

Blandfordia



North Shore Group
(ABN 87 002 680 408)

MAY 2023

President's Message *Sue Bowen*



Our working bee at our Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden (KWG) shadehouse on the morning of Saturday 22nd April was very successful, despite the odd shower. We did a general tidy-up, removed all of the ferns and selaginella from under the benches and even potted up some ferns for future sale. A big thank you to Sue F, Wendy, Phillip, Genevieve, Tania, Bruce, Helen and Beverley for coming along and helping out.



Please don't forget to send your 10 photos of your native plant successes and failures to Jan Williamson so that they can be put into a presentation for discussion at our next meeting on Friday 12th May. (*see page 2*). Those of us who have, or have had, native gardens, have some favourite plants that grow really well but know that there are always those favourites that don't thrive at all. We also know that some plants that are not favourites grow amazingly well and become weeds to us!! Please talk to us about your particular successes and failures.

I am starting a native garden from scratch using mainly the unloved plants from our shadehouse. To do that I have had to remove most of the plants that characterise a typical North Shore garden. As yet, I don't have any successes or failures but I can talk about what I hope to achieve and what I have learnt so far. Fortunately, I have been able to dig up and give away some plants to a new home: the roses, some bulbs, the clive-as and some camellias. The rest of the tibouchinas, agapanthus, heliotropes, indian hawthorns, durantas, gardenias, azaleas, sacred bamboo, murrayas and weeds etc have been dug out, are just stumps waiting to be ground out or have been shipped-out in our green waste. Major challenges for removal still are an umbrella tree and several European nettle trees.

Also, don't forget that we are open every second Wednesday afternoon at our shadehouse (behind the KWG Visitor Centre and the KWG nursery) for propagation, plant sales and growing advice. (*3, 17 and 31 May*)

Continued page 2

Mud dauber wasps

We are very privileged to be able to provide a nesting site for a number of mud dauber wasps in our Propagation room at KWG. We noticed the adult wasps building their nests in late summer and found that they particularly like our styrofoam boxes. Each nest is built from mud and contains several paralysed spiders, ready for the young wasp to eat when it hatches.

The wasps are about 3cm long and distinguished by their yellow and black colouring and the very long slender part of their abdomen. Although we were initially concerned about being stung we found that the wasps ignored us so long as we didn't disturb them. We were able to go in and out of our room while they were building their nests and no-one was stung. The adults have now departed but we intend to leave the nests until the young wasps exit from them.

see <https://backyardbuddies.org.au/?s=mud+dauber+wasp> & <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/insects/mud-dauber-wasp/> for more information on mud dauber wasps.



Written by & images by Sue Bowen

Next APS NSG General Meeting

Friday 12 May 2023

7.30 pm for 8pm

at Beatrice Taylor Hall, Willow Park Community Centre
25 Edgeworth David Ave, Hornsby

Topic: Members' experiences, both successful & unsuccessful, of creating and maintaining a native garden

Speakers: Members

While our gardens may not be as spectacular or as well curated as this mixed native and exotic garden at Government House, Sydney we still love and enjoy them.

This meeting will be a relaxed and interactive meeting where we can all share our thoughts, experience and wisdom. All sorts of things will be discussed- soil types, aspect, to fertilise or not, species chosen, when and how to prune, watering, mulching.....nothing will be off limits.

See *page 6* for a couple of queries from Rae Rosten.

All welcome to come and share our passion for native plants and the animals and birds that frequent our gardens. Plants for sale, library & supper.

Members are asked to send < 10 images to Jan Williamson by **Friday 5 May** at janw7531@gmail.com Jan will compile these into a presentation. If you would like to contribute but won't be able to attend the meeting please send your images with accompanying notes. Please contact Jan by email janw7531@gmail.com or phone on 9875 2262 between 6pm -9pm if you have any queries.



Local Stewardship Creates Habitat



Karen Benhar spoke on this topic at the meeting on 14th April.

Karen is the President of Friends of Berowra Valley, co-founder of Wild Habitats Inc. and an experienced Bush Regenerator. She also lives on the edge of Berowra Valley National Park. This initiative is about reaching out to local residents who live on the edge of good bushland and teaching them how to take care of the bush to enhance local vegetation communities and wildlife.

Karen's talk explained how this initiative is quite a challenge, but one that is most worthwhile. Volunteers will visit a garden and give free advice on what, and how, to plant to create suitable habitat.

Karen turned her area into a meadow of native grasses and reaped the benefits with increased wildlife from insects to swamp wallabies visiting and successful regeneration after fire. Her "control" garden is one of her neighbours who prefers buffalo grass and clear felling. Karen stressed the importance of many grasses to the lifecycle of butterflies. Useful species include Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*), Tussock grasses including *Poa* spp and Burra Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*). Other plants favoured by butterflies include *Dichondra repens*, *Dianella caerulea* (Blue Flax Lily) and even *Ehrharta erecta* (Panic veldt grass). There was unanimous agreement that this attribute of *Ehrharta* did not outweigh its nuisance value and everyone will continue to remove it! The butterflies lay their eggs on the grasses in late summer/early autumn and following autumnal rains in April and May the larvae hatch and feed on the grasses: *editor's note: I was planning to "tidy" the Microlaena grass in my front yard, but will now leave it in its more natural state.*

Karen used a night motion sensing camera to capture images of "who goes there". Foxes, cats, echidnas and wallabies were recorded.

Karen reinforced the principles of responsible land management for properties abutting bushland, these including don't encroach onto bushland, do not dump rubbish into bushland and select plants that are not going to spread as weeds into the nearby area. Use of native endemic plants is to be encouraged.

Overall Karen has found that people need help when trying to transition into a garden that supplies good habitat. This help can be in the form of information about weeds, controlling cats, plantings more suitable to smaller birds etc. Encouraging wildlife with sources of water is also a useful strategy.

Thanks to Karen for sharing her experience and passion and for coordinating the recent Berowra Fauna Fair.

Some sites that Karen recommended are:

<https://www.greengardener.com.au/author/karen/>

<https://www.friendsberowravalle.org.au/>

<https://www.inaturalist.org/places/australia>

<https://www.frogid.net.au/>

Atlas of Living Australia <https://www.ala.org.au/>

Editor's note: The Secret Lives of Our Urban Birds ABC iview Series 1 episode 2 Brisbane

<https://fvau-web-stage.switch.tv/watch-tv/shows/f936c07d-e757-4c6d-a2e5-0a6fed891c9c>

This episode highlighted the value of the untamed "scruffy" environment for encouraging biodiversity.

Written by & image by Jan Williamson

Monday Walks & Talks Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden (KWG), 420 Mona Vale Road, St Ives

Be guided by members of the North Shore Group of the Australian Plants Society on a walk in the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden to see and learn about our wonderful native plants as they come into flower. These sessions are free. No prior knowledge is required. Information sheets will be provided.

Meet at **9.45 am** at Caley's Patio (behind Caley's Pavilion) in KWG. No booking necessary.

Enquiries: Wendy: wendyagrimm@gmail.com or 0419 323 035

Walks are easy/medium. Sessions run 10am to about 12 noon.

The 22 & 29 May 2023 sessions will start with a lecture in Caley's Pavilion followed by a walk in KWG.

Please wear a hat, have suitable footwear and carry water/snack. Sunscreen and insect repellent would also be a good idea.

Date: Monday May 15 Topic: Insects & inspiration Leader: Margo



Date: Monday May 22
Topic: Banksia (Family Proteaceae) Leader: Norah

Date: Monday May 29 Topic: Pollination and Seed Dispersal Leader: David W.

Wendy Grimm

For more information and the full 2023 W&T programme see <https://austplants.com.au/North-Shore-Walks-&-Talks>

Note that at the bottom of this page is a heading and link to the notes on each topic.

Walks & Talks Resources

Walks & Talks notes for each topic are [here](#).

Part of the first page for Banksias is shown here.




These notes are a wonderful resource for you to use at your leisure.



Banksias

Characteristics

Banksias are plants with woody stems ranging from trees to prostrate shrubs. The flower spikes are conspicuous and contain between 100 and 5000 individual flowers. As described above each flower holds a single style and four tepals to which anthers are attached. When a flower is in bud the end of the style and all the tepals are attached to each other so the style picks up pollen from the anthers. The style then breaks free and projects itself further out from the banksia spike. The end of the style now carries pollen (it is called the 'pollen presenter') and mammals, birds and insects landing there pick up pollen which then becomes transferred to other banksia flowers. (Surprisingly, there is little self-pollination, possibly due to the stigmas not at first being receptive to pollenation.)

Normally only a small proportion of the flowers will produce the woody seed follicles embedded transversely on a central woody cone. These follicles take a year or two to mature and may, depending upon the species, stay on the plant for many years awaiting the heat of bushfire or even the death of the plant. Two winged seeds are released from each follicle when they are opened.

Distribution

Some references say there are 78 species of Banksia in Australia and some say 172. In early 2007 Mast & Thiele suggested that Dryandra be merged into the Banksia genus on the basis of extensive molecular and morphological evidence. There is a great deal of debate about this. However, Dryandras (some 90 odd species) occur only in Western Australia. There are 27 Banksias in eastern Australia and 4 species in the south of Australia.

Wendy addressing some of the 31 people who attended the very successful W&T on "Bush Foods and Fibres" on 17th April at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens.
Image by Sue Fredrickson

Group Walk to Cattai National Park- Saturday 13th May



Inspired by Peter Ridgeway's talk to our group in February this year, this excursion is planned to visit some of the places Peter covered during his epic 180km walk traversing the Cumberland plain.

Finishing that walk in Picton to the south, he started at Cattai in the north which is where we will visit. Cattai National Park is located at the junction of the Hawkesbury River and Cattai Creek to the north of Windsor. The land here was granted to First Fleet surgeon Thomas Arndell in 1804 and it features the colonial homestead Caddie and other historic farm buildings. These are set in grassed and wooded grounds and there is a walk through bush to a view of the Hawkesbury River. On the river flats, which it is also possible to drive to, camping and picnicking are popular.

As well as visiting the main Cattai National Park, we'll also visit the nearby Mitchell Park section of Cattai National Park. It is a bushland gem and a loop walk of 1-2 hours here takes you through a variety of Forest Plant Associations and finishes with a stroll along Cattai Creek. Being a little out of our group's usual walking locations and

with the riverine influences, we will see trees and plants a bit different to what we are used to e.g. lots of Ironbarks.

The level of difficulty for the first part of the walk is very easy and for the Mitchell Park section- easy. The track there is well constructed with some slightly uneven rocky sections. The driving time to get to Cattai NP is around 45 minutes from the Pennant Hills area.

You can use your navigator to avoid route confusion but a good route is through Round Corner Dural, Kenthurst, onto Pitt Town Rd to Maraylya, right at Pebbly Hill Rd, left at Millers Rd, right onto Cattai/Wisemans Ferry Rd and then left at the Cattai National Park sign. A little way in, Cattai NP entrance is on the left.

We will meet not far in at a derelict Visitors Centre where there is parking.

Date and time: **Sat 13th May, 9.30 am**

Meeting Place: A little way in from the entrance to Cattai National Park at the now derelict Visitors Centre.

What to bring: Good walking shoes, lunch, snacks, water, hat, plant ID book, walking poles if desired.

Contact person: **Sue Fredrickson** paulandsuefreddo@bigpond.com phone 0401 362 921 (also my number on the day) **Please let me know if you wish to attend.**

APS NSW activities– near future

The next Quarterly meeting of APS NSW & AGM, hosted by APS Central Coast, will be on **Saturday 20th May at Kariong**.

There is a morning programme starting at 9.30am. It is either an easy bush stroll or a visit to Olga Blacha & Jonathan Steed's Wholesale Production Nursery, Sustainable Natives. Plants for sale.

Afternoon meeting commences at 1pm with AGM followed by speaker - **Olga Blacha** *Achieving a New Civic Australian Style Garden* from 1.45pm - 2.30pm and then afternoon tea.

Full details & registration: see <https://austplants.com.au/event-4549820>

Easter in the Blue Mountains



Sue Fredrickson wrote: “We had the happiest of Easters doing what we love! Our son Tim was our personal guide as we visited beautiful spots around the Newnes Plateau, amongst the pagodas, Dumbano canyon and also a lovely view into the Newnes Valley. We are so lucky to have the beautiful wilderness just 2 hours drive away.”



At the same time Jan and Steve Williamson were holidaying with family nearby and enjoying the sites from Katoomba. Three Sisters, Jamison Valley and Mount Solitary feature in this panorama.



Rae’s Queries

Why are mint bushes so short lived?

Rae’s experience is that the plants only live 6-7 years in her garden.



How can I stop Dendrobium beetles from turning the orchids into moth eaten miseries?

I have been told by experts that chemicals are ineffective and the only way is to find and dispose of the beetles under foot, but this is so tedious.



2023 Activities : SEE <https://austplants.com.au/North-Shore>

MONTHLY **GENERAL MEETING** with guest speaker

WALKS & TALKS 2022 is held at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden (KWG) 420 Mona Vale Rd, St. Ives *see page 4*

MONTHLY **GROUP ACTIVITY** Saturday 13 May Cattai NP *see page 5*

PROPAGATION is held at KWG on alternate Wednesdays from 1-4pm 3, 17 & 31 May 14 & 28 June

THE KNOLL APS NSG Native Plant Community Garden at KWG

PLANT SALES and growing advice at our shadehouse (with white roof) at KWG (behind Visitors' Centre & KWG Nursery) on propagation afternoons every 2nd Wednesday (weather permitting) (cash only).

FLOWER DISPLAY at KWG Visitor Centre

BUSHCARE (KC) in KWG on alternate Wednesdays from 9am-12pm: 10 & 24 May & 7 & 21 June

2023 Activities CONTACTS

Walks and Talks at KWG	Wendy Grimm	0419 323 035
Propagation at KWG	Tania Lamble	0415 043 671
Bushcare at KWG	Sue Bowen	0478 957 951
The Knoll	Wendy Grimm	0419 323 035
Flower Display at KWG	Jan Marshall	0403 908 042

REMINDER

Suggestions for speakers at the general

meetings . If you know of anyone, or hear of anyone who you think would have a topic/ presentation suitable for our group please contact Jan Williamson on janw7531@gmail.com

Committee Contacts

northshore@austplants.com.au

President:

Sue Bowen 0478 957 951

Website: <https://austplants.com.au/North-Shore>

Newsletter Editor: Jan Williamson
9875 2262 janw7531@gmail.com

The preferred method for Membership Applications & Renewals is to go to the APS NSW website and follow the instructions at <https://austplants.com.au/about-membership>

If joining or renewing online presents any problems assistance can be given by emailing your query to northshore@austplants.com.au

Are you in a joint membership of APS NSW?

Would you prefer to use separate email addresses and/or contact numbers? This arrangement would mean that you each receive electronic communications, e.g. *Blandfordia*. This can be arranged by contacting Merle Thompson apsnswmembership@gmail.com

April 2023 Committee Meeting Notes

- Speakers at meetings
- Plant sales: follow up invite to attend Berowra Wood Chop on 26th August, 2023.
- 2023 Val Williams Scholarship .
- Propagation report
- W&T notes on website & promotion of their existence

Do you want to know more about native plants?

Have you tried <https://austplants.com.au/> and within that site <https://resources.austplants.com.au/plant-database/> ?

More plants for sale

Brian Roach (APS NSG member) at Westleigh Native Plants
Contact westleighnativeplants@gmail.com

Newsletter submissions: Deadline for submissions is the third Friday of the month. For the June 2023 edition is Friday 19 May 2023 Editor: janw7531@gmail.com

Blandfordia *The Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society North Shore Group*