



# Australian Plants Society

## South East NSW Group

Newsletter 194

April 2023

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

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**Dear Members,**

It has been a very busy time of year with the Easter Break and all kinds of activities happening in our area. I hope that you have been able to get out and enjoy the environment with friends or family. I have been thinking often lately about what it means to be a gardener and considering if I am actually aiding or hindering the natural life in my neighbourhood. I am sure the possums love me growing a garden, and the skinks have certainly multiplied.

I have the feeling that if I turned my back on the garden the vines, including *Stephania japonica*, also known as Snake Vine, would take over.

It is an interesting balance of working with and modifying nature and trying to create a space of that reflects the beauty and peace of my local area. This is my long-term project. I always marvel at the amount of work that people put into their gardens and the passion that goes with it.

Our next garden visit, see page 2, will be no exception.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our monthly meetings during the year.

Best wishes,

**Di Clark**



**Access via this gate is proving a challenge as the Stephania claims ownership**

# Next Meeting

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023, meeting at 10.30 am  
at the property of Members Cliff Wallis and Sayaka Mihara  
“WATERY FOWLS”, 59 BOURNDA RD, BOURNDA**

**“Watery Fowls” is a 40HA / 100 acre property that runs along the southern side of Wallagoot Lake adjacent to Bournda NP.**

It was purchased in 1997 from Peter Royle who had owned the property for more than 50 years. Peter lived in Bega and established the first Vet’s practice in Auckland Street. He ran a flock of 200 sheep on the property and had a small shearing shed. The property had been substantially cleared and internally fenced.

Once Peter removed all the sheep, a small herd of cattle were run until 2009 when the property was turned over entirely to conservation and all internal fences removed.

**We think of it as a regeneration project rather than a garden.**

The first tree plantings took place in 1998 and since then about 7,000 trees and shrubs have been planted. In all the tree plantings we have aimed for plenty of variety; the plantings closer to the house contain a more diverse range of natives. Additionally large areas have been allowed to regenerate naturally. There is a conservation agreement in place and the property is also registered with the Humane Society International.

“Watery Fowls” is home to Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Red Necked and Swamp Wallabies, Echidna, Wombats and various reptiles. It is a “hot” spot for birds – over 180 species have been seen here – more than 25% of Australia’s birds, and Cliff recommends to bring binoculars to really appreciate the variety of avian life.

Before working life became too time consuming, an extensive collection of Hakea species was planted, and we expect that many will be flowering during our visit. Cliff has generously offered that members are welcome to collect seed or cuttings from their plants, so come prepared.

**Please bring morning tea, lunch and a chair... walking shoes and maybe insect repellent, to enjoy the extensive grounds.**

**Don’t forget SHOW and TELL (bring samples of native plants in flower) to discuss after lunch.**

**On completion of our visit to “Watery Fowls”, there is an opportunity to visit nearby Bournda Lagoon in the adjacent National Park. A park entrance fee is payable, and we are advised that payment is by card only. Alternatively, those heading north might wish to take the scenic coast drive from Tathra to Bermagui via Mimosa Rocks N. P.**

**Directions to the Bournda meeting, from the north.** Time about 2.25 to 2.5 hours from Batemans Bay

Travelling south on the Princes Highway, stay on the Bega Bypass (A1) past Bega, and after 4km, turn left onto Kerrisons Lane.

In 2.1km, reach a T intersection, Tathra Road. Turn right.

Stay on Tathra Rd for 8.8km, and soon after passing through Kalaru, turn right onto Sapphire Coast Drive.

After 6.2km turn left onto Bournda Rd., and around 550m, arrive at the entrance roadway to “Watery Fowls”. Follow this unsealed roadway for around 50m to your destination.

**The APS signboard will be placed at the entrance way.**

## Last Meeting

## PRACTICAL PROPAGATION

There are many different aspects of plant propagation, and members were presented with a detailed process that is used successfully at the ERBG nursery, by Horticulturist Dylan Morrissey, assisted by our President Di. Clark.

Dylan began with how to assess cutting material, recommending selecting the cuttings before the heat of the day, preferably before the sun hits the plant. Cuttings are placed in plastic bags, lightly sprayed with water and kept cool until needed. He showed how to ensure the cuttings were suitable for striking. Soft tips were removed to prevent wilting. He explained that once a cutting loses turgidity, it is difficult for that piece to recover, and the cutting will likely fail. After tips are removed, the cutting faces a flexibility test. Stems, when bent past 90°, should spring back erect, showing the right character for success. Not too soft, not too hard, just right.



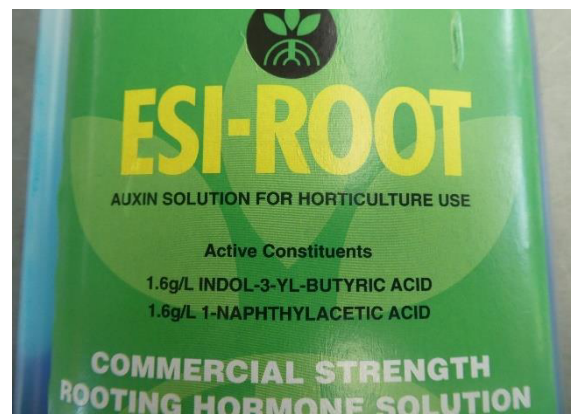
**Preparation of the cuttings requires clean and sharp tools.** The paper test was demonstrated by Di, and only tools which provided a clean cut, without ragged edges, were considered sharp enough. Secateurs or blades are dipped in methylated spirits regularly to ensure disease pathogens were not transferred to other cuttings.

**Selecting a suitable hormone** is a matter of personal choice. Cuttings will produce roots without the addition of hormones, but as has been shown over many years, adding root promoting hormones improves the root mass, and usually produces roots more quickly, which can be an advantage. At ERBG, 3 grades of **Clonex Gel containing Indole Butyric Acid (IBA)** are used. **Clonex Green**, containing IBA at 1500ppm (Parts per million) is used for softer material such as herbaceous shrubs. **Clonex Purple** (3000 ppm) is used for the majority of woody shrubs.



**Clonex Red** (8000 ppm) is used on harder wooded plants, and also trialled for difficult to root species. Prepared cuttings are dipped into the gel and inserted directly into the propagation media, or coir plugs.

**Esi-Root** is another hormone used. This is added to water and the prepared cuttings are either dipped in the liquid for at least 15 seconds at the higher (dipping) dilution, which is 5ml in 200ml of water, or soaked in a more dilute solution, 2.5ml in 1 litre of water for at least 15 minutes, and up to 24 hours. The mix can then be bottled and used over the next few days to spray the cuttings.



**Esi-Root** contains IBA 1600 ppm, and NAA (Naphthylacetic Acid) also 1600 ppm.

Experience with this product has been less burning of cutting bases, and the addition of NAA has proved beneficial on some species which do not respond successfully to Clonex.

ERBG purchases these products in commercial quantities, but smaller packaging is available at retail outlets.

The size of prepared cuttings was discussed at length. Obviously cuttings with long internodes will be longer than those with many closely spaced leaves. Dylan showed that with *Grevillea gilmourii*, the internodes are 50mm or more long, so the cuttings are often 200mm long. He suggested that with all cuttings, at least 2 nodes should be inserted into the growing media, and at least 2 nodes above. This gives 2 points where a cutting can produce callus material to initiate roots, and 2 points from where growth buds will be promoted. Where cutting material has more nodes, 3 or 4 can be inserted into the mix, with 3 or more growing points above.

### The photo illustrates

1. *Callistemon Kings Park Special*, stem length 8cm, 4 nodes where leaves have been removed, and 4 leaves with growing buds.
2. *Leptospermum petersonii*, stem length 7cm, 6 nodes with leaves removed and 4 growth buds
3. *Crowea Poorinda Ecstasy*, stem length 7cm, 3 nodes with leaves removed and 4 growth buds
4. *Thomasia foliosa*, stem length 8cm, 3 nodes with leaves removed and 3 growth buds
5. *Grevillea gilmourii*, stem length 13cm, 2 nodes with leaves removed and 2 growth buds. With the large leaved species such as this, Dylan suggested that the leaves should not be reduced in size as the cuts lead to necrotic tissue which can cause the cuttings to fail
6. *Grevillea granulifera*, stem length 8cm, 4 nodes with leaves removed, and 4 growth buds.

Although not discernible in the photo, **both Grevillea have had a 1mm deep sliver of wood removed, known as wounding**, to open more cambium wood to be exposed, and thus more opportunity for callus development.



The lower photo shows creamy white callus tissue emerging from the base of a *G. gilmourii* cutting. From this tissue will emerge roots.

### Choosing the right media and pot size.

There is as many recipes for striking cuttings as there is pots to hold the mix. A tried and true propagation mix comprising 3 parts sharp sand to 1 part peat moss, has been a standard for many years. However finding clean, quality sharp sand is not easy, and anyway it is very heavy.

In recent times many new recipes have been trialled, using lighter materials such as perlite as the main ingredient.

Some Commercial growers use finely milled composted pine bark which meets all the criteria necessary for success; good drainage, good water holding capacity, and high air filled porosity. (More on this later) For most hobby propagators, using pine bark successfully might prove difficult due to over watering, especially when the containers used are shallow.

Depending on the time of year, using **3 parts perlite and 1 part coir peat** (in place of sphagnum peat) is a well balanced mix, but some found that the mix needed some ballast to hold the cuttings securely. Adding 1 part finely crushed quartz or granitic sand (particles 0.5 to 2mm in size) provided stability to the mix whilst maintaining the drainage necessary to prevent waterlogging. It is important that the perlite is not heavily firmed, as the material is easily crushed, turning the mix



into a soggy mass. Also be aware that the perlite is quite dusty, and should be dampened before use. Wearing a mask is also advisable when handling, as the dust can prove harmful to lungs.

Vermiculite is another light material, and can be used with coarse sand and coir peat.



ERBG, and many others, also uses **coir plugs** for some plants with good success, but their use requires a bit of care with watering.

The photos show cuttings of *Grevillea rhyolitica ssp semivestita*, each individually set into its own coir



plug, and the resultant roots.

This method has an advantage of not disturbing other cuttings when inspecting progress and potting on.

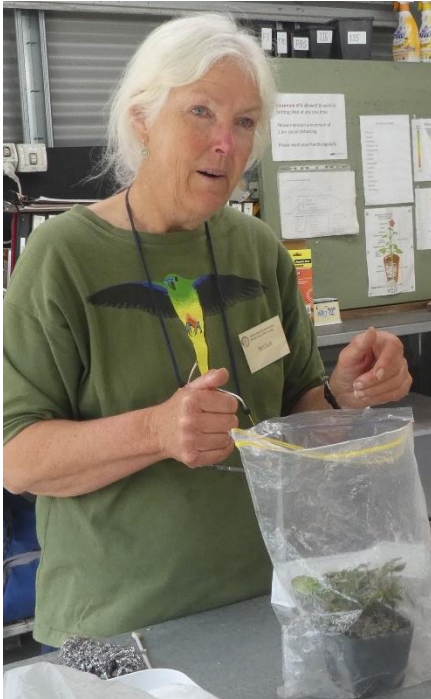
**Propagation mixes need an air filled porosity (AFP) of at least 20% - 25%.** This can be readily measured with a simple home test, giving a reasonably accurate measurement.

- For convenience, use a clean 1 litre plastic lidded container, such as that which you buy fruit like peach slices. In the lid, drill 4 equally spaced 8 – 10mm holes, the purpose of which will become obvious later.
- Fill the container with propagation mix, firmly tamping the container on a table, but not forcing the mix tight by pushing fingers into the mix. Continue adding more mix, and tamping, until the container is filled.
- Do not yet screw on the lid. Place a piece of gauze over the open end, held tight with a rubber band to prevent any mix from floating out, and plunge the container into a bucket of water, ensuring water covers the top of the container to a depth of at least 50mm. Leave this in the bucket for around 10 minutes or more to ensure the mix is saturated.
- Remove the container from the bucket, remove the gauze and screw on the lid.
- Now you need a shallow tray, and 2 x 100mm long pieces of dowel or similar material about 12-15mm in diameter. With two fingers of each hand covering the holes in the lid, carefully invert the container and rest on the dowels. Remove your fingers, and allow the container to drain into the tray for around 30 minutes.

Assuming the container was fully 100% saturated, water must have filled all the spaces within the mix. By measuring the volume of water which has now drained from the saturated mix, this tells you the amount of air now in the drained mix, having replaced the water which now resides in your tray. If the water volume measures more than 200ml, (1 litre = 1000ml) the AFP is more than 20%, and therefore suitably drained for propagation purposes.

### **I don't have a glasshouse, can I still have success with cuttings ?**

The simple answer is yes, and Di showed how a simple plastic bag can be used. The pot of cuttings is watered, allowed to drain then placed inside a plastic bag, the sides of the bag held away from the foliage with hoops of wire, and bag closed. Place in a sheltered but warm place, out of the sun, and check for condensation periodically.



When condensation no longer appears on the bag, open it up and spray a little water onto the foliage. Drier is better than wet!

Other suggestions included a polystyrene fruit box with a clear lid cut to fit, and a layer of sand on the base about 25mm deep to hold water for humidity, with the cutting pots just nestled to the sand but above the water reservoir. Similarly a clear plastic storage box with lid can be used. Holes about 12mm diameter should be drilled at each end, about 25mm from the base, and sand filled to this level. Then any extra water can drain away. Better drill a couple of holes in the top as well. In use, the box lid will collect heavy condensation, so the lid should be left partly open until this clears.

### Do I need a heated bed for cuttings ?

Whilst heat might be desirable in a commercial nursery where many plants are continually propagated, at home this is not necessary. However, during the cooler months, cuttings can be encouraged to root quicker with some help from a heated base.

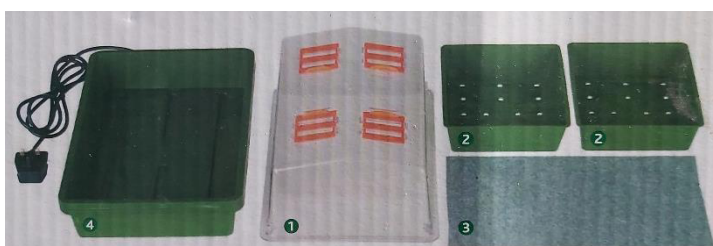
Di talked about using a safe, low voltage reptile heating cable and attached thermostat which maintains a steady temperature from 18 - 28°. The cable is embedded in 25mm of moist sand, and the thermostat probe sits in the sand

as well, switching the cable on and off as necessary to maintain the temperature somewhere near the desired level.



**Small commercially available electric propagation units are cheap to buy, and can produce good quality struck cuttings.**

There was a comment from the group that it is difficult to control the heat output of these small units, and they can get too hot. Members need to assess this for themselves, as placement of the unit in a warm environment, or not maintaining sufficient moisture on the capillary matting might be part to blame.



**Happy groups of propagators** spent the remainder of the day busily preparing and setting cuttings, calling constantly for assistance from the leaders Dylan and Di, both of whom were only too happy to advise



**Matt and Alison were probably the most productive, filling many pots with treasures for the home garden**



**Mike Shihoff explains to Sally finer details on how to prepare Grevillea cuttings**



**The young and nimble fingers of Daniel put older members to shame. He had finished all his cuttings, and was now potting up some he had set some weeks back.**

**Time will tell** just how these confident propagators fare, and as we are planning a plant swap day for later in the year, hopefully the skills and tips picked up at this meeting will bear fruit.

**Thanks to both Dylan and Di for their efforts.**

**Without such support, our group activities would be less profitable.**

## **Kosciuszko National Park**

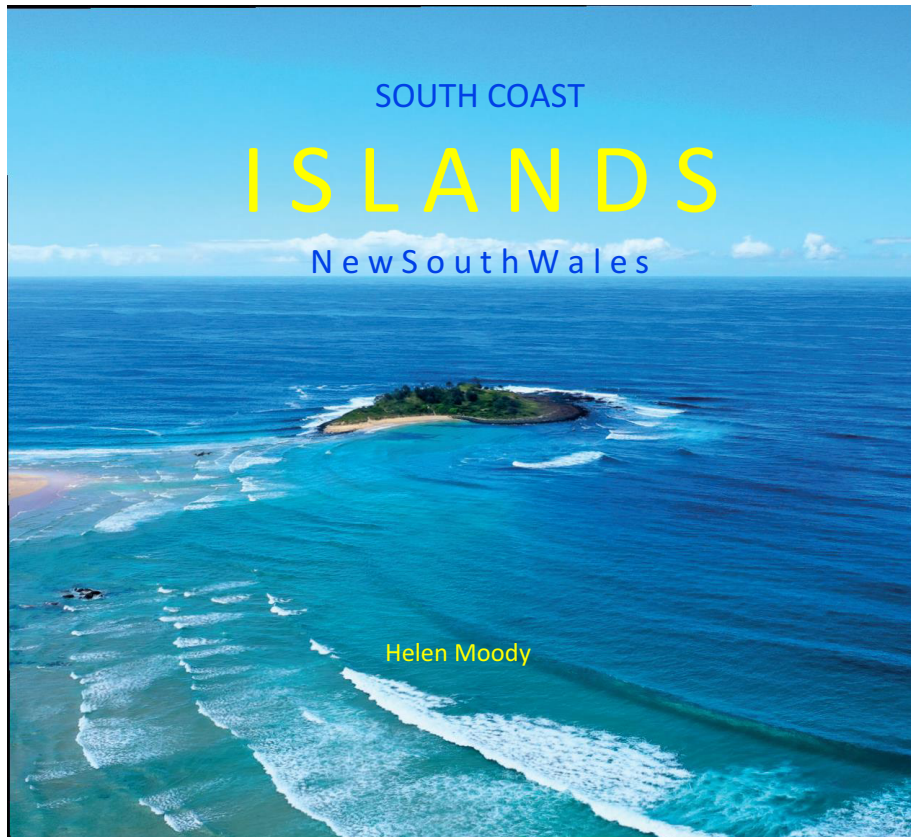
In 2019 we invited Linda Groom Volunteer Co-ordinator, Reclaim Kosci Campaign, to speak to our group and discuss some of the pressures that were being placed on the environment of Kosciuszko National Park. In 2023 these environmental pressures, particularly the wild horse population, are still a serious threat to the park. You may be aware that there has been a call for a Senate Inquiry on this issue and Linda has contacted this group to let us know that there is still an opportunity to make a submission to the enquiry if you wish. The closing date is April 28<sup>th</sup> 2023.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/FeralHorses47](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/FeralHorses47)

Linda has also provided a few tips about making submissions. She advises that they are hoping for submissions of two kinds:

- (a) Short submissions that are basically a 'vote' in favour of federal intervention to get more action
- (b) Longer submissions from people or organisations with relevant expertise e.g. in animal welfare, federal legislation, ecological restoration, or joint federal-state projects.

If you are interested in reading Linda's comments please let me know and I will forward them on. The Reclaim Kosci Campaign is encouraging people from outside cities and those that have an affinity with the park to speak up.



**The next meeting of the Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens will welcome guest speaker Helen Moody.**

**The talk will be held on 3 June, 1.30-3.00pm, followed by afternoon tea.**

**SOUTH COAST  
ISLANDS  
New South Wales**

**Available May/June  
2023**

For three years Helen Moody and Mike Jefferis led walks and kayak trips to the 61 islands of the NSW South Coast. Now they have written the first ever book on the islands. You have likely never heard many of their names before; perhaps not even been aware of their existence.

The book isn't just a travel guide for walkers and kayakers. It's a book for South Coast residents, visitors to this area, and anyone who loves nature and discovering wild places.

It tells of Aboriginal connections to the islands, the history of South Coast exploration, and the arrival of settlers and convicts.

It covers the geology, flora, lighthouses, shipwrecks, bird life and environmental values of the islands. There are over 200 photographs from over 20 photographers, and maps and description of how to visit every island, whether on foot or by boat.

Donations and grants from individuals and organisations have covered most of the production costs, so that **all profit from book sales will go to environmental projects**. Despite almost 400 pre-orders, as a self-published book the print run will be limited. So purchase soon to avoid disappointment.

Books will be available at the Friends meeting in June, or by contacting Helen by email.

[southcoastislandsbook@gmail.com](mailto:southcoastislandsbook@gmail.com)

**Authors: Helen Moody with Mike Jefferis**

**208 Pages**

**Sale Price: \$50**

**Postage direct from authors: \$13.50 for 1 or 2 books**



# An epic global study of moss reveals it is far more vital to Earth's ecosystems than we knew

THE CONVERSATION

Published: May 2, 2023

## Authors

1. **David John Eldridge** Professor of Dryland Ecology, UNSW Sydney
2. **Manuel Delgado-Baquerizo** Ecosystem ecologist, Spanish National Research Council, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC)

**Mosses are some of the oldest land plants.** They are found all over the world, from lush tropical rainforests to the driest deserts, and even the wind-swept hills of Antarctica.

They are everywhere; growing in cracks along roads and pathways, on the trunks of trees, on rocks and buildings, and importantly, on the soil.

Yet despite this ubiquity, we have a relatively poor understanding of how important they are, particularly the types of moss that thrive on soil.

New global research on soil mosses **published today in Nature Geoscience** reveals they play critical roles in sustaining life on our planet. Without soil mosses, Earth's ability to produce healthy soils, provide habitat for microbes and fight pathogens would be greatly diminished.



**Soil moss with fruiting bodies (capsules).**  
David Eldridge, Author provided

### A global survey of soil mosses

The results of the new study indicate we have probably underestimated just how important soil mosses are. Using data from 123 sites across all continents including Antarctica, we show that the soil beneath mosses has more nitrogen, phosphorus and magnesium, and a greater activity of soil enzymes than bare surfaces with no plants.

In fact, mosses affect all major soil functions, increasing carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling and the breakdown of organic matter. These processes are critical for sustaining life on Earth.

Our modelling revealed that soil mosses cover a huge area of the planet, about 9 million square kilometres – equivalent to the area of China. And that's not counting mosses from boreal forests, which were not included in the study.

The strength of the effect mosses have on soil depends on their growing conditions. They have the strongest effect in natural low productivity environments, such as deserts. They are also more important on sandy and salty soils, and where rainfall is highly variable.

Not unexpectedly, mosses have the strongest effects on soils where vascular plants – those that contain specialised tissues to conduct water and minerals – are sparse.

### An intimate connection

Mosses lack the plumbing that allows vascular plants to grow tall and pull water from beneath the soil. This keeps them relatively short, and means they develop an intimate connection with the uppermost soil layers.

Mosses are extremely absorbent and can attract airborne dust particles. Some of these particles are incorporated into the soil below. It is not surprising then that they have such a strong effect on soils.

Our modelling shows that, across the globe, mosses store 6.4 gigatonnes more carbon than soils without plant cover. Losing just 15% of the global cover of soil mosses would be equivalent to global emissions of carbon dioxide from all land use changes over a year, such as clearing and overgrazing.



Without mosses, the world's ecosystems wouldn't thrive nearly as well. Eric Prouzet/Unsplash

### Not all mosses are equal

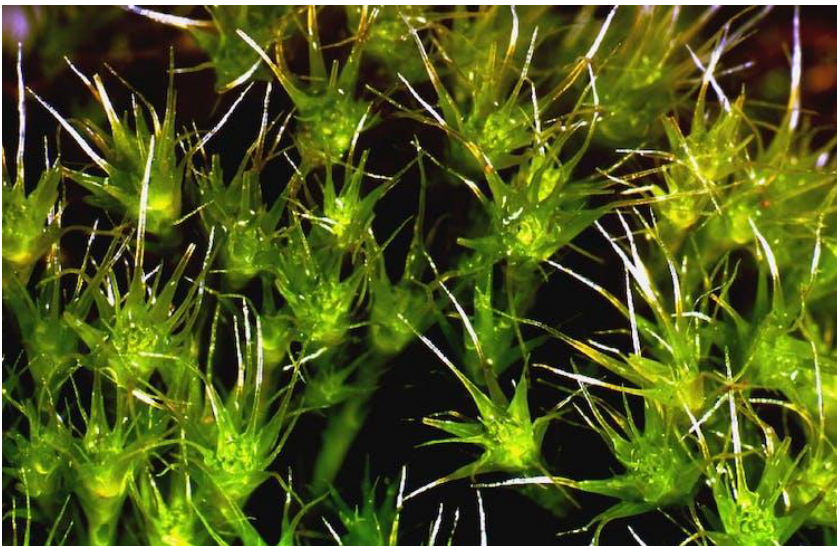
We also found some mosses are more effective at promoting healthy soils than others. Long-lived mosses tended to be associated with more carbon and greater control of soil pathogens.

The ability of mosses to provide ecosystem services and support a diverse community of microbes, fungi and invertebrates was strongest in locations with a high cover of mat- and turf-forming mosses such as *Sphagnum*, which are widely distributed in boreal forests.

Soils are a huge reservoir of soil pathogens, yet the soil beneath mosses had a lower proportion of plant pathogens. Mosses can help to reduce the pathogen load in soils. This ability may have originated when mosses evolved as land plants.

### A special group in the desert

A special type of moss flourishes in deserts. They either live hard (perennial mosses) or die young (annual mosses). Mosses in the family Pottiaceae are uniquely suited to life under dry and inhospitable conditions. Many have specialised structures that allow them to survive when water is scarce. These include boat-shaped leaves with long hairy tips that help to funnel water into the centre of the plant. Some mosses twist around their stem to reduce the area exposed to the sun and conserve moisture.



Desert mosses also protect the soil against erosion, influence how much water moves through the upper layers and even alter the survival chances of plant seedlings.

Other mosses have special moisture-absorbing cells (papillae) that swell up and provide them with a moisture reserve when conditions are dry.

**Long hair points on the leaves of *Campylopus* sp.**

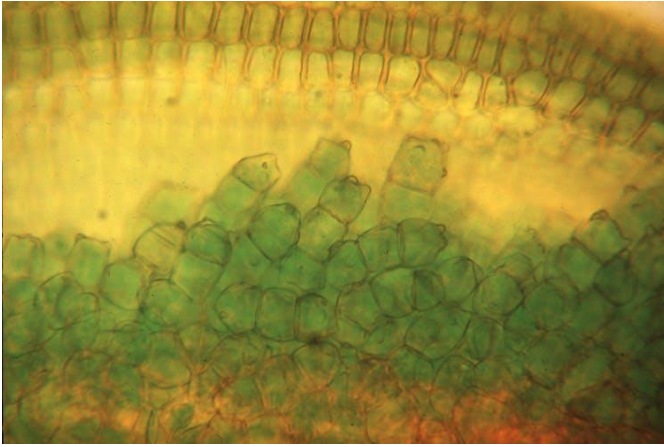
David Eldridge, Author provided

Our global study showed that mat- and turf-forming mosses such as *Sphagnum* had the strongest positive effects on the diversity of microbes, fungi and invertebrates, and on critical services such as nutrient supply. Predictably, longer-lived mosses supported more soil carbon and had greater control of plant pathogens than short-lived mosses.

### Protect the mosses

Overall, our work shows mosses influence important soil processes and function in the same way vascular plants do. Their effects may not be as strong, but their total cover means mosses are potentially as significant when summed across the whole globe.

But mosses are under increasing threats globally; disturbance by livestock, overharvesting, land clearing and even changing climates are the greatest threats.



We need a greater acknowledgement of the services that soil mosses provide for all life on this planet. This means greater education about their positive benefits, identifying and mitigating the main threats they face, and including them in routine monitoring programs. Soil mosses are everywhere, but their future is far from secure. They are likely to play increasingly important roles as vascular plants decline under predicted hotter, drier and more variable global climates.

**Papillae on the leaf of the moss *Crossidium davidai*.**  
David Eldridge,  
Author provided

## Book Fair Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden



**Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 June  
10am – 3pm**

**Join the hunt for the perfect book to get you through winter.  
Our annual preloved book fair is back, bigger and better, on the June long weekend!**

**Where:** The Banksia room,  
Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Garden, Deep Creek Dam Rd, Batemans Bay.  
It's going to be everyone for themselves when doors open for our mega two-day second hand book fair, so put on your skates and sharpen your elbows. Drop in to grab a bargain, or perhaps that special title that has been on the wish list for years. What better time of year to curl up with a good read on the couch in front of the fire and get transported to another world and remember that funds raised go to supporting the Garden.

**If you would like to donate some books for us to sell at the fair, please contact Dylan Morrissey on 02 4474 7471 or [dylan.morrissey@esc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dylan.morrissey@esc.nsw.gov.au)**

### Weeds, weeds and more weeds

*Ehrharta erecta* Panic Veldt Grass is one of those plants which just never seem to go away. This tufted South African grass was introduced as a pasture species, and has aggressively spread through all states except the Northern Territory, and pops up everywhere on disturbed sites and gardens, under shrubs, in rocky retaining walls and even cracks in the roadway. Very tolerant of shady sites, and especially moist soils, *Ehrharta* grows vigorously during spring and summer, but if conditions suit, it will grow throughout the year, flowering and seeding continuously, out-competing native grasses in most situations. Plants grow to around 60cm, with soft



leaves which droop with age. In shade it will climb through other plants up to 2m, and seeding once the panicles reach light. Time of flowering to seeding can be just a couple of weeks, and if we are not vigilant, another crop is set before we know. Seed production is profuse, with immature green seed turning straw colour when ripe. They fall readily and germination seems to be 100%

Although a perennial grass, the root system is fairly weak, and plants are easily removed by holding the plant close to the soil and lifting. This feature distinguishes it from the native grass *Microlaena stipoides*, Weeping Grass, which has a tough, difficult to remove root structure, and leaves which are more bluish-green and feel slightly rough. Another similar native grass is *Entolasia marginata*, which is a coarser grass with distinctive leaves held at right angles to the stem.



## One Man's Meat     Ann Brown

From Hornsby Shire Council's Booklet *Celebrating 30 years of Hornsby Bushcare*

*Now privet, UK's favourite hedge, came to Australia free, and so enjoyed our wide brown land it turned into a tree. Trad came from South America and spread along our creeks, but no matter how you weed it out, it's back again in weeks.*

*Honeysuckle, out of China, you might think could feel a little lost, but it has adapted to our scorching sun, our flooding rain and frost.*

*It covers walls and timbers well, but not satisfied with these, it marched on out into the bush, and covered all our trees.*

*Our friends arrived from overseas and admired our lush green grass, shall we say it's from South Africa, or shall we let that pass?*

*From seed to weed in just four weeks – I think they may be right, it seems Ehrharta seeds if left alone, spring full-grown overnight!*

*Asparagus has spread so much; it should be a deportee, for no matter how you root it out there is no guarantee, that any fragment left behind won't bide its time till spring, then overpower our native plants, plus almost anything.*

*Many arrived as potted plants, but after a short while, they found the indoors boring, 'cos it really cramped their style.*

*So they tried a different way of life, successfully it seems, to add a new dimension to the weary Bushcare Teams So – did some gung-ho politician with a Visa in his hand, say "Hello" to these strangers – and "Welcome to this land"?*

## COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

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