemic, but that our two botanic gardens are premier tourist attractions for Australia. To put it in context, the MCG got silver.

We also received a VIP visit by Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State. Other VIP visitors this month included Secretary for Water Harriet Shing, and Member for Cranbourne, Pauline Richards MP, who, with Board Chairperson, Chris Trotman, launched our new recycled water treatment plant at Cranbourne Gardens.

As we transition from t-shirt weather to a few layers, the Gardens are much easier to explore. Autumn is a good time to enjoy the deciduous trees, and while the oaks get a lot of fanfare, Melbourne's elms are of particular

significance. Located on Tennyson Lawn, an English Elm planted by the Gardens' first Superintendent John Arthur and his family in 1846 is thought to be the oldest exotic tree growing here. After Dutch Elm Disease swept through much of the Northern Hemisphere, Australia's elms became some of the most significant in the world.

So the year is off to a strong start, and I look forward to hopefully catching up with you all in person soon.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Entwisle', written in a cursive style.

Professor Tim Entwisle
Director and Chief Executive
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Nature Wonder

Explore the Gardens at Night

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is seen by few once the sun has descended below the towering trees and the gates are firmly shut. But as the winter of 2022 arrives, a world-class, immersive event will light up the Gardens and beckon everyone inside to appreciate its mesmerising, wintertime beauty.

Lightscape is a journey of light and sound through the Gardens at night, with installations by international and Australian artists. It will warm up the winter months and bring the community together as they stroll the Gardens at a time when it is normally closed.

Attractions include the Winter Cathedral, an immersive installation comprising more than 100,000 fairy lights; luminous walkways and vistas, sparkling trees of light, as well as displays that will create stunning lakeside reflections. Light will appear to tumble from the undergrowth to light up trees, for a moment of calm in this winter wonderland.

The event was developed at Kew Gardens nine years ago and has been an enormous success ever since. It is now coming to Australia for the first time, after successful seasons in the US, as well as National Trust and UNESCO World Heritage sites in the UK.



Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne will be the first garden to host it in Australia and has commissioned local artists to create work that responds to nature and the work of the organisation.

From 24 June, sessions will be held on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, with first entry from 5:30pm through to 8:00pm, and entry up until 9pm for later sessions on a Friday and Saturday. There will also be relaxed sessions: Wednesday 29 June and Wednesday 13 July 2022.

For further information and to book tickets, visit melbournelightscape.com.au

ABOVE

Lightscape is a family-friendly winter attraction.

RIGHT

Lightscape is a journey of light and sound through the Gardens at night.

**Light will appear
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“It is a place where we are reminded that nothing is permanent, but gratitude for the glorious years we had with her and our fond memories can be expressed when we gather at her memorial chair.”

ABOVE

Sally Browne with her seat, dedicated to her daughter Tess.

Supporter Spotlight: Sally Browne

Sally Browne is a woman of many achievements. Renowned fashion designer, business leader, mother of four, grandmother of seven and high-altitude adventurer. She is also a lover of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and a long-time donor. Sally has been coming to the Gardens since childhood and remembers being in awe of the green lawns and leaves and the abundance of colour in the amazing flowers.

Sally and her family share a particularly poignant connection to Eucalypt Lawn or, as Sally calls it, her "Family-under-the-gums space". It is here that Sally's seat, dedicated in memory of her daughter Tess, who died in 2019, has found a home. The seat has become a wonderful memory of how Tess loved visiting the Gardens with her family, and Eucalypt Lawn has become a sacred space for Sally. As she describes, "it is a place where we are reminded that nothing is permanent, but gratitude for the glorious years we had with her and our fond memories can be expressed when we gather at her memorial chair."

Sally has been a champion of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria for many years, through generous donations, supporting the Directors Circle and by choosing to leave a gift in her Will to the Gardens.

Reflecting on her decision to leave a bequest, Sally sees this commitment as a thank you to the Gardens for the pleasure and memories it has given her family. Over time, she has become a great friend to Director and Chief Executive, Tim Entwisle and the team and wanted to ensure the future of their vision.

"I felt the best way to show my loyalty to the Gardens was through a bequest."

"Whether you are rich or poor, whether you are local or international, this urban oasis has its gates open for us all, to enjoy, to picnic, to meditate, to wander through to have celebrations or contemplative time alone."

If you would like to inquire about leaving a gift in your Will to the Gardens please contact: Imogen Henry on 03 9252 2383 or at imogen.henry@rbg.vic.gov.au



A Summer Florescence

The beginning of summer saw relaxed days and much-needed gatherings with family and friends. Melbourne Gardens provided the perfect outdoor location for members of our Director's Circle to meet and enjoy an exclusive tasting of our new, award winning gin *Florescence*, produced in collaboration with Anther Spirits.

Guests were drawn to Tecoma Pavilion, which sparkled with an array of tempting concoctions, as Prof Tim Entwisle and Dr Dervilla McGowan gave a fascinating insight into the gin distillation process. The dynamic duo wove the science of distillation and botany together with a passionate lyricism, whilst each cocktail glass exuded the heady perfume of *Florescence*.

ABOVE

The exclusive *Florescence* gin tasting event.

"Working with Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria meant that we had a whole library of potential ingredients at our fingertips and access to scientists and botanists with an educated hunch about what might work," said Dr Dervilla McGowan, from Anther Spirits

Every ingredient in *Florescence* can be found in the Gardens, including Waratah, Alpine Pepper, Violet Kunzea, Lemon Scented Ziera, Alpine Baeckea, Silky Heads and Rooftop Honey, foraged from Melbourne Gardens.

Proceeds of the sale of *Florescence* go towards supporting Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

Florescence can be purchased online at www.anther.com.au/product/florescence-gin/ or at selected Dan Murphey's or BWS stores.



Garden Party Delight

The air was hot and heavy with the scent of magnolias as visitors to RBGV's 175th Garden party settled among the lush foliage of Gardens House. It was the first in-person event many of them had attended in a long time, and they celebrated in a rainbow of plant-inspired greens, browns, and pinks.

Penny Fowler, the Gardens Board Deputy Chairperson, welcomed the influential group and invited them to join the exclusive Director's Circle. One attendee who signed up that night was Lord Mayor Sally Capp, a strong advocate for the Gardens, whose most recent visit was for the launch of Melbourne Fashion week in November.

Other attendees included former Premier Jeff Kennett with partner Felicity, Vue De Monde Executive Chef

Hugh Allen, businessman David Abela, entrepreneurs Andy and Ruby Ryan, National Executive Editor of News Corp Ltd Peter Blunden, RBGV Board Chairperson Chris Trotman, influencer Alex Pike and philanthropists Alan Schwartz and Janet and John Calvert-Jones.

Tim Entwisle, Director and Chief Executive and Charlie Carroll, Manager of Arboriculture took to the podium and discussed the special trees of the Gardens. As if on cue, a giant Poplar tree was brought to life by a sudden gust of wind, sending everyone's gazes upward in awe.

If you would like to inquire about becoming a Director's Circle supporter, please contact: Imogen Henry on 03 9252 2383 or at imogen.henry@rbg.vic.gov.au

ABOVE

Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Robin Penty Executive Director of Engagement and Impact, Tim Entwisle Director & Chief Executive, Penny Fowler Deputy Chairperson RBG Board and Andrew Sutherland

“Results from this research may have applications industry wide, from the rare and threatened collections found in botanic gardens, to orchards and forests.”



Fighting Fungus

The Gardens' Invisible Threat

In the summer of 2018, numerous large trees in the Australian Garden appeared to be dying from an unknown cause. It wasn't until a tree listed with the National Trust, the Moodjar (*Nuytsia floribunda*) succumbed, that the horticultural team were able to pinpoint the source of the scourge. The Moodjar's roots were infested with white threads of mycelium, later identified as belonging to *Armillaria* spp., a pathogenic fungus which spreads via root-to-root contact. The fungus can infect woody root systems, attacking living tissue, and can persist on dead tissue. It is particularly prevalent on developed sites with reduced biodiversity and there is no proven technique to control the fungus.

Now aware of the problem, Russell Larke, Team Leader Horticulture and his team investigated the entire Australian Garden, only to make the heart-breaking discovery of a widespread *Armillaria* spp. infestation. After speaking with industry professionals from Kings Park, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, Australian National Botanic Gardens and Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, as well as orchardists, foresters, and academics, a plan was developed to help save the Australian Garden from the fungal threat.

Partnering with the University of Melbourne in 2021, Russell and his team are researching the effect of different cultural practices to examine the link between plant health and response to infection. To do this they have used a range of techniques to ameliorate the soil, including: replacing soil with a rich organic blend, applying phosphonic acid, increasing soil pH, reducing overhead irrigation, applying seaweed extract, and changing the mulch. Furthermore, as part of the ongoing project with the University of Melbourne they will also be looking to paint fungicide directly onto badly infected trees and measure the response – a first globally!

“Results from this research may have applications industry wide, from the rare and threatened collections found in botanic gardens, to orchards and forests.” – Russell Larke

Russell Larke has been the Team Leader Horticulture at Cranbourne Gardens for 5 years. He has been central to driving the change in the collection towards the conservation and display of rare and threatened species. He has been instrumental to our *Raising Rarity* program and bushfire recovery work.

LEFT

Russell Larke, Team Leader Horticulture, Cranbourne Gardens



The Spirit Room

Aaron McCardle is a Curation Officer at the National Herbarium of Victoria, located in Melbourne Gardens. As part of his role, he works closely with preserved specimens.

Here, Aaron is pictured in the Spirit Room, which contains specimens stored in an ethanol solution. Spirit collections are important because they preserve the shape and size of stored material. This technique is critical for specimens that lose diagnostic characters through pressing, for example orchid flowers.

“Most of our specimens are dried and pressed on paper, but the State Botanical Collection also includes glass slides, carpological material (seeds and fruit), and spirit material. With each providing different types of information for researchers and students of botany.”
– Aaron McCardle

The State Botanical Collection currently holds 10,356 jars of spirit material and counting, as our botanists return with fresh material from collection trips.

ABOVE

Aaron McCardle, Curation Officer at the National Herbarium of Victoria



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To support our work or learn more
please contact us on:
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