

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group

...your local native garden club

Southern Highlands

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Southern-Highlands



Photograph by Gngarra...commons.wikimedia.org, CC BY 2.5 au,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1475272>

A fascinating Xmas story sent to us by Jane Lemann about the Western Australian Christmas Tree *Nuytsia floribunda*.

SEASONS GREETINGS AND A HAPPY XMAS TO ALL.

This December flowering little tree grows in arid, infertile soil yet produces a magnificent abundance of golden orange, sea anemone shaped, fragrant flowers later ripening to three-winged fruit. It is host to myriads of birds and insects and kangaroos and wallabies eat its leaves. Writer Jonathon Drori calls it "amazingly unlikely". Its secret is that it is the world's largest parasite, a freeloader that hunts for water and nutrients and bleeds them from its neighbours. *Nuytsia* can send exploratory roots up to 100

metres, and along their length side roots branch. When they sense the right substance in the roots of a host, the *Nuytsia* grows a dough-nut shaped haustorium around its target, like a wedding ring. Within the ring, it then creates miniature hydraulically operated secateurs, with sharp woody blades that sever the roots of the host. When *Nuytsia* attaches its own root system to the host plant the heist is complete. With a nod to science fiction, *Nuytsia* has been known to seek and sever buried telephone wires and cut the insulation of electric cables, a tiny redress of the balance of power between humans and plants.

This story is from a book *Round the World in Eighty Plants* by Jonathon Drori, lent to Jane by Jenny Simons. He is a botanical scientist, Trustee of the Eden Project in England, producer of numerous documentaries and has a lovely sense of humour says Jane.

Coming Up Next

	General Meetings Usually Thursdays 2pm every second month, at Moss Vale CWA, 66 Elizabeth Street, Moss Vale	Outings	Committee Meeting 2nd Monday of month
December 2023		Thursday 7th December Xmas party at Carrington Falls. See details below.	11 th December
February 2024	CHANGE OF DATE Thursday 15 th Feb AGM and talk on Phytophthora by Professor Brett Summerell. See details below.		12 th February

Our **Xmas party** will be held at Carrington Falls on 7th December 2023.

(a) Meet at Native Grace Nursery, Robertson at 10.30am (for retail therapy). If you don't wish to visit the nursery, meet at the lunch venue at 11.15/11.30.

(b) Carrington Falls for a walk and picnic: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/picnic-areas/carrington-falls-picnic-area>

OR (c) If the weather is not suitable, we will go to the Robertson Public House & Kitchen after the nursery. <https://robertsonpublichouse.com.au/> So this will be an all-weather Xmas party.

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.

WE HAVE A NEW EDITOR FOR OUR SHAPS NEWSLETTER

It is a great pleasure to welcome Leeanne to be SHAPS editor from February 2024.

From our next editor:

Hello to all SHAPS members.



Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Leeanne Tyler-Olsen and from 2024, I am going to take over from Trish Arbib as editor to the SHAPS newsletter. I hope that I can do the job as well as Trish has done over the past six years. Thank you Trish for your longstanding contribution and thank you for your generosity in teaching me the basics of the newsletter. I am looking forward to being editor.

I moved to Bundanoon four years ago with my husband Greg, and we are in the process of developing an Australian garden to provide pleasure for us, and habitat for Bundanoon’s beautiful local wildlife. We both have a passion for Australian flora and fauna and we are looking forward to seeing our garden grow and develop over the years to come. Our dream is to have a garden buzzing with life! We recently rejoined SHAPS so that we could learn as much as possible to aid us in this quest. And we certainly have a lot to learn. Greg has yet to attend meetings as he has been keeping busy as an environmental keyboard activist. He may yet deign to grace us with his presence!

I hope that next year, I will meet and become better acquainted with the SHAPS membership and I am told that there are many dedicated members who regularly contribute to the newsletter. Perhaps there may be others who have something to write about, but who have not yet done so. If this is the case, please don’t be shy to add your observations, photos or stories of gardening, bushwalking or visiting a special place or garden. Any or all of the above will be most welcome.

Thank you for reading,
Leeanne.

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.

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: _____	

Great Result: Mountain Bike Trails on the Gib

From Jane Lemann

Editor: As many will be aware, the building of unauthorised trails in the Mount Gibraltar Bushland Reserve by mountain bikers has been a hot topic for discussion in the local community, press and at Council for some time.

Jane Lemann would like to thank everyone for their support during the prolonged, traumatic and expensive process of the Law prevailing over the Mountain Bike damage to our Reserves, on behalf of all involved.

The following motion was passed at a Wingecarribee Shire Council meeting on 20th September 2023.

1. **Accept the draft Review of Environmental Factors (REF)**, noting that:
 1. A section of the unauthorised mountain bike track is of significant environmental impact
 2. Augmentation of the track would be required to minimise erosion and avoid private property, and
 3. Further specialist studies, of significant financial and time investment, would be required to enable a final REF determination under Division 5.1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979).
2. **Close and decommission the unauthorised mountain bike track in the north east area** of Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve.
3. The General Manager ensure there is **continued monitoring of illegal track construction and usage at the Mount Gibraltar bike track especially during weekends and public holidays.**
4. The final **costs** of the studies associated with the illegal use of the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve and decommissioning be reported to Council in conjunction with the next financial quarterly statements.
5. Council note that further options for mountain bike facilities will be considered through the **Natural Area Recreation Activity Strategy** and any capping of the former Welby Tip allow for passive and active recreation.
6. Council note that **Officers will continue to collaborate with local mountain bike riders** to ensure that any selected site and future mountain bike facility is fit for purpose and provides opportunity for partnering in track creation and maintenance.
7. An **update** on the **Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2016-26** be provided to Council within 3 months.
8. That the **General Manager meet with Mr Kopetko** to discuss the Welby Tip site and the offer of **Mr Matt Ward** and this be reported to Council.

The La Nina Connection

Louise Egerton



Photos Gaye White

As I'm sure you have all noticed, many of the boundary trees and others around the Shire have succumbed to death. There were a number of theories as to why. Some thought it was the result of Cypress Canker as many affected trees were in the cypress complex, including *x Leylandii*. Others suggested wet feet. Several tests were carried out, one by the National Trust; another by the Department of Primary Industry when they were testing for Forestry in our area and whom we were able to persuade to take some samples from affected paddock trees in the Moss Vale-Bowral area. Tests came back positive for *Phytophthora*, a water-borne fungus-like pathogen.

In June this year SHAPS was awarded a grant of \$1,450 as part of Council's Wingecarribee Community Assistance Scheme to test for *Phytophthora* across a broad geographical range of the Southern Highlands. We took 14 soil samples from 6 properties, at Werai, Berrima, Canyonleigh, Exeter, Moss Vale and Mittagong. Most samples were taken from either *Cyprinus torulosa* or *Cyprinus x Leylandii* but we also tested two pines, a Deodar cedar, a banksia and two eucalypts. Of the 14 samples, 8 came back positive for *Phytophthora*.

We are now at the interpretive stage but it seems clear that many of our trees have been affected by *Phytophthora*. Since this pathogen requires water to attack the roots of trees, we might conclude that one of the consequences of La Nina's 2020-22 wet weather in South-eastern Australia has facilitated the passage of this fatal disease.

We are extremely pleased that Professor Brett Summerell, Chief Scientist at the Sydney Botanic Garden, will be coming to talk to us on our first meeting of 2024. He will enlighten us about what this disease is, how it works and what we need to do to reduce its spread. We hope that the knowledge we accrue will be of use to landholders dealing with Phytophthora now and in the future.

Please note: in order to take advantage of this opportunity of having such a knowledgeable speaker we are moving our first meeting of the year (and our AGM) from Thursday 1 February to Thursday 15 February.

Grasses

Jen Slattery

A report of our October 2023 Meeting: Grasses An introduction. What Grassy Plant is That? Is it a Goodie or Baddie?

Jen Slattery introduced us to the fascinating world of recognising grasses. Council's bio-security team provided some samples of bio-security grasses.

Is it a Grass? Remember the rhyme.

Sedges have edges (solid triangular stems), rushes are round (solid round stems), grasses have knees that bend to the ground. Grass knees are knobby nodes found along roundish, hollow stems



(Left) Node on the stem of Blowfly Grass / Briza maxima and (Right) Node on the stem of Yorkshire Fog / Holcus lanatus

Photos Jen Slattery

Botanically Speaking

Grasses = Poaceae (synonym gramineae) Includes Wheat, Corn, Rice, Themeda, Poa

Sedges = Cyperaceae e.g Carex, Gahnia, Cyperus. Rushes = Juncaceae e.g Luzula, Juncus

First Steps to Identifying Grasses

Grasses can be difficult to identify. Add in a flowering head (inflorescence) and you can start ruling out certain grasses.



Photos: Jen Slattery

Flowering head (inflorescence) types.

Remember to bend narrow / closed inflorescences in the middle to open them up and see if and how they are branched

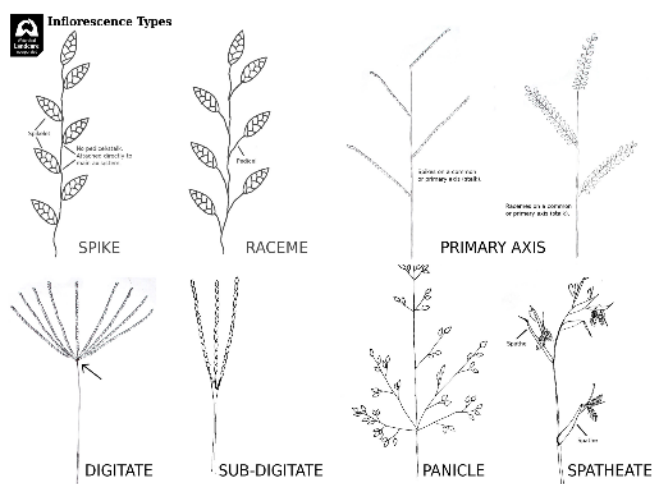


Image sourced with approval from Watershed Landcare Inc

Flowering head (inflorescence) Examples. (E) = Exotic (N) = Native

Spike (no stalk) or Raceme (short stalk) – Flower Spikelet directly attached to main axis (stem)

E.g. Pigeon Grass (E), Rye Grass (E), Swamp Foxtail (N)

Primary axis - Branches of racemes directly off the main axis (stem).

E.g. Common Paspalum (E) Basket Grass / Oplismenus (N) Wiry Panic / Entolasia sticta (N)

Digitate / subdigitate - Branches of racemes all radiate from one point / almost one point, like fingers

E.g. Rhodes Grasses (E), Windmill Grass (N,) Red leg grass (N), Summer Grass (E)

Panicle - Branched flower head. Most common flowering head type

- Open panicle (many branches) E.g. Shivery Grass (E), Poa labillardierei (N) Yorkshire Fog (E)
- Narrow, spike raceme like (has reduced branching) E.g. Weeping Grass / Microleana (N)
- Contracted panicle - solid inflorescence, stays closed - E.g. Phalaris (E) Blady Grass (N).

Spathate - Leaf like bracts in the flowerhead

E.g. Kangaroo Grass (N), Barbed Wire / Lemon Scented Grass (N) Coolatai Grass (E)

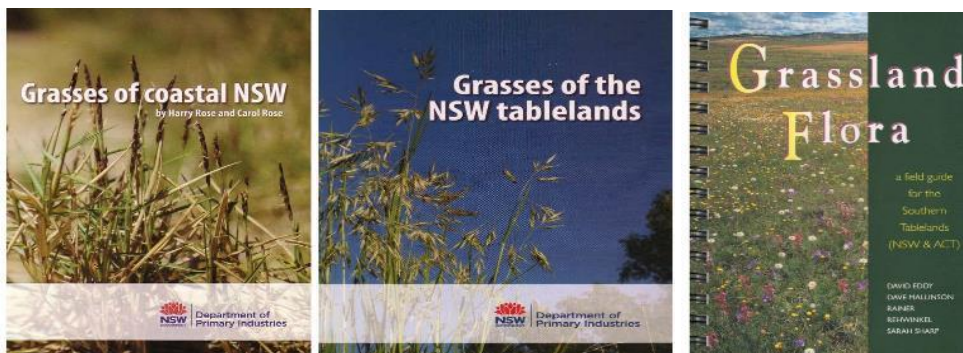
Growing Season

Perennial grasses can be classified as either C3 or C4 plant, depending on their photosynthesis process.

C3 = Cool season or year long growth period. Likes shade and southerly aspects, greater tolerance of frosts E.g. Weeping grass (Microleana).

C4 = Warm season growth period. Likes full-sun, northerly aspects E.g. Kangaroo grass (Themeda).

Where to find help to identify grasses? **Books**



On Line Sources

Watershed Landcare ★★★★★ Has an excellent easy to follow Grass Literacy video series.

<https://watershedlandcare.com.au/resources/grass-identification/>

Friends of Grasses https://www.fog.org.au/Brochures/grasses_brochure.htm

Grasslands Biodiversity of South-Eastern Australia Field Guide App | Grasslands (ecolinc.vic.edu.au)

Hornsby Shire Weed Lookalike Grasses & Sedges

https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/_resources/documents/environment/lookalike-weed-booklet/Grasses-and-Sedges.pdf

Is it a goodie or baddie?

Is it invasive? Is it taking over an area?

Native Species = Usually OK, but there are some issues with Fountain / Foxtail Grasses

Exotic but non-invasive = not a problem. Check planting guides for weediness

Exotic and invasive = Biosecurity grasses. It's a problem!!!! Examples provided by the Bio security Team (James, Peter and Tristan) included Pampas Grass, Coolatai Grass, African Love Grass.

You could also dip into the NSW government Local Land services publication *South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023 – 2027*.

Lake Alexandra to Katoomba Lookout

Robyn Kremer



View from Katoomba Lookout towards the Blue Mountains

The pleasure of viewing Waratahs in their natural habitat, motivated us to follow the rugged bush path from Lake Alexandra to Katoomba Lookout recently.

Pimelias were flowering profusely metres from the popular track around the lake.

As we climbed higher masses of white paper daisies and *Pulteneas* enlivened the landscape.

Scrubby Pears were flourishing & their pale green leaves

complemented scattered Waratah flowers with their distinctive dark, sculptural vegetation. Eastern Rosella's were a colourful sight feasting on their nectar.

Casuarinas are proliferating at the summit picnic area. They frame the spectacular view to the Blue Mountains and also block the view east over Mittagong where excessive development has resulted in the loss of many trees.

Mt Alexandra is a valuable habitat for flora & fauna, happily saved by its ruggedness from exploitation.





Helichrysum elatum

There are several paths from Lake Alexandra to Katoomba Lookout and none are clearly marked. That is probably why few people find their way to the top. We have over 32 years worked out the least steep of several routes.

I now use walking poles which are reassuring on the descent & because there are rocks, sticks & roots to trip over. Robyn & Andrew Kremer would be happy to lead a walk there during Spring. But it is a demanding climb. Hiking boots are recommended.

Joint walk with APS Illawarra at Barren Grounds

Harper Wright

Photos Harper Wright, Louise Egerton and Michael Swire

Some invitations are better than others. The invitation we received towards the end of September was one of the really good ones. We were invited to join the APS Illawarra Group on a walk around



Photo Michael Swire

Photo HW

Barren Grounds just off the Jamberoo Road. Everything contributed to a very pleasant and educational experience.



Photo HW

Photo HW

View up towards Port Kembla Photo HW



Boronia pinnata Photos HW



Drosera sp. Photo HW



Creek crossing - LE

The location was a mix of heath and woodlands, and as a result the plants were at their best on a bright and clear spring morning. The views down to the coast really contributed to the sense of location just above the coastal rainforest. There were about 10-12 of us, equally split between the Southern Highlands and Illawarra Groups. Mike Swire did a great job as the walk leader and, along with a few other knowledgeable members, answered most of our questions about what we were seeing. In addition to spectacular displays of boronias, we were also entertained by gang gang cockatoos and other birds.

We will return to Barren Grounds in other seasons to enjoy the changing seasons, and also to explore different trails which take us to different habitats.



Allocasuarina Nana, dwarf she oak - LE



Sprengelia incarnata - LE

Finally, thank you to APS Illawarra for inviting us to join them. We really appreciated the friendship and the opportunity.

Visit to Myall Park Botanic Garden, Queensland

Robyn Kremer

Only a few hundred metres off the Surat Development Road, Myall Park Botanic Garden is a secluded oasis for many species of indigenous plants suited to hot, dry conditions.

David Gordon a grazier, cultivated *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' which was the first plant registered with the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority established in 1973.

Since David had shared plant tissue, he didn't receive royalties. 'Sandra Gordon' & 'Meninda Gordon', named after his other daughters, similarly were natural crosses & they continue to be popular & hardy hybrids that don't generate income.



The well-known *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon'

Though on private land, the current owners allow visitors to explore on foot & in vehicles via a network of tracks, much of the 132 hectares dedicated to the cultivation of a wide range of species. Camping & picnic facilities allow a leisurely visit & if time permits, gardening assistance is encouraged.

The Friends' group meet regularly to maintain and extend plantings. A network of irrigation pipes draw on water stored in a large picturesque dam.

An enterprising member chose another naturally occurring cultivar displaying an attractive lavender hue & registered *G. 'Dorothy Gordon'* which generates royalties from its sales in many nurseries including Illawarra Grevillea Park.



Grevillea 'Dorothy Gordon'

ccA Gallery onsite displays watercolours created by Dorothy Gordon, David's wife, who shared his appreciation of Australian plants & an illustrated book of hers has been published.

David Gordon sought seeds from arid, semi-arid & dry tropical regions with an emphasis on rare, threatened & vulnerable species for cultivation & as a seed bank.

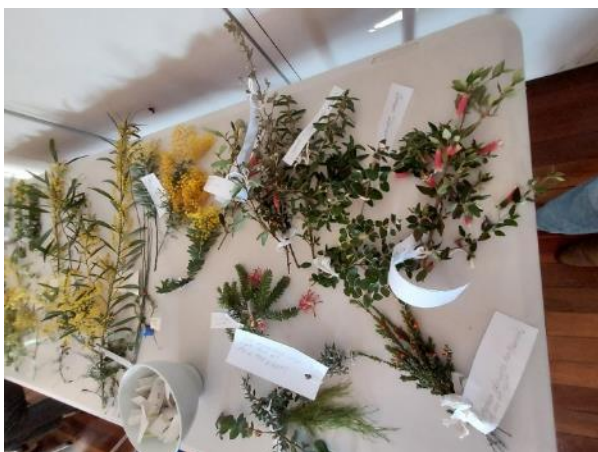
Through his enthusiasm, foresight & generosity, Myall Park Botanic Garden remains an important resource that encourages the cultivation of Australian Plants.

It is located in the Western Downs Region of Queensland, near the small town of Glenmorgan.

myallparkbotanicgarden.org.au

Snippets

The Plant Table Is Moving - Jen Slattery



Photos from our August 2023 Plant Table (Jen Slattery)

Thank you to everyone who has been contributing specimens to the plant table, they are very much appreciated. I love seeing what comes in - whether they are a person's favourite plant, a plant with fabulous flowers, seed pods, scent or foliage, or something to be identified.

We'd like the specimens to take a more prominent position during our meetings so we are moving the plant table from the front of the room to near the kitchen area, where we can discuss, identify, and admire their beauty over afternoon tea. Looking forward to seeing your

plant table contributions in 2024.

RECENT EVENTS

Visit to Pam’s Garden, Bundanoon – Text Paul Osborne, Photos Helen Worrall

Pam Tippett opened her garden to the Bundanoon Garden Club and our APS for a visit on a Saturday in early October. Although it’s not a large block, immersed amongst the intense



plantings of mainly natives and some beautiful other species are meandering pathways which cover a great deal of ground. From a mature central eucalypt down through smaller trees and shrubs, groundcovers and grasses, there’s a lot to see and delight. Too much to list, but little orchids, *Isopogons*, various native daisies, flowering tea trees and a showy *Calothamnus* come back to mind. The place has a natural feel about it. According to Pam a steady

stream of visitors wandered here and there during the morning, confirming the benefit of our groups joining up on the day.



Calothamnus and rusty gate.



Ed: Typical of Pam’s juxtaposition of plants and objects to create a vignette. A garden that rewards time looking and browsing.

Report from Habitat Gardeners Bundanoon on their Spring plant sale

Held on Saturday 21st October, the occasion was supported by several local groups. Birdlife Southern Highlands provided binoculars and information for the display table. John Creighton, Wombat Care Bundanoon, together with wombat mascots, came along to chat about all things wombat. Belinda Booth, Wingecarribee Shire Enviro Team added to the information available on our display table. SHAPS supplied flyers.

Of course, the preparation and activity are all about providing local plants for our gardens. Our thanks to everyone who came along and bought plants to add to the wonderful habitats being created. We're very happy to report that your support means \$1600 is being donated to Wombat Care Bundanoon from recent sales.

If you wish to be informed of further sales you can subscribe to habitatgardeners@gmail.com

Editor: Australian native plants are propagated by this small committed team of women, with proceeds going to support the work of Wombat Care Bundanoon. Sylvia's beautifully tended garden of mainly native plants, chooks, vegetables and her quirky pottery is a delight and an inspiration to walk around.

To Enjoy

1. Birds - Robyn Kremer

Little Wattlebirds and endemic Rainbow Lorikeets, feeding on *Banksia integrifolia*, animate pathways linking headlands & beaches on the south east coast at Port Macquarie.



2 - Flowers – Janet Wright and Kris Gow



*A spotted sun orchid Thelymitra ixioides
Taken on a backroad near East Kangaloon.
Photo Janet Wright*



Left: Dillwynia phyllicoides Right: Gompholobium minus Taken at Alison Hone Reserve on the road between Goulburn and Crookwell. Entry is with a guide only. Photos Kris Gow

Many thanks to our contributors. To Jane Lemann, Leanne Tyler-Olsen, Louise Egerton, Jen Slattery, Robyn Kremer, Harper Wright, Michael Swire, Paul Osborne, Helen Worrall, Janet Wright and Kris Gow. Wonderful!

