Australian Plants Society South East NSW Group

Newsletter 170

April 2021

Corymbia maculata Spotted Gum and ***Macrozamia communis*** Burrawang

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Next Meeting

Saturday 1st May 2021, 10.00am for 10.30am start

Landscaping with Shane Doherty at Di Clark's 17 Tranquil Place Rosedale South

For directions see page 10

Dear Members,

In May we will be visiting my garden in Rosedale, and we will be spending the whole day at the property. If you have seen my garden and are concerned about the slopes and steps, please don't be put off as we will be concentrating on the easily accessible parts of the garden and will be able to congregate on the deck to view different areas from above.

Once again Shane Doherty has agreed to assist us with her skills and insights.
Shane is a Landscape Designer with a wealth of experience.

The house at 17 Tranquil Bay Place was built in 2009 on a large steep block running East to West The house has had two owners before me and both were keen gardeners. When I first looked at the house from the outside I thought that it was too hemmed in by vegetation and I was not interested. On inspection I changed my mind.

The garden we will be viewing is an established garden which was originally designed as a rambling exotic garden with a smattering of natives.

Where do I begin ?

I have written about some of the problems I have with this garden in a previous newsletter, so I will use this space to highlight some of the ideas I have and that I hope we can discuss at the meeting. I do want to create a space that people would call a native garden but I do not want to remove plants just for the sake of it. This means establishing which plants are the backbone plants and working around them.

I am aiming to change it to a garden where plants are selected for their suitability to the area. The garden has many different microclimates allowing for a large variety of plants to be accommodated. I would also like to simplify the plantings, placing the plants in groups rather than scattered rather inappropriately (I think) around the garden. My natural bias is towards local plants and plants that are subtle in their beauty. Red tipped Callistemon and Leptospermum and small flowering shrubs such as Correas, Platysace and Dampiera would feature.

As an owner of an established garden it is sometimes difficult to imagine what could be possible with a few landscape changes or even some major works. There is scope in this garden to shift a few internal fences and totally open up new vistas. I am open to eliminating lawn and using some other type of ground cover that is not so vigorous. The nature strip would need to remain as grass. I would be open to creating a level green area in the garden and at the same time creating some raised beds for vegetables.

I am uncertain of what to do with the pergola. I wonder if I could use it as an orchid house, a microbat shelter, shade house or remove it totally? Probably the best idea.

The infrastructure (steps) are aging and need replacing.

The garden has many fruit trees that are productive but plagued by fruit fly. Is it worth the trouble? Could I help to create wildlife corridors with a section of local plants and simplified fencing.

What plants are best as privacy screens? How do you view the garden from inside the house?

All these questions and more. Enough of me thinking out aloud. Come along on May 1st and see for yourself and hear from Shane. I am hoping that you will all bring some new ideas and participate in this discussion led by Shane. Have some fun and inspire me to take action.

We will also have our usual show and tell opportunity so please bring along plants of interest. You will also need a chair, morning tea and your lunch.

If anyone is interested we could walk through the bush to Guerilla Bay at the end of the meeting, an easy 20 minutes each way. I look forward to seeing you there.

The following meeting in June will be held at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens and we will provide more details of that in the newsletter to come.
Thank you for your membership and participation.

Di.

Last Meeting

photos Marj Apthorpe

On a perfect Autumn day, 23 members journeyed to Catriona and Phil's Little Forest property for what was an entertaining and instructive day of grafting propagation of Grevilleas. Phil pointed out that the process is equally suited to other Genera such as Banksia, Isopogon and Eremophila. He did mention though, that unless you have bottom heat available, it is probably too late in the season to graft Banksia.

Phil spent some time addressing the issues of why some plants are best suited as garden plants when grafted, and discussed why his choices of rootstock material are likely candidates for others.

Two methods were demonstrated, firstly grafting onto an established seedling of ***Grevillea robusta***, and then cutting grafts.

Most grafting of Grevilleas has in the past used ***Grevillea robusta*** as stock, and for many species this has proved successful, but over time signs of incompatibility have emerged in some plants.
Signs of incompatibilitity might show as the stock growing away below the graft, with little growth of the scion, the scion although appearing to grow, showing little vigour, being unthrifty and with dieback of new growth, or the graft failing to grow on at all.

Phil addresses the issue of why to graft

Cleanliness is of paramount importance.
Phil was at pains to impress this as he addressed the group.

Both the stock material, and the scion which is grafted onto the stock, must be healthy, disease free, and exhibiting vigour.

Just as important, the tools used must be sharp, clean and suit the purpose.
Phil uses **flower picking secateurs** to prepare the stock and scions, as these have fine pointed jaws to enable close working of small plant sections.
For cutting into the stock, and to make the wedge, a retractable knife cutter is used, and a recommended tool is an **OLFA knife** with 9mm blades. This is a quality Japanese tool with excellent, snap off stainless steel blades which remain ultra sharp, is more comfortable to use, is not prone to bending as the hobby style cutters might, and stays sharper than a scalpel.

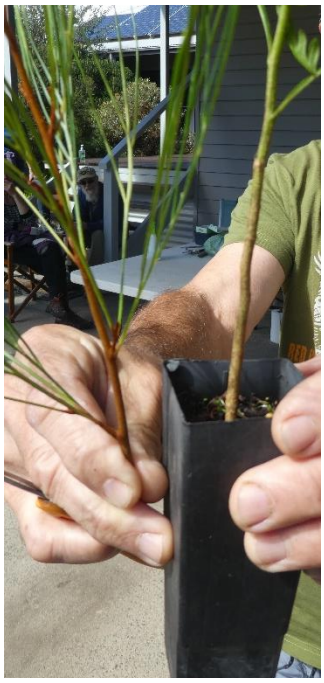
Tools are cleaned between each process, using a 70% methylated/water mix in a spray bottle, and wiped dry with paper towel. This prevents transferring pathogens between plant material.

Both scion and cutting material should be dunked for around 2 minutes into a 1% bleach solution and rinsed in clean water before use. The bleach used is common 4% household bleach, 10ml of which is added to 1 litre of clean water.

Seedling graft.

Phil grows ***Grevillea robusta*** seedlings in 50mm x 120mm forestry tubes, which allow the seedlings to develop strong, straight trunks of suitable thickness.

A young *G. robusta* seedling prepared for grafting. Leaves are removed from the bottom 100mm, and just 1 or 2 leaves are left below where the scion is attached.



Matching the scion stem diameter to the *G. robusta* stock.
In this case a piece of *G. johnsonii* (Rylestone form) is used as the scion

The tricky bit. Cleft cut
Using the OLFA knife to cut into the *G. robusta* stock. As Phil said, it is important to apply slow, consistent pressure to ensure the cut continues down the centre of the stock to the required depth, here about 25mm to accommodate the scion

Once the stock is prepared, the scion material can be attached. The base of the large scion of ***Grevillea johnsonii*** is cut to a wedge shape, each side trimmed equally for about 25mm. The wedge is inserted into the stock, ensuring the cambium of both the stock and scion is aligned. Where the stock and scion are of unequal diameter, successful grafts are still possible provided the cambium of one side are aligned. It is important that the scion wedge sits slightly proud of the stock to prevent the join opening up due to excess callusing.

A study in concentration as Phil wraps the graft with Parafilm tape. This tape is self - adhering, and does not require removal, as the buds will burst through.

Success. The completed graft, shown right. Note that the tape totally covers the union, from below the cut in the stock, to above the insertion point. This prevents moisture entering the join

Only 1 leaf and bud remains on the scion, sufficient to provide a healthy plant of the future

Cutting grafts
Phil has spent 10 years fine tuning the process of cutting grafts, and prefers this method, as it is only a one-step process.

Stock Material:
Plants to be used as stock need to address 3 criteria.
Be hardy in your garden conditions, that is, grow healthily without too much need for watering or soil amelioration.
Cuttings must strike readily and reliably.
Be long term compatible with the scion material which will be grafted.

Over the years a number of plants have been used for stock, including some ***Grevillea* Poorinda** hybrids. In his soil conditions, Phil prefers to use the hybrid ***Grevillea* 'Carrington Cross'**, ***(G. rivularis x G. acanthifolia)***, as it tolerates wet or dry soils, is long lived and produces a strong root system able to withstand windy weather, but most importantly strikes readily.
As proof of its suitability, Phil showed us a plant of ***G. leptobotrys*** from the Tutanning W.A., a notoriously difficult plant to keep alive in our summer rainfall conditions, grafted onto ***G.* 'Carrington Cross'**, and looking delightfully healthy despite recent heavy rains during March. This was the plant he used in our demonstration.

Another recommended stock is ***G.* 'x semperflorens'**, a hardy shrub which is thought to be Phytophthora resistant, and might be useful where drainage is suspect.

Preparing stock cuttings of *G.* 'Carrington Cross':
Cuttings, each with a minimum of 4 nodes or buds, are selected and prepared by carefully removing the lower 2 leaves and the top leaf, leaving just 1 leaf and its attendant bud. Secateurs are used to make a straight cut above the top bud, and the OLFA knife used to slice the cleft cut down the centre of the cutting about 20mm deep. (If a number of grafts are being done, all the cuttings are completed first, and these are dropped into a container with a dilute solution of **ESI-Root liquid hormone, at dunking strength of approximately 1ml to 400 ml of water**. Here they remain until readied for the scion. Often Phil does not use hormone at all during this stage as too strong a hormone solution has proved to be disadvantageous in getting some cuttings to root.)

Select a scion piece of a similar diameter to the stock, with 4 nodes, or more if the leaves are close together. All but the top leaf is removed, and a wedge of a similar length to the cleft cut in the stock, is prepared, with the cut commencing at about the lower bud level. Both sides are trimmed equally so that a sharp wedge results with equal cambium on each edge. This wedge is then inserted into the stock, to about bud level, or just below. The top of the wedge should remain just above the cleft to avoid benching, where the graft sections meet, to avoid the stock swelling out, which would produce a weaker graft union

Cutting graft being wrapped with Parafilm. Note that the wrap begins below the level of cleft cut, and continues above the leaf and bud, completely sealing the join.

Once firmly wrapped, the cutting base is recut and dipped in Clonex Green (1500ppm) and then set in cutting mix.

Discussion on preferred mixes showed that most preferred Perlite/Cocopeat (4/1) as good quality sharp sand is difficult to obtain. Perlite also seemed to vary in particle size, but Horticultural 500 grade is ideal. Adding 1 part vermiculite when the Perlite is all a similar size was also suggested. As noted earlier Phil often does not use hormones, but others suggested success with Clonex Purple (3000ppm). Everyone has different conditions, so what works for you, stick with it.

Success with grafting
As Phil said, he has been doing this for 10 years, and we new triers might struggle with the process.

As with all things, practice makes perfect (or more successful efforts).

It was suggested that before tackling grafting, we should practice making the cleft cut a number of times, perfecting getting the cut down the centre of the stock.

Having a go

This is a difficult exercise when the material is only 3 or 4mm thick, but as Phil showed, can be achieved reliably, with slow, consistent pressure and confidence.
The wedges were less difficult, although trimming each side equally will also benefit from practice.

Selection of suitable material for stocks is still a work in progress. Many growers have over the years trialled different species, with qualified success. Often their work goes unrecorded, or as is sometimes the case of professional nursery people, guarded secretly.

We do know that the large flowered tropical plants do very well on ***G. robusta***, but smaller shrubby plants from W.A. in particular are less likely to be long term survivors. It was suggested that those plants with spider type flowers would do well when grafted to stock of plants which have similar flower arrangement. Those with toothbrush flowers likewise should graft successfully to other toothbrush flowered plants. It is thought plants with similar flower arrangements might be more closely related, and therefore be compatible. This hypothesis needs to be tested. When the DNA studies of the Genus are completed, we might be able to adjust our grafting trials to reflect closer relationships, and subsequently improve our success rates.

Whilst Phil conducted classes with those wanting to improve their grafting technique, **Catriona** took the remaining members on a tour of the garden. Banksias were putting on quite a show.

Here Cliff admires the hedge of ***Banksia vincentia***, a rare plant now threatened by development and roadworks. Phil and Catriona have been assisting with propagation of this plant with a view to rebuilding the only natural population in existence.

Friends of ERBG

Easter Book and Bake Sale

The Friends of ERBG committee President Heather Haughton has reported that sale raised upwards of $2700 to assist with the development and recovery projects at ERBG. Heather has asked that our members be thanked for their contributions

Trivia Night

The Friends are holding a Trivia night on Friday 14th May commencing at 7pm. The event will be held at the ERBG Function Room.

BYO Supper and Drinks, with microwave, crockery and glasses available at the venue. Tickets are $5 for members of the Friends, and $10 for visitors.

Anyone wishing to attend can make bookings via email to friends@erbg.org.au
Enquiries to Heather : h@haughton.id.au Final bookings by 7th May 2021.

Committee news

Proposed Proteaceae Project at Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden
Update

Dear Members,

In our last newsletter we had some information about a proposal for APS South East Region to become involved in developing a Proteaceae Garden Bed at the ERBG.

At this stage we are working on an action plan. I haven't received much feedback and I am hoping that at the next meeting we can discuss the idea further, gain member support and suggest some activities.
In the meantime I would like to provide a little bit of information regarding the Proteaceae family in the hope that this will inspire you to become involved.

Botanic Gardens are special places and the ERBG is especially important because it only sources plants from our local collecting area. This collecting area includes 12 genera from the Proteaceae family that have previously been collected by the ERBG.
These genera are **Banksia, Conospermum, Grevillea, Hakea, Isopogon, Lambertia, Lomatia, Persoonia, Petrophile, Stenocarpus, Symphionema and Telopea**.
As you can see there is a huge range of plants in this family of all shapes and sizes. The family name came from the first (non Australian) genus named in the family. This was a Protea and the name came from the greek sea-god Proteus who could change form at will.

Please follow this link for more information.
https://profiles.ala.org.au/opus/foa/profile/Proteaceae

Banksia spinulosa

Banksia integrifolia

The aim of a Proteaceae Garden Bed is to showcase these wonderful variable plants, but also to highlight the diversity in our region. A garden bed needs to be well designed and maintained to allow for the plants particular growth habits and requirements and also to show them off to advantage. At this stage APS will be liaising with the ERBG management to determine how many and which plants will be able to be included. Another aim of a botanic Garden is to be able to refer back the provenance of plants that are planted and to have a representation of wild collected local species. Record keeping is also an important part of this project.

I believe there is scope for anyone to become involved and help get this project moving. Whether it be helping us tidy up the beds, assess the site, keep lists of plants up to date, assist with propagation or keep photographic records and so much more. Hopefully we can offer you some practical action soon.

It is an opportunity to help the ERBG recover from the 2019 bushfires and to share your skills or learn new ones. I think it will be an exciting project that will help nurture the link between the ERBG and APS South East NSW Group and inspire us to grow plants and work together towards a common goal.

Regards,

Di Clark

Stenocarpus salignus

Grevillea rhyolitica ssp semivestita

It's Correa time. Locally we have 4 species of Correa. Coastal plants C. alba and C. reflexa var. speciosa, and from the forests C. reflexa var reflexa, C. lawrenceana var cordifolia, and the rare C. baeuerlenii.

***Correa reflexa var speciosa* growing at Guerilla Bay**

In My Garden Marjorie Apthorpe.

Not quite as expected…

I bought a Western Australian plant as a tubestock "Garden Starter" from a certain large hardware chain in 2018. I was very hopeful that this plant, labelled ***Beaufortia squarrosa*** (Red), would provide a small example of W.A's magnificent sandplain **Beaufortias**, which come in a dazzling range of reds and pinks. Planted at Currowan in winter 2019 in a sunny bed of clay and gravel soil, it was slow to establish and did not seem to like the location.

The plant survived a year of drought with hand watering, and frost (under a hessian frost cover), followed by a year of soaking rains.
At last, flower buds formed this summer. Great anticipation. When eventually the flowers opened, they were not red as labelled, but orange… However, the flowers are still very attractive. It seems that this is ***Beaufortia squarrosa*** 'Orange'. The plant has neat leaves on thin woody stems, and is now nearly 1 metre high. Indications are that this plant will grow from cuttings. If you like W.A. plants, this one could be worth a try.

The Big Wet

We all sympathise with those of northern NSW and southern Queensland, who suffered dreadfully following the recent flooding deluge.
Whilst we personally received far less in much of our region, with only 167mm recorded in my rain gauge over the 4 days of steady falls, some members have reported in excess of 250mm.
Heavy rain always causes some damage to our gardens, but I was surprised to find that it also affects our wildlife in unexpected ways. As the last day of steady rains receded, we observed a bedraggled echidna seeking refuge on our garden seat, avoiding

the wet ground and enjoying a little sunshine to improve his outlook. Once warmed, he moved awkwardly (read fell nose first) from the seat to rest atop tubed plants in the nursery area, probably waiting for the activity of his favourite food to recommence.

Directions to17 Tranquil Bay Place, Rosedale South. Take the turn off on Rosedale Pde from George Bass Highway towards the beach. Take the first turn to your right into Tranquil Bay Place then the first turn on the right to Tallwood Cres. My House is up the hill and on the left corner of Tranquil Bay Place and Tallwood Cres. The best parking is on Tallwood Cres naturestrip and the entry is also there

Committee news

The committee continues to monitor and enforce any NSW Health guidelines regarding COVID - 19 and gatherings.

COVID 19 restrictions still apply at all our gatherings, both indoors and outside.

Members will be required to sign our attendance record, and supply contact details for tracing purposes should that need arise. Also, you need to supply your own refreshments, as a "no sharing" policy is adopted by the committee until advised by APS NSW Region that this requirement has been relaxed. We will keep you informed of any changes to plans. We hope to see you all many times during the year.

Please note the new email address for John Knight, Newsletter Editor. I am phasing out the use of the @outlook address as the site has become unstable and prone to spam attacks.

All future contact should be addressed to johnonvista49@gmail.com

Could members please make the change as of now. Thank you.

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