

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY... Southern Highlands Group

Southern Highlands

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Southern-Highlands

HAPPY

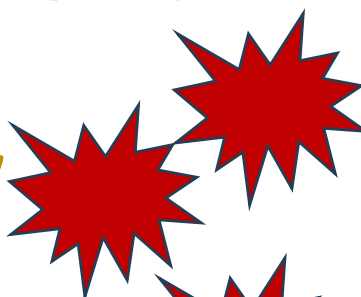
NEW



YEAR



2024



Coming Up Next

Lots of plans in the pipeline. There will be the usual interesting mix of talks and walks and visits. Stay posted.

	General Meetings Usually the first Thursday of the month, every second month. 2pm at Moss Vale CWA, 66 Elizabeth Street, Moss Vale	Outings Usually alternate months on first Thursday of the month	Committee Meeting 2nd Monday of month
February 2024	CHANGE OF DATE Thursday 15 th Feb AGM and talk on Phytophthora by Professor Brett Summerell. See details below.		12 th February

We are very fortunate that **Professor Brett Summerell** has agreed to come and talk to us about Phytophthora on Thursday 15 February so we are changing our meeting date at the CWA, originally scheduled for Thursday 1 February, to Thursday 15 February. So the AGM will also move from 1 February to 15 February.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE ON NEXT YEAR'S COMMITTEE?

Either as a committee member or an office bearer. A chance to be involved in discussion and decisions on SHAPS going forward, with a friendly group of people. And it's fun.

Form to be submitted to southernhighlandsaps@gmail.com on or before the AGM on Thursday 15th February 2024.

NOMINATION FORM

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY- SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS AGM 15/02/2024

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position (please circle)

President Vice-President Secretary Treasurer Newsletter Editor
Committee member

Nominated

by _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

As a bit of an indulgent exercise I have chosen 20 images, from the front pages of our SHAPS newsletters, from my period as editor.



Photos Trisha Arbib with contributions from Harper Wright, Sarah Cains and Barbara Eckersley. Thank you.

Goulburn Get Together

Paul Osborne

Over the weekend of Nov 17 to 19 the annual gathering of APS NSW members from across the state was held at Goulburn. The Southern Tablelands district group hosted about 80 of us for interaction, talks and activities. Firstly, at a school hall on Saturday morning, local President Jen Ashwell introduced ecologist Dr Lyndal Thorburn, leader of the Eremophila Study Group. That afternoon we enjoyed a guided roam about the nearby Goulburn Wetlands.

The Eremophila SG started back in 1972 when knowledge and interest in the genus was scant compared with today. Efforts during these years were outlined leading to the now thriving group which collaborates with university researchers and the horticulture industry. They have achieved substantial grants to aid these important activities which increase understanding and promote wider use in gardens and the general environment.

Eremophilas grow in arid areas across large parts of the country and have a diversity of form, foliage and flower shapes and colours. They are classified amongst the Scophulariaceae family with related genera including the myoporums. Through the decades, the development of hybrids and innovations in garden methods has extended the range for cultivating these plants. There are approximately 250 species and more than a 1,000 subspecies and cultivars. A number of these need to be grafted onto shrubby myoporum understock. Although they are associated with deserts many can be grown in wetter and even frosty places.

The hard woody fruit of eremophila does not yield easy seed germination. Hence most of the garden plants out there are from cuttings and grafts via chance seedlings. A major focus of the S.G is to investigate aspects of natural reproduction and work on improving success from seeds. This has many advantages including maintaining genetic diversity and increasing ease and efficiency when planting larger areas like mine site rehabilitation. It also would enable more “deliberate” production of varieties. This determined and hopeful project requires much fruit and seed gathering by members and partnering with the University of Queensland and other researchers.

Another concern accompanying the explosion of interest in eremophilas is finding some order in the naming of plants and nursery industry labelling. With constant introduction of new species, subspecies and hybrids, and something of a “free for all” over our big country, there is much to sort through. Interacting with breeders and propagators helps towards more rigorous practices.

For growing eremophilas in our gardens knowledge of their natural habitat is useful but not limiting. As with other natives they can benefit from raised beds, clever pruning, nurturing to establish, fertilizing and all those things gardeners like to try. Seeking out varieties for suitable climate zones and garden positions is wise, and adequate nursery labels can guide this. For instance, the grey leaved ones with their protective hairs, e.g *E. nivea*, prefer it dry and less humid, while greener ones like some maculata forms can stand it wetter.

From groundcovers and shrubs to trees and so many leaf shapes and tones, these are fine choices for any garden. The large amount of flower colours and shapes relates to their association with pollinators. Insects prefer the majority white, mauve and purple, while birds go for red, yellow and bright pink.

This comprehensive talk was a positive endorsement of the work of specialist groups which enable members to engage in promotion, education, research, communication and comradeship. The field trips sound like fun with a purpose.

Apart from eremophilas Lyndal pursues interests in flora and fauna conservation in a number of geographies. That morning she brought with her a collection of “show and tell” flowers and stems from her Canberra garden displaying their unusual beauty as part of a look into the big world of this genus.

The study groups come under the umbrella of the ANPSA and their website is the place to explore more. There’s lists of books and further reading on the eremophila site as well as an image database to explore and identify specific plants

The Goulburn Wetlands

Just down the road the Goulburn Wetlands was the place for post lunch activities.

Going about the walking tracks, listening to the volunteers involved in restoring and continuing maintenance of what was a wasteland until 11 years ago, was impressive. It had been a quarry and brickworks and eventually weed infested council land. Local groups, particularly Friends and Residents of Goulburn Swamplands Landcare Inc. lobbied governments and council for help to create a wetland and natural area for tranquil public enjoyment.

A determined approach to eradicate weeds of all types has been needed to allow planting and encouragement of local species. The APS has helped with sourcing and propagating these. Now there’s a thriving mixture of woodland patches, understory, lomandra and grasses. Flowing water on the boundary is part of the chain of Mulwaree Ponds which later joins the Wollondilly River. After clearing choking weeds, like willow and blackberry, endemic reeds and rushes have returned along here. On damper areas elsewhere the larger ‘common reed’, phragmites, has made a home too. Adjacent to the constructed large ponds are a couple of shelters for observing the many birds that dwell here or visit from often far away places.

The persistence in building momentum towards a self sustaining environment has been great over these few years. Between droughts there has been a dozen flood events on top of the always frosty winters and hot summers. This 14 hectare site feels as if it has been thriving for much longer than it has. The eucalypts, wattles, hakeas, melaleucas, callistemons and more are all strong and healthy. These include *E.elata*, *amplifolia*, *blakely*, *stellulata* and *Acacia melanoxylon* and *mearnsii* to name a few. Encouraging native grasses to grow across larger areas has been more difficult but bit by bit this could succeed.

At the entrance to the wetlands are gardens planted and tended to by APS volunteers. Despite being in tough spots and enduring weather related setbacks the natives, hailing from across the country, are mainly happily growing. A tight screen of mixed shrubs lines the street border with full flowered stems of *Hakea teretifolia* poking out. The lower woodland garden is dominated by several *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* many metres tall and still with their juvenile looking blue/grey foliage. These shelter daisies, violets, veronicas, bulbine lilies, small tea trees and others. The APS plants are helpfully labelled.

Saturday Dinner.

At a local hotel that evening a good dinner was held including a presentation by Dr. Brian Faulkner, the Biodiversity Assessment Officer for the shire council. By all reports it was a lively talk on aspects of his job and frank about the limitations when dealing with the competing interests across a large rural district.

Sunday.

Sunday morning offered some choices of visiting a number of gardens or taking a walk in a nature reserve off the Crookwell Rd. Quite a few of us opted for the latter and enjoyed a fairly easy stroll about the dry sclerophyll terrain. Our guide, Ash, has been active in managing the Alison Hone Reserve, clearing weeds and recording the flora present there for many years.

As expected at that time of year there's not an abundance of flowering plants in the bush compared with early spring but there was enough to interest and encourage a return visit. Even where the ground was cleared beneath overhead cables, tea trees and ground covers hid the small pea *Gompholobium minus* which was sought out for photos. Parts of the reserve are dominated by attractive eucalypts like *mannifera*, *rossii* and *meliadora* and beneath them cassinias, ozothamnus, a number of pea species here and there with lomandra, poa and wallaby grass. Orchids are common on this ground and some spent stems could still be seen. The prostrate little *Goodenia hederacea*'s yellow flowers were dotted about the entire area. Although the soil is supposedly poor there was a surprising variety of flora. Near the carpark, on some bare earth, a sweet patch of leucochrysum everlastings have appeared lately.

Back in Goulburn the open gardens gave visitors a chance to see how members' love of Australian plants and adapting them to local conditions create beautiful and unique home gardens.

SHAPS Christmas Party

Jen Slattery

It's such a busy time of the year. A group of a dozen or so members enjoyed our SHAPS Christmas Party. We met at Native Grace nursery in Robertson and picked up some treasures for our gardens. My treasure is a Mulla Mulla

(*Ptilotus exalatus*). Although it's coming to the end of its season, it has plenty of seeds forming. I'm planning to give my propagation skills a work out over the Christmas New Year break.



We then headed off to Carrington Falls and met up with a few more members. The Carrington Falls picnic area, also known as Thomas' Place, provided a perfect back drop for our lunch and homemade, very delicious, Ginger Beer (thank you Barbara). A short walk away from the picnic spot, there are a number of lookouts to view the spectacular Carrington Falls cascade down into the gully below.



Some of the beautiful plants spotted on the walk to the falls included Mountain Devil (*Lambertia Formosa*), Fringe Lily (*Thysanotus sp.*) and Fan fern (*Sticherus sp.*).



The following link provides more information on Carrington Falls Picnic Area. It's a beautiful stop off point for locals and visitors alike.

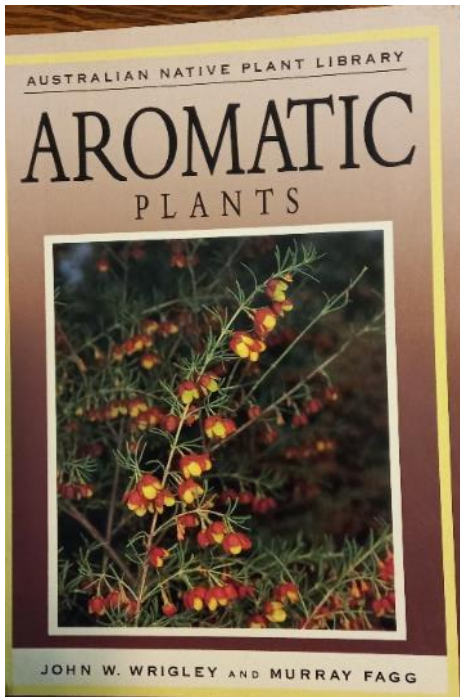
<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/picnic-areas/carrington-falls-picnic-area>

BOOK REVIEW – Trisha Arbib

Australian Native Plant Library: *Aromatic Plants*, John W. Wrigley and Murray Fagg

These are the authors of my native plant bible, the encyclopaedic *Australian Native Plants*. It's an old book. My copy was published by Collins/Angus and Roberson in 1990. But I always knew with these authors that it would be a good one. As expected, they have useful symbols attached to each plant indicating habit of growth, attractive features, frost resistance etc.

I've always been interested in perfume in plants and taken this in account when choosing plants for my garden, and I enjoy this extra dimension when walking in the bush. Although as the authors of this book reminds us aroma is not always pleasant. Think of the name old socks for *Grevillea leucopteris* and stinkwood for *Pararchidendron pruinosum*. Of course, a great majority of the plants, as in any book of Australian native plants, are ones that we are unlikely to encounter, but are still interesting to read about.



It may be the flower, foliage, stems or roots that are aromatic. The book has some interesting things to say on the chemistry of odour in plants, the distribution of aromatic compounds, and their horticultural and commercial uses.

The body of the book looks at individual plants, their distribution, cultivation, propagation etc. I was somewhat surprised that it only has a short note on the type of aroma for each. But the important thing to me is knowing which plants are aromatic, which part of the plant, and whether the scent is pleasant.

I never knew for instance that *Grevillea buxifolia* has flowers “that are sweetly but subtly perfumed”. I was surprised, and pleased, to read that a favourite, *Hypocalymma angustifolium*, has leaves that “have a spicy aroma when crushed and the flowers have a heavy sweet perfume.” I’d never noticed.

I don’t always agree with their descriptions, for instance that the flowers of *Homoranthus flavescens*, loaded with nectar, “give off a disagreeable odour which has been described as animal like”. I rather like it. This just confirms the authors’ assertion that the perception of smell can be quite idiosyncratic.

SNIPPETS

Rare purple *Banksia spinulosa* discovered near Braidwood NSW - Leanne Tyler-Olsen

During winter this year, Mr Gerard Nicole was walking his dog on his property near Braidwood, when he discovered a purple *Banksia spinulosa*, or Hairpin Banksia, nestled amongst the usual orange, red and yellow varieties. He immediately knew it was something different, so he posted a photo to an online horticultural forum. Mr Nicole was amazed at the sensation the photo created in the horticultural universe. For the full story with photographs, please click the link below to the ABC Illawarra News article.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-14/purple-banksia-spinulosa-native-plant-discovered-braidwood-nsw/102951088?utm_campaign=newsweb-article-new-share-null&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web

Failed Regeneration in Victoria’s state forests

Follow the link to read an ABC report of an AI-based analysis of 20 years of Vic Forest’s logging showing the scale of failed regeneration.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-01/ai-analysis-finds-failed-forest-regrowth-after-logging-/103153614?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=abc_newsletter_pm_sfmc&utm_term=&utm_id=2257514&sfmc_id=129949304

The last legal stockpile of King Billy pine

A west coast Tasmanian sawmiller is selective in his customers for the highly prized timber of *Athrotaxis selaginoides*. It is thought to be even rarer than Huon pine. It's a remnant of Gondwana, growing only on high mountain slopes of Tasmania, and is now a threatened native vegetation community. The timber is in demand for musical instruments, sculpture, art pieces and boats.

Follow the link to the ABC Rural report.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-10-27/king-billy-huon-sawmill-last-custodian-of-rare-tasmanian-timbers/103015506>

Sniffer Dogs for Phytophthora

This piece is pertinent to the report in our last newsletter about conifer deaths in our Shire. With funding from the NSW Government's Saving our Species program, two spaniels, a springer and a Brittany, are being trained to identify *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. After 10 months training, they can discriminate infected from non-infected plants in a lab environment and are learning to do it in the field.

They've been practising on plants provided by Northern Beaches Council, which is working to protect critically endangered *Grevillea caleyi* from infection. A further grant will see them using their skills in testing soil in Barrington Tops National Park and Scheyville National Park, where Phytophthora poses a significant threat to several threatened plant species.

https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/detection-dogs-sniff-out-silent-killer-to-save-native-plants?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Naturescapes%20November%202023&utm_content=Naturescapes%20November%202023+CID_3be02395f2b83fc123b956c2651d6758&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=More%20info

Virtual Fence Trial

A virtual fence being trialled on a one-kilometre strip of road in Long Beach, Batemans Bay, has been reducing road deaths of wildlife. Car headlights activate posts distributed every 25 metres along the roadside causing a high-pitched sound and a flashing blue light to warn wildlife not to step on the road.

Eurobodalla Shire Council's pilot has been so successful that they are extending it. A limitation is that it works best with vehicles travelling at up to 80 kilometres per hour.

See:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-23/eurobodalla-virtual-fence-trial-reducing-roadkill-incidents/102880624?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=abc_pan_yours_sfmc&utm_term=&utm_id=2216898&sfmc_id=129949304



Thank You

I want to thank all of our wonderful contributors over the time that I have been editor. You have all been so generous in providing such interesting reports and/or photos. And thank you to all the members who have read the newsletter. There would have been no point without you. And to our fabulous SHAPS committee, current and past members, who have been so good to work with. And finally, a big thank you to Leeanne, our new editor who will be taking over with the next newsletter.

I'd like to finish with a snippet, not about plants but a threatened animal species. A story about the bum breathing turtle from the Mary River catchment. It's a positive story about a nest full of eggs being saved from flood waters, and their name makes me smile.

It's worth clicking on the link below if only to see the image of these "punk turtles" with green algae growing prolifically on their heads.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2022-02-20/turtle-bum-breathing-mary-river-catchment-threatened-species/100804026>

**And for the last time,
many thanks to
contributors. Jen Slattery,
Paul Osborne and Leanne
Tyler-Olsen. Wonderful!**

