

Flourish

Supporter News Autumn 2024

ISSUE 16

A gifted gate

VIP visitors

A tapestry of
garden heritage



Royal
Botanic
Gardens
Victoria



Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne has been the top destination choice for VIP visitors recently.

In January, we hosted the Australian Open Men's Champion media conference for winner Jannik Sinner.

In March, we welcomed President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, for a site tour when he was in town for the ASEAN Summit.

That visit was followed by a tour of the gardens by Clare Hart *Acting Executive Director Melbourne Gardens* and Chris Russell *Acting Director & Chief Executive* for the Laos Prime Minister's wife Mrs. Vandara Siphandone, the Laos Deputy Prime Minister's wife Mrs. Alouny Kommasith and the Laos Ambassador's wife Mrs. Sirvanh Manivanh.

Both parties were interested in understanding the Gardens' world-class landscape design, management of water and important conservation and cultural projects.



ABOVE

Penny Fowler AM with Indonesian President Joko Widodo along with Chris Russell *Acting Director & Chief Executive* and Chris Cole *Director Melbourne Gardens*.

LOWER

Penny Fowler AM *Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Chair* with Jannik Sinner.

COVER

Detail of City Gate featuring superb fairy-wrens.

Welcome to Flourish Autumn

Dear supporters,

Thank you for your ongoing support of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. I am delighted to say that, in this edition, we explore our place as one of the world's most beautiful botanic gardens.

It has been a busy start to the year, with some very high-profile visitors to the Gardens, an enjoyable summer program of outdoor events and some beautiful new landscapes for visitors to enjoy.

One of those landscapes, our new City Gate, was made possible thanks to the generous support and vision of Lady Potter AC. Lady Potter has been an avid supporter of the Gardens over many decades and you can read more about this project on page 2.

At Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, works are underway on a new Arid and Drylands Precinct, which includes a Cyclades dwelling node supported by Jane Edmanson OAM and a Fire seating node supported by Rosemary Simpson. Adjacent to this precinct will be a new Australian meadow made possible through support from Mrs. Joan Darling.

At Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, thanks to the generous support of Susie Hamson, a new Stringybark Garden boardwalk has enhanced access to the fascinating *Xanthorrhoea* spp. (Grass Trees). Meanwhile, the new Arid Garden and Dry Riverbed

landscape has reached the next stage of development — another project made possible thanks to generous donor support.

Finally, I am pleased to share that Lightscape will continue in 2024. It is a highlight of Melbourne's winter calendar, and plans are underway for a similar but smaller scale event at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne later in the year, so stay tuned for more details.

It was fantastic to see many of you at the end of year supporter event last year, and I look forward to working with many of you in 2024.



Warm regards,

Penny Fowler AM

Chair

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Board

City Gate

An artistic expression of beauty, nature and wonder

This February we launched the beautiful, new City Gate at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, funded through a gift from long-time supporter and passionate advocate for the Gardens, Lady Primrose Potter AC.

This exquisite addition enhances the Gardens' city-side entrance with an artistic expression of the beauty, nature and wonder to be found within. Our shared vision with Lady Potter for this project, was to welcome visitors to the Gardens, by creating a gateway that delights from the moment they enter.

Designed by Gardens' *Landscape Architect* Andrew Laidlaw in consultation with Lady Potter, the gate creates a mesmerising scene of nature: two majestic trees, falling leaves, and superb fairy-wrens looking out for worms below and playing among the branches.

Lady Potter, always mindful of how children engage with nature and experience the world, suggested the blue fairy-wrens so children could have fun counting the little birds.

You may be familiar with The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden. Visited by over 300,000 people each year, The Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden was one of the first in the world and has been beloved by Melbourne families and schools. This September, we'll look forward to celebrating its twentieth anniversary!

We'd love to invite you to come and enjoy the beautiful gate, perhaps bring your children and grandchildren to count the little blue wrens, and to celebrate the beauty of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne.

“We are deeply grateful to Lady Potter for her generosity, which has brought this new gate to life. Her contribution to this gate and to the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden reflects her love of nature and a desire to inspire others to appreciate nature.”

— Andrew Laidlaw, *Landscape Architect*



BELOW LEFT

We celebrated the launch of the beautiful, new City Gate with Lady Potter and her close friends. Lady Potter cut the ribbon with *Acting Director & Chief Executive* Chris Russell and we toasted to the gate and Lady Potter's generous support.

ABOVE & BELOW RIGHT

The gate was designed by *Landscape Architect* Andrew Laidlaw, in collaboration with Lady Potter and fabricated by metal artist Justin Purser and sculptor Yvonne George.



An event to end the year

Last year ended with a bang as the Gardens celebrated another year of successes with our inspiring supporters.

Held on a balmy December evening, our celebration took place in the Dog Flat Marquee and was finely catered by our partners Curtis Stone Events and decorated by Interflora. It was

an opportunity to meet and greet old and new friends, as well as get to know our *Chair*, Penny Fowler AM and our new *Director and Chief Executive* David Harland via a fun Q&A on stage.

We are always grateful for our partners and supporters, and we hope that those in attendance had an enjoyable evening.

TOP LEFT

Annie and David Pitt with Belinda and Christopher Langdon.

TOP RIGHT

Clive and Helen Weeks with Narelle Ivers and Russell Board.

LOWER LEFT

The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos *Minister for Environment, Tourism, Sports & Major Events and Outdoor Recreation* with Penny Fowler AM, Dave Harland and John Berger MP.

LOWER RIGHT

Felicia Mariani *Foundation Board* with Rebecca Eagleson, Peta Sullivan and Kara Ward.



Bringing fungi to the forefront

The Gardens recently brought together the nation's leading Mycology experts and fungi fans in an evening of insightful exploration into our Fungi and Global Collections.

Hosted by Chris Russell *Acting Director & Chief Executive*, award-winning mycologist Dr. Tom May *Principal Research Scientist* introduced fungi through a fascinating presentation

TOP LEFT

Elizabeth Howcroft and Nicki Burrige with *Private Giving & Bequests Coordinator* Vikram Kote.

LOWER LEFT

Dr. Tom May presenting to donors.

and Q&A session before guests were invited to view exhibits and specimens from our State Botanical Collection — many that have never been made public before.

The evening was a pleasant balance of learning and delightful refreshments.

We hope to share more stories from our wonderful Mycology team in the future.

TOP RIGHT

Nicki Burrige viewing exhibits.

LOWER RIGHT

Nola Foster viewing *Curation Officer* Rebecca Le Get's fungi display.

Supporter Spotlight

Geoff Steinicke: A life embedded in gardens, family and innovation



Geoff Steinicke is a man whose life journey reflects a rich tapestry of gardening heritage, entrepreneurial vision and a commitment to the community and plant conservation. Geoff has greatly supported the organisation through his unwavering dedication and generosity.

The seeds of Geoff's connection to the Gardens were sown early in his life. Fond memories abound of feeding swans in the Gardens, a tradition he passed down to his children. He fondly recalls his daughter Jenny's eagerness to feed the swans, requiring a gentle hand to prevent her from toppling into the water in her enthusiasm.

He courted his late wife Judy, a pharmacist, while strolling through Gardens and seeking her expertise on the plants and their pharmacological uses. A love story rooted in both nature and science.

Driven by a vision for healthier living, Geoff founded Melrose Health, pioneering Australia's health food industry. Recognising the nation's nutritional gaps, he introduced products like flaxseed oil and tapped into emerging trends in alternative medicine. Geoff's business thrived and he personally delivered goods and educated eager clients on the benefits of organic living.

Geoff's love for the outdoors extended beyond gardens to the open seas. United by a passion for sailing, the Steinicke family achieved the pinnacle of success by becoming Australian champions in 1992. However, it was Geoff's daughter Jenny's tenure at the Gardens as *Executive Director of Corporate Services*, that rekindled his connection to this verdant oasis.

Geoff generously supported projects at Cranbourne Gardens such as the

As Geoff continues to care for our Gardens, his legacy of innovation, generosity and love for nature will continue to blossom, enriching the lives of many for years to come.

iconic Lilypad Bridge and the innovative aqua thermal project. Jenny passed away in 2020, a tragic loss to the Steinickes and her Gardens family. In memory of Jenny, Geoff and his family planted a native kauri pine at Cranbourne, underscoring their enduring connection to botanical preservation.

A dreamer and doer, Geoff's latest ambition is a glasshouse for Melbourne Gardens. He envisions a beautiful landmark which will enrich Melbourne's botanical landscape, draw visitors, and showcase plants from diverse climates. A key element to the Melbourne Gardens Master Plan, he has already made substantial donations towards this future project and hopes that others too will support it when the time comes.

Beyond his green thumb, Geoff is a pillar of community support, actively engaged with the Rotary Club and passionate about Motor Neuron Disease research. His philanthropic spirit knows no bounds, always ready to lend a hand to worthy causes.

As Geoff continues to care for our Gardens, his legacy of innovation, generosity and love for nature will continue to blossom, enriching the lives of many for years to come.

LEFT

Geoff Steinicke with photographs of his beloved family.

World-leading Botanic Garden

Awards

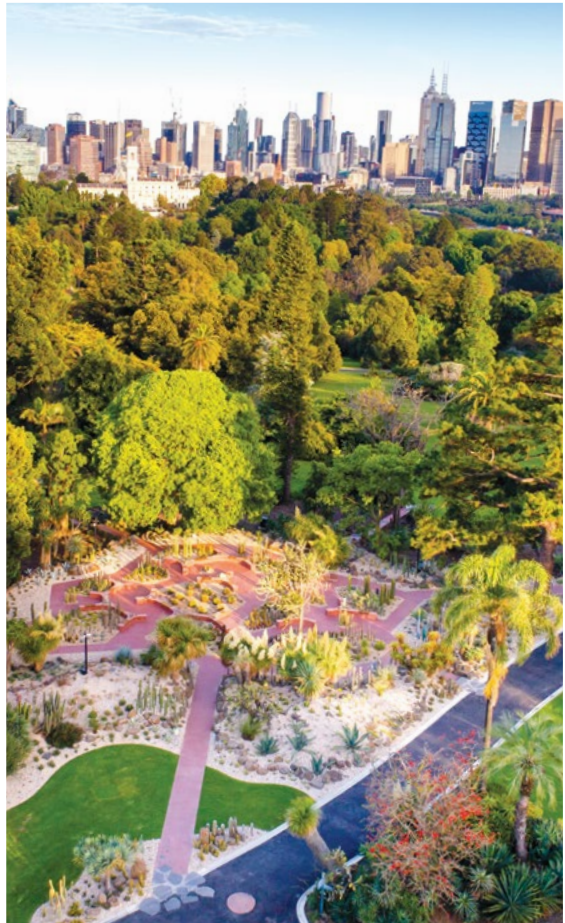
Tourism

In 2022, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria won the tourism industry's peak award, the Gold Medal for Major Tourism Destination in the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. We were thrilled to be recognised as Australia's top tourism attraction, having won the same category in the Victorian Tourism Awards for three years running.

Science

Dr. Tom May, *Principal Research Scientist (Mycology)* was awarded the 2023 Nancy T. Burbidge Medal, the highest award of the Australasian Systematic Botany Society.

Dr. Noushka Reiter, Senior Research Scientist, won the Botanical Excellence Award for her orchid conservation work at the national Eureka Prize award ceremony held in Sydney last year.



World leader among botanic gardens

The Landscape Succession Strategy – Melbourne Gardens 2016–2036: adapting a world-renowned botanical landscape to climate change, is the first of its kind for botanic gardens in Australia and is a blueprint for other botanic gardens across the world. It provides a framework for the selection of plantings that will survive the projected climate in 2090.





World-class visitor engagement

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria is also a leader when it comes to best practice placemaking and interpretation and visitor engagement, with the Gardens recently winning the Best in Category – Communication at Victorian Premier’s Design Award. This has been accomplished through the new wayfinding signage (with QR codes) and online digital interactive maps. They provide visitors with more information about our Collections, as well as what’s on today, accessibility information and Gardens’ facilities.

The organisation worked closely with an Indigenous cultural design translation specialist and in consultation with the Traditional Owners to devise the colours and patterns and language used in the Gardens. These respond to the primacy of Country and honour the land, its people, plants and uses prior to and since colonisation.

Scientific excellence

The Victorian Conservation Seedbank (VCS) is Victoria’s primary facility for the conservation of the state’s most threatened plants. It stores the seeds and spores of native Victorian plants, particularly endemics and at-risk species. The VCS currently holds over 2,330 collections covering over 1,500 taxa.




Excellence in horticulture

The Gardens’ Science and Horticulture teams combined to release a paper in 2023 about its emerging ‘Raising Rarity’ program designed to involve the community in the conservation of rare and threatened plants. The program seeks to engage schools, local government and regional botanic gardens in plant conservation, as well as making rare plants available for sale in nurseries.

Value of trees

The Arboriculture team at the Gardens, with the assistance of the City of Melbourne, is leading the way in assigning a monetary value to trees, as well as measuring ecosystem benefits and carbon storage. This will assist in communicating their value to the community.



A vertical photograph of a lush garden path. The path is made of light-colored concrete slabs and is bordered by a low wall of stacked, rounded stones. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall bamboo stalks on the right, ferns, and other green foliage. Sunlight filters through the leaves, creating dappled light on the path and wall.

For Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to be the best possible custodians of our unique natural heritage, we need to continue to uncover plant knowledge and save the rarest Australian plants from extinction.

It is through the generosity of our donors that the Gardens continue our efforts in world-class science and horticultural research, landscape development and public programs.

Show your support today by making a fully tax-deductible donation.

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

Title _____ First name _____

Last name _____

Address _____

Card no. _____

State _____ Postcode _____

Email _____ Expiry date ____ / ____ / ____ CVC ____ - ____ - ____

Phone _____ Cardholder's name _____

Date of birth _____ Signature _____

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 Visa American Express

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:
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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



We recently conducted a survey to find out what you think of the Gardens. Here are some of the wonderful feedback we received.

Julie Girdwood-Downs: "A visit to the Gardens brings me peace and serenity and centres my inner being."

Roderick Home AM: "I'm a historian of science and the RBG Library is a wonderful historical and scientific resource."

Merrill and Arthur Shulkes: "We believe that RBG Melbourne is one of the city's icons – that we should respect its history, but also make sure that it serves future needs."

Peter Kelly: "As a boy whose family lived close to the Gardens, I walked there from earliest years several times a week. They are part of my DNA."

Laurie Bebbington: "I use the Gardens to walk almost daily, plus for picnics. It helped my recovery from cancer as well."

Christina Hellard: "Place of solace in hard times, place of inspiration in good."



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