

# AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

*Southern Highlands Group*

*...your local native garden club*

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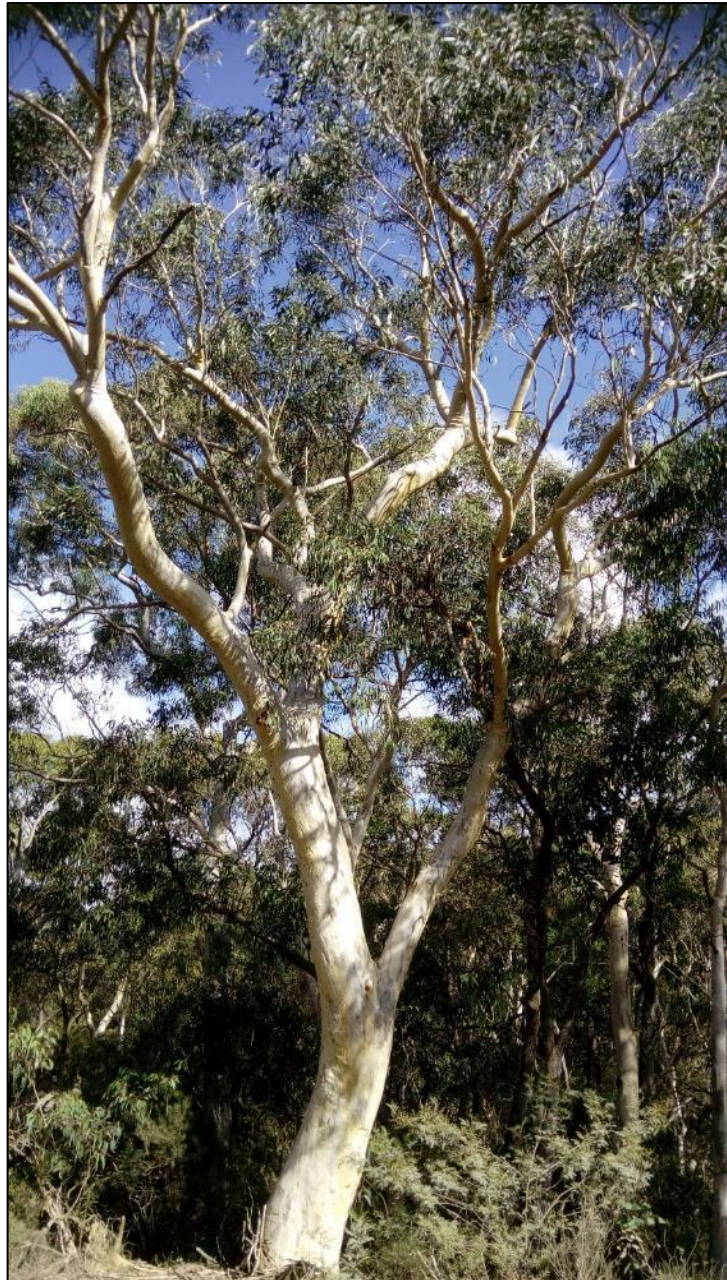
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It is so good to be communicating with our group through the newsletter. I hope you enjoy it - we have some interesting contributions. I'm looking forward to meeting again though. This is a beautiful eucalypt I saw on the way to Meryla Pass for a walk. I hope you are also getting pleasure from walking in the bush. We are so fortunate in the Southern Highlands at any time, but especially now.

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### Message from our President, Kay Fintan

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To all our members our first wish is that everyone is well and coping with the enforced position in which we find ourselves.

This very different world situation is indeed difficult to face at times but we must do all in our power to keep everyone safe. At this time we can just be so thankful that we reside in such a beautiful part of the world and can enjoy the wonderful flora on our door step.

It is an ideal time to be in the garden with this last splash of warmth before the chills of winter arrive and send us indoors. While everything is on hold, we can keep looking forward to normal life returning at some stage. Keep up to date with all the newsletters and use the Zoom app. if you want to be actively involved.

Our super plant propagator is still beavering away and in the very near future she will be holding a modified plant sale from her front garden. Please keep an eye out for a note from Erica as to a date and time.

Keep well from all at the Committee and a special thank you to our wonderful editor for keeping us in touch.

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## The Next Diary Dates and Program for 2020

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Unfortunately everything is **CANCELLED OR POSTPONED DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS until further notice**. If you wish to know what you have missed and what was planned for the remainder of 2020 please consult the March 2020 newsletter. We will let you know as soon as things are back on track.



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### Snippets

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#### Update on Bowral Roundabout Planting – Sarah Cains

Here's a good news story to cheer you all. Our roundabout looks brilliant. Growth since the rain is wonderful and Council has weeded and mulched.

Amazing how forgiving are native plants! When we first looked at the site planning a planting, we nearly despaired at the horribly damaged soil and harsh conditions.

Hooray for Australian Plants well chosen to suit the given conditions



#### National Museum of Australia's Online Exhibition on Captain Cook's Endeavour Voyage – Trisha Arbib

<https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/endeavour-voyage>

Don't turn off. This exhibition is not a traditional hero worship hagiography of Cook. It is called "Endeavour Voyage: The Untold Stories of Cook and the First Australians." *Views from the Ship and Shore* includes stories from the original owners of the land.

A section *Knowing Plants* explores indigenous and European knowledge of plants collected on the voyage. <https://nma.gov.au/av/endeavour/plants/>

The introduction from the website promises much.

*"Throughout HMB Endeavour's Pacific voyage, botanists Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander collected thousands of plants, many previously unknown in Europe. Together they form the world's oldest collection of Australian plants. Specimens were quickly sketched by Sydney Parkinson and, once back in England, turned into watercolour studies. Solander and Banks classified and named them according to the European scientific system."*



*Australia's first peoples have a much older knowledge of these plants..... This interactive allows you to explore some of the Australian plants Banks and Solander collected. It presents both Indigenous and European knowledge of them."*

This section is not as extensive as suggested, but is still of interest. For 3 locations along the coast a very small selection of plants is displayed, first as photos with their common name, and where applicable their aboriginal name. It is interesting to hear their aboriginal name spoken. Further plant information is basic but includes an original sketch and watercolour. There is little on the indigenous people's knowledge.

I do think this website is still worth looking at but it does prompt me to look further, to explore reproductions of the old botanical drawings, and look again at my books on Aboriginal plant use. A particularly good one is *Ngunnawal Plant Use: A traditional Aboriginal plant use guide for the ACT region*. Although there is no record of the Endeavour sailing to Canberra! It was published by the ACT government, Canberra in 2014.

It is now possible to buy a Thames & Hudson publication, *Joseph Banks' Florilegium: Botanical Treasures from Cook's First Voyage* for \$120.00. This includes 147 reproductions. It is fascinating to learn that the Florilegium was never published in Banks' lifetime, although he spent 10,000 pounds on the over 700 engravings. It was not until 1990 that a complete set in colour came out in a boxed edition limited to 100 copies under the direction of the British Museum. One set sold for £100,000. You can read the fascinating story in the link below.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/21/joseph-banks-botanical-work-on-cooks-voyage-finally-makes-it-to-print>

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## Coronawalk Photographic Vignettes

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Trisha Arbib

This period of self-distancing and social isolation has led to the positive outcome of walking more. The Southern Highlands has so many walks in the bush or along country lanes, even though the National Parks are closed.



This Bundanoon section of Morton National Park is closed not solely because of Covid 19, but also as a legacy of the recent bush fires. In fact the Park closure has made us be more creative in finding interesting walks. Later in this newsletter I review a helpful book, *Best Walks of the Southern Highlands*.



This walk near my Bundanoon home on an April day started out feeling rather dismal. Greyish skies, puddles, burnt trees. But once I started looking more closely I was entranced by the smaller things and the pictures that they made. Here are some of the details that intrigued me.



*Strange golden globular shapes of funghi emerging from the curved eucalypt leaves.*



*A green diagonal. Perfect.*



*A strong contrast of black and white, and interesting juxtaposition of shapes. A living still life.*



*Spiky tufts of bright green emerging from densest black elongated globes.*





*Granular fawn coloured shapes made by these fascinating ant hills.*



*Small circles and large sickle shapes. Orange, black and grey.*



*Simple bark and its curves highlighted by the sun.*



*A chance diagonal stick on the stony path makes a picture with the flat stones.*



*The V in this scribbly gum provides a frame for the burnt trunks beyond, and the black verticals pick up on the black of the scribbles.*

I will keep looking for these little pictures on all of my walks.

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## Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne

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Yvonne Crofts

Nothing is better than being taken on a trip to a place you don't know anything about and find yourself totally bowled over. That place was the Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne, an hour out of Melbourne and we were taken by my husband's cousin, a gardener of some note, in September 2019.

After the drive through endless, uninspiring suburban landscapes we were rewarded with the most dramatic entrance to a garden I have ever seen. Partly this is because we recognise our unique Australian landscape immediately but it is interpreted in a way we haven't seen before.

Well known landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean and Paul Thompson are responsible for the design of the 15 hectare Australian Native Botanic Garden nestled within the remnant woodland vegetation of 350 hectares in total. The land was purchased in 1970 but it wasn't till 2012 that this native garden was opened.

The significance of water, or lack thereof, in determining our natural landscape is the underlying theme linking the 21 different precincts depicting our journey from the arid inland to the coast.



So what you see as you walk in the entrance is the arresting sight of the Red Sand Garden conveying the dramatic heart of our continent. Mass plantings of *Acacia binervia* and the *Spinifex sericeus* stabilize the sandhills in the distance and *Kunzea pomifera*, a source of bush tucker, as well as seasonal wild flowers, are placed in artistic clumps across the vista. The yellowish stripes you see in the foreground representing an

ephemeral lake are made from low relief, liquid shaped ceramics.

The next few hours were spent drifting from one wonderland to another, discussing the various species, their habitats and marvelling at not only the variety, the amazing forms but also artistic settings designed to display them at their best.

One of the aims of the garden is to demonstrate how magnificent gardens do not need European plants to be considered world class.

The most striking example of this is the Weird and Wonderful Garden featuring some of the stranger and more dramatic forms of Australian flora set amongst massive slanting vaults of Avoca stone.





*Brachychiton rupestris, Queensland bottle tree*



*Xanthorrhoea, super grass*

One whole section is devoted to showcasing the use of native plants in city gardens so as to encourage Australian gardeners to be more creative with our indigenous plants and choose for example a standard wattle instead of the standard rose, and a hedge of Lilly Pillies instead of a Box hedge.





We were fortunate to be in this garden in Spring so we could enjoy some magnificent flowering shrubs. Though the garden is designed to have plants that flower in different seasons.

I'll leave you to identify them.



The day was topped off with a lunch at the Boon Wurrung Café which uses many of the native ingredients grown on the property.

## Reclaim Kosci – Feral Horses

**John Desmond prefaced by Trisha Arbib**

You will recall that Linda Groom from Reclaim Kosci spoke to us in April last year on the impact of feral horses in the Kosciuszko National Park. Sarah Cains wrote a report on that talk in the APS SH newsletter of May 2019 if you wish to revisit it. It is therefore of



*Snow gum at tree line in Kosciuszko National Park.  
Wikipedia photo by Sterry2607*

particular interest to view the feature video recently released by Reclaim Kosci. <https://reclaimkosci.org.au/true-history/>

The video combines the voices of scientists, park experts, a keen angler and conservationists. They report on the damage that they see feral horses doing to the Kosciuszko National Park, trampling on stream verges, wrecking the catchment area of the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers, and the sensitive alpine ecosystem. The

deputy premier in an interview voices other opinions, and talks of the romance of brumbies.

Cattle and sheep grazing was removed from the park after its creation in the late 1960's. It is the hard hooves, now of rapidly increasing numbers of feral horses, that the video

graphically shows doing damage, destroying vegetation, causing erosion, impacting on water quality, and affecting endangered plants and animals. The importance of non-trampled sphagnum moss for the absorption of 20 times its weight in water and its slow release into the river system is demonstrated.

The film concludes that there will always be horses in Kosci, but there is a need to get them down to the sustainable numbers of the late 1970's. A recent inter- governmental committee reported about 20,000 horses in the Park.

***Below is John Desmond's thought provoking response to this video.***

The video describing the impact of feral horses on the park was hard hitting and very professionally produced. However there are some reservations regarding their policy prescription, particularly if it diverts attention from other threats to the alpine environment.

The first issue to be cleared up is the number of feral horses we are talking about and where they are. Some reports have claimed that there are 20,000 horses in the park, while other estimates are that there are little more than 3,000. This requires an analysis of the counting methodology and also a clear delineation of the area covered, as there is some suspicion that the higher estimate included horses in the Bago, Maragle and Maragle Hill state forests as well as the surrounding privately owned grazing land.

There are also a number of other threats to the park environment which need to be addressed as part of an overall management plan for the alpine area.

Feral pigs are common in some areas of the park and it is widely believed by many local people that some of these have been introduced by pig shooters. Establishing the facts regarding this would involve analysis of scats and detailed personal investigations which are probably beyond the capacity of the current park administration. Further threats to the park come from rabbits, blackberries, feral deer and a poorly administered fire control regime.

At present a very significant threat to the park appears to be the Snowy 2.0 pumped storage project which has greater environmental impacts than were apparent when it was first announced. Apart from the economic modelling behind this project, which is very suspect, the plans include:

- Dumping 14 million cubic metres of excavated spoil, some contaminated with asbestos and acid forming rock.
- Clearing a 120 metre wide easement through 10 km of the park for high voltage transmission lines
- Depressing water tables and stream flows above the 27 km tunnel
- Destroying hundreds of hectares of habitat for 14 threatened species
- Spreading pest fish, diseases and weeds through the scheme and downstream rivers

The poorly controlled expansion of ski resorts, especially the more recent Blue Cow field will have a major environmental impact. These will impact areas not usually utilised by horses. In particular the higher levels around Charlotte Pass pose a serious threat to the Corroboree Frog which lives among rocky slopes not frequented by horses.



The campaign against the horses does appear to have taken on a life of its own and has been caught up with other issues, particularly competing tourist businesses which utilise the park in different ways. There are also animal welfare issues to be considered and in this context aerial shooting and aerial baiting are generally second best solutions picked more for cost saving reasons than for ecological responsibility. Given the coming by election in the area it is expected that there will be a great deal of posturing from all sides but possibly not much in the way of hard evidence.

In conclusion there may be a case for some form of feral horse control BUT it is important that it be based on proper science, accurate counts, and does not distract from other environmental threats which may in fact be more significant. The worst possible outcome for the park would be a concentration on horses while allowing other threats supported by different vested interests to cause greater long term damage to the park. A responsible policy would be to pause non-selective killing until better evidence is available on all threats.

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## Gardening with Noel

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Kim Zegenhagen

***It is a truth universally acknowledged that a gardener in isolation is in want of garden design ideas.***

In isolation I turned to a book my grandmother gave me for my birthday in 1977.

The book is "Noel Lothian's Complete Australian Gardener".

Some words of wisdom from Noel who had this to say about garden design:

Gardens should be more than a mere collection or accumulation of plants without design or cohesion. Emphasis can be obtained by using special plants or features, such as excavating for a small sunken garden or a pond. These places will also allow the use of a wider variety of plants than on a level site, adding interest to the garden. Terracing, whilst hard work, will give wonderful effects and greater emphasis to certain features or plants.

Keep overall design and planting simple. Use group plantings instead of scattering them about.

April and May are generally good months for planting of evergreens. By planting in these months full use of rain can be made, and the plant should be established before winter commences, for the soil is still warm enough to promote root growth. Because they are established the plants are fully then able to use any rain which falls during late spring or early summer, and so maximum growth for the following season following planting is obtained.

So, get to it couch potatoes out there reading this article! Time is of the essence. Remember this mantra: ***Design and plant.***

Soon you will be saying it in your sleep.

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## Welcome to our Mittagong Garden

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Robyn Kremer



*Veronica perfoliata, and Brachyscome multifida with iris and gazanias*

The rainy Thursday in early March that led to cancellation of the scheduled visit of APS SH to our Mittagong garden was a blessing in disguise.

Apart from the benefit of a heavy downpour, we have the ongoing motivation to work hard in the garden since our diaries are now empty & the weather has been mostly blissful.

The weeds that germinated after the rain inspired me to find a helper. Keetha, a Tamil refugee living in Mittagong on a protection visa needed work. While respecting the physical distancing regulations, she has addressed the weed problem under very scratchy hakeas and impressed me with her hoeing skills in clearing pathways in the vegetable/orchard area.

Bottle brushes in many colourful hues are flowering now & handsomely complementing multi-toned green vegetation. *Philothecas*, *Acacias*, *Baeckias* and *Hardenbergias* are budding up & promising luxuriant flowering in contrast to last year's sparse blooms due to the drought. An assortment of *Correas* also delight me as they were propagated by Kris Gow, planted as tubestock and only reveal their unusual blooms after a few seasons in the ground.



*Baeckea virgata with eucalyptus and black wattle trunks silhouetted against green expanse of neighbouring playing field*

Motivated by the loss of a well-established garden opposite us we have installed 2m high lattice screens on our northern side and *Pandoreas* & non indigenous climbers are growing with lilly pillies & various grevilleas to block out the overdevelopment that will spoil our little cul de sac.





Our one acre block was formerly part of Frensham farm so we inherited well established eucalypts that are animated by flocks of corellas, families of kookaburras, king parrots & eastern rosellas as well as magpies, miners & passing snipes & yellow tailed cockatoos.

*Casuarinas* shade ponds now home to wood ducks & their ducklings. Recently planted *Allocasuarinas* will in the future enhance the wildlife corridor and provide habitat for glossy black cockatoos.



*Casuarina cunninghamii* underplanted with *Lomandra longifolia*

I am looking forward to welcoming you to our garden when we can again meet & share our stories over afternoon tea. BOM is forecasting a wet winter so a thriving garden should be a panacea for troubling times.

Till then let's stay happy & healthy in our gardens.

## Book Review – Best Walks of the Southern Highlands, Gillian & John Souter

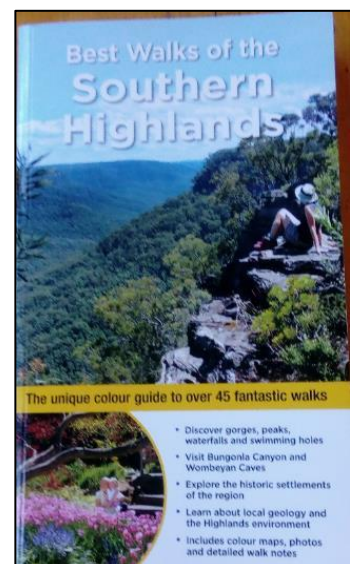
Trisha Arbib

Woodslane Press, 2012

I bought this some time ago from the National Parks and Wildlife shop at Fitzroy Falls. But it's only now that I am regularly consulting it.

This is a colour guide to over 45 local walks. It includes maps, photos including some photos of flora, detailed walk notes, and information on historic features, local geology and the environment. It has a rather wide definition of the Southern Highlands, including Bungonia to the south and Thirlmere Lakes and Picton to the north.

Not all walks are bush walks. There are also strolls around Bowral, old Berrima village and Robertson exploring their history and introducing less obvious features that can't be seen from a



car. Some of the walks included are Blue Gum Creek in the Nattai Wilderness, Bundanoon Creek dam, Cecil Hoskins Reserve, Mount Gibraltar and Mount Jellore.

I like that it gives you the grade of the walk from easy to hard [and there are many easy ones] and the time taken. I also like that it tells you how to find the start of a walk. E.g. for Gibbergunyah Reserve, “to the left side of the road, by a locked gate, is a sketch map and the start of the Geebung Track. Take this narrow footpath [rather than the fire trail]... “

There is a useful table of *Walks at a Glance* which includes ascent and descent details, whether there are cafes [not many], conditions like “best after rain”, faint track”, “steep and stony,” and highlights.

Well worth having. And using.

**And to finish off.**



Love this sign. Used in Northern Territory National Parks. *ABC Radio Adelaide: Spence Denny*

MANY THANKS to all contributors to this newsletter.



*Thank you to Yvonne Crofts, Kim Zegenhagen, Robyn Kremer, Kay Fintan, John Desmond and Sarah Cains who contributed to this newsletter. Contributions are always welcome. Please write to me at [trisharbib@gmail.com](mailto:trisharbib@gmail.com)*