

EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



MAY 2017

NEXT EHG MEETING:

From 7 pm for 7.30 pm start, Wednesday 3 May 2017

**Local threatened species &
Community involvement in conservation of threatened species**

Guest speakers: Liza Schaeper and Aimee Freemanis

Saving our Species, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

LUGARNO-PEAKHURST UNITING CHURCH

909 Forest Road Lugarno (opposite the Chivers Hill Lugarno shops)

Visitors are welcome.

If you can, please bring something to share for supper, and labelled specimens for the plant table.

WELCOME to the May 2017 edition of the East Hills Group Newsletter. We have all the usual items and information about the APS NSW AGM and Quarterly Gathering. Central Coast Group is hosting and they are offering lots of extras, so I hope you can get there.

Enjoy your garden and see you soon!

Jan Douglas

Editor

In this newsletter:

- A note from the President
- April plant table notes & photos
- Notes and photos from the April meeting
- EHG meets Ikebana
- Coming events – dates to note
- EHG contact details.

www.easthills.austplants.com.au



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a very interesting talk at the April meeting with Dr Trevor Wilson from the RBG, talking about *Plectranthus*, a group of plants I thought were just weeds! What I found particularly interesting was that it was only when they started carrying out a systematic search for this group of plants, particularly in Cape York, that they started finding many more species. It just shows that there is still a lot to learn about our native flora and fauna. As part of his presentation Trevor mentioned the costs of sending researchers to remote areas, and with Government's reducing funding for research and science in general, it was getting difficult to get funds to carry out this type of work. This leads onto the March for Science which was held on 22nd April at 600+ sites around the world.

Liz and I attended the event in Sydney. It was very inspiring with a good crowd and excellent speakers all proclaiming how important science is to our wellbeing. They talked about how politicians are now frequently adopting the quick simple fix without considering the science and this is leading to bad decisions. Furthermore, these same politicians, due to their lack of scientific knowledge, are cutting back on scientific research funds just when we need it most. The final message was to keep putting the pressure on politicians about science and don't let the non-science message go unchallenged.

On a more positive note, I hope you can come to the next meeting when we will have Liz Schaeper from the Save our Species unit of the NSW Environment and Heritage speaking.

Graham Fry
President.



APS NSW AGM and Quarterly Gathering

hosted by Central Coast Group

Saturday 20 May 2017

Phillip House, 21 Old Mount Penang Road, Kariong



Pre- meeting activities from 9.30 am

Registration from 10.30 - 11.30 am

AGM from 12 noon.

Guest speaker at 1 pm

Plant sales. Morning and afternoon tea available.

See page 4 for more details.



The Fourth Biennial

**AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
TRIVIA NIGHT**

hosted by the East Hills Group of the Australian Plants Society

Wednesday 7th June 2017 (7pm for 7.30pm start)

at Lugarno-Peakhurst Uniting Church
909 Forest Road, Lugarno

Cost \$5 per head.

Form your own table of 6-8 people,
or join a table with other APS members.

Don't miss this night of entertainment with many great prizes.

**Join us in having fun as we learn more
about our wonderful native flora.**

**RSVP: Karlo Taliana 9709 6135 or
karlo.taliana@optusnet.com.au by 31/5/17**

A request to East Hills Group members:

Please do what you can to contribute suitable prizes – bring your contribution along to the May meeting, or let Karlo know what you'll be providing so he knows what's on offer!



APS NSW AGM and Quarterly Gathering

Saturday 20 May 2017

hosted by Central Coast Group

Phillip House, 21 Old Mount Penang Road, Kariong

\$5 per person

Unless you have mobility issues, please park at the Mt Penang Gardens Information Centre car park in The Avenue, Kariong. The carpark is a five-minute walk from the meeting venue. If you have mobility issues, follow the signs and park at Phillip House.

Options before the meeting:

- Mt Penang Gardens, accessed from the Information Centre carpark
- The Wildflower Place native plant nursery at 453 The Entrance Road, Erina Heights
- Japanese Gardens, 36 Webb Street, East Gosford

At Phillip House, 21 Old Mount Penang Road, Kariong:

10:30 am – 11:30 am Registration, plant sales, morning tea. (\$5 entry fee)

12:00 noon – 1:00 p m Welcome by John Aitken and AGM

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm Lunch - BYO, or take advantage of the sausage sizzle, soup and cold drinks available for purchase.

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm Guest speaker: Olga Blacha - Attracting birds with native plants.

3:30 pm – 4.15 pm Afternoon tea, plant sales.



Resolving relationships in Australian *Plectranthus*

Presentation by Dr Trevor Wilson, National Herbarium of NSW

Thanks to Trevor for supplying the photos and correcting and augmenting my draft notes.

Dr Trevor Wilson, who completed his PhD at the University of Sydney, is a postdoctoral research scientist at the National Herbarium of New South Wales. His current research focus is the mint Family, especially the genus *Plectranthus*. Trevor was also able to talk to us about related work done by colleagues and students.

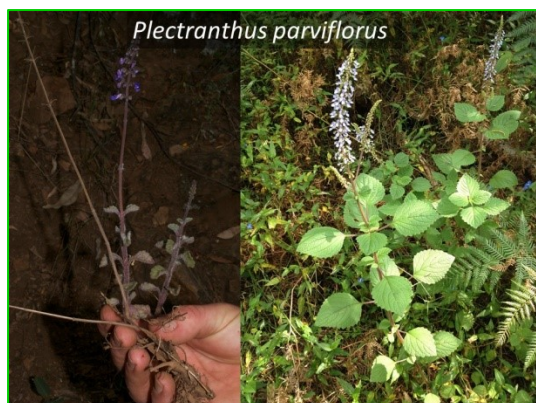


Left: *P. diversus* in Kutini-Payamu National Park, Cape York.

Right: *P. venustus*, Cape York



Trevor's current work includes collecting all known Australian species of *Plectranthus* and the use of sophisticated methods in molecular biology and his background in plant morphology to understand their relationships. This work helps to describe the floral diversity of Australia (such as describing new species), understanding evolutionary processes and the biogeographic history of Australia. For instance, this will help with understanding how *Plectranthus* may have spread across Australia, and when it arrived here.



Above: *P. parviflorus* showing variation of flower and form within a species. Photographed in Bungonia Gorge (left) and Royal National Park (right)



Above: A new species of *Plectranthus*, photographed on Cape York.

One of the tools at Trevor's disposal is a living collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney consisting of over 90% of the currently recognised species of *Plectranthus* (total 48) in Australia. Plants of a single species can vary widely in leaf shape, size and colour (see above) depending on environmental conditions. By growing these and unidentified

specimens in controlled conditions (i.e. removing the effect of environmental variability) he can establish which differences between these individuals are influenced through genetic control. This is one of the chief methods he uses to establish he has found a new species, and it also allows Trevor to have a good amount of plant material to conduct measurements for a new species description.



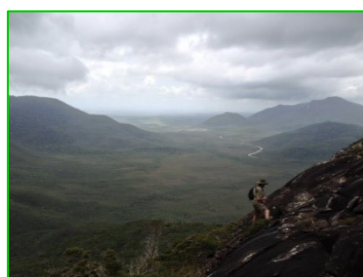
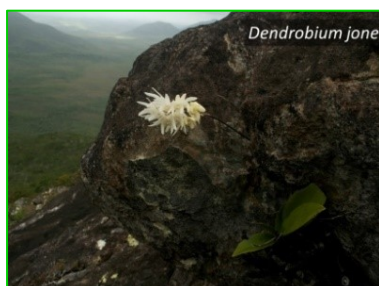
Here are just a few points from Trevor’s presentation:

- Until the 1970s about 17 Australian species of *Plectranthus* were recognised – now there are more than 40!
- The classification of *Plectranthus* needs revision, and at the moment there is no up-to-date comprehensive tool available to assist with their identification.
- The best-known *Plectranthus* is the garden plant Coleus – *Plectranthus scutellarioides*. It grows naturally in Australia and further north e.g. Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (photo above right).
- *Plectranthus* are typically herbaceous succulent perennial shrubs. Many species are hairy and have glands (visible with hand lens), which are features that currently assist with their identification.
- A few species have medicinal properties (e.g. antiseptic) and some are used as food.
- Closely related to Basil (*Ocimum*), which also has species native to Australia.
- Flowers produce nectar but pollination agents are not known. At least one species is known to be able to self-fertilise by producing flowers that never open.
- Cuttings of most *Plectranthus* strike easily: take a terminal piece and use a coarse propagation medium such as coarse river sand.



Above: Image of leaf tip of *P. congestus* (magnified) showing hairs and glands.

In the second part of his presentation, Trevor took us on a virtual field trip with beautiful photos of remote locations where *Plectranthus* species have been found.



THE APRIL 2017 PLANT TABLE

Hugh Stacy and Jan Douglas

Plants brought to our meeting on 5 April included:

Banksia 'Birthday Candles'

Banksia 'Giant Candles'

Banksia ericifolia

Correa 'Jezabell' (hybrid of *C. pulchella*)

Crowea exalata

Crowea sp., possibly *Crowea* 'Festival'

Goodenia sp.

Grevillea barklyana [Photo top right, Jan Douglas]

Grevillea maccutcheonii (McCutcheon's Grevillea)

(Yes, the spelling of common name is different from the spelling of scientific name.) [Photo at right, Brian Walters]

Hakea 'Pinball' (hybrid between *H. petiolaris* and *H. laurina*) [Photo below right, Jan Douglas]

Hoya australis

Lepidozamia peroffskyana

Lomatia (probably a hybrid between *H. myricoides* and *H. silaifolia*)

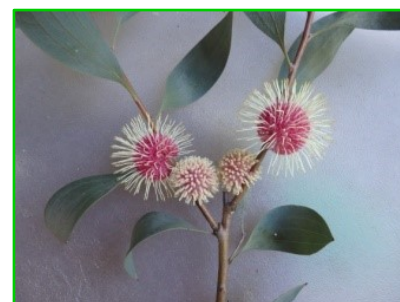
Philotheca difformis

Scaevola aemula

Solanum sp.

Viola banksii or *Viola hederaceae* or ?

Xanthostemon chrysanthus (Golden Penda) – no specimen was provided, but members' attention was drawn to an excellent example in the front garden of 899 Forest Road, Lugarno.



Correa 'Jezabell'

Correas are usually small bushes very suitable for gardens, often with attractive and colourful flowers. From only a few true species many regional forms and natural hybrids have arisen, making their classification difficult. Within this complex scene man has meddled and manipulated; in this case to cross the cultivar *C.* 'Candy Pink' with *C. pulchella*. But *C.* 'Candy Pink' is itself believed to be a cultivar of *C. alba* var. *alba* crossed with *C. pulchella*. So the parents of *C.* 'Jezabell' (with deep pink flowers) are the same as those of a sister cultivar *C.*



'Isabell' which has flowers of a much paler pink. The presence of *C. alba*, that occupier of the sea front, promises resistance to all weathers, while *pulchella* brings beauty. [Photo Jan Douglas]

ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK

OPEN DAYS

Saturday 6 May 2017 & Sunday 7 May 2017
Saturday 13 May 2017 & Sunday 14 May 2017

www.grevilleapark.com.au

THE BUSINESS

East Hills Group meeting – 5 April 2017

Meeting notes by Karl Schurr

APS East Hills Group general meeting 5th April 2017

Meeting began at 7:45 p.m., chaired by the President, Graham Fry.

Fourteen members and five visitors were present. There were four apologies.

Dates to remember:

- EHG May meeting : threatened species talk
- 6-7th & 13-14th May – Illawarra Grevillea Park open.
- EHG June meeting: Trivia night
- 25th May Central Coast hosting the AGM and quarterly gathering.

Action items:

- Secretary to send letter to APS President offering to host spring quarterly gathering in 2018.
- Members asked to contribute prizes for the trivia night.

Presenter: Dr Trevor Wilson, Post-doctoral research scientist, National Herbarium of NSW

Primary topic of the evening was his current area of research *Plectranthus* in Australia.

Plectranthus is a member of the mint family which grows primarily in the tropics and concentrated in Africa. In Australia there are 48 currently identified but this is likely to increase with ongoing research. Current research includes exploration and collection of specimens as there are still many areas of Australia, particularly the wet tropics, which are yet to be explored and detailed investigation and comparison of the current collection using DNA sequencing.

Wikipedia: *Plectranthus*, with some 350 species, is a [genus](#) of warm-climate plants [occurring](#) largely in the southern hemisphere, in sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar, India and the Indonesian archipelago down to Australia and some Pacific Islands. They are closely

related to *Solenostemon* and are known as the spurflowers. Several species are grown as ornamental plants, as leaf vegetables, as root vegetables for their edible tubers, or as medicine.

Plectranthus is a very variable genus, tends to be weedy and has a large distribution. This variability and adaptability makes identification in the field difficult as the same plant can appear to be different depending on the environmental constraints/demands in which it is growing. Trevor showed photographs of *Plectranthus dumicolor* growing in different environments with very different morphology.

Overall: a very hardy, diverse plant which is easy to propagate either by cuttings or seed. It is likely that more examples will be found as the research continues.

Trevor also showed photos of his trip into far north Queensland showing the variability of environments seen and some of the plants seen during the trip.

The presentation was followed by discussions around the plant table, the raffle and supper.



EHG GOES IKEBANA!

As mentioned in our April newsletter, Graham Walters has been busy spreading the word about Australian native plants, with a talk to Revesby Garden Club in February and to an Ikebana flower arranging group in Chatswood in March. Karlo Taliana and Hugh Stacy provided support and information. Below are photos of the Ikebana group talk, provided by Graham's daughter, Sue Walters, and a few slides from the presentation.



COMING EVENTS – CHECK YOUR DIARY!

You can find more district group events at <http://www.austplants-nsw.org.au/calendar6.html>.

Wednesday 3 May 2017	East Hills Group meeting – Local threatened species & Community involvement in conservation of threatened species: Liza Schaeper and Aimee Freemanis , Saving our Species, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
Saturday 6 May 1 pm	East Hills Group propagation meeting with Menai Wildflower Group. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters
Saturday 6 May & Sunday 7 May	Illawarra Grevillea Park open days. \$5 entry for adults, children free.
Wednesday 10 May 7 pm	Menai Wildflower Group – Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters
Saturday 13 May & Sunday 14 May	Illawarra Grevillea Park open days. \$5 entry for adults, children free.
Wednesday 17 May From 7.45 for 8 pm	Sutherland Group meeting – Plant traits for restoration projects GyMEA Community Hall, 39 GyMEA Bay Rd, GyMEA
Saturday 20 May	APS NSW Quarterly Gathering hosted by Central Coast Group. For more details see page 4.
Wednesday 7 June	East Hills Group meeting – Trivia night: \$5 per person.
14-18 January 2018 plus pre- and post-conference tours	ANPSA National Conference – Hobart, Tasmania. Details at APST (Australian Plants Society Tasmania, Inc.) www.apstas.org.au

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