

CALGAROO

February 2022



Eucalyptus parramattensis - Calgaroo

**Newsletter of the Parramatta and Hills District Group
Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd**

What's on in 2022

Saturday 26 February 2 pm: Member's Meeting and AGM at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place Cherrybrook.

The speaker will be Professor Michelle Leishman, who will be talking about the 'Which Plant Where' Project – finding suitable species for greening urban spaces in a warming climate. The issue of heat islands in our cities has generated some discussion lately. It is particularly relevant for our area where instant suburbs are springing up on greenfield sites with almost no planting incorporated in the urban designs.

Saturday 26 March 2 pm: Members' Meeting at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place, Cherrybrook.

The speaker will be Angie Michaelis who will be talking about plants for gardens in the shade. Angie has been a popular speaker at previous meetings. In more recent times she has written some entertaining and informative articles for *Calgaroo* on the influence of Ancient Greek on some of our botanical names. Drawing on her extensive experience as a gardener, propagator and bush regenerator she will be sure to inspire those of us with shady spots in our gardens.

Saturday 23 April 2 pm: Bushwalk at Vineyard Creek Reserve Dundas.

We will explore the upper valley of Vineyard Creek, a tributary of the Parramatta River. Be prepared for a steep walk down to a hidden fern gully and then an easier walk to the dam created to provide water for the Oatlands Golf Course. Below the dam, the walk is among

tall trees - blackbutts, angophoras, bloodwoods and turpentines - in beautiful shady valley. Some of the more interesting understory plants include *Trachymene incisa* and *Astroloma humifusum*. Meet at the entrance to the reserve in Robert St Dundas.

Saturday 21 May: NSW Region Gathering Hosted by our group at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place Cherrybrook.

The 2 pm meeting will be preceded by a garden visit at 10 am to Boongala Gardens in Kenthurst followed by a BYO Lunch at Gumnut Hall. The speaker will be Peter Olde who will be talking about "Grevilleas suitable for pots and patios" Please keep this date free to be able to help with the many tasks required to make this meeting a success.

Saturday 25 June 2 pm Members' Meeting at Gumnut Hall, Gumnut Place Cherrybrook.

Saturday 23 July 2 pm: Bushwalk Jones Road Kenthurst.

Saturday 27 August 2 pm: Bushwalk Cobar Ridge Murrumbidgee National Park.

Saturday 24 September 2 pm: Garden Visit to the Wright's Garden at Baulkham Hills.

Saturday 22 October 2 pm: Bushwalk.

Saturday 26 November 2 pm: Members' Meeting and Christmas Party.

Group Meeting 26th February 2022

Speaker: Professor Michelle Leishman – Finding climate-ready plants for resilient urban parks and gardens

For our first meeting on 26th February 2022, our guest speaker will again be Prof. Michelle Leishman. This will be the third time she has been our speaker. Her previous talks have been very interesting and topical, and were very well received by members.

Prof. Leishman is an internationally renowned and much-published biologist, who works in the fields of plant invasion biology, climate change impacts and adaptations, conservation and urban ecology. She leads a research group in the new School of Natural Sciences at Macquarie University, and is Director of this university's 'Smart Green Cities'. She has led the development of widely-used online tools for climate change adaptation and leads the 'Which Plant Where' project, aiming to facilitate resilient and diverse urban green spaces. She also holds leading positions in the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, Bush Heritage Australia, and the Australian Flora Foundation.

Green spaces in our urban areas are extremely important for mitigating high summer temperatures, absorbing carbon dioxide, and for the psychological benefits for the residents of crowded cities. It is likely many of the current street trees and green space plants will not survive the inevitable higher temperatures of the future. The 'Which Plant Where' project aims to give reliable recommendations for planning and planting public green spaces and private gardens. They have tested and observed how well some plants can adapt to the changing climate. This project was quite young last time Michelle was our speaker, so this

time she can explain some of the results of their testing, and recommendations for designing green spaces, with some certainty that the plants chosen will thrive despite worsening climate change.

This will be a very interesting, topical and informative talk about the threats by climate change to gardens, including to native gardens, and ways to avoid and manage these.

Pip Gibian

Canoeing down the Cattai

Pip Gibian

On Saturday 27th November Mal Johnston was the speaker at our meeting. Mal and Jenny Johnston are well known in the native plant world, as they ran a retail native nursery, Annangrove Grevilleas, for many years. Now they have a beautiful garden, Boongala Gardens, which they open to the public twice a year.



A few years ago, Mal made a three-day canoe trip down Cattai Creek from Castle Hill to where it flows into the Hawkesbury River, near Cattai National Park. He described this trip and the native plants he saw on the way. Parts of the banks of Cattai Creek are still covered with wet sclerophyll forest. The plant species he saw included *Acmena smithii*, *Backhousia myrtifolia*, *Tristaniopsis laurina*, *Callistemon salignus* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana*. Many were festooned with vines.

Mal also has extensive knowledge of the local early colonial history. He detailed the land grants given early settlers in the mid-nineteenth century, and which families took up these grants. All this information was accompanied by photos of some of the early farmers, their houses and their farm implements. A few of the houses are still standing. Mal has lived in this area all his life, and he knew many of the descendants of these early farmers. He also expounded on some of the uses of the local flora made by the Aborigines - the long time, original residents along Cattai Creek. Mal's talk was full of information and very interesting.

Epsilon: the simple E

Can understanding where plant names and botanical terms come from help us work out what they mean? Angie Michaelis continues her exploration of Ancient Greek.

E is the most common letter in the English language. Ancient Greek had two letters (and a few letter combinations) that become 'e' in English. The fifth letter of its alphabet, *e-psilon*, is the 'simple e'.

Let's start with prefixes – many we meet in botany begin with 'e'. For instance, ***Eu-calyptus*** means 'well covered', a reference to how the developing buds are covered by the woody operculum. So, the first of our prefixes is *eu-*, meaning 'good' or 'well' (*kaluptos* means 'covered').

Photo by L Hammersley, WA Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, showing flower pushing away the operculum

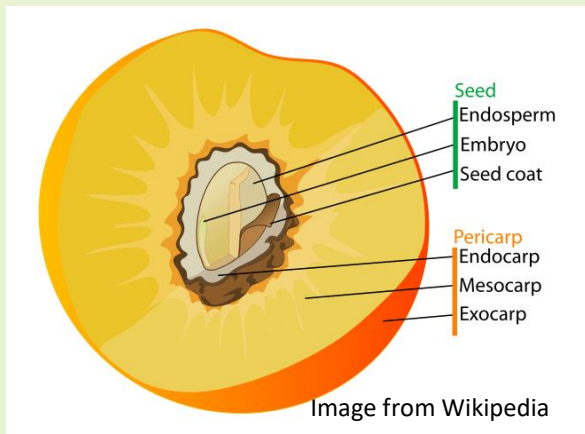


Image from Wikipedia

When you hear *endo-* think, 'inside'. For example, inside the fleshy part of a drupe, or stone fruit, you find a hard **endocarp** – the woody inner shell that surrounds the kernel. Inside the kernel is the **endosperm**. *Karpos* means fruit, *sperma* means seed – both from Greek.

Endemic means something confined inside a particular area: "***Telopea aspera***, the Gibraltar Range Waratah, is endemic to the New England region of NSW".

An **epidemic**, on the other hand, is not outside (that would be *ecto-* ...), but, as we know from

experience, around. *Epi-* usually translates as 'above' or 'upon'. The **epidermis** is the layer over or upon the original skin cells, and the often-misused word **epicentre** means the point on the surface above the earthquake centre. In botany, an **epiphyte** grows upon another plant (*phyton*).

An epiphyte staghorn growing upon a trunk.
Photo Angie Michaelis.



Less obviously, **Epacris** refers to where one commonly finds the genus growing: upon a summit (*epi+* *akros*, the highest point).

Eremophila also tells us where the plant likes to grow – it loves (from *phileo*, to love) the desert (*eremos*).

Finally, the grasses offer us two common names which are direct translations from Greek. The Greek god of love is **Eros**, and *grostis* is a Greek word for grass. Together, we have **Eragrostis**, or Love Grass. *E. brownii* is Common Love Grass in Australia, whereas African Love Grass *E. curvula* is a problem weed. Why Love Grass? One theory is that the flower panicles tended to catch in the long dresses of ladies as they walked through pastures. Once caught, they would creep upward, tickling their legs, perhaps **erotically**.

And in the fields what else might you find but a hedgehog, *ekhinos*. A hedgehog was to the Greeks a 'bristly', and to me, the easiest grass of all to recognise is the one with a bristly beard, ***Echinopogon*** – known as Hedgehog Grass.

Hedgehog Grass, *Echinopogon caespitosus*. Photo Angie Michaelis.



From Angus Stewart via Facebook

This evening I planted a tree in memory of my friend, Peter Cundall.

That tree is part of a garden I planted today as well. Every time I am in that garden I will think of this incredibly inspiring person, and continue his work of helping others to look after our precious environment through gardening and horticulture.

So, folks, if you want to honour a truly great and unique human, get out in the garden and plant a tree.

Come to think of it, plant lots of trees. The tree I planted for Peter is a rare and endangered Tasmanian species, *Eucalyptus risdonii*.



Landcare and Community News

There are lots of interesting articles about our environment, plus details of events too, in the first issue of the '*Greater Sydney Landcare and Community News*' for 2022.

Click to view it [here](#).

Mona Vale Road to Barrenjoey Lighthouse

Lesley Waite and Ian Cox

On Tuesday 16 November 2021 we had a relaxing but eventful outing to Barrenjoey Lighthouse.

On our leisurely drive down Mona Vale Road we stopped off at the two native plant nurseries, Harvest Seeds and Cicada Glen Nursery – see Pip’s article in the November 2021 *Calgaroo* for details. The variety and range of plants at both nurseries were impressive.

We also visited the Bahai Temple, a beautiful landmark surrounded mostly by native vegetation. It was a lovely place for our morning coffee.

The bushland near the Temple is fairly undisturbed. We soon found the critically endangered *Grevillea caleyi* just coming into flower. Surprisingly, there were numerous plants of *Xylomelum pyriforme* (Woody Pear).



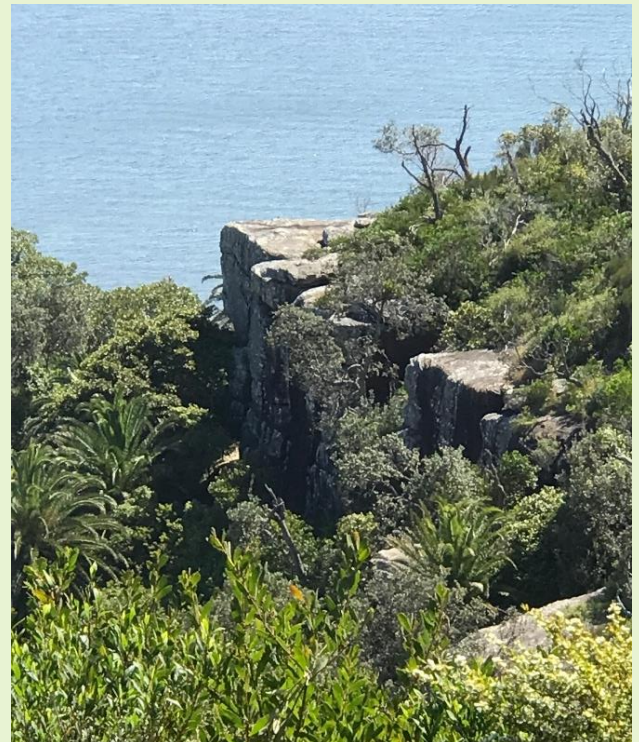
We decided to go to the lighthouse for several reasons – the lighthouse and its history, the views, the vegetation, and the challenge of the walk. We weren’t disappointed - each of these objectives was more than fully satisfied.

On arrival at Palm Beach, we lunched under one of the Bunya Pines next to the golf course. No - it wasn't very windy!



The first part of the walk is along the beach, at the end of which we had a choice – to go up by the Access Trail (easy walk), or the shorter, steeper, Smugglers Track. We chose to go up the easy way, and come down the steeper section with lots of steps – picture above.

The vegetation was interesting and varied, with a fair representation of Proteaceae – *Banksia serrata*, *B. ericifolia*, *B. spinulosa*, *B. integrifolia*, *Isopogon anethifolius*, *Grevillea buxifolia*, *Hakea sericea*. One of the standout plants was *Melaleuca hypericifolia*, with its large orange-red flower spikes (picture below). *Livistonia australis* (Cabbage Palm) was in the more sheltered spots.



Other plants of note were *Epacris longifolia*, *Hibbertia dentata*, *H. scandens*, and *Acacia suaveolens*.

The vegetation on the southern side of the lighthouse is very windswept and stunted, and many of the large sandstone rocks are exposed.

The lighthouse was built in 1881 from sandstone quarried nearby. Something we didn't expect to see was someone up a ladder polishing the windows of the lighthouse!



Stunning views looking north



... and south

... and west.

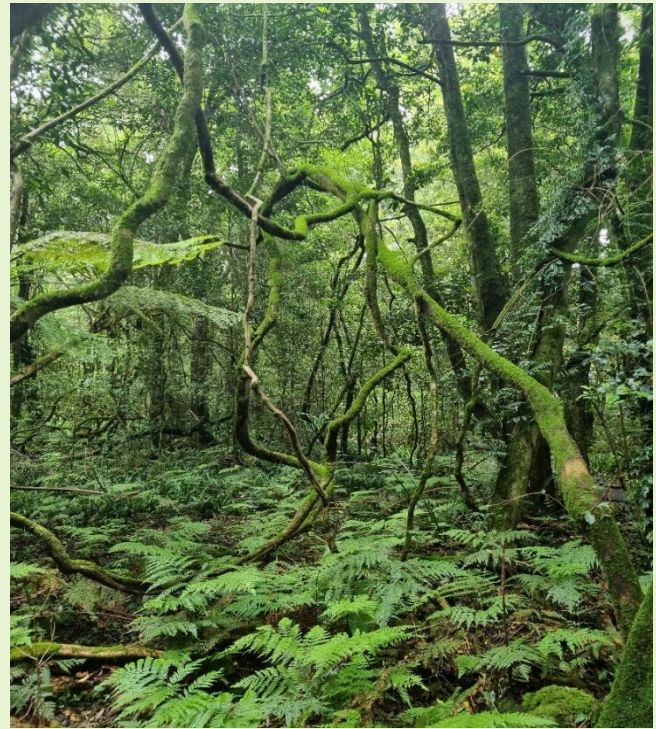


We were surrounded by iconic views, wonderful nature, and fascinating history. It certainly was a day to remember!

Robertson Nature Reserve

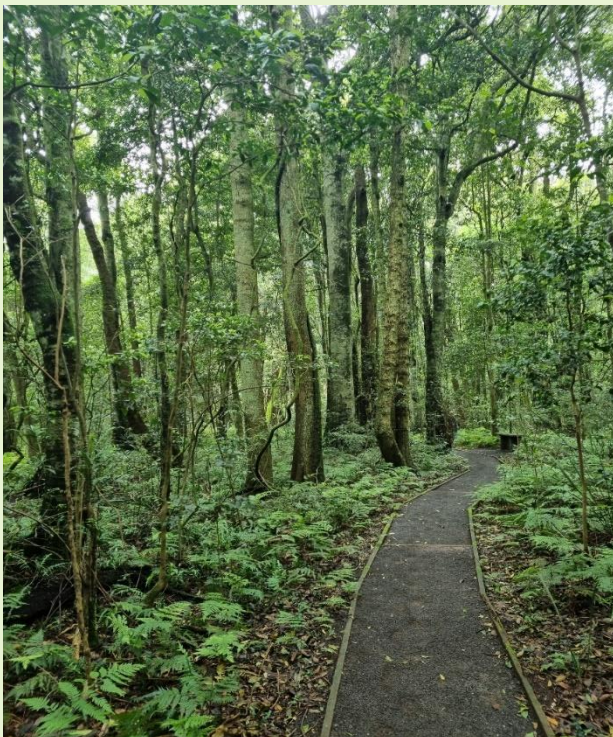
Jennifer Farrer

On a recent visit to the Southern Highlands, we included a walk through Robertson Nature Reserve. This 5-hectare remnant is all that remains of the 2,500 hectares of impenetrable cool temperate rainforest which stretched from the Wingecarribee Swamp to the coastal escarpment. Known as the Yarrawa Brush it was first mentioned by Dr Charles Throsby in his 1818 expedition to find a route from Bong Bong (the original settlement near Moss Vale) to the South Coast. Brush was the name given to rainforests in the 19th century to distinguish them from the more open woodland of the coast.



The area remained relatively untouched until the Robertson Land Acts of the 1860's. These land reforms gave settlers the right to claim unused Crown Land for farming at very low prices provided the land was cleared. The rich volcanic soil of this region was the settlers' reward for the back-breaking task of clearing the forests with only hand saws and axes. Soon intensive production of vegetables, especially potatoes, and livestock farming were established. The villages of Robertson, Kangaloon and Burrawang grew to service the farming communities. Sawmills were built to process the native cedar and hardwoods which were felled from the forests.

Fortunately, this small remnant remains to remind us of the original primeval forest. A 600-metre wheelchair-accessible track winds through tall trees such as sassafras, figs and



coachwoods, ferns and vines. At the entrance, there is a large stump of a red cedar tree. A reminder of the beautiful trees which were once so prolific here but are now a rarity.

Also in Robertson is the Native Grace Nursery and Design Studio which has a fine selection of native plants for sale.

Remembering Gordon Brooks

Ian Cox

Gordon Brooks, who passed away in December 2021 aged 95, made an outstanding contribution to the Australian Plants Society over many years.

Gordon's background

Gordon spent his formative years in Jamestown, South Australia. One of his first positions was Technical Officer at the Weapons Research Laboratory, Salisbury, SA, where part of his job was to track rockets at the Woomera Rocket Range. He became qualified as an electronics engineer.

Gordon's son Christopher described his dad as "a serial committee man". He was on committees at the primary school, school fund-raising, tennis club, netball club, basketball club, often as President or Secretary, as well as being a Church Steward, and Superintendent of the Sunday School.



Gordon and Gloria Brooks

In 1968 Gordon and his wife Gloria moved to New Jersey, USA, for two years, where he worked on a project to standardise military equipment for the USA, Canada, the UK, France and Australia.

Gordon's grandfather, Sir Frederick Holder, was Premier of South Australia. He gave up state politics to become the first Speaker in the Australian House of Representatives. He was Speaker from 1901 until he died in 1909. The Canberra suburb of Holder was named after him.

Moving to The Hills

Gordon and Gloria moved to Baulkham Hills in 1972. They became interested in Australia's flora after walking in bushland at Galston and beyond. They just loved the bush, and bought Alec Blombery's book, *What Wildflower is That?* They visited the SGAP annual spring shows at The King's School Parramatta in 1973 and 1974, and were amazed at the lovely displays. They joined the Society in 1975.

Parramatta and Hills Group

Gordon became an expert propagator and grower of native plants. He didn't waste much time either in becoming involved in the Parramatta and Hills Group's activities. In 1977 he was elected Vice President, and also Delegate to the State Council. He held many positions on the Group's committee over about 40 years, including President (two terms: 1981-82 and 1988-90), Publicity Officer, Program Officer, Editor, and Leader of the Rutaceae Interest Group.

Gordon retired from the Commonwealth Public Service in 1986, and he and Gloria moved into their new home at Ridgescrop Drive, Castle Hill. Their garden, perched on the side of a hill, was a challenge. Gloria helped with the physical work, moving rocks, making pathways, planting and watering. It always looked immaculate.

Gordon and Gloria never hesitated to offer their home as a meeting venue, or their attractive garden as the subject of a visit. They always made you feel welcome. An enduring memory is the delicious food they served – whether for morning/afternoon tea or supper, always accompanied by lovely coffee, specially brewed by Gordon.

The Society NSW

Gordon was the Society's NSW President for three years from 1991, and a Vice President for two terms. He was chair of the Publishing Committee, and chair of the organizing committee for the Society's immensely successful Wildflower Spectaculars held at Rouse Hill in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997. He represented NSW at national conferences in Perth, Sydney and Ballarat.

Probably his most important innovation, when he was state President, was obtaining the board's agreement to form a Committee of Review, to investigate and report on the Society's entire operations. This culminated in the Report on Operational Procedures, which was accepted by the board in 1993. Some of the benefits were increased membership, an enhanced public profile, valuable links with other organisations, and improved systems and communications.

Life Membership

Gordon was elected a Life Member of the Society in 1996. Here are extracts from the citation by the Parramatta and Hills Group:

"Gordon is a tireless and unselfish worker for the Society. If there is a job to be done, a meeting to organize, a letter to write or a question to answer, Gordon is usually there to do it."

"Gordon is one of the Society's visionaries, always looking at the big picture, but with one eye on the practical detail, unafraid of the hard work required to make vision a reality".

"Gordon has been an inspiration to our Group with his knowledge of Australia's flora and his expertise as a propagator. He is generous with giving his propagation successes to new members, as he is with advice for their gardens."

Eremophila Study Group

Gordon was one of the pioneers of growing Eremophilas in Sydney, and was skilled in propagating and growing them. He was actively involved in establishing the Sydney branch of the Eremophila Study Group, and chaired their meetings from 2003.

When Bob Chinnock's standard reference book "*Eremophila and Allied Genera*" was published in 2007, the publisher, Rosenberg, asked for bunches of Eremophila flowers to decorate the room of the press conference to announce and promote the book. Many of these came from Gordon's garden.



Gordon (top left) chairing an Eremophila Study Group meeting in 2006. Special presenters were Russell Wait and Ken Warnes.

In his later years, Gordon was a strong advocate for action on climate change. This was reflected in his conversations and writings.

The last *Calgaroo* Gordon edited was February 2018, about the time he lost Gloria.

Gordon will be fondly remembered for his exceptional organizing skills, and his ability to get things done.

Community Environment Centre – a continuing history.

A book about the history of the Community Environment Centre (CEC) Annangrove was published just before Christmas. It tells the fascinating story of the development of the CEC, with text contributed by various participants, and lots of wonderful photos. It was put together by Lachlan Turner.

Betty Rymer and Lesley Waite were heavily involved in establishing the CEC and its display garden of native plants. Lesley and several other members of our Group currently work there as volunteers.

You can view an online copy of the 34-page book in the form of a "flipbook" [here](#).

Propagation News

Our Propagation Group has been meeting and working at The Hills Council nursery for two months now, but the numbers have been limited to six. So only a small group of regulars have been allowed. When this changes we'll let you know.

Share your stories . . .

What have you been up to?

Email me at itcox@bigpond.com for the next Calgaroo.



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