

# CALEYI



## NORTHERN BEACHES GROUP austplants.com.au/northern-beaches



December 2019

Australian Plants Society Northern Beaches  
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### CALENDAR

**APS Northern Beaches Christmas lunch** 12 noon for 12.30pm **Saturday December 14** at Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden, Dee Why.

An email will be sent to ascertain contributions i.e. salads, deserts etc. Cooked chickens will be supplied. Also please bring any drinks, glasses, crockery and cutlery you require.

If you wish to participate in the Kris Kringle please bring a wrapped gift to a maximum value of \$10.

Many thanks this month to Jan, Penny, Russell, Anne, Jennifer and Lindy for their reports and great photographs. As usual we seek contributions of any articles or photographs that you think will interest our members. Deadline is 2 weeks before next meeting.

**No meeting in January**

**APS Northern Beaches February Meeting**  
Thursday February 6, 2020 at Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden, Dee Why.

**7pm Committee Meeting.**

**7.30 pm Plant Family.**

**7.45 pm Presentation tbc.**

**Supper Georgine & Jane.**

**Editor** march@ozemail.com.au

### NOVEMBER MEETING

**Plant family Dilleniaceae:**  
talk given by Anne Gray.

This family is solely represented in temperate Australia by the genus *Hibbertia*, which is named after George Hibbert (1757 – 1837). He was an eminent English merchant, politician, slave & ship owner, amateur botanist and book collector. He funded various expeditions to the Cape region of South Africa and to China. His collection of heaths, banksias and other Cape and Botany Bay plants was reported to be one of the best in London. He presented his herbarium to the Linnean Society.



There are 5 *Hibbertias* found in the bush around Sydney: *H. dentata*, *H. fasciculata*, *H. monogyna*, *H. nitida* and *H. scandens*. Anne brought in a sample of 3 of these species. Some robust discussion followed on the rarity or commonness of the different species.



Jan Carnes.

## THE GARDENER'S TALE

Penny Hunstead



Penny Hunstead, pic: Ed.

I cannot remember a time when I didn't love plants.

From babyhood, until the end of WWII, my mother and I lived with my maternal grandparents. Grandpa was a land surveyor and very keen hobby gardener. As I was his constant garden companion I learnt about plants, especially about vegetables and weeds, as I was learning my mother tongue.

I spent my childhood in Balmoral. The family garden was a haphazard place where my mother kept chooks, grew vegetables and had the favourite shrubs of the 50's – azaleas, hibiscus, hydrangeas and roses. My father loved fruit trees and we had to eat his maggoty peaches, bird-pecked bananas, always sour citrus and clothes-staining mulberries. But weeds were the healthiest specimens in that Balmoral garden and it all seemed a bit mad that I had the job of pulling them out.

During my teenage years we lived in Parramatta. The garden in the house we rented there, was very small and although I cared for it, that exercise was not pecuniary. So I earned pocket money by working in other people's gardens. This work usually consisted of doing jobs that the owner hated, like weeding the rose beds, digging out oxalis and pruning prickly shrubs. But I was learning on the job. I could see that a garden was a marvelous place, teeming with the most fascinating plants and animals. A seed was powerhouse when it was planted. There were still flocks of butterflies in the summertime. Bushwalking with my parents, re-introduced me to the Australian native plants that my Grandpa had shown me in Canberra.

Finishing high school, I got a job in the Botany Department of Sydney University and met people who had known the earliest botanical taxonomists of the Australian flora. These people were of interest to me, as my maternal great grandmother was a collector of Australian native flora, in Western Australia, in the late nineteenth century. She was engaged to collect, press and send specimens of Australian native plants to botanists in Kew Gardens.

In the 1960s, as a young married woman, I was at last in charge of my own garden. I took a University degree majoring in botany. At last, plants could earn me some real money! However, I had parental responsibilities and all jobs that used my botanical knowledge were those that involved working in places far distant from my home. Thus I needed to find a job with plants that didn't involve travel. So, I did a trade course in horticulture. A letterbox drop advertising my (fingers crossed!) skills returned 5 replies. Forty years later with no further advertising, there is that 6 degrees of separation link between clients, over time.

So what are the fundamental aspects of being a professional gardener? A gardener's life is not just about plants. It involves whole gardens, plants – old and new, clients, people in trades related to gardening, the tax department and .....the weather. It is not as financially rewarding as being an employee, but it is a fabulous way to spend one's working days,

exercising the body and the mind and making a positive difference to people's lives.

A gardener's day will involve making new, renovating old and maintaining existing gardens. Work can be as little as putting a few potted plants on a balcony to the task of maintaining a 5-acre domain. New gardens are always a joy because there is a greater or lesser degree of control. Rarely will a client stipulate every plant and often it is left up to the gardener to choose every plant and all the incidental landscaping materials. I have never been the creator of quirky gardens, unlike some people who have chosen all artificial plants or landscaping materials such as crushed coloured glass, beer bottle edging and the kaleidoscopic use of coloured mulch. My gardens have been places where people love to be for entertaining, daydreaming or eating the fruits of my labours.

My Grandpa instilled in me the love of Australian native plants as he had been on a number of pioneering land surveys in the Australian bush. So it was natural that I would try and persuade my clients to have indigenous plants in their gardens. People love to grow Australian "bush tucker" plants and there are more of them suitable for Sydney gardens than you'd realize. However, there are sites where Australian native plants would not make as interesting a garden as would exotics. On a 35th floor penthouse balcony, I have planted a fun desert garden of rocks and pebbles with big and tiny succulents and blue foliage plants to represent a meandering creek. This garden withstood the onslaught of a hail storm! Other gardens have included fruit trees and vegetables planted in an ornamental way and a 6-metre long, 1-metre wide mini-rainforest garden. Of course, there have been numerous stock-standard suburban gardens planted with run-of-the-mill exotics and oh-so-trendy hardy Australian natives. So then, I say "goodbye" to these new gardens and wish them well under unknown care.

Maintenance of existing gardens is whole different ball game! One has an ongoing relationship with the garden and the client. These relationships will always be; like the garden and dislike the client, dislike the garden and like the client and like both the client and the garden. The fourth, obvious relationship can never work! I have changed a disliked garden to one I like, but never a disliked client to one I like. Happily, I now have only gardens where plants and people are liked....almost equally! Some clients have become life-long friends, as have their plants. Gardening for apartment blocks, where the clients are anonymous is unsatisfying, although there have been the apartment block "dragons" about whose behaviour it has been fun to relate to family and friends!

Trade and retail nurseries are like supermarkets. You go in to buy a few things and come out with a trolley-full! If you think hobby gardeners are seduced by beautiful plants, well so are professionals. Of course, the best way to resist being carried away with purchases is to go to a tubestock nursery. Most professional gardeners buy tubestock plants because, like little kids, they settle into the neighbourhood quickly.

Unfortunately, you often get the complaint, "Couldn't you have got a bigger one?" Often bigger is false economy, because that pot-bound rootstock may take the same time to come to life as the tiddler has to reach the same size.

For a woman gardener, there are funny experiences with landscaping suppliers. I've been asked "where's the boss?" and when buying heavy or bagged material "can I lift this into your wagon?" when they know I have to lift it out and heave it around on the job. Even dressed in the most obvious gardener's work clothes, I'll be asked for proof of my occupation, to get a trade discount. In the same attire, I'll be asked by a shopper, horticultural questions at a retail nursery, then be offered a garden job.

A gardener's relationship with the tax dept is pretty low-key. Work books are simple to keep and I've never had the inconvenience of being audited. The weather is another matter! One year I kept 5 changes of rain gear in the car. Ticks loved the humidity and I would have up to 200 on me, per day. In the drought, almost no ticks at all. Hot, hot weather called for white cotton shirts and then I was still uncomfortable in protective long jeans. On sunny winter days you wish that the hours of daylight were as long as in summer. On hot summer days you seek work in the shade. But, whatever the weather, it's great to be in the fresh air all day.

So, what more can I say. If I had my life again, I'd come back to professional gardening.



## APS QUARTERLY: FROM WARRIEWOOD TO GONDWANA

Lindy Monson

In November Northern Beaches Group hosted an APS Quarterly Gathering in Warriewood that included walks, plant sales, information about the ANPSA Biennial Conference 2021, a plant presentation and an informative talk about the Wollemi pine.

The speaker **Liz Benson's** topic was '**My Life with Wally**'. Liz sketched the place of the Wollemi pine, *Wollemia nobilis*, in Gondwanan history so as to be declared a 'living fossil'. As context, she took us back into the history to described RF Scott's finding in 1912 of *Glossopteris* fossils, a conifer in Antarctica, preserved in rocks dating from 200-300 million years ago. The fossil leaf has parallel veins. These fossils are also found in South America, Africa, Madagascar, India, Australia and New Zealand. Recently *Glossopteris* was also found in Mongolia. *Glossopteris* fossils can be seen in The Age of Fishes Museum, Canowindra.



pic: Ed.

During the Jurassic period Australia was covered in conifers, but this changed as a result of continental drift. As Australia separated and drifted northwards a wet and warm climate favouring rainforests gave way to a drier climate. Conditions then allowed flowering plants to dominate. Angiosperms replaced gymnosperms and eventually evolved into the full range of flowering plant species known today. Liz noted that the reticulated leaves of angiosperms (ie. veins with a net-like structure) have an adaptive advantage over leaves with parallel veins.

David Noble's chance discovery of the four-storey high *Wollemia nobilis* after the 1994 bushfires in an isolated gorge in the Wollemi National Park still excites naturalists world-wide. The Wollemi pine is related to both extinct and living species in the family Araucariaceae. The ancient Kauri pine *Agathis jurassica* is the Wollemi pine's closest relative while *Podozamites jurassica* is also close. Living examples of close relatives are the kauri pine, *Agathis robusta*, and the bunya pine *Araucaria bidwillii*, a food for indigenous Australians. It is possible that the Wollemi pine may one day be found widespread in the fossil record.

An international media frenzy broke out when the discovery of the Wollemi pine was announced. Unfortunately this impacted on David Noble as a private person. It took international effort and time to identify *Wollemia nobilis* and its existence contributed to the successful bid to list the Greater Blue Mountains as a World Heritage area.

The Wollemi pine is now grown around the world. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW) dealt with any threat of extinction of the two stands of the Wollemi pine growing in the two gullies by propagating it at the Australian Botanic Garden Mt Annan and by commercial distribution. Initial attempts at tissue culture or helicopter seed collection have been abandoned, as tip cuttings from the top will take. If the cuttings originate from the side, the shoots grow along the ground. The plant does require water, in keeping with its natural environment at the base of a sandstone cliff.

As a bushwalker and traveller, Liz Benson finds interest and joy in seeing the Wollemi pine around the world, in places as diverse as the Inala Jurassic garden on Bruny Island, the Bunya Mountains Queensland, Hobart Botanic Gardens, in a cool glasshouse in Singapore, outside the National Museum of Natural History Paris, in London's Kew Gardens and in Germany.



Wollemia nobilis. Pic Liz Benson



Wollemi with male & female cones. Pic LB

Liz's photos, story-telling, breadth of knowledge and first-hand experience of *Wollemia nobilis* were greatly appreciated by the APS audience of 47 members from Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Central Coast, Sutherland, East Hills, Parramatta Hills, North Shore and Northern Beaches district groups.



Russell previews the morning walks. pic: Ed.

Earlier, Northern Beaches members Russell Beadmore and Anne Gray led visitors on the Warriewood Wetlands boardwalk and the Irrawong walk (see separate article & photos).

North Shore district group sold plants propagated in their nursery at Kuring-gai Wildflower Garden. The Nelson Heather Community Centre's doors open to an outside garden, enhancing the ambience for plant sales.

### APS members also spoke:

- **Leonie Hogue** and **Liz Aitkin** recommend a free open online short course on natural history illustration at the University of Newcastle, adding that the assessment process was well worthwhile. Find it at <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/online-learning/drawing-nature-science-and-culture>.
- **Heather Miles, APS Secretary**, invited members to register their interest and become involved in planning for the ANPSA Biennial Conference in Kiama, September 2021. This could include trial runs of trips and tours, eg. to Lord Howe Island.
- **Rhonda Daniels** from Sutherland presented a dozen or so beautiful samples of angiosperms in flower eg. a mauve Blueberry Ash, with a white bloom on the leaves; a *Grevillea johnsonii*, with its graceful spider-shaped flowers.
- **APS President John Aitkin** thanked APS regional volunteers for their ongoing work and Northern Beaches members for managing the day's event, especially the fresh coffee and homemade cakes.



## IRRAWONG WALK

Anne Gray

A very friendly and knowledgeable group of APS members joined the Irrawong Walk. Penny Hunstead had produced a handout naming the trees and plants to be found along the walk which was a great help..

Penny points out plants at the waterfall. pic. Anne



*Ceratopetalum apetalum*. pic. Anne



The main trees to be found in the Reserve are the beautiful *Eucalyptus robusta* (Swamp Mahogany) trees. It's deeply ridged bark is surprisingly soft to touch. Other trees found on the walk were *Livistona australis*, *Melaleuca ericaefolia*, *Eucalyptus piperita* and *Ficus coronata* (Sandpaper Fig) Shrubs seen were *Eupomatia laurina*, *Omolanthus* and *Pomerderris discolor* and *Solanum aviculare*.

Towards the end of the walk and approaching the sandy beach and waterfall we found a Lilly Pilly forest including *Acmena smithii*, *Glochidion sp.*, *Ficus rubiginosa*, *Endiandra sieberi* and the rare *Syzygium paniculatum*. Near the sandy beach is *Synoum glandulosum*, *Eupomatia laurina*, *Clerodendrum tomentosum*, *Tristaniopsis laurina* and the vines *Cissus hypoglauca* and *Morinda jasmioides*.

Young cormorant. pic. Jennifer



The birds spotted were a Little Pied Cormorant that dived under a log and then came out of the water to stand on the top of the log to spread its feathers out, a female Golden Whistler and an Eastern Yellow Robin. We heard Bellbirds and Whip birds.

Happy walkers. pic. Anne



Everyone found plenty to interest them and had to be gently encouraged to return to the Nelson Heather Centre for lunch.

## OTHER PHOTOGRAPHIC MOMENTS AT THE QUARTERLY.



Plant sales. pic. Ed

Healthy plants. pic. Ed.



Unusual camera angle. pic. Russell.



Serious business. pic. Russell.



More serious business. pic. Russell.