

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



May 2021

NEXT EHG MEETING:

Wednesday 5 May at 2 pm to 4 pm

Australia's changing spring and summer temperatures: A look through to 2099

With Rebecca Riggs

Climate Scientist

Rebecca is studying the impact of climate change in spring – not as pronounced as in summer perhaps, but vital for crop germination and our future food supply.

LUGARNO-PEAKHURST UNITING CHURCH

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

WELCOME to the May 2021 edition of the APS East Hills Group Newsletter.

This month we're having a little feature on propagation, inspired by Karlo's talk on the wonders of some of our local orchids, including their pollination methods, at the April meeting. Orchids are some of the most contrary plants, with a wide variety of habits and habitats. Liz also introduced us to the Wild Pollinator Count, a citizen science project we can all participate in, from our own gardens. The discussion elicited further stories of members' efforts in propagating other species.

I had slipped back a month with the newsletter name, so its corrected this month.

Dorothy Luther, Editor

In the spirit of reconciliation, the APS East Hills 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.

<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

My thanks to all who contributed to the success of our April meeting. The afternoon time is bringing visitors & notification of the speaker to other groups is positive. The meeting topic was on orchids and we even had a guest from Orchid Society.

The next meeting is on "Australia's changing spring and summer temperatures: A look through to 2099". Rebecca Riggs is a postgraduate student in agriculture who grew up in Oatley. She will speak on her research examining how climate change is affecting the planting times of crops.

There were some excellent entries into the Sydney Royal Easter Show this year. Congratulations to the Menai group who gained the Champions Ribbon for the Flowers Section & the Central Coast for the Pot Plant section. There was a good display of Native Flowers to delight the crowds. Well done to all groups.

Marie O'Connor.
President, East Hills Group

GUEST SPEAKER

Our guest speaker for April was Karlo Taliana, of the APS East Hills group. His topic was
The Orchids of the Georges River National Park

The talk summarised the biodiversity within the local orchid species that are naturally occurring within the Georges River NP with some focus on those occurring within the Bankstown LGA in general. Not all species were shown but there were many close up photos of the majority, including some of the rare species in our area.

Karlo's Introduction

For the past two years, I've developed a growing fascination for native orchids in my local bushland around Picnic Point within the Georges River National Park and in some of the surrounding reserves in the Bankstown LGA. Luckily, this also has coincided with a series of bountiful seasons – the result of higher rainfall over this period.

Over seventy different orchid species (mostly terrestrial) occur locally, some of which are quite uncommon in our area. Additional species have been found recently with some becoming new species records for our local area. The Yeramba Lagoon area at Picnic Point seems to be a hotspot for Greenhood orchids with no less than a dozen different species. For me, learning about the pollination process for some of these orchids, particularly with the Greenhoods, is quite interesting – although witnessing this is a very rare event, something I am yet to experience first hand.

Editors notes:

As Karlo said, orchids are a whole new little world, and sometimes can be a law unto themselves. They have a range of pollination strategies, from self-pollination to trapping the pollinating insect for a few minutes to ensure it does its job. Some even have no leaves, ignoring photosynthesis, & live off decomposing vegetation. Most only have leaves for a few months before and around flowering time. Winter & spring are the most common flowering times, but there is always some species flowering given any month of the year. This novelty is also expressed in their common names – who can imagine any other flower called dog, tiger, snake, donkey, flying duck or leopard? Some have more romantic names like pixie caps & fairy orchids.

Below are photos of just a handful of the various orchid species that occur locally showing the diversity within our local area.



Calochilus campestris (Copper Beard orchid)



Cryptostylis erecta (Bonnet orchid)



Chiloglottis diphylla (Common Wasp orchid)



Cyanicula caerulea (Blue Caladenia)



Dipodium roseum (Rosy Hyacinth orchid)



Eriochilus petricola (Parsons Bands)



Glossodia minor (Small Wax-lip orchid)



Prasophyllum elatum (Tall Leek orchid)



Pterostylis longifolia (Tall Greenhood) with pollinator



Pterostylis nutans (Nodding Greenhood)



Pterostylis concinna (Trim Greenhood)

Although the flowers are spectacular in shape & colour, many are quite small, unlike the exotic Thai orchids people tend to think of, and often open one at a time to extend the period of pollination. They mostly can be found growing alongside paths on the high – sunny & better-drained – side and are easily overlooked - and unfortunately sometimes can be trampled.

GROUP NEWS FROM OUR APRIL MEETING

The Wild Pollinator Count

From Liz Cameron

Wild Pollinator Week runs from 11-18 April and everyone was invited to watch a clump of flowers or a flower head for 10 minutes at a time and record pollinators (both native and introduced) that visited it, then submit their observations online. Multiple observations could be submitted during the week. This Citizen Science program encourages people to look more closely at the insects in their gardens and beyond.

From: <https://wildpollinatorcount.com/>

Australia has lots of wild pollinator insects that are often overlooked. European honey bees get a lot of attention because they are an adaptable, generalist forager, which means they are happy to visit almost any flower, in most climate zones. They are also a social species, so their hives are easy to domesticate and manage.

However, many native insects also contribute to pollination in crops and gardens all around the country. We still need to do a lot of research to identify all our pollinator insect species, understand their ecology and how they are affected by human activities. So far, we know that Australia has around 2,000 native bee species, all of which are important pollinators. We also know there are a couple of thousand butterfly, wasp, fly, moth, beetle, thrips and ant species, some of which are documented pollinators. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of information on the ecology of many of these insects, what flowers they pollinate, or where they are found.

The Wild Pollinator Count gives you an opportunity to contribute to wild pollinator insect conservation in Australia. We invite you to count wild pollinators in your local environment and help us build a database on wild pollinator activity. You can join in by watching any flowering plant for just ten minutes sometime in our count week.

The next Wild Pollinator Count date is in Spring: 14-21 November

We've missed the Autumn one on 11-18 April

I'll remind you about it in the October newsletter with more details on what's involved.



Congratulations to Marie

Congratulations to Marie O'Connor for her prize winning wool embroidery entry in the Royal Easter Show. Not only did she win 1st prize, she was also awarded a standard of excellence for the design & execution.

The native flowers are carefully observed & rendered in fine embroidery and beading. The work is a woollen cot sized tuck in blanket. At the moment it's in a display at OATLEY Cottage.

“Hot, Dry, and Deadly - Bushfires in the 21st Century”

News of this webinar was circulated after the meeting. You can watch it on YouTube by clicking on this link [livestreaming on our YouTube channel](#)

Three leading fire professionals answer your Burning Questions regarding Bushfires, Bushfire management, and the science of Hazard Reduction Burning. Thursday, April 22nd, 5.30pm-6:15pm

Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*)

From Tony Porritt

Our Kurrajong joined the family in 1980 when we collected a large number of seeds from the street outside Wentworth Jail in western NSW. Several months later a number of these seeds turned into seedlings and after many repottings we ended up with a single plant about 60 cm tall in a decorative pot. This pot resided in several different rooms of our house at Blakehurst with occasional R&R outside. During this time, it grew very slowly and never flowered.

In 1989 we relocated to Brisbane but decided to leave the Kurrajong to fend for itself and thus planted it in one of the garden beds. At this stage it was approximately 1.5 metres tall.

We returned in 1997 and were pleasantly surprised to find a well-established Kurrajong tree. It continued to flourish and by 2004 was a tree of over 10 metres, flowering regularly in early summer ever year. It is now well over 15 metres tall and has withstood dry & wet periods, being hacked about by the so called arborists from the electricity companies and being a source of sustenance to many possums whenever there is new growth on it.

Its shape, colour and flowers have and continue to provide pleasure to us, although as it has aged we have noticed the flowers have less colour on the inside.



The following facts are provided by **Tom Taverner on the Australian National Botanical Gardens website:**

Naturally distributed from north-eastern Victoria to Townsville and from the coast through to the semi-arid inland, *B. populneus* inhabits various well-drained soil types, often occurring amongst rocky outcrops of granite or limestone and also thriving on deeper soils in some areas. Flowers are bell-shaped and whitish in colour with the inner flower tube streaked purple-brown. Cultivated hybrids involving *B. populneus* display pink or red flowers. Seeds are borne within

woody, boat-shaped fruit 1-7 cm long and are surrounded by fine hairs that can cause skin and eye irritation.

Juvenile plants, which display attractive lobed leaves and swollen taproots, make good **pot-plants**, tolerant of dry and pot-bound conditions that respond well to pruning.

Trees are typically stout with glossy-green foliage and are widely used as **street trees** in Australia and overseas. Native populations **on agricultural land** are often retained to provide dense shade and drought fodder. Leaves lopped from branches are nutritious and desirable to stock. The deep rooting trees have minimal impacts on cropping and also support honey production.

Ground-up seeds can be brewed into a coffee substitute or added to bread. The swollen, carrot-like taproot is a nutritious and agreeable vegetable and the gum exudate is also edible.

Kurrajong fibre taken from the stem has been used in twine and netting manufacture.

Propagation is from seed or cutting. Seeds are readily germinated and immersion in warm-hot water then soaking for 12 hours enhances success. Care must be taken to avoid the irritating hairs surrounding the seeds. Cuttings from plants with desirable characteristics may be grafted onto seedling rootstock. Plants to 2 m respond well to transplantation if the swollen taproot is conserved and the branches trimmed to reduce water loss.

Other Brachychiton species in cultivation include *B. acerifolius* (Flame Tree), *B. discolor* (Lacebark), *B. rupestris* (Bottle Tree) and *B. gregorii* (Desert Kurrajong).

Self-Seeding Banksia

From Marie O'Connor

In spite of the efforts usually involved in propagating banksias, Marie had one self-seed in her garden, without the aid of smoke or heat. She potted it on as it progressed, then pruned it, keeping the cutting in a second pot. She is trying to keep the original one in the pot. Its all an experiment. We look forward to progress reports.



the original seedling



The cutting, growing well

PLANT TABLE – APRIL 2021

List: David Crawford and Jan Douglas

Thanks to everyone who brought specimens.

<i>Alyxia ruscifolia</i>	Prickly Alyxia, Chain Fruit
<i>Anigozanthos</i> 'Bush Tenacity'	
<i>Callistimon viminalis</i> 'Pink Alma'	
<i>Grevillea humilis</i> 'Pink Gem'	
<i>Hibiscus heterophyllus</i>	Native Rosella, Native Cottonwood, Native Hibiscus
<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	Sea Hibiscus, Native Hibiscus, Cottonwood
<i>Hoya australis</i>	Common Waxflower, Native Hoya
<i>Scaevola ramosissima</i>	Purple Fan-flower, Hairy Fan-flower

Alyxia ruscifolia

David Crawford



Alyxia ruscifolia is a shrub which grows to approx. 3m high by 1.5 m wide. It occurs naturally in rainforest from near Wollongong north through NSW, Queensland, Northern Territory into New Guinea. It is also native to Lord Howe Island.

The genus *Alyxia* is in the family Apocynaceae (known as the Dogbane family). Other genera in this family, which members may know, include *Hoya*, *Mandevilla*, *Marsdenia*, *Nerium* (Oleander), *Ochrosia*, *Parsonsia*, *Trachelospermum* (Star Jasmine) and *Vinca* (Periwinkle).

Jan and I have grown *Alyxia ruscifolia* for about 10 years and have found it easy to maintain. Until recently all our experience has been with plants in pots. Their growth has been slow but steady. The tough leaves do not seem to readily dry out and as such the plant puts up with some neglect. About six months ago we put one in the ground at our south coast property and although it is in the shade of a wattle wind-break and currently covered in lush grass it appears to be doing well.

Our first potted plant lived for a number of years near a garden tap and several self-propagated seedlings appeared over the years in the moist ground near the tap. These were potted-on and became new specimens. We intend to try to reproduce by seed deliberately in future.

At the meeting, Marie advised that she and Des have a large specimen in the rainforest section of their back garden in Connells Point. I have not seen it in the bush or in any garden, but believe it has horticultural merit. Hopefully we can propagate it and share it within our group and maybe then among other APS members.

Alyxia ruscifolia has a number of common names including Prickly Alyxia, Chain Fruit and Moonya.

The common name 'Chain fruit' comes from its habit of producing Moniliform fruit (Long and narrow but swollen at regular intervals like a string of beads).

According to <https://samfordcommons.org.au/chain-fruit-alyxia-ruscifolia/> "The foliage provides vital nesting habitat for our local birds and a safe refuge for other creatures, so is a good replacement for Lantana", and the flowers have "a wonderful fragrance". Although not prickly, the leaves have sharp points, hence habitat.

Hoya australis

Marie O'Connor

Given the problems with propagating many natives, involving arcane rituals of smoking, soaking, scarifying & complex home-made potting mixes, it's a surprise to come across one that self-propagates as readily as your average weed. *Hoya australis* is one such plant. It produces many fertile seeds which will germinate happily in any available pot plant and can also be struck from the leaf nodes.

H. australis is a rainforest climber with thick, glossy leaves about 40-50 mm in diameter. The stems contain a white, milky sap. Flowers occur in clusters of up to 40, each on a long pedicel (stalk) and about 20 mm in diameter. They are borne on the same stalk in successive seasons and are fragrant, white in colour with deep red markings in the centre. The seed pods are long and slender, about 100 mm long containing a number of seeds. It is suited to growing in containers and hanging baskets as it seems tolerant of root constraint. Flowering is best if good light is available but the plant will grow in reasonably heavy shade. <http://anpsa.org.au/h-austr.html>



Hoya australis flower head

and seedlings in a convenient pot

Hibiscus heterophyllus (again)

Tony Porritt

Following Jan's story last month, Tony brought an example of his *H. heterophyllus* for comparison. He also mentioned that they are used widely as street trees in Randwick where they grow well in the stabilised sand dunes & produce yellow flowers that age gracefully to pink. [Although that may be *H. tiliaceus*, just to confuse things even more – Ed]

FROM OUR APRIL MEETING

APS EAST HILLS GROUP MEETING – WEDNESDAY 7 APRIL 2021

Lugarno–Peakhurst Uniting Church, Lugarno
Notes by Liz Cameron

Meeting Notes

Fourteen members and five visitors (including one from the local Orchid Society) attended. Apologies received from Ellie Smith.

Marie O'Connor opened the meeting at 2.05 pm with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members and visitors. Karlo Taliana then gave an engrossing talk on Native Orchids of the Georges River National Park, illustrated with his excellent photos.

Following Karlo's presentation, Rebecca Riggs, a postgraduate student in agriculture who grew up in Oatley, spoke briefly on her research which is examining how climate change is affecting the planting times of crops. She will be our guest speaker at the May meeting.

Plant sales raised \$33 and the raffle a further \$52 totalling \$85 for the afternoon. Thanks once again to Karlo for his contribution of time and effort.

Donation to Environmental Defender's Office – a small amount was raised from the sale of Jan's limes & lemons. Jan announced that more fruit will be available for exchange for donations to the EDO at the May meeting.

Correspondence Received

Native Plants for NSW – April 2021

The monthly e-newsletter of the Australian Plants Society NSW, available at

<https://resources.austplants.com.au/newsletters-journals/monthly-eneewsletter/>

AGM details, some stories about the social impact of pink flannel flowers, and an updated propagation leaflet

Australian Plants Society, Newcastle NSW Group - Newsletter April/ May 2021

Group has been holding meetings by Zoom simulcast, allowing remote as well as in person attendance. They do hold mid-week walks once a month. Their May meeting will be on Native Orchids of the Hunter Region, including species variation, in even a fairly short distance.

Australian Plants Society, Sutherland NSW Group - Newsletter April 2021

From the March meeting, "From flowers to fruit: a focus on the diversity of fruits"

Australian Plants Society, Hunter Valley NSW Group - April 2021

Bushwalking on Maria Island, Tasmania and lots of lovely photos by members

Australian Plants Society, South East NSW Group - April 2021

On the joys of grafting grevilleas & redesigning a large garden. News about their project to establish a Proteaceae Garden Bed in the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden; since this group includes genera such as Banksia, Conospermum, Grevillea, Hakea, Isopogon, Lambertia, Lomatia, Persoonia, Petrophile, Stenocarpus, Symphonema and Telopea, it is a large project. The objective is to include only locally occurring species.

Australian Plants Society, Northern Beaches NSW Group - May 2021

Visiting a garden with 'rooms' of plantings; RAMSAR's 50th Anniversary (the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance); the bad news – trees emit methane, but at least a common Australian species of paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) harbours unique methane-eating communities of bacteria that consume some of it; resurrection ferns.

COMING EVENTS

Because of the Covid-19 outbreak, face-to-face meetings are still restricted. Some APS meetings are being held on-line, using Zoom. For details of coming events, please see the APS NSW e-newsletter (which members should be receiving by email at the end of each month).

You can find more district group events on the APS NSW website at <http://austplants.com.au/calendar>

Wednesday 6 May 2021 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	East Hills Group meeting. Rebecca Riggs on the impact of climate change in spring on plants, particularly crops.
Weekends 1–2 May and 8–9 May	Open days and plant sales at Illawarra Grevillea Park at Bulli
Saturday 8 th May at 1 pm	Menai Wildflower Group meeting – Justin Collette on germinating difficult Australian native plants. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters, Old Illawarra Road, Illawong For a map: https://austplants.com.au/Menai-Activities
Saturday 15 May	APS NSW quarterly gathering at Kurnell - physical meeting hosted by Sutherland Group.
Wed 19 May, 8 pm	Sutherland group meeting. Pipeworts? Learn more about the Eriocaulon genus with Richard Jobson at Gynea Community Centre, 39 Gynea Bay Rd, Gynea.
Wednesday 2 June 2021 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	East Hills Group meeting. Sophie Moore on the functionality of urban street trees

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