

# CALGAROO

September 2022



*Eucalyptus parramattensis* - Calgaroo

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

## What's on for the rest of 2022

Saturday 24 September: Celebration of our Group's 50th anniversary - see page 2

Saturday 22 October 2 pm: Bushwalk.

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



### **Boongala Native Gardens is now open**

Malcolm and Jenny Johnston's magnificent native garden will be open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, 10am to 4pm, from Friday the 2nd of September to Monday the 10th of October, 2022. The address is 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst.

Full details are [on their website.](#)

You are cordially invited

To celebrate our

# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at a Luncheon

**Keynote Speaker Brian Roach**  
**"Reminiscences of a Life with Australian Plants"**

To be held on

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2022**

**12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

At

**Muirfield Golf Club**

**58 Barclay Road, North Rocks, NSW**

**Members are invited to bring memorabilia, flowers and photos**

**R.S.V.P. September 10<sup>th</sup>, with number attending  
and any special dietary requirements**

Jennifer Farrer: 0407 456 577  
Joan Hayes: 0435 945 603  
email: [apsparrahills@gmail.com](mailto:apsparrahills@gmail.com)

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## **Community Environment Centre – Open Day**

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August our Group had a stall at the Open Day at the CEC Annangrove. It was a very successful day. We talked to people about growing native plants and what our Group does, answered people's questions, handed out leaflets about our Group, and sold plants. Lesley conducted guided tours around the native plant demonstration garden that some of our members have helped create.

Here's a letter of appreciation received from The Hills Shire Council:

*'A huge thank you to the Australian Plants Society for coming out and being involved in our Community Environment Centre Open Day event celebrating the opening of the Centre on Saturdays.*

*It was a fantastic community day, and it was great to see so many groups come out together to celebrate and connect with each other and the community.*

*The day was such a success with around 20 stalls and 200 people that attended, and I hope your group got attention and interest and you enjoyed the day!*

*It was a fun informative community day, and we are very happy with how the day turned out (even the sun came out!) and very appreciative to your group for being part of such a great day to be remembered.*

*Again, thank you for coming out and contributing towards a great community day and look forward to catching up soon!'*

*Jessica Styan  
Environmental Education Officer  
The Hills Shire Council*



The mayor of The Hills Shire, Dr Peter Gangemi, addressing the attendees at the CEC.



Lesley leading one of her guided walks around the demonstration native garden at the CEC.



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## ***Congratulations to the APS Parramatta & Hills District Group on your 50th Anniversary***

Don and I were members for a short time before we moved to Armidale, and eventually became founding members of the New England Group of SGAP - now APS Armidale & District.

So much has changed since those heady days of discovery. Over the years members have been involved in landcare projects, open gardens, plant sales,

conferences, outreach to the community, revegetation and regeneration projects, publishing and so much more.

We learnt the basic skills of propagation through your group and did some planting at my former school. So many former members have moved away or passed. However, their legacy remains. We brought Australian plants into the mainstream and saw an evolution of interest among Australian gardeners and landscapers who saw the potential of our wonderful flora.

***Don and I wish you a wonderful Anniversary luncheon with lots of memories and catching up with former friends.***

Sadly, I cannot join you as I am opening my one-man exhibition at the Armidale Art Gallery that day.

***Maria Hitchcock OAM***

***Armidale NSW***

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I came across this article when browsing through early *Calgaroos*, and it struck a chord. It comes from *Calgaroo* of April 1992, and was first published in *Viminalis*, newsletter of the Logan River branch of Native Plants Queensland. Jan Glazebrook, the author, is still a member of that branch . . .

## **Once upon a time**

**Jan Glazebrook**

Benjora was a young Aboriginal boy who lived with his tribe in the area of the big river, the area we now know as Logan Reserve.

His home was rich in food. There were kangaroos and wallabies aplenty, and the river was full of fish. After hunting there was time for playing in the clear streams and for singing and dancing.

When the rains came, the tribes would move to rocky areas where there were caves for shelter. At this time, the men would make and mend their weapons, and the women would make carry baskets from bark and reeds, and warm clothes from the kangaroo skins.

Benjora would often help his father gather fruit and plants for the family's meals. He knew where to find the yam (*Dioscorea transversa*), and the tuber of what we call native parsnip (*Trachymene incisa*), which were roasted in the fire. He knew when the lilly pillly (*Syzygium spp*) were ripe and ready to eat. If he was away from water, he knew to chew the sweet fruit of the geebung (*Persoonia spp*) to ease his thirst.

Along the banks of the rivers and creeks grew large, spreading, shade trees with hanging roots, a great place to play, and if you could find them before the birds and flying foxes, you could eat your fill of the ripe seedy fruit of the Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). Another

tree with similar fruit (*Ficus coronata*) had very rough leaves that were used by the men to smooth wooden spears and shields.

The children of the tribe loved collecting and eating the sky-blue bell flowers (*Wahlenbergia spp*), and, if they braved the tangle of thorny vines, the delicious red fruit of the native raspberry (*Rubus spp*) were a treat indeed!

In the rainforest, the large-leaved clumps of native ginger (*Alpinia coerulea*) had blue fruit full of seeds with a pleasant ginger taste. The roots were collected by the women for food. Occasionally in the forest, Benjora would come upon a tree that bore hard-shelled nuts. What a feast the tribe had on these delicious nuts (*Macadamia spp*)!

Sometimes, if Benjora was careless, he brushed against a stinging tree, (*Dendrocnide excelsa*), but he knew that if he rubbed the sting with the juice of the cunjevoi, (*Alocasia macrorrhiza*), which always grew nearby, the sting would ease. Likewise, if he was bitten by the aggressive bull ant, the white sap from the base of a young bracken frond (*Pteridium esculentum*) would stop the pain.

One year, the tribe made a long journey to the place of the Bunya trees (*Araucaria bidwillii*). About every three years these trees bore large quantities of nuts. Many tribes gathered there at this time for feasting and ceremonies.

Much of the forest as Benjora knew it has now been cleared. The rivers and streams have become polluted and muddy, and the kangaroos and wallabies killed or driven away. Nevertheless, given a chance, the land can heal itself, and in our hands, may it do so!

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## Revegetating Australia

Recently with other members of APS, Cattai Hills Environment Network (CHEN) and Hills 4 Climate Action, I went to a presentation about regenerating Australia at the Rebellion Room, Castle Hill. A very apt place for this event! It included a short film, 'Revegetating Australia' and a talk by Carolyn Hall, CEO of the Malloon Institute, plus a Q&A panel discussion. It was very impressive and inspiring.

The Malloon Institute is a charity that dedicates itself to educating land users about regenerating farms through landscape rehydration and restoration. By increasing biodiversity and natural ecosystems, the soils become more productive, and this results in more income for the farmers. The soils are able to store more carbon too.

Here's a brief summary from the [Malloon Institute's website](#) about their research priorities:

### Water

We are rehydrating our landscapes by reconnecting them to our rivers and streams and returning landscapes to as close as possible to their original state. Rehydration techniques bank water in the floodplain - under, not over the land. We all benefit from greater availability of naturally filtered, clean water when we need it. This has a significant positive knock-on effect to the health and balance of the ecosystems correcting salinity and creating landscapes more resilient to drought, floods and bushfires.

## Revegetation

We are reforesting and recovering landscapes using appropriate shrub and tree species and measuring the impact. Sophisticated drone technology and aerial mapping helps us to conduct vegetation surveys. We also provide grazing and cropping advice to land managers.

## Soils

Healthy soils are the foundation of life. We support best practice farming techniques that build soil, rather than deplete it. Grazing management and natural rehydration help to build organic carbon and soil quality.

## Biodiversity

Providing diverse and complex vegetation systems helps to create critical wildlife corridors for endangered wildlife and nationally listed threatened species.

## Society

Through social surveys, regular workshops and field days, we engage in two-way discussions with participants and equip farmers and land managers with the knowledge and tools they need to manage their land and water resources sustainably, productively and profitably.

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## Our bushland playground at Kenthurst (Part 4)

Malcolm Johnston

First published in the *Kenthurst Community News*

As children growing up in the Hawkesbury Sandstone Region of Sydney during the 1950s and 1960s, we gained a special connection with the bush and the wildlife which lived within. On weekends and during school holidays we looked forward to exploring new places or revisiting favourite sites discovered in the past. There were no boundaries, as there were no fences. Our playground was as large as we could walk in one day.

Christmas was a great time to be in our Bushland Playground, when the red flowers of the Christmas Bush brightened up the sides of the gully. Some of the older men of the district cut flowers from these bushes and delivered them to local families to create a real Christmas spirit. Two of these men were family friends, Jack Baildon and George Inwood. During Spring they also knew where the rare Sydney Rock Rose (*Boronia serrulata*) grew. They cut bunches of this highly scented *Boronia* to give away as well. I was a young adult before I was told where this now locally endangered plant grew.

The Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) also flowered at Christmas time, supplying Possums, Honeyeaters and Native Bees with nectar. The solitary Banksia Bee makes a home in the old, dried-out Banksia cones. The Hairpin Banksia (*Banksia spinulosa*) and *Banksia ericifolia* grew on the ridges. We would tap the brush-like flowers on the back of our hands to release the sweet nectar, which we would then lick off. The same Banksia flowers can be soaked in a billycan of water to rinse out the nectar, making a refreshing drink. We sometimes pretended that a Banksia brush was a hair-brush and brushed our hair with it.

Woody Pear trees also grew in the gullies. We sometimes picked these large woody pear-shaped fruits and let them lay in a sunny place to dry out. As the fruits dried, they opened to

release a large seed with papery wings. We threw the seed into the air and watched it spin to the ground like a helicopter.

We were also aware of the many birds that inhabited our Bushland Playground. The little Yellow Robins, Grey Fantails and Willy Wagtails were very inquisitive and followed us around, hoping to catch the insects that flew from the vegetation as we passed by. Whip Birds were a favourite, with the male bird starting the call and the female finishing with the “Whip – whip” at the end. The Magpies (Karuk)\*with their special song (Chortle) and Pee Wee (Birrerik)\*liked to forage for worms, caterpillars and insects on grassy areas. Kookaburras (Kogunda)\* with their raucous laugh liked to hunt small reptiles, while the Crows (Wargon)\* with their mournful cry would scavenge and eat almost anything. The Tawny Frogmouth was hard to see, as it sat motionless in a tree and looked like part of a branch.

During the hot summer days, we liked to stay in the shaded areas along the creeks where vegetation was abundant. This is where the Paperbarks (Kurunderung)\* and the Lilly Pilly trees (*Acmena smithii*) with their crispy fruits grew. The vigorous Native Grape (*Cissus antarctica*) covered these trees, its dark-coloured pea-sized grapes hung in clusters. Another climbing vine we could identify was the Sarsaparilla Vine (*Smilax*). We enjoyed chewing the fresh new, maroon-coloured leaves with their strong sweet flavour, which also moistened our mouths. Sarsaparilla leaves make a nice tea which is good for coughs and colds.

*Billardiera scandens*, known as Apple Berry, is a vine with a nice little green flower that grew near the creeks. It has a fruit that tastes like dried apple, and can be eaten raw or roasted. Also growing near the creeks was Dwarf Plum Pine (*Podocarpus spinulosus*), with the purple part of the fruit tasting sweet with a mild pine flavour.



Whipbird calls echoed through the gullies, and Native Grapes (*Cissus antarctica*) hung from their vines covering the trees along the creeks.

Those early years exploring our Bushland Playground gave us a good understanding of the environment in which we lived, leaving us with our special connection to those Hawkesbury Sandstone gullies for the rest of our life.

\*Dharug language.





We loved those crispy sweet Lilly Pilly berries, and the Dwarf Plum Pine (*Podocarpus spinulosus*) that grew beside local creeks.

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## The colour blue in nature

Kevin Mills

Have you ever wondered why blue is a rare colour in nature? Perhaps not, but here are some reasons. The following is an extract from the Faculty of Sciences at The University of Adelaide.

The colour blue accounts for less than 1 in 10 plants, and far fewer animals are blue. Part of the reason is that there isn't really a true blue colour or pigment in nature, and both plants and animals have to perform tricks of the light to appear blue. For plants, blue is achieved by mixing naturally-occurring pigments, very much as an artist would mix colours. The most commonly used are the red pigments, called anthocyanins, and whose appearance can be changed by varying acidity. Plants absorb blue light, as it has more energy than any other light in the visible spectrum; so leaves are almost exclusively green, the light colour that is reflected.

Blue fungi are very rare; this species *Entoloma virescens* is found on sandstone country south-west of Nowra.



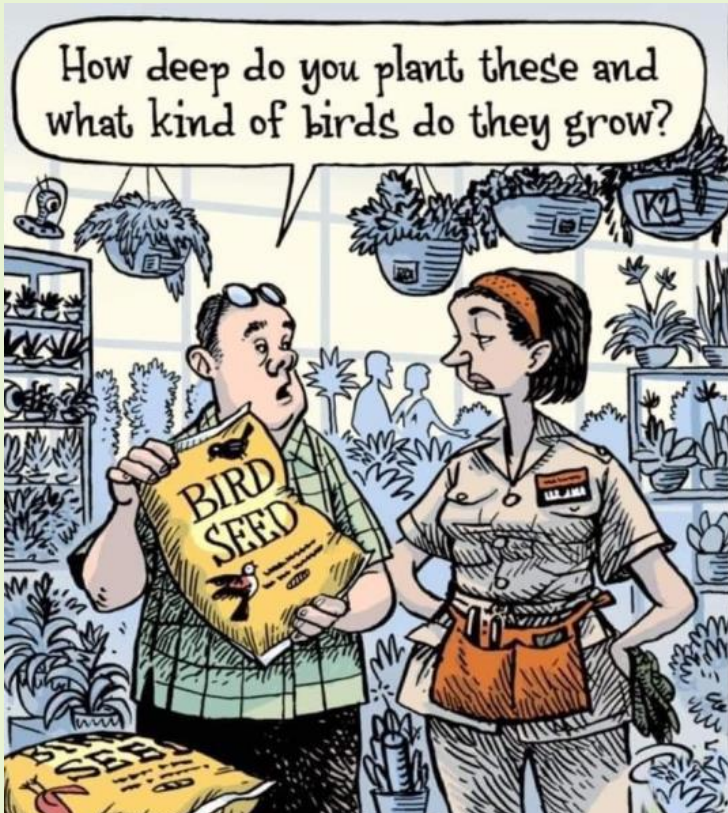
Instead of pigment mixing or alteration, blue is achieved in many animals by making structures that change the wavelength of light. For example, the blue morpho butterfly gets its colour from the fact that its wing scales are shaped in ridges that causes light to bend in such a way that the only wavelength of light it reflects is blue. If the scales were shaped differently, the blue colour would vanish.

Blue birds, such as the Azure Kingfisher, get their colour through a similar, but slightly different process. Each feather is made up of light-scattering, microscopic beads spaced in a way that every wavelength of light is cancelled out except blue – think noise cancelling headphones here.



Female Satin Bowerbirds are clearly attracted to blue - this male's bower is surrounded by blue plastic items and is clearly near an urban area (Mt Brown, Wollongong). At more remote bowers, without access to human-made items, the bowers are decorated with yellow flowers, snail shells, and other natural items, but almost nothing blue. Perhaps blue items are collected because it is a rare colour in nature.

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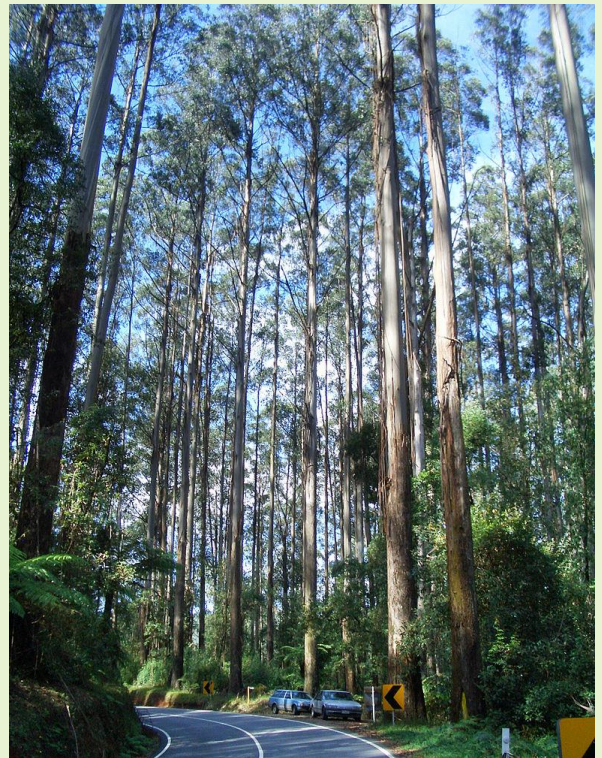


## Eucalypt of the Year 2022

The votes are in and the Eucalypt of the Year 2022 has been announced. And they don't get much bigger than this year's recipient – *Eucalyptus regnans*, the Mountain Ash – the tallest flowering plant in the world!

*Eucalyptus regnans* is so familiar to Victorians (should it be named Victoria's state tree – an honour not given to any tree. Yet there is a state fossil and even a state tartan!) This broad-leaved tree, from tall open forests in high-rainfall areas of southern Victoria and north-eastern and southern Tasmania, can grow to a height of 100 m and a trunk diameter of 2.5 m.

Giant mountain ash trees (*Eucalyptus regnans*) dwarf cars on the Blackspur Range, Victoria. The largest trees germinated together after devastating bushfires killed the parent forest about 80 years earlier. From Wikipedia Commons and Bob Beale.



In second place was the Red Flowering Gum, *Corymbia ficifolia*. From southwest WA, this is a straggly tree that grows to a height of 10 m, with rough, fibrous brownish bark on the trunk and branches. Bright red to pink or orange flowering occurs from December to May. This year we have witnessed an incredible flowering season.



Little Wattlebird feeding on a flowering *Corymbia ficifolia*, Austins Ferry, Tasmania. From Wikipedia Commons and J J Harrison.

Third place went to *Angophora costata* – Sydney Red Gum, Smooth-barked Apple or Apple Gum, among its several common names. *Angophora costata* is a spreading tree growing up to 30 m. Old bark is shed in spring in flakes with the new salmon-pink bark turning to pale grey before the next shedding. The white flowers, which occur between October and January, are very showy. This species has been in the top three eucalypts almost every year since the competition started in 2018!



*Angophora costata*, McKay Reserve, Palm Beach, NSW – from Wikimedia Commons and Margaret Donald

Eucalypt of the Year is named each year by Eucalypt Australia  
<https://www.eucalyptaustalia.org.au/> to coincide with National Eucalypt Day – 23 March.  
Eucalypt Australia is a grantmaking charitable trust that focuses on eucalypts, and envisages  
a public inspired by and appreciative of eucalypts.

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### *The Blue Mountains*

Henry Lawson (1888)

Above the ashes straight and tall,  
Through ferns with moisture dripping,  
I climb beneath the sandstone wall,  
My feet on mosses slipping.

Like ramparts round the valley's edge  
The tinted cliffs are standing,  
With many a broken wall and ledge,  
And many a rocky landing.

And round about their rugged feet  
Deep ferny dells are hidden  
In shadowed depths, whence dust and heat  
Are banished and forbidden.

The stream that, crooning to itself,  
Comes down a tireless rover,  
Flows calmly to the rocky shelf,  
And there leaps bravely over.

Now pouring down, now lost in spray  
When mountain breezes sally,  
The water strikes the rock midway,  
And leaps into the valley.

Now in the west the colours change,  
The blue with crimson blending;  
Behind the far Dividing Range,  
The sun is fast descending.

And mellowed day comes o'er the place,  
And softens ragged edges;  
The rising moon's great placid face  
Looks gravely o'er the ledges.

(Henry Lawson died 100 years ago, on 2nd  
September, 1922).

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## We're being invaded . . .

Recently a 'watch out for deer' sign appeared in Pitt Town Road near the corner of Kenthurst Road, Kenthurst.

And, I've just received a letter from Greater Sydney Local Land Services letting me know that cane toads have recently been identified and removed from Kenthurst. They're asking residents to report suspected sightings, but not to harm the animals, as they could be native frogs.

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## Share your stories . . .

What have you been doing?

Email me at [itcox@bigpond.com](mailto:itcox@bigpond.com) for the next *Calgaroo*.

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*In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of our Country, the people of the Dharug Nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since time immemorial. We honour and celebrate the spiritual, cultural and customary connections of Traditional Owners to Country and the biodiversity that forms part of that Country.*

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## Parramatta and Hills District Group

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