



HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER Group of APS NSW NEWSLETTER – May 2023

NEXT HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER EVENT:

Wednesday 7th June, from 6 pm for dinner

Indoor Meeting and Talk

Something Completely Different:

**Member Travels, Including
Highlights from a Trip to Bhutan**

**At Burwood RSL Club, 96 Shaftesbury Road Burwood
Presentation at 7:30 pm**

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

Welcome to the May 2023 edition of the APS Harbour Georges River Group Newsletter.

This month we have an indoor Meeting with member stories on Wednesday 7th June. Join us in the RSL restaurant from 6 pm for a meal or at 7:15 pm in the Executive function room on Level 1 for our formal meeting. We also have a story about the Sydney Park tour & a catch up on some plants from earlier meetings.

I'm starting a new column about members gardens and favourite plants. Please write in with your stories and adventures, good and bad, in gardening with Native plants.

Dorothy Luther, Editor

In the spirit of reconciliation, the APS Harbour Georges River group acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

<https://www.austplants.com.au/Harbour-Georges-River>

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Figure 1 National flag of Bhutan

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

I hope you are all well and enjoying the changes in your garden and surrounding areas as the cold weather sets in.

I attended the recent quarterly meeting hosted by the Central Coast at Kariong, meeting up with members from other groups and hearing the guest speaker Olga Blacha discuss the importance of being aware of the street plantings the local councils are installing. We need to encourage local species in public as well as private gardens.

Heather Miles handed over the President's Position of APS NSW to John Desmond from the Southern Highlands Group. We wish him well in his new role. As he said, he will have a hard time in following the role of his predecessor.

Heather Miles has been an outstanding President during her time, dealing with the Covid Pandemic and hosting the Bi Annual conference in Kiama which was an amazing success.

Looking forward to seeing you all at our next meeting and a big thank you to the committee members and all those supporting the group.

"From little things big things grow."

Warmest regards to you all,

Marie O'Connor President of HGR APS NSW.

Syncarpia glomulifera fruit & tree (60 metres tall)



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_ndC07C2gw

NEXT MEETING

Indoor Meeting and Talks, Wednesday 7th June, from 6 pm

Our June meeting will be at Club Burwood RSL again.

We originally planned to have an academic speak about their research projects, but early June is a bad time for academics. Its end of semester exam marking with all the associated dramas & stress. So, we're having **something completely different**. There will be presentations by three HGR members –

Chris King – the Macquarie Marshes, one of the largest inland semi-permanent wetlands in south-eastern Australia and a very important nesting site for waterbirds in Australia; it includes extensive areas of *Phragmites* reeds, River Red Gum woodlands and mixed marsh floodplains.

Marie O'Connor – demonstration of arranging native flowers from her garden. Marie has been a successful competitor in the Australian Native Plants section of the Royal Easter Show for a number of years and will share photos of her floral arrangements.

Graham Fry – highlights from a trip to Bhutan, with a focus on the flora and fauna.

“Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom on the Himalayas’ eastern edge, is known for its monasteries, fortresses (or dzongs) and dramatic landscapes that range from subtropical plains to steep mountains and valleys. In the High Himalayas, peaks such as 7,326m Jomolhari are popular trekking destinations. Paro Taktsang monastery (also known as Tiger’s Nest) clings to cliffs above the forested Paro Valley.”



Following the presentations there will be a ‘show and tell’ round the Plant Table. This is an opportunity to bring flowers from your garden, exchange information on native plants, and share material for propagation.

There will be a raffle, so please bring some cash if possible.

When and Where?

Club Burwood RSL, 96 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood.

Arrive any time from 6 pm for general socializing and to have a meal in the bistro or grab a snack from the bar. The formal proceedings will start at 7.30 pm in the Executive function room on Level 1.

This will be another opportunity for new members to introduce themselves and get to know other members. We are keen to hear how we can tailor our program to suit your interests in native plants.

Please let Secretary Liz Cameron know if you are coming: elsmere02@gmail.com

LAST MEETING

Sydney Park Tour, Sunday 7th May, from 10 am

Thanks to Karen, who organised the walk, for this informative summary.

Walk through Sydney Park, Sunday 7 May

Today five HGR members (mad keen nature lovers?) braved the weather for a walk around the middle of Sydney Park.

We began by sharing memories of the park, remembering when the park was a municipal rubbish tip, discussing the many brick companies that operated around the Sydney area, including one in the park which ceased operations in 1970, and recollecting when there were community native planting days in the nineties.

From the denuded landscape of the Parklands after the brick companies finished extracting clay and after the Park's use as a rubbish dump, Sydney Park has been transformed today into a lush area containing thousands of native trees, bushes and grasses.

Despite the rain shower, it was time to explore these plantings around the Wetlands in the middle of the park. But before we headed off, we learnt from the Sydney Park website that a federal government grant worth millions of dollars funded a stormwater harvesting system. New underground piping now treats and diverts storm water to the Wetlands, creating a sustainable supply of water all year round. The native grasses surrounding them assist in filtering the stormwater runoff and decreasing contaminants flowing into Botany Bay.



2 What's a light shower of rain!



3 Raindrops on a Hakea branch

As we slowly made our way around these Wetlands, we spotted many native plants including: *Lomandras*, *Dianellas*, *Themeda triangia*, *Goodenia ovata*, *Persicaria decipiens*, *Melaleuca spp.*, *Eucalyptus spp.*, *Hakea spp.*, *Juncus spp.* and *Casuarina spp.*

Most of the casuarinas we saw were male trees loaded with pollen. We did spot a female one with woody cones. Thanks to Boyd for pointing out this difference.

We decided it would be good to revisit Sydney Park in better weather to appreciate the abundance of native plants. Despite the damp conditions, it was good to catch up over a cuppa with other HGR members.

Members Night at Burwood RSL, April 5th – Plant Table

Thanks to the able assistance of Yahoo & Microsoft, Phyllis' plant table notes from our April meeting got stuck in the electricity somewhere and have only just surfaced. So here they are, better late than never.

Notes and photos by Phyllis Heggie – well done as her first attempt at the plant table, with some additions by the editor.



***Persicaria decipiens* Slender or Spotted Knotweed**

Displayed by Chris King

Narrow dark green leaves. Pink flowers on dense spike in Summer. Grows vigorously in damp situations. Specimen is from the GreenWay in Inner West Sydney.

Also noticed on the Sydney Park wetlands tour.

“This is a species of flowering plant native to Australia and Asia. It is a trailing plant whose stems grow horizontally at first but become more vertical with time, reaching 30 cm high.” Wikipedia

***Themeda triandra (T.australis)* Kangaroo Grass**

Displayed by Chris King

Tussock style Grass grows up to 1m tall. Distinctive rusty red flower head, mostly in spring and summer. It grew in large grassy plains and fed the kangaroos.

The aboriginal people ground up the seeds to make a damper. Bruce Pascoe is researching commercial production of *Themeda* based breads. It has higher protein than many modern grains, although is not so productive.



***Austromyrtus dulcis* Midyim or Midgen Berry**

Displayed by Liz Cameron

Semi-prostrate spreading shrub up to 0.5m tall. Prolific flowers. The small berry is white/grey with dark spots, edible and slightly sweet.



Gynochthodes jasminoides, (Morinda jasminoides)

Sweet Morinda

Displayed by Dorothy Luther

Woody climber suitable for damp and low light conditions. Cream flowers in Nov-Dec have orange blossom fragrance. Small orange fruit is edible when soft but unpalatable.

There is actually very little flesh on the berries to eat.

This one is sort of trained over an archway and climbs up into the surrounding trees about 2 metres at most.



Asplenium sp. Crested Birds Nest Fern

Displayed by Dorothy

This is believed to be a cultivar or variant of the standard birds' nest fern. The specimen has long (60 cm) tough radiating leaves that are divided at the tip (crested). Plant requires good indirect light, warmth, and moisture. It has been growing in a large earthenware pot under a shady tree for many years quite happily.

***Eremophila mackinlayi chimera* Desert Pride**

Displayed by Graham Fry

A chimera is produced by grafting genetically different parents - cultivars or species (which may belong to different genera). The tissues may be partially fused together following grafting to form a single growing organism that preserves both types of tissue in a single shoot. Just as the constituent species are likely to differ in a wide range of features, so the behaviour of their chimeras is like to be highly variable. [Wikipedia]

The original species is endemic to dry areas of Western Australia. It was grafted onto rootstock to allow growth in eastern states. Some genes from the rootstock cause the chimera to grow much taller than the original *E. mackinlayi*.

It is also now producing 2 types of leaf. The very green leaves on the left being a throwback to the root stock plant, which no longer exists.



***Backhousia citriodora* Lemon-scented Myrtle**

Displayed by Liz Cameron



A small tree, sometimes grown as a street tree in Sydney.

The glossy green leaves are strongly lemon-scented and make an excellent tea. They can also be ground up, or the oil extracted & used in cheesecake and shortbread biscuits. The leaves will keep in the freezer for long periods and can be used in pot pourri.

Lemon-scented myrtle oil is produced commercially for cooking.



***Pelargonium australe* Austral Stork's Bill**

Displayed by Marie O'Connor

A small, herbaceous plant that grows well in a range of habitats and soils. Flowers best in full sun. Propagation is easy from cuttings.

It has small pink flowers, unlike its European cousins which have been cultivated to produce a huge variety of colours & forms.

GROUP NEWS

Planning for 2023

We have almost finalised the activities for the rest of 2023. Here is the updated plan:

Sun July 2nd or 8th - Tour of the GreenWay with IWEG (Inner West Environment Group)

Sun August 13th, 9:30 am start – 'PUB' crawl with the Bankstown Bushland Society (BBS), to see their planting & bush care projects. The tour will be led by Colin Gibson, an expert on plants of the area. It will possibly include sightings of rare orchids in flower. This is a great opportunity for us to meet like-minded people and see the work that BBS does, along with having the opportunity to view some amazing native local flora.

We will start from Lansdowne Reserve, Bass Hill. From there we will move on to Deepwater Park (Milperra) and Monash Reserve (East Hills). If time permits us, we will also squeeze in East Hill Park as part of the PUB crawl.

September, date TBA - Mt Annan Botanic Gardens tour with the manager of the Herbarium.

Wed. October 4th, evening meeting - Garden design workshop with James Middleton, one of our members, who is a landscape designer. He will demonstrate a design using the Clemton Park Uniting Church grounds as an example. Members are invited to bring their expertise, ideas and problems too.

November – TBA

Wed December 13th – Christmas Party & AGM, at Earlwood Uniting Church, in the hall.

Members Growing Stories

From the analysis of member interests, it seems that a majority of members are interested in growing plants – not surprising really. So, I'm asking you to send in a paragraph or two about your growing activities – a favourite plant, a challenge, your garden or bush patch - to share with the membership in the next few newsletters. Here are some examples:

From Karen, in Ashfield

Just back from weeding 'my patch' near the railway underpass in Ashfield...feels good to fill a bag with weeds and imagine the native plantings breathing a sigh of relief... 🌻

From Marie, in Connells Point

A report on a problem in our garden recently with mealy bugs.



We have an *Acacia howittii* in our front garden in the pond area. It was planted about 12 years ago. I have pruned it back over the years and have had a go at the cloud pruning effect (photo left), which has been satisfying in the last 5 years.

To my horror when looking at it last month I found a severe infestation of mealy bugs (photo right).



I started to prune the plant and had to keep going till, as you can see in the photo (lower left), I removed 90% of the leaves. I sprayed with white oil to try and remove the rest in awkward spots with poor results. Last resort was an old toothbrush then water pressure.



A month later the plant is still alive and no further signs of the mealy bug. Des & I are enjoying the new Japanese look.

The ground cover Cootamundra Wattle next to it has to be kept severely pruned also, as it has the potential for the same infestation.

It's really satisfying learning how to manage the plants in the garden. I give things a go and see what happens.

Our Library – New Books

We have 3 new books for our library:

Denis Crawford “Garden Pests, Diseases & Good Bugs”, 2015, Harper Collins

Not only Australian plants, but it has a whole section on the most common Native genera – Acacia, Callistemon, Casuarina, Eucalypt, Grevillea, Hakea, Kangaroo paw, Leptospermum, Lilli pilli, Melaleuca, Pittosporum.

For mealie bugs, he recommends pruning & spraying, as Marie did, and also native parasitic wasps, lacewings & ladybirds will eat them. If desperate, you can buy a species of predator beetle too.

Bill Laws “Fifty Plants That Changed the Course of History”, 2010, Allen & Unwin

Again, mostly exotics, but Eucalypt rates a mention for medicinal, commercial & practical uses.

Helen Moody “South Coast Islands of NSW”, 2023, self-published, with photos by Phil Warburton

A small coffee table book, taking you on a tour of the Aboriginal & white history, geography, bird life & vegetation of each island. Many of the islands are estuarine or quite small. The authors explored them by canoe or on foot.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

There is a lot happening in our patch, with community groups and local councils being active in promoting native plants. My plan is to feature a local group or event each month. I welcome contributions - stories about your other favourite groups.

Oatley Flora and Fauna (OFF) group

From Graham Fry

Oatley Flora and Fauna had a stall at the Lions Festival at Oatley at the end of April. As well as providing information to the public we also sold plants. I had got a tray of tube stock from Menai WFG and I took 7 of our APS plants along as well. I had discounted them down \$6 as they were getting pot bound and needed to be planted out. We were quite successful. We sold most of the tube stock and 6 of the APS plants as well. Total sale income for HGR was \$36.

A Garden for Life Workshop



Native Bush Food Garden Workshop

Come along and learn how to grow, harvest and cook with native food plants. Detailed notes and taste testing included. at Sydney Wildflower Nursery, 9 Veno Street, Heathcote on Saturday 22nd July 2023, 10am-12 noon

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=932027&>

Jennifer St Banksia Scrub

This is turning into a typical Development Application approval saga. The Council has approved construction of a part 3, part 4 storey residential flat building (“RfB”) comprising of 76 apartments with basement car parking, tree removal and associated landscaping (I

think). The developer is appealing their decision to the Land and Environment Court. There is to be a conciliation conference on 9 June 2023 onsite at 9:30am. This is a standard procedure for these types of appeals. A Commissioner of the Court will meet with the parties ... to ascertain whether the matter is capable of resolution or whether issues can be reduced. A maximum of 6 residents may give oral evidence at the hearing. Sighh!!

RANDOM JOTTINGS

These are items of general interest found on the World Wide Web & other sources. All contributions for future editions gratefully accepted.



Damselflies

Blue ringtail damselflies (*Austrolestes annulosus*) seem to be about at the moment. A friend & I have both noticed them. They are quite an iridescent blue. I've watched them attach to the end of a leaf in the grevillea or the rosemary then fly round in a little circle then settle again in the same spot. They will defend their spot from other bugs. They seem to attach by their jaws & float almost horizontally, defying gravity.

They look like small dragon flies, but don't seem to just hover near water, as dragonflies do.

Blue ringtail damselflies are a thin, medium-sized damselfly with varying coloration, which depends on maturity and temperature. However, most are a striking blue with minimal black markings.

Females are slightly more robust than males, and have a black and white/pale blue coloration. They eat midges, mosquitos & other small bugs.

Magic Mushrooms

Settle down!! This is not about the ones you have hazy memories of from your youth.

Scientists have discovered mushrooms that can devour plastic waste - in a matter of weeks. Right now, 91% of the plastics we use can't be recycled, and every minute another truckloads-worth is dumped into the ocean, suffocating sea life and spreading pollutants across shores. Nearly all the plastic ever created still exists in some form today.

But scientists say these magnificent mushrooms could eat up to half of the plastic waste being dumped in the ocean. Fungi, like mushrooms and yeast, are nature's clean-up crew. The enzymes they produce can break down pollutants and clean up everything from oil spills to toxic pesticides.

So scientists are researching how to use these crafty microbes to try and break down all types of plastics to make them possible to recycle and reuse -- and so far it's working.

This from a press release from 'Sum of Us' aka Eko. Of course, they're asking for money to fund the research. Here is a less excited version:

[Plastic-eating backyard fungi discovery boosts hopes for a solution to the recycling crisis.](#)

ABC. 14 April 2023.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Newsletters Received – May

The full text of the APS newsletters is available from the APS website, on the District Group pages – usually under ‘Resources’.

Australian Plants Society, South East Group - Newsletter April 2023

Regenerating a small farm; **detailed notes on a propagation workshop**; An epic global study of moss reveals it is far more vital to Earth’s ecosystems than we knew.

Australian Plants Society, Northern Beaches Group - Newsletter June 2023

Alpine plants of the Central Highlands of Tasmania; RANUNCULACEAE, Compiled by Jane March from entries in Robinson, Plantnet etc.; Visit to Arnhem Land

Australian Plants Society, Sutherland Group - Newsletter May 2023

Local grevilleas; Sutherland Shire Citizens Heritage Festival at Joseph Banks Reserve, Kareela: Royal Easter Show photos.

Australian Plants Society, Northern Beaches Group - Newsletter May 2023

Elvina Track walk in Kuring gai National Park; Huntsman spiders; hoyo & plantago; do plants talk?

Australian Plants Society, South East Group - Newsletter May 2023

Post fire recovery of the vegetation in Morton and Tallaganda National Parks – good news. Bush regeneration of a 40HA / 100 acre property over 25 years. Dwarf banksias cultivars.

Other Groups Newsletters

We have begun to swap newsletters with other environmental groups in the Harbour Georges River area. Links to their web sites are provided where available.

Burrendong Arboretum Quarterly newsletter, January 2023

This got stuck in the system somewhere, but has finally arrived. Mainly business news.

National Parks & Wildlife Service, ‘Naturescapes’ May 2023

Sound like a botanist on your next bushwalk with this plant lingo

https://blog.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/sound-like-a-botanist-with-this-plant-lingo/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Naturescapes%20May%202023&utm_content=Naturescapes%20May%202023+CID_fbb1d3041e4c1dde925817326a5a8a99&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Learn%20more

COMING EVENTS

For further details of coming district group events, please see the APS NSW website at <http://austplants.com.au/calendar>

Wed 7th June, 6 pm	HGR indoor meeting at Burwood RSL Club, 96 Shaftesbury Road Burwood
Wed, 17 May, 7:00 pm	Sutherland Group Meeting - Bush Tucker Plants + Gardening Responsibly with Samantha Newton At Gymea Community Hall, 39 Gymea Bay Rd.
Sunday September 10	Northern Beaches group invites us to the Stony Range Flora Reserve Festival

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4 3 with thanks to Fiona Katauskas of the Guardian newspaper