

Blandfordia



North Shore Group
(ABN 87 002 680 408)

SEPTEMBER 2023

President's message

We had a most fascinating talk at our meeting on 4th August. Although our speaker, Dr Alex Austin, from Ku-ring-gai Council, was ill, we still managed to hold a zoom meeting at Beatrice Taylor Hall with Alex speaking from his home. Thirty one members and visitors turned up to hear him give his presentation on solitary bees and how to support them. I had no idea that most of our solitary bees are ground-nesting and that a raised garden bed (covered with some pebbles but not mulched) just might attract one of my favourite bees, the blue banded bee, to nest!!!



Spring is on its way and I am enjoying some orchids that are in flower. My pots of *Pterostylis curta* are all flowering and I found this magnificent *Dendrobium teretifolium* in a nearby garden. →



I was also fortunate to be able to drop into a Bonsai and Ikebana display at the Forestville Community Centre recently. Among the bonsais were this 59 year-old *Ficus rubiginosa* and several flowering *Zieria prostratas* (a favourite low grower that we propagate at our shadehouse).



Please join us at our garden visit on Sunday 10th September at Westleigh. Brian Roach is a very experienced propagator and gardener and he has a vast knowledge of native plants.



Sue Bowen

Friday 8 September 7.00pm for 7.30pm



Speaker: Sarah McInnes (2022 Val Williams Scholar)

Topic: How is dormancy controlled in seeds of heat-responsive Australian fire-prone species?

Background: Growing up only minutes away from both Ku-ring-gai and Garigal National Park, I loved native plants at a very early age. I completed my undergraduate degree at UNSW Sydney in chemistry, but moved to fire ecology (specifically looking at plants) for my Honours and PhD.

Currently, I'm in my second year of a PhD at UNSW, where I study the fire ecology of native plant seeds in fire-prone ecosystems – specifically, how they survive the extreme heat of a bushfire. I'm currently supervised by fire ecologists Dr Mark Ooi (UNSW) and Dr Ryan Tangney (Kings Park, WA).

Future 2023 meetings

13 October

Karen Wilson *Sedges and rushes*

10 November

Harry Loots *Plants Hidden in the Clouds*

8 December

Christmas Party KWG

2024 Suggestions for speakers welcomed. Please contact Jan Williamson janw@7531@gmail.com

Jeff Howes' suggestion

I have been growing *Phebalium squamulosum*, a medium shrub for many years and it is a reliable plant growing in my heavy soil. It requires little water once established and is happy in dappled light to full sun.



It is a variable species, containing a number of forms and 10 to 12 subspecies and the flowers vary for white to yellowish/cream. The only maintenance I do is to cut back by one third after flowering. They shoot even from old wood.

The attached picture shows in the background, the yellow flowering form on the LH side and the normal white flowering form on the RH side. Worth sourcing from nurseries and adding to your garden.



Dendrobium speciosum
in foreground

This is one of the many creamy / yellow flowering subspecies being sold as *Phebalium squamulosum* 'Dusty'

**Presentation at the meeting held on 4th August by
Dr Alexander Austin on Australian solitary bees and how to support them.**

Written and image by Sue Fredrickson



Dr Austin currently runs the Ku-ring-gai Council's Native Stingless Bee program as well as other initiatives related to the support of Australia's native bee species.

Alex started by explaining that true bees belong to the group of organisms called Anthophila. They are essentially "vegetarian wasps". Bees are often visually hard to tell apart from wasps. There are currently close to 1,700 bee species known in Australia but there may be as many as 2,000 because it is thought many are still not described. They can be tiny or massive in size. Significant differences between males and females within the one species can lead to thinking they are different species. Only females carry pollen and the male does not sting.

Alex then went on to discuss the great variety of Australian bees some of which can also be found in our gardens. Lovely photos accompanied the descriptions of feeding and nesting habits of Leafcutters, Resin bees, Blue-banded and Teddy bear bees, large furry bees, ground nesters, solitary bees such as the magnificent big green Carpenter bee whose numbers are in decline, small Carpenter bees, Cellophane bees, Masked bees, the Euryglossinae ground nesters and Cuckoo bees.

The talk then went on to say how we could encourage Native bees to our gardens.

Basically they need somewhere to live and something to eat.

Land clearing and climate change effects are not helping native bee numbers. We can help by providing a diversity of flowering plants, some of which will provide pollen and some that provide nectar and at diverse times of the year. Maintain what is already growing as well as new plantings and have plant type diversity including ground covers, small shrubs, large shrubs and trees. You can't go too far wrong with flowering native plants.

Native bees don't mind less organised gardens as opposed to manicured gardens and are not so attracted by red flowers which they can't see and which have evolved rather to attract birds. Alex listed some of the Native plant types preferred by Native bees including the Myrtaceae (lillypillys, teatrees), Proteaceae (Banksias, Grevilleas, Hakeas, Macadamias), Asteraceae (Daisies, such as Olearia and Brachyscome) and Fabaceae (Peas including Hardenbergia and Dillwynnia, which have protein-rich pollen). Native bees will also be attracted by some exotics in particular Herbs (Basil, Thyme, Oregano, Sage, Parsley and Coriander), vegetables like celery and radish, flowering Daisies and Salvias. Bees like large clumps of colour, so think of having clump plantings and let some go to seed as the dried hollow stems provide roosting sites for male bees and nests for females.

Nesting requirements were then discussed. Natural cavities include hollow stems, man-made cavities include parts of houses, metal gateposts and hose tubing. We can help by providing bee hotels with hollow natural materials such as bamboo stems and pithy canes like Lantana, but not plastic items, straws or other non-breathing manufactured items that get affected by condensation that can contribute to disease. The components of the hotel should have 5-8mm diameter cavities and a suitable depth is 150mm. It should not be too big as big populations potentially breed disease. The bee hotel should be securely anchored and be out of the weather.

The majority of native bees are ground nesters (a pie graph shown looked like about three quarters of native bees are ground nesters). Since it is harder to provide nesting materials for them, we should look after any sites where there are ground nesting bees already. Leave some bare ground in the garden for them. They like raised garden beds to dig into. Scatter pebbles as they seem to like digging in the lee of a pebble or rock. Don't use mulch or weed mat. Drilled wooden blocks can be provided. We can provide mud bricks for mud nesting bees or make a simulation using Besser blocks that are filled with fine tennis court loam, a clay/sand mix or a sand/cement mix, in which case small starter 1cm holes are made before the cement dries and sets. Lay the filled Besser blocks upright directly on the ground in a place that gets morning sun.

Continued on page 5

Answers to questions from the audience followed and added some more interesting extra information

- The reason Green Carpenter bees are in decline is because of their specific nesting requirements e.g. loss of the favoured Banksias that are > 20 years old that have softened bark.
- Verroa mite, though it doesn't infect Native bees directly, can still cause indirect exposure of Native bees to the pathogens that it carries. Alex mentioned that since feral bees are the biggest threat to native bees, anything that decreases feral bee numbers, such as the mite, could benefit native bees.
- Most native bees "hibernate" e.g. spend winter underground and emerge in Spring to lay eggs.
- Swarms of Tetragonula bees can be because of either mating or fighting. They may swarm while waiting to mate with the females inside the hive. Fighting is often indicated by a lot of bees dying off and occurs because a swarm is trying to take over a hive site.
- Native bee hives can be moved around and provide a pollination service on a commercial scale but that is still in its infancy.

Thank you Alex for a most informative talk. Since Alex was not well on the night but still kindly offered to deliver his presentation by Zoom, that led to a flurry of activity as we grappled with the technology, this being the first time we'd viewed a Zoom in Beatrice Taylor Hall. Thanks to new member Angus for helping out with the sound problems- all good in the end!!



Hardenbergia violacea Jan W

APS Sutherland is celebrating their 60th Anniversary this year

Gardens weekend, 2–3 September 2023

Enjoy six gardens of Australian Plants Society Sutherland Group members.

Entry to each garden by gold coin donation.

Refreshments and plant sales at selected gardens.

Saturday 2 September 2023 10 am to 3 pm

Hogue garden – 75a Wattle Rd, Jannali

Aitken garden – 44 Buchanan Ave, Bonnet Bay

McColl garden – 13 Shorland Ave, Jannali

Zande garden – 8 Bates Dr, Kareela

Plus Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve, Manooka Place, Kareela

Sunday 3 September 2023 10 am to 2 pm

Thorn garden – 18 Caldarra Ave, Engadine

Cartwright garden – 25a Dubarda St, Engadine

Plus Sydney Wildflower Nursery – 9 Veno St, Heathcote

10% discount to Australian Plants Society members

Open 7 days, 9 am to 5 pm.

More information

<https://austplants.com.au/Sutherland>

Arthropodium strictum commonly called the chocolate lilly is a great addition to your garden for its chocolate, caramel scent. The flower spikes are up to one metre high and contain many pale mauve to dark purple flowers.

An added bonus is its edible tubers.

Jeff Howes



WELCOME

A BIG welcome to our newest members, Jarrad, Richard & Frances, Andrew, William & Catriona, Jill and Veronica. We hope that you have an informative and enjoyable relationship with our amazing flora, APSNSW and our group.

You will see from this newsletter that the organisation and group provide a large variety of ways to be involved and informed. Our members have a wealth of knowledge about the plants, the locales and micro & macro environments, photography and love to share this knowledge and experience with each other.

Group Activity Sunday September 10

Garden Visit to Brian Roach's Garden Westleigh

September is a prime time to see many Native Plants at their flowering best, so we are lucky that Brian Roach will make us welcome to visit his beautiful Native Garden in Westleigh this month.

Brian can give great growing tips and advice on what he has observed for many years as the best way to plan your garden and choose plants for it, depending on your conditions, soil, aspect etc. He is also an accomplished plant propagator and has a variety of his propagated plants for sale. He may even show us the Bower Bird bower that a bird has constructed in his garden.

He is happy if we arrive at **10 am** and soon after that he will give our group of visitors a run-down . Your punctual arrival will mean that Brian is not having to repeat himself too many times! Hopefully we can leave him in peace to get on with his day by 11.30am. Some of us will then head to Ruddock Park for a bite to eat and a relaxed get-together and chat. Note that Westleigh café, also in Eucalyptus Drive, in the shopping centre, offers great coffee take-aways.

Date and time: **Sunday September 10th 10am**

Where: **47 Eucalyptus Drive Westleigh.**

What to bring: Weather appropriate clothes e.g. rain gear, umbrella? Some change in case you decide to purchase plants, whatever you'd like to bring for yourself foodwise if you decide to join the gathering in Ruddock Park (also in Eucalyptus Drive) afterwards e.g. morning tea or early lunch food, keep cup for take aways.

Contact person: **Sue Fredrickson** 0401 362 921 paulandsuefreddo@bigpond.com.

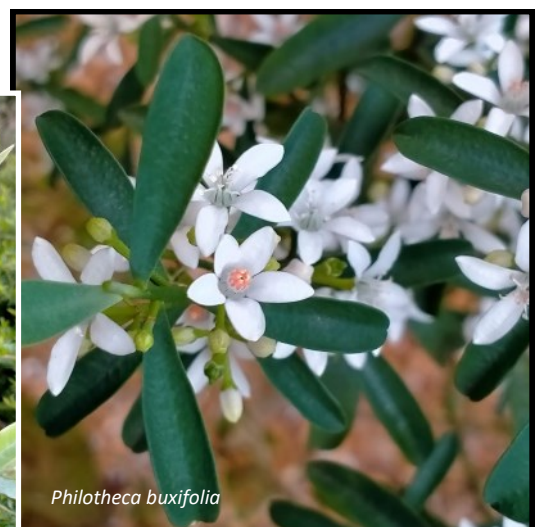
It would be **very helpful if you contact me to let me know that you plan to come**, both so that we can give Brian an idea of numbers and for me to be able to contact you if for some reason (weather?) it is necessary to cancel.



Indigofera australis



Gastrolobium celsianum



Philotheca buxifolia

What is flowering in your garden?
Jan W

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 Pavilion in KWG. No booking necessary.

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

Walks are easy/medium. Sessions run 10am to about 12 noon. Please wear a hat, have suitable footwear and carry water/snack.

Sunscreen and insect repellent would also be a good idea.

Meeting in Caley's Pavilion, for a 10am start. A power point presentation with specimens followed by a Walk in Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens to explore some of the many plants and fruits that grow there.

Sept 4 Monday Pea shrubs and vines (Family Fabaceae, Subfamily Faboideae)

Sept 11 Monday Ferns & Fernery tour

Sept 18 Monday Walk Only: Weeds and Bush regeneration

No further activities until Monday 9th October.



For more information and the full 2023 W&T programme see

<https://austplants.com.au/North-Shore-Walks-&-Talks>

At this site to see notes on each topic, click on Walks & Talks notes for each topic are [here](#).

We all know of this remarkable explorer

Jeff Howes notes that

William Dampier was the first European naturalist to visit Australia on 17 August 1689. He landed in the Shark Bay area of Western Australia. While there he collected 24 Australian plants. His pressed specimens are in the Fielding - Bruce Herbarium in Oxford University in UK (why not in Australia?).

This collection includes Sturt's Desert Pea *Swainsona formosa*.



Jan W

Report on Challenger and Koolewong Track Walks, West Head on 12 August 2023.



Those of us who attended were treated to great floral displays.

Along the Challenger Track, the highlight was the numerous *Boronia serrulata*'s in full flower, as shown in Petra's photo (to left). Numerous other species were putting on a good floral display too.

At the Koolewong Track, there were a few highlights. The Ironbark orchids *Dendrobium aemulum* were in magnificent flower safely high up on the tree trunks. The challenge was on for good photos of those- which people with good cameras managed to do! The walk passed through galleries of numerous colourful wildflowers- head high thick trackside Wax flowers *Eriostemon australasius* and *Dillwynia retorta*.



The view at the end of that walk, over Lion Island and the Central Coast across the Hawkesbury River entrance is very impressive and peaceful. Northern Sydney bush at its best!

Sue Fredrickson

Image taken on Koolewong Track by Petra



Sue Fredrickson's images

Tiny Forest, Big Impact!

Bringing the benefits of the forests to our suburbs

Provide more shade and cool the air

Reduce noise and pollution

Create homes and food for wildlife

Make us happier and healthier

Absorb greenhouse gas emissions

Help tackle climate change

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/tiny-forests

Tiny Forest in the making...

What's a Tiny Forest?

- Tiny footprint (as small as a tennis court)
- Filled with a diverse mix of native plants normally found in the wild, and suited to local growing conditions
- Closely planted (3-5 plants per square metre)
- Plants chosen to replicate the layers of a forest

Like to know what's growing here? Check out the plant list online

wollongong.nsw.gov.au/tiny-forests





TINY FORESTS
 This is a topic new to me and I was so curious, I decided to drive to the Wollongong Botanic gardens to see for myself first hand, where, according to a staff member I spoke to, advised it was the first such forest in an Australian Botanic Garden.
 As you will see from the attached picture the density is quite close with a range of plants from low growing understory plants to tall trees. Evidently a tiny forest can be created in a 3 square metre size in home gardens. I am not sure if this could be done. However it is an interesting concept that is gaining momentum as global warming shows us the future. For those who have not heard of the

concept I have copied the following explanation from EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny forest web site.
Tiny Forests are densely packed patches of native bushland the size of a tennis court, right in the heart of our cities. These urban wildlife oases are a unique nature-based solution, reconnecting people with nature and helping to mitigate our urban climate and biodiversity challenges. Using an established planting method (called the Miyawaki method) that includes soil enrichment, diverse indigenous plant selection, and a dense planting structure; Tiny Forests are supercharged, growing up to 10 times faster than traditional forests, and becoming up to 100 times more biodiverse than monoculture forests.
 Some further background on the Miyawaki method of afforestation:
 It was pioneered in the 1970s, by Professor Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist and forest ecologist. It involves careful species selection, specific soil preparation, very dense planting, a high diversity of species planted, and local community involvement
 Jeff Howes July 2023

- A few references:
1. EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny forest web site: <https://earthwatch.org.au/programs/tiny-forests>
 2. EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny forest Handbook: https://earthwatch.org.au/images/research/Tinyforests/Tiny%20Forest%20Handbook_edit_2023-04-14.pdf
 3. <https://carbonpositiveaustralia.org.au/blog/the-benefits-of-miyawaki-urban-forests-in-australia/>

Thanks Jeff for this most interesting article. Jan W

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 6

MONTHLY GROUP ACTIVITY Sunday 10 September area see page 5

PROPAGATION is held at KWG on alternate Wednesdays from 1-4pm 6 & 27 September, 11 & 25 October

THE KNOLL APS NSG Native Plant Community Garden at KWG Please contact Wendy Grimm 0419 323 035

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: 13 & 27 September, 4 & 18 October

As in previous years, this waratah plant in a nearby garden is currently putting on its magnificent display. *Jan W*

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



Committee Contacts

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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

August 2023 Committee Meeting Notes

- Plant sales at Berowra Woodchop 27 August
- General group matters



BOONGALA NATIVE GARDENS & RAINFOREST OPEN DAYS

Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday 10am to 4pm from Friday 1st September to Monday 9th October, 2023
Adults \$5 Children free 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst
<https://www.boongalagardens.com/>

More plants for sale

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

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/> ?

Newsletter submissions: Deadline for submissions is the third Friday of the month.
For the October 2023 edition is Friday 15th September 2023
Editor: janw7531@gmail.com

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