

CALGAROO

A journey into nature

August 2023



Eucalyptus parramattensis - Calgaroo

Newsletter of the Parramatta and Hills District Group

Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

Our vision: inspiring people to admire, grow and conserve native plants

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WHAT'S ON IN 2023

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|--------------------------------|--|
| 2 August Wednesday: | Propagation |
| 26 August Saturday: | 2 pm Bushwalk Paulls Road Maroota. Leader Jennifer Farrer.
See Page 2. |
| 13 September Wednesday: | Propagation |
| 23 September Saturday: | 2 pm - Members' meeting at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place
Cherrybrook. Speaker Mick Roderick 'The Critically Endangered
Regent Honeyeater and the Superhero Plant Saving the Day' |
| 11 October Wednesday: | Propagation |
| 28 October Saturday: | Bushwalk Vineyard Creek Dundas. Leader Jennifer Farrer |
| 8 November Wednesday: | Propagation |
| 25 November Saturday: | Members' meeting and end-of-year celebration |
| 6 December Wednesday: | Propagation |

If you'd like to come to our propagation days at Bidjiwong Community Nursery and haven't been before, you can get full details from Lesley Waite - phone 0438 628 483

Bushwalk Paulls Road Maroota - 26 August

Jennifer Farrer

Meet at the Community Reserve on the corner of Wisemans Ferry Road and Paulls Road Maroota at 2 pm.

The edge of the road has been identified as a biodiversity hotspot. We will wander along and see what is in flower. There should be many different species out as August is the peak flowering time. This will be an easy walk within most members' capabilities.

Wear comfortable shoes and a hat. Bring water with you and any medications you may need.

Please register your intention to come at apsparrahills@gmail.com

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'Drip tips' – what's it all about?

Kevin Mills

The leaves of many rainforest plants, particularly those from the tropics, have 'drip tips'; that is, a point at the extremity of the leaf. This leaf adaptation is to aid in the shedding of water from the leaves, which is important in very wet habitats to protect the plant from mould and algae growth.

Examples of local rainforest trees that produce drip tips include several species of Lilly Pilly *Syzygium* sp., *Abrophyllum ornans* and the vine *Cissus hypoglauca*. Another feature of rainforest leaves that help to shed water is a waxy coating on the surface of the leaves.



Left. The leaves of Lilly Pilly *Syzygium smithii*, showing the pointed tips to the leaves.

Right. The leaves of Coachwood *Ceratopetalum apetalum*.

Plants in drier habitats need to retain water rather than shed it so have smaller, tougher and often hairy leaves (to trap water). The plants of desert regions may do away with leaves altogether or have very tiny leaves.

Evolution of a garden (and gardener!) as I go native

Heather Miles



From Native Plants for NSW journal, October 2015

Perched on the top of a windswept hill in the Hunter Valley, this Australian native garden started with some lofty goals: to offer beautiful views from the house; create a haven for local fauna; be a rewarding 'walk-around' experience with places to sit; provide a rich source of vegetables; and provide places for kids to play.

We fell in love with the land in 2003, and while my husband built the house, I started planting. Little did we consider the vicious westerly winds, shallow, compacted soils, clay, 45°C days and the locals eating the plants. All we saw were the stunning views and the sense of space and belonging.



The ridgeline in the Hunter Valley NSW

Garden opportunities and challenges

Part of a 100-acre block, the 1.5-hectare garden sits on the top of a ridgeline in the lower Hunter Valley, two hours north of Sydney and an hour west of Newcastle. At 400 metres above sea level, there are views east to Newcastle, south over the Hunter Valley and north to Barrington Tops (on a clear day). It's a mix of native and veggie gardens, an orchard of about 30 trees, and lawn.

About 40% of the 100 acres is cleared and 60% bush. It was previously used for cattle grazing. Over the last 100 years or so, selective logging took out very large red cedars (*Toona ciliata*), rosewood (*Dysoxylum fraserianum*) and other dry rainforest trees, but the bush is still dense and not too weedy. We have started reforestation, so far planting about 6,000 trees across the property.

Being on the top of the hill, there are no frosts. But there are very strong westerly winds in spring, with gusts up to 150 km/hour. Not only do plants get ripped out by their roots, but pool canopies and their metal poles get ripped out of the concrete! There is high rainfall, at 900 to 1100 mm per year, mostly falling in late spring and summer. Twice in the last 10 years, we've had 400 mm or more in a few days. This has led to rivers overflowing, bridges being washed away and electricity cuts. But the garden seems to cope.

The soil is fairly shallow on the top of the hill, silty loam, slightly acid with reasonable organic matter, but with patches of clay and many, many rocks. Fossils of ferns abound in many rock outcroppings, indicating the Carboniferous/Permian age of the area (360-250 million years ago).



Hardenbergia violacea in full bloom leading down to the garden from the house

Going Australian native

I went fully native after a couple of years. It was partly a commitment to sustainability (water and nutrients), partly to fit with the landscape, partly ecological and a lot about the subtle beauty and scents of Australian plants.

I remember walking around the garden one day and thinking, 'I need to do my bit to protect these incredible plants'. I hope we can bring natives more into the mainstream so we can conserve as well as revel in their beauty and unique qualities. My ambition is to create a garden that is attractive and accessible, then not only will I and my family enjoy it, but perhaps others may be inspired to do the same, and support, in a small way, our environmental heritage.

'There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments.'

- Janet Kilburn Phillips

Experiments in design and style

There was much experimentation with styles and plants – what would look good, what would survive, how to do layers, getting the scale right as well as managing for fire risk. I started with a few trees but not much else. I got some great ideas about layout, shapes and plants from a garden designer, Michael Cooke.



Energetic Xanthorrhoea

The garden is a mix of formal and informal:

- Triangles and straight lines provide some structure and complement the bush style and grass paths.
- The informality comes from the repetition of plants, like mounds of *Westringia* spp. and mass plantings of *Anigozanthos*, although I admit to a bit of serendipity rather than design: ‘This seems to grow well here, I think I’ll plant more!’
- Scale and perspective have been a learning experience – I would buy a statue and it would disappear! Or I would create a design on paper, and then walk around and have to re-adjust.
- Getting layers right has been an ongoing experiment. I have well-populated upper and mid-level plant layers, but not enough lower-level plants to create that layered effect. Sometimes they just get crowded out. And other times I miscalculated how tall plants would grow, or they just bolted!
- In terms of hardscaping, we have a wonderful big gazebo looking to the west, attached to the house by a walkway. There’s nothing better than sitting there with family and friends with a coffee or wine, looking out to the south and east. We also have the driveway, a few rock walls and, of course, big rocks in the garden beds.

I am constantly thinking about 'design', being more of a plantswoman than a designer. For me, design is 5% inspiration and 95% perspiration!

Zones, not garden rooms

The garden has three zones with different needs and challenges, as well as an orchard and veggie patch. The zones have quite different needs and 'look and feel'.

I do love colour! This grove in the north-east 'goes off' in spring with *Grevillea* 'Moonlight', *Chamelaucium uncinatum* 'CWA Pink', *Anigozanthos* 'Bush Pizazz', *Grevillea* 'Jennifer Joy', *Callistemon* spp. and *Leptospermum* 'Cardwell'

The **northeast zone** is the first area I planted in front of the house. It is relatively well protected with a windbreak and has good sun, soil and moisture. Many plants thrive, including *Banksia* 'Giant

Candles', *Doryanthes excelsa*, *Hibiscus* 'Barambah Creek', *Grevillea flexuosa* 'Zig Zag', *Acacia cognata* 'Limelight', *Westringia fruticosa*, *Anigozanthos* and *Xanthorrhoea*. The Boronias last quite a few years and we have just planted a *Ficus rubiginosa* in the middle of the lawn to give shade in summer. Perhaps I'll regret it in 30 to 40 years...



Facing south are plants that can cope with poor and dry soils, like *Crowea* 'Festival', *Lomandra cylindrica* 'Lime Cascade' and *Westringia* spp.



North-east view: *Hibiscus* 'Barambah Creek', *Grevillea flexuosa* 'Zig Zag', *Acacia cognata* 'Limelight', *Westringia fruticosa*, *Anigozanthos*, *Boronia spp.* and *Xanthorrhoea*

The **south-east zone** is below the house with clay soil on a slope, surrounding the wastewater treatment system. It gets good water run-off from the house, but then sits in clay, requiring plants that don't mind wet feet or bone-hard soil in the dry weather. Plants include *Leptospermum* spp., *Kunzea baxteri*, *Crocea* 'Festival', *Philotheca* spp., *Lomandra cylindrica* 'Lime Cascade', *Westringia* spp., *Callistemon* 'Rocky Rambler' and *Doryanthes palmeri*. Three *Doryanthes* were transplanted about 5 years ago, and I'm waiting with bated breath for them to flower! I've just planted a new garden of massed *Anigozanthos*, an idea courtesy of Angus Stewart, with *Westringia* 'Smokey' and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*. The kangaroo paws are a kaleidoscope of red, orange, yellow and lime.

The rest of the **south area** is a steep grassy slope, looking out to the bush and views. It's very peaceful. Kangaroos and wallabies regularly graze on the grass (and occasionally plants). We have regular visits of wombats and have even seen a spotted quoll. There's a large Spotted Gum in the middle of the view, which some people say to get rid of as it impacts the view. But I think it frames the view perfectly, and the kookaburras use it to spy from.



Dry westerly area with 'drought tolerant' species

The **west zone** is a very dry area that competes with mature stands of *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum) and ironbarks. This area takes the brunt of the westerly winds, and has very poor shallow soil and many rocks. The plants have to enhance the windbreak, as well as look good and so are drought resistant, with a mix of colour and texture.

Acacia vestita creates stunning colour, texture and protection, against the silvery white of *Eremophila* spp. and the lime green of *Acacia cognata* and *Lomandra* 'Little Con'. *Stenanthemum scortechinii* has put on a stunning display this winter. In this area, *Grevillea* 'Sylvia' is now coming good while *Grevillea* 'Sandra Gordon' is going well, as is *Grevillea* 'Poorinda Queen'.

My journey as well as the garden's

Like any garden, this is a work in progress. My next evolution is to learn more about horticulture and planting design so the experiment continues.

I have created an arboretum extending down to the dam with trees like *Eucalyptus scoparia*, *Eucalyptus saligna*, *Eucalyptus acmenoides*, *Eucalyptus amplifolia* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, that complement 7-year-old *Eucalyptus pauciflora*. I'm wondering how to complement these with lower maintenance, mass plantings of colour and texture. This area is definitely still a work in progress.

This quote from English poet laureate, Alfred Austin sums up gardening for me:

'The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.'



Around stands of spotted gums, a rock garden houses a mass of *Dendrobium speciosum*, giving a beautiful display each spring.

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“ . . . on the very roof of Australia are to be found species of wildflowers unknown elsewhere, exquisite in their delicate beauty yet sturdy enough to withstand the snow-laden blizzards of winter and the hot drying winds of summer. In a good season, they cover the moors in a blaze of colour, often brought to fulfilment by a few days of summer temperatures after a prolonged period of snow and sleet. From neat compact bushes, from twisted branches scrambling over rocks, from the sides of rippling streams along the line of the melting snowdrifts and from the heart of the peat bogs a riot of colourful blossoms appear as if by a miracle, while the air is laden with the delicate perfume which so many of them possess.”

- Thistle Harris, 1970.

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CORRECTION: In July's *Calgaroo* the first photo on page 3 taken on the Challenger Track should have been labelled *Crowea saligna*, not *Ereostemon australasius*.

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MELVA TRUCHANAS was a casual acquaintance. I looked forward to catching up with Melva at APS national conferences. I didn't know she had passed away until Christine Milne told me recently.

Melva was an iconic and inspirational conservationist. She was very active in APS circles too, and was a founding member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants Tasmania, now Australian Plants Society Tasmania. She was awarded Life Membership in 1996 for outstanding contributions to the Society over many years.

Melva was always optimistic and positive about the future and life in general, as you can see in this extract from her last email to me:

'I wonder how anyone can be bored in this colourful world we inhabit. The Community Environment Centres do their best to keep it meaningful. I'm glad you enjoy those contacts because I believe it's the solidarity of strong communities which will bond Australia into a better Nation. Hope is necessary.'

Here is Christine's wonderful eulogy:

Melva Truchanas. A Celebration of Life.

Hobart, Tas. May 27, 2022.

What a special moment we are all sharing as we honour and celebrate the life of Melva Truchanas, a champion of the Tasmanian Wilderness, a stalwart of the campaign to save and restore Lake Pedder, and an inspiring and supportive friend to everyone who cared enough to take action for the Earth.

She loved wild places and spent her life walking, exploring, enjoying the plants and animals and experiencing the moods of Tasmania's mountains, rivers, lakes and coasts. She could tell you about the silence, the brilliant night skies and the way the light fell over its mountains and ridges. She could describe the hazards of the walking tracks, the endemic plants and animals that could be found there, and could recount stories of how places were protected or lost.

She understood to the very core of her being what Henry Thoreau knew:

'In wildness is the preservation of the world.'

As a young woman, she joined the Launceston Bushwalking Club and walked the length and breadth of Tasmania including into the southwest in 1952. In 1953 E T Emmett, head of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, described the southwest as *'a veritable no man's land, where any lone traveller would be taking his life in his hands. It is an inferno of mountains, gorges and impenetrable forests.'* I quote that to demonstrate what an adventurous spirit Melva and her fellow bushwalkers had in the 1950s, and the incredible effort they put into having the 'no man's land' and 'inferno' declared the Lake Pedder National Park only two years later in 1955.

She spent a year bushwalking the mountains of New Zealand before she was married, and decades before it became commonplace for people to travel to walk the high and rugged

mountain tracks of other countries, let alone without any communication with the outside world.

That adventurous spirit, that courage, that curiosity about the flora and fauna and the need to document it, stayed with Melva throughout her life. She was a founding member of the Society for Growing Australian Plants and was described as a passionate, enthusiastic, committed, dedicated, and loyal member and attended meetings right up until a week before she died. As Keith and Sib Corbett noted:

'Apart from the many other things Melva did, she came on many of our SGAP/APS walks, most memorably perhaps on the first walk we did to the Tyndall Range in February 1985.'

After she and Olegas married they continued to explore Tasmania, walking and cross-country skiing including at Cradle Valley - she joined Friends of Cradle Valley - a place special to her, and I know it pained her to watch the rampant commercialisation of a place so close to her heart. But she was so grateful to those like Nick Sawyer who continued to take her there as her mobility deteriorated.

But Melva knew from bitter experience with the revocation of the Lake Pedder National Park in 1967 for the Gordon Scheme, it was not enough to lament the loss of wild places - you had to fight to protect them - and she was ready to take it on despite losing her home and Olegas's precious slide collection to the bushfires that same year.

She was a feisty, tenacious and courageous woman who never complained. The courage she had shown in getting out into the wilderness when others didn't dare, came to the fore in the epic Tasmanian battles to save Lake Pedder, the Franklin River, the Tasmanian forests, and the campaign to restore Lake Pedder. She helped establish and joined or chaired organisations like the SW Action Committee, she attended meetings, and rallies, wrote letters, kept minutes and filed records, and supported everyone on the front line including becoming a friend of the ABC to try to protect public broadcasting in the public interest.

She understood you had to get political to protect public land and your community. She knew you had to keep records of the struggle to keep the story alive for future generations. She joined and supported the United Tasmania Group when it contested the state election in 1972 and was a proud life member of the Tasmanian Greens. She was overjoyed by the declaration of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and its subsequent extensions.

In March this year, the Lake Pedder Restoration Committee marked 50 years since the waters of the Serpentine impoundment drowned Lake Pedder, and we held a gathering near Strathgordon.

Melva came and was beaming, blue eyes shining as she took in a perfect SW-Tasmanian day. Although I don't know what she saw in her mind's eye as she sat looking out towards the Frankland Range, I imagine it was Lake Pedder and the Serpentine Valley as she had known them when she and Olegas and the children together with watercolourists and friends had wandered the beach, enjoyed the shallows, the tannin waters, and the magnificent changing of the light over the Lake she had worked for fifty years to restore.

At the lunch, she proposed a toast:

'To all the Pedder campaigners who have perpetuated the legacy of the lake and inspired a new generation of activists to fight for Tasmania's wild places.'

And that exemplified Melva... her gratitude ...she was always grateful for whatever contribution people could make...her optimism...she knew the restoration of Lake Pedder is inevitable, just a matter of time, and her critical role as a mentor to several generations of activists. She knew how important it is to encourage and nurture and mentor young activists and Green Parliamentarians of all ages and stages.



Over the years, she would send a card or an email of encouragement and it was so good to know that Melva had your back. Her core message was always *'You are doing a good job, and make sure to be kind to yourself'*.

She kept up with everything. When Zoom was used widely during the pandemic in 2020, she was delighted by the capacity of the new technology to educate more people, and she wrote:

'I see this recent gathering of people, with new sharing facilities like Zoom, can learn, recognize and join other successful actions for the Restoration of the Land. They can learn that previously ignorant and foolishly-made decisions can be reversed, and further foolish decisions could be prevented.'

And she was ninety!

She was the thread that joined us together. She was a huge part of our corporate memory. She was always there.

But the thread is not broken. Melva's indomitable spirit and her wise counsel remain with us and will continue to inspire us to redouble our efforts to campaign for the wild and the restoration of Lake Pedder.

As Bob Brown has said:

'Melva was the cheery spirit who, more than anyone else, connected the original Lake Pedder defenders with today's growing campaign to restore the lake. She was a fabulous advocate for the island's wild and scenic beauty. A true Tasmanian champion!'

That she was, and I would add, a kind, loyal and generous friend, and a strong woman ahead of her time.

Christine Milne AO
Former Leader of the Australian Greens
Convenor Lake Pedder Restoration Committee

New Director and CE of RBG Victoria

On behalf of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board, I am pleased to advise you of the appointment of David Harland as the new Director and Chief Executive following the retirement of Professor Tim Entwisle in August.

David hails from the United Kingdom where he is a visionary and highly regarded leader in the global biodiversity sector. He has worked within international public garden and sustainability communities for over a decade and has visited both the Cranbourne and Melbourne Gardens several times in recent years. This is an exciting appointment that will see Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria continue to flourish and make significant contributions to global plant conversation efforts.

David has held several executive roles at the internationally renowned Eden Project, a leading visitor attraction and botanic garden located in Cornwall, where he oversaw a major reorganisation of the operational, educational and commercial aspects of the business. As CEO of Eden Project International, David has led Eden's expansion across the UK and the world.

I'm sure you will join me in thanking Director and Chief Executive, Tim Entwisle, for his significant contributions to Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria over the past decade and wish him well in his retirement.

Chris Trotman
Chairperson, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
29 June 2023

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Lizard hotels . . .

Some examples for a habitat garden, where small lizards can live a safe life . . .



Besser blocks and rock gabions.

Visit to Mt Annan Botanic Garden

Pip Gibian

On 22nd July a group of our members visited Mt Annan Botanic Garden, at Narellan, south of Sydney. We hired a local community bus, saving us the long drive. Many thanks to Ben, who expertly drove the bus for us.

On arrival, we acquired information and a map and had morning tea. A few of our number elected to head off on their own, while the rest investigated the Connections Garden opposite the information, shop, café and plants sales area. The lower section of this garden was a riot of colour largely due to the large number of daisy species in full bloom. Higher up there were some long-standing primitive pine species, connections to the original Gondwana plants, and higher still were some rainforest plants.



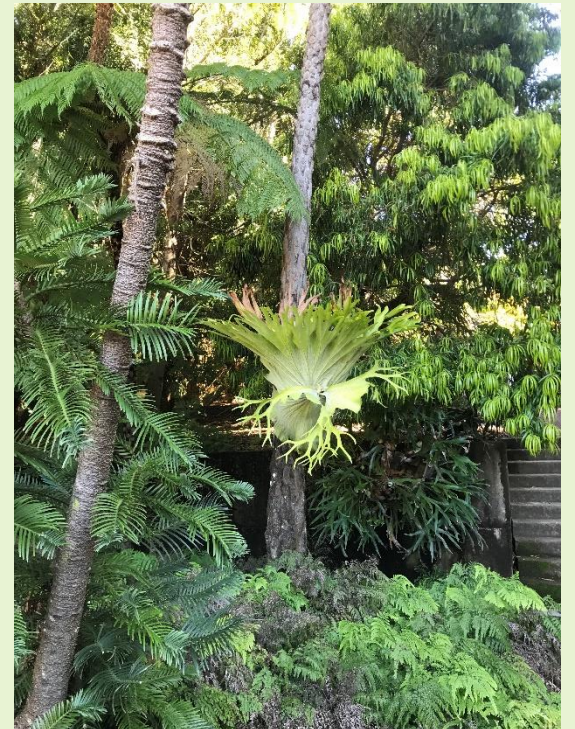
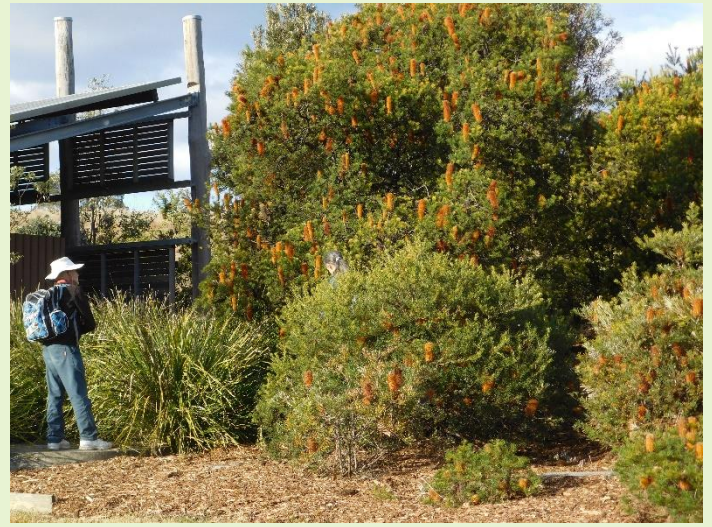
We discovered that the PlantBank was running tours of the facility – just come, no booking needed. Some members were keen to do this so we headed off on the long Cunningham Drive to drop them off at the PlantBank for the 1 pm tour.

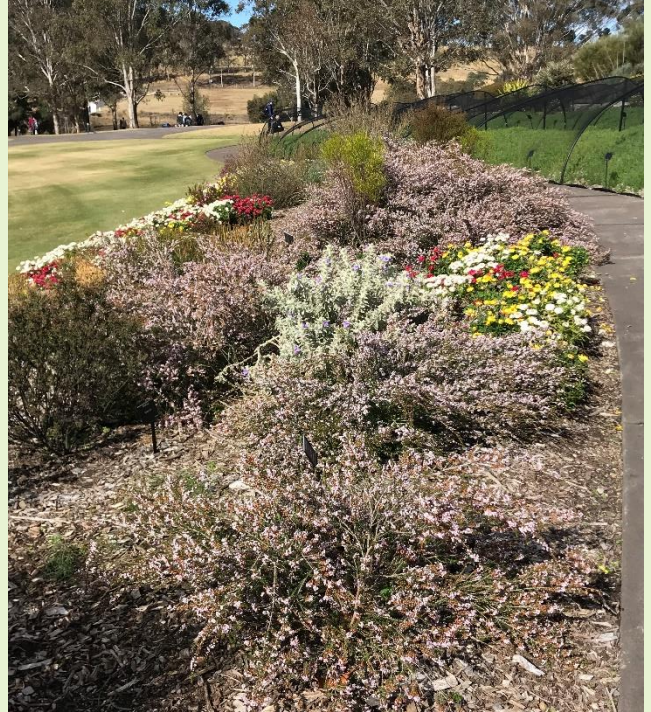
Ben then drove the rest of us along Caley Drive, which features a few themed garden areas. We chose the Banksia Garden and lunch in the sun, before investigating this large planted area. This is really a Protaceae Garden. As well as a large display of local banksia species, it had two areas planted with grevilleas, and a few isopogons and lomatiads. Behind these, close to a drainage gully, there were large, mature rainforest species such as *Buckinghamia celcissima* and *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, decked out with large, bright red spider flowers.

On the other side of the road, where the land rises quite steeply, there were planted terraces, largely featuring many Western Australian grevillea species. Some had done very well, and overgrown their plant labels, while others looked very spindly and sad. There were some scattered prostrate banksias, also from WA, such as *B. repens*, *B. blechnifolia* and *B. petiolaris*, spilling over the edge of the terraces. Unfortunately, this area is poorly maintained and very weedy. It is a sad fact the funding given to the gardens is inadequate to employ sufficient staff for the upkeep required. There was so much to see in this garden that we returned to it after picking up the members on the PlantBank tour. They reported that the tour is well worthwhile. The foyer also contains a great deal of information.

Altogether Mt Annan Botanic Garden is well worth a visit, if fact possibly more than once a year, as the gardens would change markedly in different seasons.

On the next two pages are some of the photos taken on our trip . . .

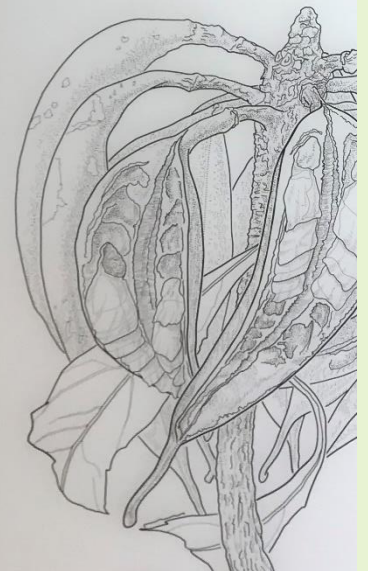




Protection and respect

Through searing heat and bitter cold, the woody seedpod of the Mana (Dharawal language) — Waratah, or *Telopea speciosissima* — is steadfast, holding its fragile seeds safe from the elements. Evoking the seedpod, the Herbarium's rammed-earth vaults and soaring fly-roof safeguard the precious plant collections within.

This is the traditional land of the Dharawal. The Herbarium faces east, paying respect to the cultural significance of Mount Annan — a meeting place for many First Nations peoples. The Herbarium embraces the First Nations philosophy of Caring for Country: Valuing ancient knowledge and new insights, it embodies a vision of sustainability and environmental integrity.



DRAWN TO THE FLAME

Bushwalking in cooler weather puts a spring in the step to keep the cold at bay and, at this chilly time, warm colours in the bush draw the eye and cheer the spirit with their flame-like glow.

Seen recently in Blue Mountains bushland were (left to right from top left): Seedpods of *Telopea speciosissima*, *Grevillea laurifolia*, *Leptospermum sp.* leaves, male flowers of *Casuarina*, *Banksia spinulosa*, *Leptospermum sp.* seed capsules, Eucalypt buds, *Banksia spinulosa*, *Lambertia formosa*.

From Wild Blue Mountains



Share your stories . . .

Your contributions to *Calgaroo* are always welcome.

If you have interesting observations of plants in the garden or the bush, including photos, or any other news, please send them to me at itcox@bigpond.com for the next edition.

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In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our Country, the people of the Dharug Nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since time immemorial. We honour and celebrate the spiritual, cultural and customary connections of Traditional Owners to Country and the biodiversity that forms part of that Country.

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Parramatta and Hills District Group

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