



HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER Group of APS NSW NEWSLETTER – October 2023

NEXT HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER EVENT:
Wednesday 15th November, 10:30 am
Royal Botanic Gardens Tour
Guided tour of the Eucalyptus Lawn
and the Australian Rockery Lawn

Meet at the Woolloomooloo Gates
Mrs Macquarie's Drive

Please RSVP to Liz on elsmere02@gmail.com as numbers are limited.

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

A long story about garden design this month, thanks to James, and a little story about a micro garden, thanks to Brianna, plus an interesting array of newsletters from near and far. And a little bit about birds and bugs just to keep the ecosystem in balance. I can't fit the cartoon in, but here is the link

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/27/are-you-overwhelmed-with-all-the-things-why-not-take-a-moment-to-enjoy-this-story-of-a-baby-osprey-instead> enjoy.

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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Banksia blechnifolia in O'Connor's back garden



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to you all,

My apologies for not being at the last meeting.

From reports you enjoyed the meeting and thanks to James Middleton for presenting an interesting talk on garden design. Thank you, Graham, for standing in for me.

Des is due home from Hospital on Melbourne Cup Day. It's now a wait and see if the operation improves his quality of life.

I am delighted that the swamp orchids are flowering well this year.

Ebony propagated one from a cutting of mine, last year. How is your plant growing? Perhaps you can try the other colour and let us all know how propagating lying flat works, compared to the upright method.

Thank you all for your support and help to keep our group developing and being flexible to meet the challenges of our times.

Warmest regards to you all.

Marie O'Connor President HGR APS



1 Phaius tankervilleae, the swamp orchid, photos by Marie from her verandah green house

NEXT MEETING

Wed November 15th at 10:30 am, outing to Royal Botanic Gardens, with volunteer guide Amanda Gibson. Amanda has confirmed she is available to lead our group on Wednesday 15th. The details are:

Meet our volunteer guide, Amanda, at the Woolloomooloo Gates (Mrs Macquarie's Drive, near the Art Gallery) at 10:30 am.

First stop will be The Calyx, which has one of the largest living green walls in the Southern Hemisphere. The current display - 'Love Your Nature' - features over 20,000 plants. Entry is by donation and you might like to have a coffee at the kiosk while you are there. <https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/whats-on/love-your-nature>

The rest of the tour will focus on Australian natives and seasonal features of the Gardens. We will visit the Eucalyptus lawn & the Australian Rockery Lawn, among other places.

Bring lunch with you and continue to enjoy the Garden after our tour ends.

Plants for sale at the Growing Friends Nursery, open 11 am – 2 pm on weekdays.

LAST MEETING

Garden Design in Theory and Practice

Wed. October 4th, evening meeting at Burwood RSL - Garden design workshop with James Middleton, one of our members, who is a landscape designer.

James described his practice in landscape design, illustrated with reference to a community garden project he is working on with the Clemton Park Uniting Church. Members of the church group also talked about their vision for the garden. This was followed by a discussion on how to implement the garden vision with a limited budget and lots of muscle power.

[Here are James' Check Lists for Design:](#)

Principles of designing a garden apply to any garden and many factors must be considered before working on the aspect of the design relating to native plants. My interest lies in providing a relationship between different native plants, trying to find combinations that harmonise and offset one another. That inspiration comes from nature. The Church Garden is not a bush garden, rather a garden to be established with local native plants, that is hopefully eventually self-sustaining.

General Factors for Any Garden

- light & shade, summer & winter aspects, wind, screening
- existing vegetation & structures, overhead power lines, sewer pipes.
- condition of soil and drainage - What happens to water - does it absorb or run off. water supply.
- focal points - points where all plants can be seen.
- needs of client - style - naturalism, formal, cottage, Japanese, ...
 - uses of the space
 - structures including paving, shade, BBQ/firepit, water, seating, retaining walls, borders, paths, clothes lines, storage bins, ...
 - maintenance
 - edible plants

- measuring the space accurately.
- budgetary restraints.

Specific research into plants:

- plants growing in surrounding area - any native ornamental gardens, plants that thrive.
- bushland: Hard to find to non-existent in Clemton Park. Visited Wolli Creek, but of limited use as its mainly sandstone base bushland. Sylvan Grove & Georges River National Park.
- research into existing flora from the area, Canterbury Bankstown Council web site has a Native Plants selector which is an excellent resource.
<https://www.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/native-plants>
- ANPSA web site is an incredible resource of knowledge.

Design

- Scale drawing of existing space - do a base plan on tracing paper
- Sketch separation of space - garden areas, lawn or turf, paths
- If sloping site may be necessary to draw 'side on'
- Incorporation of structures - firepit, paths, borders, seating, water, fencing, paving, rocks

Soil preparation/amelioration

- Borders – grass, Removal of existing turf (by machine).
- Compaction: addition of compost only when planting to prevent weeds; gypsum if there is clay.
- Mulch – use composted leaf mulch for preference.
- No synthetic chemicals such as weedicides – we're attempting to improve soil biota.
- No irrigation on native garden, as that encourages germination of weeds - regular hand watering to establish, particularly over summer. Irrigation only if no one available to water.
- Irrigation on exotics, especially vegetable gardens.
- Maintenance schedule – using a hose. Water as habitat as well as for plants.

Plant Selection

Layering of the garden

- - Canopy - large or small trees
- - Mid layer- tall or small shrubs
- - Ground covers
- - Base plants

Factors that govern plant selection

Relationship between plants both in terms of **height layers as well as width**. Plants appropriate to soil conditions Plants appropriate to light - summer and winter, heavy shade, light shade

- Plants for variation in texture: soft, hard, spiky,
- Plants for sensual quality - fragrance, flower colour, leaf colour
- Selection of plants for resilience. Plants that will compete with weeds. Plants that can be maintained and not lost when weeding
- Plants for habitat – food & shelter for insects, birds, lizards, possums, frogs
- Plants for allowing depth - size and relation to a focal point. Allow space between each plant - one plant to not be in competition with others.
- Plants that will be happy to be there and not struggle
- Plants that are in balance - shape, texture, colour, size
- Plants that are available.

Relationship between plants, based on observations in nature. Use **contrasts** in foliage, form, size and colour. Examples of plants that work well together and enhance one another:

- Xanthorrhoea with viola or scaevola or brachyscome
- Doryanthes and Lomandra tanika or Dianella
- Crinum and Viola
- Base plant such as Poa or Lomandra - plants that are repeated.
- Poa and Banksia or Eucalyptus haemastoma
- Angophora and Doryanthes
- Westringia and Correa - both clipped
- Baumea (Twig rush) and Marsilea [for damp places]
- Banksia serrata and Brachyscome or Dianella caerulea
- Dianella and clipped Westringia
- Angophora and lomandra
- Ficinia and pigface
- Poa and Yellow buttons
- Banksia serrata and Actinotus - Flannel flower



Some of the requirements for the Community Garden are:

- A fire pit for the Tongan congregation to do cook ups. In the centre in the lawn, surrounded by decomposed granite. James recommends a bag of off-white cement mixed in to stabilise it, and compaction with a road compactor.
- A 'yarning Circle' around the fire pit for everyone to sit and chat.

- An area for vegetables & food plants the congregation is familiar with. This includes an older Mediterranean congregation, as well as the Tongans. Possibly raised garden beds as the soil may be contaminated. Left side in diagram.
- Native plant garden – fauna friendly. Right side in diagram. Also, native vines along the fences.
- A rain water tank with irrigation for the food gardens and possibly a water feature.
- Keep some of the lawn for kids to run about on.

James has also added more compost bins, a place for firewood and a place on the very wide street verge for loads of mulch to be dropped.

Plant selection for the native garden is not yet done. Another of our members, Ashlie Stevenson, who is a horticulturalist, is working on that. The soil was Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, but has been badly degraded with building rubble. The congregation will select plants for the food gardens.

There will be working bees of congregation members arranged to do the heavy lifting as required. Ashlie recommends not planting until Autumn, when the soil is cooler & the plants are becoming dormant. However, the watering system and grass removal can start now as the Church has some funds for this.

Notes from Liz & Graham, in no particular order:

- mulch - important for enriching soil, leavening heavy clay; poor quality mulch is OK if it is aged well before application.
- water feature - for aesthetics and to increase biodiversity - importance for birds, frogs, invertebrates.
- keep plants pruned (including the base of shrubs to allow easier access for weeding underneath).
- defer planting local grasses until non-native grasses have been eradicated.
- choice of plants - give preference to local species, consider soil type, exposure to sun and wind.
- diversity of foliage types for contrast.
- location of compost bins - in full sun to maximise decomposition versus aesthetics and proximity to existing structures.

We look forward to updates in the coming years as the garden progresses.

Plant Table

Thanks to Boyd Webster for plant notes & *Ajuga australis* photo; also, to Liz and Graham for remainder of photos.

List of tip cuttings and flowers brought in for members

<i>Ajuga australis</i>	Austral Bugle
<i>Callistemon</i> 'Captain Cook'	Dwarf hybrid of <i>C. viminalis</i>
<i>Chorizema cordatum</i>	Heart-leaf Flame Pea
<i>Eremophila</i> spp.	Labelled as <i>E.subfloccosa</i> ssp <i>glandiflora</i> but atypical
<i>Graptophyllum excelsum</i>	Scarlet Fuchsia
<i>Grevillea leptobotrys</i>	Tangled Grevillea
<i>Ricinocarpus pinifolius</i>	Wedding Bush

Ajuga australis. This perennial herb, one of the 2 *Ajuga* species native to Eastern Australia, was first described by Robert Brown in 1810. Found naturally in the Sydney area in grassy woodlands. As a ground cover in the home garden, partial shade is preferred; the purple flowers appearing in spring and summer. Propagated by seed, cuttings, or by carefully transplanting with adherent soil the “pups” that may appear adjacent to adult plant.



2 *Ajuga australis* (Photo – Boyd Webster)

Chorizema cordatum is a West Australian native woodland shrub first described by Labillardière in 1792. With its attractive spring flowering orange and red pea flowers, the plant has become popular and available from Eastern state nurseries. In the home garden planting in well drained or sandy soil is recommended, along with mulching to protect delicate surface roots. Propagation by seed or semi-hardened cuttings has been achieved.



3 Flame Pea *Chorizema cordatum*

Graptophyllum excelsum is a shrub or small tree (up to 4m high), found naturally in North Queensland. In well composted soil and tolerating both sun and shade, it has been grown in home gardens as far south as Sydney. The abundant tubular red flowers appear in spring and early summer. Propagation is by cuttings.



4 Scarlet Fuchsia *Graptophyllum excelsum*



5 Tangled *Grevillea leptobotrys*

Grevillea leptobotrys is a small spreading shrub native to the woodlands in parts of Western Australia. First descriptions were by Carl Meissner in 1848. The species has become popular due to attractive fragrant mauve-pink flowers, appearing in an unusual drooping pattern. The shrub needs perfect drainage.

Grafting on to *G.robusta* root stock has enabled a longer life under cultivation in Eastern states.

Ricinocarpus pinifolius. This rounded woody shrub is found naturally on coastal sand dunes and sandstone derived soils of the Eastern states, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The profuse white flowers that appear in spring have led to its popular name of “Wedding bush”. Propagation from cuttings has been difficult. If established, good drainage and mulching is recommended.



6 Wedding Bush *Ricinocarpus pinifolius*

GROUP NEWS

The Rest of 2023

The year is almost over

Wed December 13th at 6 pm - Christmas Party & AGM, at Earlwood Uniting Church, in the main hall. 12 William Street, Earlwood. Party games, music, food, fun for all. Raffle hamper.

This will also be our AGM - your chance to join the committee and make a difference.



Garden News from Marie

Assassin bug in the garden. Eats other bugs and insects.

<https://www.australian-insects.com/assassin-bug.php>

The name **assassin bug** is due to the way this insect feeds on its prey. Often approaching from behind, the assassin bug will stab the prey and inject an enzyme which will dissolve the prey's inner organs. The assassin bug can then feed on the fluid. [You really wanted to know that didn't you? I've just had dinner.]

Studies have found the assassin bug to be of commercial benefit for cotton crop protection. The bugs will control *Heliothis* and other plant-sucking bugs in cotton. Another one not to kill!

The assassin bug can live for up to 13 months.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

There is a lot happening in our patch, with community groups and local councils being active in promoting native plants. Since it's Spring and the weather has been balmy, there are more events on than I can keep up with – bush walks, celebrations, birthday parties. I welcome contributions - stories about your other favourite groups.

Rolling Back the Concrete

Some time ago, I gave a talk called 'Holding back the Concrete'. This is my neighbour's version - reversing the current trend by digging up the concrete & making a tiny garden in front of their terrace in Lewisham. Here are the Before & After shots:



They checked what other neighbours are growing & went from there. Well done Brianna!

Nature Conservation Council (NCC) Annual Picnics

NCC hold a statewide picnic in October each year – this year on Saturday 21st October. That is, groups across the state organise local events, all on the same day. NCC supports & publicises the events, so we promote conservation to the public. The idea is to incorporate bush walks, visits to public gardens or botanical gardens in a relaxing manner, showing off the wonders of native plants and the fauna that go with it.

This year, there were 2 such picnics in our patch.

A number of local community groups hosted a picnic at **Evatt Park, Forest Road, Lugarno** from 11.30 am - 2.30 pm. At the event in Evatt Park, Lugarno (which represented Friends of Glenlee, Lugarno Progress Association and Oatley Flora and Fauna) there were 25 participants. A beautiful day for a picnic, so I was disappointed we didn't gather a bigger crowd.



7 Journaling - drawings & notes at WCPS NCC Picnic for Nature



8 hairy cheese tree photo by Greg

The Wolli Creek Preservation Society hosted a picnic in **Girrahween Park at Earlwood**.

We had 25 guests from several groups, including the WCPS. As this was 2 days after their annual dinner, this was heroic. We had a group from Sydney Nature Journal Club, who spent their time making beautiful drawings and notes (journalling) about some of our plants.

Greg, one of our APS HGR members, wandered around identifying plants & putting labels on them. He was the star attraction when he identified a hairy cheese tree (*Glochidion ferdinandi* var. *pubens*). This one is unusual because it has smaller and very velvety leaves, unlike the type species which has leathery leaves. It was only about

5 metres from the main picnic table, so even those who wanted to sit & talk got up to have look.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

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

Weed Alternatives

There is often discussion between bird lovers & bush carers about weeds. Bush carers want to rip them all out, but they often make good habitat for small birds – hiding places, food sources, nesting sites. Here are a couple of web sites seeking to solve the problem.

Grow Me Instead

<https://www.growmeinstead.com.au/region/new-south-wales.aspx>

Grow Me Instead (GMI) is an initiative of the Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) promoting a positive change in the attitude of both industry and consumers toward invasive plants. The various Grow Me Instead projects have identified 27 invasive urban plants in each Australian state and territory along with a range of suggested superior alternatives.

The invasive plant lists are not definitive, but it's a good start. Click on the plant name to get a list with notes of some alternatives. Note it includes non-native plants.

Lantana Replacement Plants

<https://ppnn.org.au/2019/10/15/lantana-replacement-plants/>

For the garden, there are many suitable native shrubs with attractive foliage, flowers and/or fruit that attract a larger variety of birds than does lantana. Bushland cleared of this weed should be replaced with native species that provide both shelter and food for wildlife whilst discouraging further weed growth.

The web site authors are a not-for-profit community Nursery. Our purpose is to protect and restore the ecological values of south-east Queensland habitats by returning locally indigenous plants to the landscape.

Small Birds

Once again, a group of Statistics students from Macquarie Uni tried to make sense of the bird survey data collected in Wolli Creek Valley over 40 years. This year we looked at small

birds and some of the possible threats to their survival. We divided the small birds into 4 groups, based on the number of 21st Century surveys in which they were seen (out of 250 surveys), and compared to observations from 20th Century.

Group	Definition	Species	Change %
Mythicals	not seen this century, but seen in the past.	8	-100%
Battlers	seen less than 20 times this century. This includes 6 new species, not seen last century.	25	-20%
Survivors	seen between 20 & 100 times this century, including 1 new species (Variegated Fairy-wren).	9	-32%
Urban birds	seen > 100 times this century.	13	+120%

There have been fewer surveys this century, so we thought that might account for the drop in overall sightings, but the Urban birds have bucked the trend by being seen much more often this century. For more detail, see <https://youtu.be/inAVmUOb3Wl>

An often-overlooked threat is the Pied butcherbird, which has been increasing in numbers far more than the other big black predator birds. Noisy miners are also a prime suspect as their numbers are increasing even more.



9 Flowers from the garden for Des in Hospital, photo by Marie

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Newsletters Received – October

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

Australian Plants Society, Northern Beaches Group - Newsletter November 2023

The Solanaceae family - species that are edible, ornamental, medicinal and psychotropic. Visit to Cranebrook and a nearby part of the Cumberland Plain Woodland (CPW) ecological community; reorganising the Tea-tree species; conservation detection dogs trained to detect *Phytophthora*.

Australian Plants Society, Sutherland Group - Newsletter October 2023

Spring flower spectacular - a full plant table. What's in flower at Joseph Banks Reserve. Book Review: "Birdscaping Australian Gardens: Using Native Plants to Attract Birds to Your Garden" by George Adams, with a bird directory of over 50 birds. Highly recommended.

Australian Plants Society, Northern Beaches Group - Newsletter October 2023

Stony Range festival photos; intriguing little pink flowers; Brian Roach's talk on a miniature Christmas bush cultivar & three species that thrive beside the seaside. Last Meeting, Little Forest Plateau- Mt Bushwalker Track.

Rare **purple** *Banksia spinulosa* plant found near Braidwood, NSW. IndigiGrow are attempting to propagate it from cuttings. the cause for the variant was hard to define, but it could have been the smoke, heat or altered chemical composition of the soil after the Black Summer bushfires.

Australian Plants Society, South East Group - Newsletter October 2023

An introduction to her garden by Joan Lynch. First—a disclaimer. There is no GARDEN. What we have is 100 acres of forest, mostly untouched.

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. Copies of newsletters are available from the editor on request for about a month.

Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum "Brigge" October 2023

Spring has sprung and the Burrendong Arboretum is looking beautiful. quite a successful plant sale - the interest in native plants in gardens is gathering momentum. The Drip - a good place for a picnic day, at the western end of the Goulbourn River National Park.

The Arboretum may have to close soon because there is no money available to pay staff and running expenses. The Board is investigating alternatives.

National Parks & Wildlife Service – Naturescapes, October 2023

A new short film, **Yarning about Country**, explores the incredible biodiversity and Aboriginal heritage of **the Greater Blue Mountains Area** World Heritage property (13 mins)

https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/types-of-protected-areas/world-heritage-listed-areas/greater-blue-mountains?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Naturescapes%20October%202023&utm_content=Naturescapes%20October%202023+CID_5ffdc49b50f8275a95c4d107c0a55cf&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Watch%20film

Head to Cape Baily track in **Sydney's Kamay Botany Bay National Park** to enjoy recent upgrades including new clifftop elevated boardwalks that provide expansive Pacific Ocean views. The 4-kilometre track hugs the coastline, starting at the popular Cape Solander whale watching platform and passing by the historic Cape Baily Lighthouse.

Birding NSW Newsletter, Sept-Oct 2023

<http://www.birdingnsw.org.au/> Pioneering World-first Mistletoe Habitat Restoration.

Mistletoe is a remarkable plant that essentially 'supercharges' the woodlands and forests where it occurs. It provides a perennial food source for many birds, mammals and insects through its foliage, flowers and fruits., and the soil borne bugs it attracts. Using novel planting techniques & research, the group has achieved a survival rate of 20%.

COMING EVENTS

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

Wed 15th November, 10:30 am	HGR Outing to Royal Botanic Gardens. Meet at Woolloomooloo Gates, Mrs Macquarie's Drive
Sun 10 Dec, 3-5 pm	Sutherland Group end of year gathering, Joseph Banks Reserve, Manooka Place, Kareela. All are welcome at our end-of-year afternoon tea gathering. Please bring something to share.
Wed December 13th at 6 pm	APS HGR Christmas Party & AGM, at Earlwood Uniting Church, in the main hall. 12 William Street, Earlwood

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