



# Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group

## May 2024

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especially the abundant orchid varieties many of which we don't see in the southern states.

The varieties of orchids she saw included King Spider, Cowslip, Donkey, Butterfly, Silky Blue and Purple Enamel to mention a few. Other places they visited on their trip included Kalgoorlie, Esperance, The Sterling Ranges National Park, Albany, Bunbury, and Rottnest Island. As well as orchids they photographed many other spectacular species.

On behalf of the audience of over 30 people I would like to thank Rhonda for this excellent talk.

*G Jackson*



Delicate grevillea flower at Fire Station, P Forbes.

### Western wonders

At our February meeting we were entertained by an interesting PowerPoint presentation by Rhonda Jackson, wife of our president Anthony and orchid aficionado in her own right. Anthony and Rhonda visited the southwest of Western Australia to view the renown wildflowers



Woolly Bush, P Forbes.

### An edible garden

There was a rather disappointing turn up of 15 to listen and taste the delicious March presentation by Narelle Happ. Narelle brought along a wide range of edible plants with many opportunities to taste and smell the edible bits as she described each plant's growing habits as well as its culinary potential. Interestingly many Australian fruits are tart compared to European and Asian fruits. Here's some of her suggestions. Keep in mind that there

are a lot of similar looking plants and they are not all edible – **make sure you know what plant you have before you try eating it!**

Finger Limes are a relative of the European citrus but suited to Australian conditions and have interesting “caviar-like” pearls inside the fruit. They are rainforest plants that cope with shade. Keep them pruned. Several different colour variations have been developed.

Native Currant is an attractive shrub for moist shade. Midgen Berry, *Austromyrtis dulcis*, are easy to grow around Menai in sun or shade and have tasty white berries. Mine self-seed and you can also propagate by pinning down stems. Native Tamarind, *Diploglottis campbellii*, takes 5 or 6 years to fruit.

Rosella is often seen as a jam or preserve in gourmet shops. It is naturalised rather than native. Davidson Plum, *Davidsonia pruriens*, is very tart but also available in some commercial products.

Pepper berries, from several species in the genus *Tasmannia*, have the same hot flavour as pepper. In Tasmania you will find Mountain Pepperberry, *Tasmannia lanceolata*, for sales as a spice and members who have enjoyed our Snowy excursions will be familiar with this species. But there is a local species called *T. insipida* more suited to local conditions. They are attractive small bushes with red stems contrasting with the fresh green leaves. Many species have separate male and female plants but *T. insipida* has both sexes on the one plant. You can use the leaves like bay leaves in cooking or the dried seeds for a peppery taste. Check out [Delicious](#) for a review of its uses.

Saltbushes are members of the Chenopodiaceae family, and are commonly found on dry, saline, clay soils in low lying areas such as flood plains but are adaptable to most soils. Old Man Saltbush, [Atriplex nummularia](#), is the most common of around 60 Australian species. This small bush with attractive soft, grey foliage, can be seen in the fire station garden. Although the leaves can be dried and ground to use as a salty spice, they have 20% less sodium than actual salt.

Vanilla and Chocolate lilies have a similar smell but not much taste compared to their namesakes. Their tubers can be roasted like the Murnong lilies of Victoria. There are Bulbine lilies in the fire station garden with bright green grass-like leaves and pretty, yellow flower. They can self-seed and become weedy.

Native ginger, *Alpinia*, is related to the culinary plant and can be grown in sun or shade. You can eat the tuber and the berry and you can use the leaves to wrap food for the barbeque.

*Trachymene incisor* has parsley like foliage. Don't eat the leaves but the roots can be eaten after

baking. The leaves of Appium, Sea Celery, can be chopped like celery. The Native Violet is edible like its European cousin It is a delightful ground cover that grows to about 40 x 20cm. There is a native Lemon Grass and a Native Mint, *Mentha spicata*. Native Raspberry has a variable taste but some plants rival their European cousins.

Many of us have chewed on Smilax while bushwalking for its pleasant but astringent taste. Smilax also makes a nice tea, preferably using the middle-aged leaves. Lloyd has recently had some success growing Smilax from seed, so some plants may be available for sale in the future.

Wombat berries *Eustrephus latifolius* are a similar looking plant with attractive, if not tremendously tasty, berries and edible tubers. Some interesting information on the plant is available [here](#).



*Eustrephus latifolius*, P Forbes.

Continuing with more berries, Apple Berries, *Billardiera scandens*, are another local ground cover with small sweet berries, looking somewhat like tiny kiwifruits. [Cissus antarctica](#), is another but much more vigorous vine which has edible black berries. It can be quite weedy but there are some plants at the nursery.

Warrigal Greens, *Tetragonia tetragonioides* is so edible (blanch for one minute to remove [oxalates](#)



first) that it has made its way into [Gourmet Traveller](#) magazine and [SBS Food](#)! It is easy to grow. If you are interested, ask Lloyd about getting a cutting from the fire station garden. Warrigal Greens can be high in sodium, potassium and oxalates so those with heart or kidney conditions should be aware of how much they consume.

Pigface is another common plant and you may have already tried the fruit that taste like fruit salad. You can cook the leaves which taste like beans according to Narelle. The sap can be used like aloe vera for skin irritation.

Locals Lomandra and Dianella have several uses. Lomandra seeds can be roasted and the base of the leaves eaten. Dianella fruit is edible. Both can be used in weaving and make good habitat.

Two species of Prostanthera have culinary uses. *P. incisor* is known as Native Thyme and *P. rotundifolia*, Native Oregano. You need some imagination but both are pleasant scents and also allegedly repel mosquitoes.

Likewise, several species of Myrtle have scented leaves useful in cooking and in teas. Lemon Myrtle, *Backhousia citrodonia*, Cinnamon Myrtle, particularly the Mini Cini cultivar and Aniseed Myrtle all fit the bill. They are all trees and most need a bit of water as well as space. Rose Myrtle, [Archirhodomytis beckleri](#) has a nice weeping habit and the pretty pink cherry blossom flowers are followed by currant sized red berries.



Rose Myrtle, APS NSW, J. Howes

Around six species of wattles are commercially grown for seed, such as *A. longifolia* and *A. victoriae*. Ground wattle seed is available and is used for its coffee/chocolate/hazelnut-like flavour. Recipes are available at [SBS Food](#), think

[Macadamia, chocolate and wattleseed damper](#), Macadamia being another classic Aussie food, but one which Narelle didn't cover.

Bunya Pines produce large cones and their seeds can be used like pinenuts.

Narelle ended the talk with a selection of delicious baked goods using native flavours, including lemon myrtle shortbread, wattleseed damper and Davidson plum jam, which were enjoyed by all present. Narelle was a very engaging and generous guest and her talk was much appreciated.

More information about most of these plants can be found at NSW APS or by visiting Heathcote Wildflower Nursery. Narelle also recommended Tim Lowe's Wild Plant Foods.

*P Forbes*

## April meeting looks east

Greg Potter from the Harbour Georges River Group talked about the parks of Eastern Sydney. Greg quickly outlined the history of the area from 1793 when private ownership of land was granted. The large estates expanded, and the mix of dry and wetter eucalypt forests and woodland was cleared. Many of the parks regenerated from the disturbed bushland. The parks Greg covered were Nielson Park, Cooper Park, Parsley Bay and Gap Park. Nielsen Park was dry, rocky woodlands of eucalyptus and shrubs. *Angophora costata*, *Eucalyptus robusta* and *Corymbis gummifera* dominate with an understory of *Melaleuca nosdosa*, *Dodanaea triquetra*, *Polyscias sambucifolius* and *Nootolea longifolia*. The later and many of the lesser species are also common in the Menai area.

While *Allocasuarina littoralis* and *A. distyle* are also in both areas, Nielsen Park has the endangered *Allocasuarina portuensis* of which there were only 10 specimens left when discovered in 1986. While these original plants have died the RBG have gathered seed and cutting material to now have around 180 specimens.

Cooper Park was part of the Point Piper Estate and was used for logging, quarrying and market gardens before being given to council in 1913 for public use. It has been used for public recreation, particularly tennis courts, concerts, and bushland since and the mix of wet eucalypt and rainforest

has been regenerated by council and the public. The mix woodland of Rosewood and Pittosporum features some interesting plants such as scentless rosewood *Synoum glandulosum* and the corkwood *Endiandra siieberi*. There are a number of other species seldom seen in Menai such as Red Cedar *Toona ciliata* and Bollygum, *Neolitsia dealbata*. There is a surprising number of species that do not reach out this far. The Eastern suburbs parks could be well worth a visit.

*L Hedges*

## Other Activities

### Open Day

We recently held a very successful open day with a good number of interested visitors and members attending. As well as guided garden tours and Lloyd's demonstration of making smoke water, Narrelle Happe kindly brought a selection of her edible indigenous plants for sale.



Sales stall ready to go with Cameron's beautiful marketing bouquets, practice for the Easter Show, P Forbes.

As usual our own plants were on sale. The recently installed cashless payment system probably enhanced these sales. Thanks to Anthony for researching cashless system options and Cameron for setting it up.

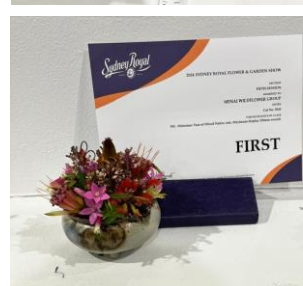
*J Riley*

## 2024 Easter Show results

Despite concern due to the poor showing of plants and foliage caused by earlier rain we were very successful in the Native Plant section at the recent Royal Easter Show competition winning seven first, three second and three highly commended places and Champion exhibit overall. Included was Cameron's miniatures winning one first, one second and two highly commended.



Entries ready to go, J Riley.



Some of the first prize winners, J Riley.



mangroves there *Avecennia marina* and the river mangrove *Aegiceras corniculatum*. Access via the boardwalk meant we got a good close look at the ecosystem, birds, fish and other life. It was a rewarding trip with many interesting conversations.

*L Hedges*

### Planting with GSLC

MWG supplied 1700 of the 2500 tubes for a successful planting day at Beale Street Peakhurst. Adrian provided great liaison between MWG and Greater Sydney Land Care and propagation involved Lloyd, Pam, Marian, Janine, Amanda, Jo, and Dianna with Geoff doing the accounting and Greg, John and Adrian keeping up tube supplies. Over one hundred volunteers, including Marian W, Adrian and Janine helped plant the tubes at the event organised by Greater Sydney Landcare and Oatley Flora and Fauna with support from Georges River Council. More information at [OFF Facebook](#).



Second prize winners and highly commended, J Riley.

This success was made possible by Helen's expertise and guidance with the team to assemble the entries at her home on Good Friday. It is very much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to Mary and Lloyd for gathering plant material at the fire station garden and other members' gardens. The efforts of our early bird team; Matt, Jan, Marion and Cameron, starting at 5am on Easter Saturday to deliver and place our exhibits prior to judging and likewise Matt who returned after hours to collect our exhibits are also recognised. Well done all involved.

*J Riley*

### Walking in the wetlands

In March Jemima and Joel Fortman and offspring joined Devlet and Erden Sizgek, Ross Jeffree, John P, Mary and me in a walk through the mangroves and salt pans of Saltpan Creek . It was 5km but quite an easy walk. There were two types of



Beale St Reserve, before and after, OFF.



Marian enjoyed starting her "babies" on their new life at Penshurst, OFF.

## Walk along Barden Creek

Despite predicted rain nine intrepid members and guests, led by Lloyd, met at the Illawong Fire Station before travelling to ANSTO, Lucas Heights, and walking down the 'blue track'. This track follows a branch of Barden Creek as it travels north towards its confluence with Mill Creek and then the Georges River. Our walk was short, only about 3km, and took us past several sets of Aboriginal stone axe grinding grooves to some Aboriginal stone engravings, known as 'the Barden Creek men', located on a high flat rock outcrop. These engravings have almost faded from view but along with the many axe grinding grooves speak of the many indigenous people who have lived in this landscape before Europeans arrived. More information on the engravings can be found [here](#).



April walk at Barden Ridge, L Hedges.



Axe grinding grooves, P Forbes.

Koalas are known in this area but are seldom seen. However, we saw their distinctive scratch marks in the bark of their favourite food tree, the grey gum, indicating that they are about.

On the walk we looked at the various autumn flowering plants which included several species of banksia, some early wattle, lobelia, hibbertia and a few *Eriochilus cucullatus*, Parson's Bands Orchid. Other orchid leaves were seen but few flowering stalks so we may not see a lot of *Chiloglottis* sp. this season. May's speaker may have more on this.

*G Jackson & P Forbes*



*Eriochilus cucullatus* and blue tinged, new flower of *B. oblongifolia*, P Forbes.

## Coming events

Details of upcoming meeting topics were not available at time of publication. Please keep an eye out for details via email and on Facebook. Meetings are on the **second Saturday** of the month at **2pm**.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>5 May</b>     | <b>Woronora salt marsh</b> talk and walk.  |
| <b>11 May</b>    | <b>APS NSW Quarterly Gathering</b>   |
| <b>11 May</b>    | <b>Growing Ground Orchids</b> with <b>Richie Dimon</b> .   |
|                  | Please note the clash between the APS NSW Quarterly meeting and the MWG meeting – what a choice! |
| <b>8 June</b>    | <b>TBA</b>   |
| <b>13 July</b>   | <b>TBA</b>   |
| <b>10 August</b> | <b>TBA</b>   |



## Keep in contact

You can now keep up to date with MWG activities on our page of the [NSW APS website](#), at [our Facebook page](#), and via Instagram.

The APS NSW website has information about national and statewide activities and it is where new members can join APS and MWG online or download the membership application to mail or email. Look for the [membership page](#) to find out about the benefits of membership and full instructions on how to join.

*Editor*

## Quarterly meeting

APS NSW Quarterly Gathering hosted by Parramatta Hills Group is on Saturday, 11 May from 10am-4pm, 2024 and will include the NSW AGM. The program is as follows -

10am - 12noon: Tour of the Community Environment Centre, Currie Avenue, Annangrove NSW 2126

12noon – 4pm: Gumnut Community Centre, Gumnut Place, Cherrybrook, 2126.

12:00-1:00 Lunch and plant sale. BYO lunch or purchase locally.

1.00-1.30: AGM

1.30-4pm: Presentation by Dan Clarke, Threatened flora of the Cumberland Plain, followed by afternoon tea.

Cost \$5 members, \$10 non-members

## Naming the New Mountain in the Shire

It is not often that a new mountain appears but one is slowly rising in the west of the shire (see Image 1). The Lucas Heights waste management site is the only remaining putrescible waste site operating in Sydney and was due to close in 2025 leaving a huge gap in the ability to manage landfill in Sydney.<sup>1</sup> Instead of selecting a new site for tipping household rubbish, a decision was made to extend the existing site up without extending its footprint to keeping the tip going till 2037.<sup>1</sup> The site will be reshaped to create a new ridgeline peaking at maximum 172 metres with valleys that drain towards Mill Creek. The high point of the site and a north-south ridgeline will afford views to the Sydney city skyline, and as far as the North Shore. Lookouts and a kiosk will be built to take advantage of these views turning this new mountain into a future tourist attraction.<sup>2</sup> Such a tourist attraction could also serve as an interpretive area, providing an opportunity to display the

history of the area, both Aboriginal and European, development and operation of the landfill, and other recycling operations which have occurred or continue to occur within the area.<sup>2</sup>



Image 1: The new mountain at Lucas Heights taking shape. Photo April 24 by G. Jackson

Such an edifice deserves an appropriate name and several suggestions have already been made by interested parties.

These names include:

Mount Tip

Mount Garbage

Rubbish Mountain

Rudera Montis (Rubbish Mountain in Latin)

Mount Duncombe (the original owner of the farm on this site in 1822 was David Duncombe)

Little Forest Mountain (the original name given to the farm on this site by David Duncombe)

Mount Fuji in Lucas Heights

Readers may think of other appropriate names. There is not yet any official requests for suggested names, but it may well happen.

The Tip Nursery will be utilised to grow plants for the revegetation of the finished mountain with plans currently being finalised on what exactly will be grown. The problems faced in plant choice include thin soil layer, topography/hydrography and contamination issues. It's likely to be modelled on nearby heath communities. Some of the rare local sheoaks have been saved from tip operations last year and are being cared for at the nursery with the hope of replanting them near their original source.

The expansion of the tip site will not be welcomed by many but compared to the alternative which is destruction of more bushland for another tip site it may be the preferable alternative. It's a good reason for us all to reduce, reuse and recycle.

*G Jackson P Forbes*

### References:

1. *Tip to be Topped Up*, St George and Sutherland Shire Leader, 25 November, 2014  
<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/2718087/ti-p-to-be-topped-up-12-more-years-for-lucas-heights/>

2. Lucas Heights and Waste Management Centre : development application report December, 1998 [https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/eis-pdf-records/EIS%201435%20Vol%201\\_AA068053.pdf](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/eis-pdf-records/EIS%201435%20Vol%201_AA068053.pdf)

## On the net

Australia has between 600,000 and 700,000 species of living things, about one in twelve of the world's species of animals, birds, plants and insects and over 80% of Australian plants and mammals and just under 50% of the birds are found nowhere else. But habitat loss, introduced species and climate change are decimating this biological richness. In 2023, the federal government added another 144 plants, animals and ecological communities to the threatened species list – including iconic species such as the pink cockatoo, spiny crayfish and earless dragons. Could we also lose the iconic kookaburra? We are all familiar with the sight and sound of this “common” bush bird but evidence shows that loss of habitat and the increasing frequency of bushfires is threatening kookaburras. The hollows they need to nest in are lost in fires or clearing and fires also make it harder for them to hunt. In some states they can be legally killed. Learn more at [The Conversation](#).



Kookaburra, P Forbes.

Similarly, koalas are in trouble. See how our attitudes to such icons has changed as shown in this history of our [interactions with koala](#). On a positive note, catch up on the progress of the [platypuses in RNP](#) including the exciting news of a new [puggle](#) and the impact of proposed erosion remediation of riverbanks at Penrith on the [platypus population](#).

In the plant world, latest evidence says that our iconic [banksias originated in Africa](#). But we can still claim the amazing [Wollemi pine which is](#)

[being reintroduced](#) into secret locations in the Blue Mountains.

And lastly, if you need another excuse to be out in the garden, [outside time](#) is good for your sense of time. It gives you a chance to escape from cares and may enhance memory and your capacity to prioritise jobs and concentrate on them.

*P Forbes*

## News from the nurseries

### The Tip nursery

The Glossies campaign was finishing and Beth Mott had taken the last of the sheoaks when she received the news that the plantings would be recommenced in the spring. We are now sowing and seed collecting for this as she needs some southern species.

Meanwhile the Greater Sydney Land Council has continued its orders and took more than 1700 plants for a very successful planting at the Beale St, Penshurst reserve so there is plenty to be getting on with.

The white flannel flower tubing season is with us and has proved to be a most successful start to the season with 250 tubed up to date and plenty more emerging. I am still holding my breath on the pinks. We have had a couple of poor years of losses and poor fertilisation so seed stocks are low.



### Compound Nursery

Without Annie, who is enjoying baby leave, it has been a challenge to keep up our plant production. We also have had some problems with the propagation beds becoming unpredictable in the heating and watering department, but some diligent



work from Robin Tuckfield has got us on the way back to full production.

John Prats, as well as being secretary, is becoming quite adept at cuttings with the assistance of Rie Vaarnela, a new enthusiast who is signing up to become a member. They should be able to keep things ticking along nicely.

Cameron has been preparing plants for the coming Grevillea Park opening on the first 2 weekends in May.

## The Gardens

The gardens have been here 22 years and reached an age when some of the plants are past their best and need to move on. Change has been initiated by Matt in the front garden and work is also in progress on the mounds. Plants are being removed and some have also been knocked over by the wind. New ones are being plants and in the next few years may make their presence felt. But it is a lot of work and some help would be appreciated.

*L Hedges*



Orange Wow and Crowning Glory, two of the grevilleas in the fire station mounds, P Forbes.



Paper Daisies in front garden, P Forbes.

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