

# AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

*Southern Highlands Group*

*...your local native garden club*

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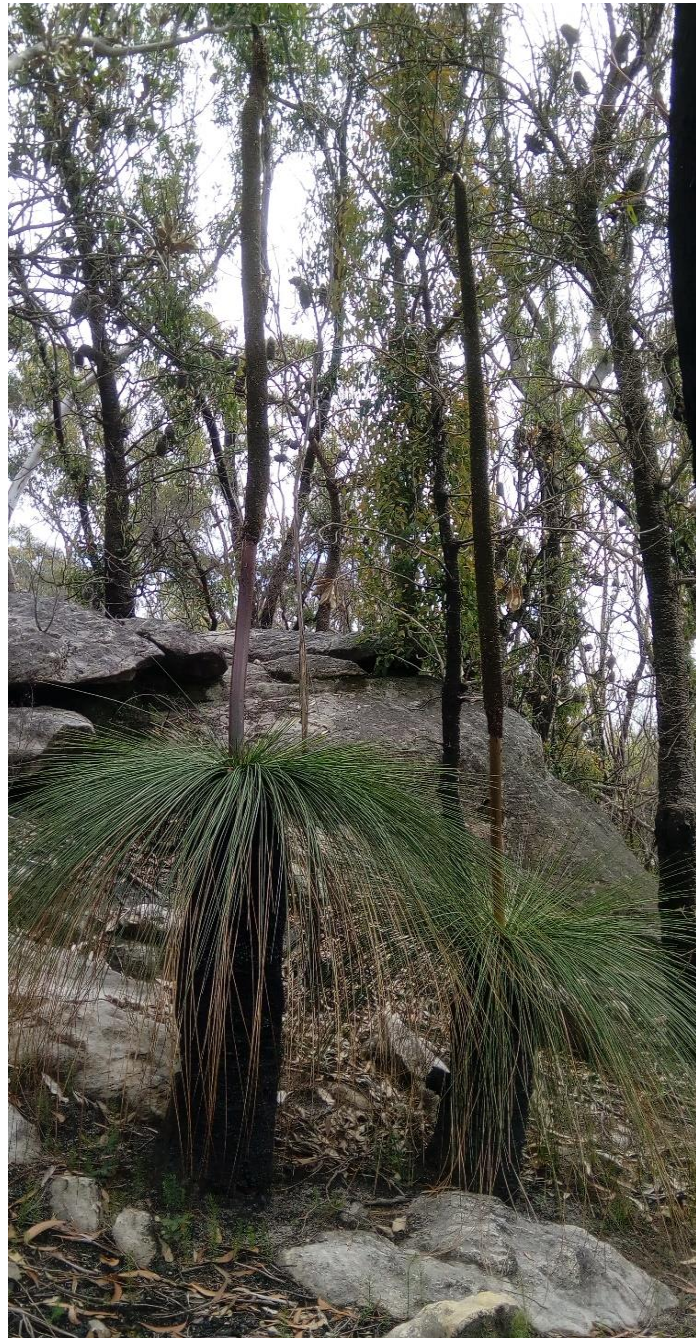
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*The Xanthorrhoea australis are looking amazing. With their flower spikes they stand almost 5 metres tall. Seen in the Bundanoon end of the Morton National Park, on the Erith Coal Mine walk. This walk fortuitously starts just across the road from Gambell's Rest where we will be having our Xmas picnic. Lots to see on this lovely walk - sprouting, seeding and flowering, despite the recent bush fires.*

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### Upcoming Program

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#### Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November

**Kris Gow's and Sarah Cain's gardens in Bowral will be open and a great array of plants will be for sale at Kris'.** Sarah's is at 27 Shepherd St Bowral and Kris's at 32 Boolwey St. These superb native gardens are within 5 minutes walking distance of each other. This is also a great opportunity to buy plant treasures not readily available.



Because of Covid restrictions there will be timed visits and bookings are essential. The time slots are 10am, 11am, Midday, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm (one time slot not to be used to visit both gardens). It is still possible to book!

Please contact Kim at [southernhighlandsaps@gmail.com](mailto:southernhighlandsaps@gmail.com)

You're welcome to bring friends and neighbours. We just need names and a phone number.

These garden visits are a welcome local alternative to the November 2020 NSW APS weekend proposed for the Southern Highlands, which has unfortunately been cancelled, because of Covid and the uncertainties of planning.

**Thursday 3rd December from 11am. Our Xmas Party.** Please keep the date – a Thursday this year. It is a self-catered picnic at Gambell's Rest, Bundanoon in Morton National Park. A great chance to catch up with SHAPS friends, and enjoy a bush walk. Because of Covid please bring everything! Food, drink, eating implements... Other than a blanket you may wish to bring a chair for comfort.

There is an entrance fee of \$8 to the park. Gambell's Rest is just inside the entrance.

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## Southern Highlands Australian Plant Society AGM

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The SHAPS AGM was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020. All positions were declared void, and new office bearers and committee members are now as follows. **President** Bill Mullard, **Vice President** Louise Egerton, **Secretary** Kim Zegenhagen, **Treasurer** John Desmond, **Newsletter Editor** Trisha Arbib, **Communications** Erica Rink, and **Committee Member** Chris Goodwin.

For their contact details see the panel on page 1 of this newsletter.

**Chris Goodwin** is a new member of the committee. You will have read about Chris' Mittagong garden in a story written by Sarah Cains in an earlier SHAPS newsletter. Here she is in her own words.



I have always loved plants and the gardens of the places I've known remain in memory as much as the people. The rambling, lush garden was the attraction for me in moving to Oxley Drive. In the initial years I marvelled at the kaleidoscope of colour as each new plant bloomed in the garden. But a chance remark that the native fauna need native flora to live in and on, made me think about planting native. And so I did. I've slowly learnt the lesson that the local native plants are the ones that thrive and I now love the prickly *Lomandra longifolia* and the black

wattle. My favourite and a plant that I'm sure will one day dominate my garden is *Melaleuca hypericifolia*. It calls The Gib home and so do I.

### President's Report- Kay Fintan

Many years ago I recall a BBC production entitled "That was the week that was" and this report seems to be in the same vein, "That was the year that was". So much and yet so little has occurred that I am left a little lost as how to convey the events of this year for the Southern Highlands Group of the Australian Plant Society.

Our year began with the AGM that ushered in some changes to the committee with Kim Zegenhagen and John Desmond joining the group. Kim is now our very efficient Secretary and John keeps all membership matters up to date. We all rely on Trisha and Erica to keep the lines of communication flowing and Bill ensures that our financial position remains sound. Louise has been busy this year in the wider community with liaison work relating to Winzero and the Eridge Park Road *Eucalyptus macarthurii* plantings.

The group finished 2019 in style when Sarah and Geoff Cains generously opened their home for all to enjoy the Christmas Party. Sharing of food and good cheer is one of the group's strengths and this occasion was such an example. We said an official thank you to both Kristine and Sarah for the wonderful contribution they have made over many years. The energy and time they have given to the group is something for which we will be forever grateful. The contribution they have made is outstanding. Thankfully they remain fully involved. Kristine's propagation skills continue to be the life blood of every meeting.



Although fires were in the news early in 2020 we were able to hold our first meeting and welcomed Emma Heyde as guest speaker. Emma, a Greens Councillor from Hornsby, demonstrated what was possible to achieve with having people in the right place at the right time. A thought that should be uppermost in our minds when council elections are finally held in Wingecarribee sometime next year.

The committee plans were looking good before the devastation of bushfires. These fires made their presence felt very close to home and wrought much devastation on our natural bushland especially for the people of Bundanoon. Paradoxically, the rain so welcome in relation to the bushfires, put paid to our first planned outing. Robyn Kremer had kindly agreed to open her garden but the activity had to be cancelled due to the rain. The follow up date set for May disappeared when all plans were put on hold due to Covid. The group's efforts did continue in a small way with the refurbishment of the planter boxes at Coles. Sarah's planning and expertise gave us a chance to remind passers-by that native plants can bring joy in small ways. With new signs organised by our Treasurer Bill, we continue to have a presence in a public place.

Due to Covid, everyone retreated to the home front and relied on contact through the wonderful work of our newsletter editor. Our appreciation must go to Trisha as she continued to bring us uplifting stories and news through the regular appearance of the newsletter. To her and the band of contributors go our sincere thanks for the little ray of sunshine that regularly appears in our computer "in boxes". All other activities ground to a halt. Now the committee ventured into Zoom meetings. July saw our first general meeting on Zoom giving a few members the chance to "see" each other and compare notes on what was appearing in gardens. Not a smashing success but a little contact that was most enjoyable.

With the climate easing, Bill and Fran offered to host a general meeting at their home with limited allowable numbers. This proved very popular and all enjoyed the interesting talk by the Biosecurity Officer-Weeds, Alicia Kaylock. Alicia spoke on the most troublesome weeds that are a problem in the shire and the work undertaken to bring them under control. Meeting face to face and enjoying the beauty of the property felt like a tentative step towards normality.

October saw another venture into the outdoors with a visit to Morton National Park. A wonderful walk on the Eastern Rim Track, a reminder of how blessed we are to live in this part of the country.

At this time it was with regret we abandoned our plans to host a NSW group meeting because we were unable to find a venue that would accommodate a group of more than 20. Plans for speakers, outing and plant sales were thrown to the wind. This turn of events has been of benefit to our members because we will be able to have the plants destined for a crowd all to ourselves. So we encourage every member to visit the gardens of Kristine and Sarah on

Saturday 14th November and buy lots of plants from the wonderful array that will be on display. With all the rain we have enjoyed lately it will be an ideal time to plant.

At the coming AGM it is pleasing to know that names are being put forward for the committee to take our group forward into 2021. Please support the new committee. I have enjoyed immensely my time both as Secretary and President and my thanks to everyone who have made it such a happy and fulfilling experience. Please support the new committee and continue to plant and care for our natural environment.

## **Treasurer's Report 2020 – Bill Mullard, Treasurer APS Southern Highlands Group**

### **Overview**

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It is no surprise that revenue is down 36% this year and a corresponding 43% fall in expenses with our bank balance falling 11% compared to the same time last year, but still relatively sound.

Income was received from Membership Payments (58%), our two Plant Sales and Raffles (24%), Donations (14%) and Bank Interest (4%).

Expenditure went to the CWA Hall and Projector Hire (40%) which was unfortunately not able to be used, Gifts for guest speakers and retiring committee members (23%), Display Signs, Newsletters and Postage (18%), maintenance of the "Coles" planter boxes (18%), and sundry expenses (1%).

Thank you all for your contributions by way of membership fees, donations, plant sales and raffles.

Obviously the Covid restrictions have had a major impact on our activities this year but we are anticipating strong support for the plant sale on the 14th of November to set us up well for next year with hopefully less restrictions.

Pleasingly, membership has increased to 91, including 40 joint memberships.

### **A Thank You to Our President Kay Fintan**

It is sad to see Kay leave the committee but of course she will still be an active member of SHAPS, and we will enjoy her company at our members' meetings. Kay has been a member since 2009 and joined the committee as secretary at the AGM 2014, after retiring as Secretary of the Bowral Garden Club. She was a brilliant efficient secretary, and continued her valuable contribution as President at AGM 2019. She has really enjoyed her time but would love to see new blood coming onto the scene. She feels that she has been around long enough!

**The talk on Native Cottage Gardens** by Sarah Cains and Kris Gow to be given after the AGM was unfortunately postponed due to problems with the projector cable, and will be held next year. However, this was a great opportunity to catch up with friends.

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## Growwild Wildflower Farm

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Sue Stewart



Australian native flowers are known for their unusual and interesting features of size, colour, structure and variety. Geographical isolation over millennia has resulted in the evolution of flora unlike any in the world. There is growing interest in Australian wildflowers among florists and gardeners as appreciation of the beauty and distinctiveness of our flora spreads.

Growwild Wildflower Farm, which is located in Alpine, just 3 kms off the Hume Motorway, was established in 2006. We, Peter and Sue Stewart, were interested in developing a retirement project ahead of time and set about planting around 2000 plants on our 25 acre property. The cashmere goats were sold, the raised beds created, the bore sunk to 136m and the drip irrigation system set up to provide for the water and nutrient needs of all the plants.

The aim of the exercise was to provide cut flowers to the Sydney Flower Market, through a wholesaler there. This arrangement has worked well for many years. Over the years we have experimented with a variety of plants, chosen for their suitability to our elevation, soil and to the changing focus of the customer. (Flowers, like clothing, go in and out of fashion!)

Currently at Growwild we are growing Grevillea (Moonlight, Bulli Beauty, Crimson Yu-Lo, Honey Gem, Misty Pink and Goliath), Kangaroo Paw (Big Red, Green and Lilac), Leptospermum Cherish, Philotheca, Christmas Bush and pink and orange Flowering Gum.

We also grow several varieties of Protea including Venus, White King, Little Prince, and Australis. Some purists argue they are not Australian natives but they are of the same Proteaceae family as the Grevillea, Waratah (which we don't grow), *Leucospermum* etc. and thus have a justified place on the farm. They also like it here!

We try to water well before picking and the stems go straight into water in the cool room before trimming and bunching ready for delivery. Springtime is the busiest time of the year, of course, but we do have flowers for about 9 months of the year, and then a welcome rest in the winter when we can attend to necessary maintenance, repairs and developments. Throughout the growth cycle we fertigate by putting nutrients in to our drip irrigation system.



Native birds are beautiful and we love them but we play ‘beat the birds’ by trying to get to the flowers before they do. This is always a challenge. Apart from the birds, our biggest issues are fungal spot on the Protea, and maintaining sufficient nutrient to the plants to ensure healthy wholesome flowers. But the plants are remarkably forgiving and resilient and don’t demand much of us.

We are always on the lookout for new and interesting things to try. We currently have three beds resting and waiting for inspiration. I would like to plant some red flowering gum and maybe some white rice flower. At present it is very difficult to source plants. Most wholesalers are very low in stock – one of the unheralded side effects of Covid.

Some basic farm facts:

- Bore water pH – 5.8
- Soil – sandy loam over some clay and rock
- Soil pH – 5.5 (acidic liked by natives)
- Feeding – Slow release for natives  
B&B, calcium, potassium

Growwild Wildflower Farm is a member of WIN, (Wildflower Industry Network), which is an amazingly supportive ‘bunch’ of growers, and we have learned a great deal from other members over the years and made many wonderful friends.

Now our farm has developed into a popular and busy marquee wedding venue with a barn and high quality facilities. We are busier than ever.

Such is retirement!

*Editor’s Note: SHAPS members were looking forward to a visit to Sue and Peter’s Growwild Wildflower Farm earlier this year, but the visit had to be cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Our visit will happen next year.*



## Pam Tippett’s Fascinating Flora

### Trisha Arbib with Pam Tippett

*Photographs taken by Pam Tippett and Trisha Arbib*

Exploring SHAPS member Pam’s Bundanoon garden is a great adventure. Native plants (and not just natives) scrambling, sprawling, shooting up, seeding, forming layers of vegetation, intermingling... It is how plants grow in the bush but here with much more variety. But certainly not a haphazard arrangement. Great thought goes into every new placement. In late October when I last visited there was so much in flower, although Pam says that it’s not just a spring garden.

When anything dies it’s a new opportunity – for more – at least five plants. Pam herself says that she is a bowerbird, an opportunistic buyer, an acquirer of interesting plants. Recent purchases are trigger plants *Stylidium graminifolium* ‘Pinkasaurus’ and *Stylidium bulbiferum*.

Nestled within the garden are two small ponds bordered by ferns, one pond is for goldfish and a smaller one for tadpoles. And then there are the myriad pots, the quirky sculptures, and the startling plastic snakes.

It was very hard to choose amongst our photos, but below is a selection with comments.



*Epacris longiflora*. While working on the area behind the *Epacris* after several years of neglect, Pam noticed how sprawling it was but covered in buds. She tied it to a two metre stake so the flowers could be easily seen. This is how it ended up.



*A closeup of Epacris longiflora flowers*



*Grevillea endlicheriana and a friendly cow*



*Spyridium vexilliferum* ‘Discovery Bay’. A new irresistible purchase. The fascinating helicopter “petals” are actually floral leaves





*Flannel flowers Actinotus helianthi are normally difficult to cultivate, and naturally grow in poor sandy soil. These seeded into a pot of a ground cover Banksia and are flourishing in a normal potting mix. You can just see the Banksia. It is not doing so well!*



*The flannel flower is so beautiful that we had to show it in closeup*



*Hardenbergia violacea on an old bed head bought from a metal recycler in Goulburn*



*Decorative silver Acacia iteaphylla seed pods. This wattle must be 3 M tall and 5M wide in Pam's garden and always looks attractive with its long silver leaves*



*Dainty Myoporum bateae branches draping over Cordyline australis*



*Orthrosanthus multiflorus. Only in its second year. It forms a grassy mound above which the spikes of blue flowers stand about 1 metre high*



*Ponds nestled in Blechnum sp, mostly self-sown, and Dicksonia antarctica*

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## Waratahs at Robertson – A History

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**Helen Tranter**

The story behind the Waratahs at the Robertson Heritage Railway Station



We need to go back to the mid-1990s, when State Rail had discontinued trips to Robertson, 3801 Ltd was starting to run Heritage Trains from the coast and a small religious sect had settled in Robertson. This sect had ambitions to develop a tourist business in Robertson and leased the station precinct where they planned to build a 1920 style village of small shops and cottages.

There was a lot of publicity, some support, some opposition, but they were conned into a fake investment, lost all their money and left.

Then State Rail contractors moved onto the site with stacks of concrete sleepers and small mountains of ballast. Part of their work was to grade the embankment opposite the station, removing all the vegetation.



*State Rail Contractors – View from south of the line, large heaps of ballast, bare graded slope*

When REPS, the Robertson Environment Protection Society, asked for it to be replanted they suggested they would give us \$1,000 for plants and we could do the replanting ourselves with whatever we wanted. We wanted Australian plants that would be colourful and as we had lots of waratahs growing well at our place, that is what we chose. We planted Corroboree waratahs, a hybrid of *Telopea speciosissima* and *T. mungaensis* because they form a more branched shrub with many more flowers, and would make a good show. Behind the waratahs we planted a row of *Alloxylon pinnatum*, the Dorrigo Waratah which flowers in December. The contractors were quite helpful in cleaning up the site when they left but it was still pretty miserable for train passengers waiting in the Robertson mist with a mostly locked station building.

REPS, with our aim “to protect and enhance the environment” thought they should get involved and in 2000 set up a separate steering committee to try to get a sublease, through WSC, for the station site. After many frustrating meetings, by mid 2001, the WSC had agreed to help with public liability for a start and an extraordinary trouble shooter had emerged from State Rail to help organize the site. So now we had 1 year to get everything done for an opening in August 2002, the 70th anniversary of the opening of the Port Kembla Moss Vale line.

Negotiations had Work for the Dole and Weekend detention people to help remove the mass of privet, ivy and hundreds of empty beer bottles. One committee member did the





*Small 'lamp' shed with the gangers' shed, now gallery in the background. Car park area all fenced in*

paperwork to get heritage listed by the National Trust, another turned the old gangers' shed into a gallery and our very competent treasurer applied for and managed many grants. David oversaw the landscaping while I manned the station when the heritage trains came in, to welcome visitors and hopefully sell them something. Because we needed to make money from the start.



*The 'lamp' shed today, looking across the railway line*



*The Fetters Shed Gallery today, almost hidden by waratahs in flower*

In December 2001 we organized a media event where each our 8 or so donors etc. planted a Corroboree bush on the sunny north slope of a group of pine trees. These trees were removed later after they were struck by lightning. As the earth moving was finished and wall building completed the rest of the planting went ahead. The raised Reconciliation Garden had 2 of each of 4 kinds, *Wirrimbirra White*, *Corroboree*, *Fire and Brimstone*, and *Green Bracts*. Along the school fence and the paths were a mixture of mostly *Telopea speciosissima* showing the natural variation in the species. *Corroboree* bushes were planted along near the gallery.



*View from the north across the internal road. Left to right: Fetters' shed gallery, 'lamp' shed, main station building*

*Note: The three early photographs of the site before development are courtesy of Helen Tranter. The current photos Trisha Arbib.*



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## Bush Walk at Fitzroy Falls – 1<sup>st</sup> October Outing

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**Kim Zegenhagen**

A happy bunch of walkers met at Fitzroy Falls car park for a very enjoyable walk through the national park. There were several enthusiastic photographers on hand, and I must thank our past president, Kris Gow, and member Robyn Kremer, for the photos that come with this article.

I was surprised with the number and variety of flowers growing by the walking paths. No effort was needed to find photogenic plants amongst a beautiful forest track. The real value in walking the full 3.5 kms of the West Rim Track is that you get to see a variety of vegetation types within the park and appreciate just how much vegetation can change within a relatively small area. We traversed shaded wet valleys through to drier exposed ridges. We walked through pristine eucalypt forests and lush rainforest. Along the walking track also provides spectacular views of dramatic gorges and waterfalls in Morton National Park. Amongst all this we saw ferns under a towering canopy of coachwood, bloodwood and lilly pilly.

Despite the ravages of last summer’s drought there was much evidence that all types of vegetation have grown back with a vengeance.



*Hibbertia sp. Guinea Flower*  
Photo Kris Gow

Here and on the next page are examples of the flowers that lined much of the walking track. These photos alone justified the walk.

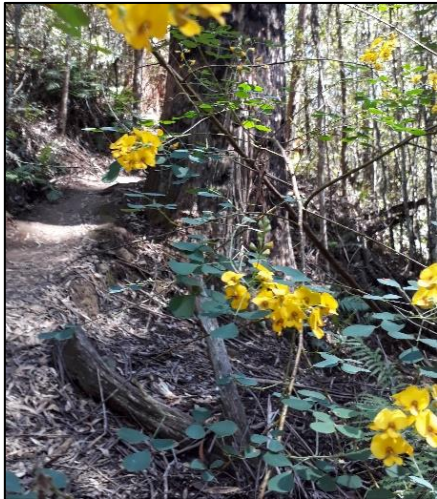


*Podolobium ilicifolium Holly-leaf Shaggy Pea.* Photo Kris Gow



*Everlasting daisies* Photo Robyn Kremer

Also seen at Fitzroy Falls....



*Goodia lotifolia* Photo Robyn Kremer



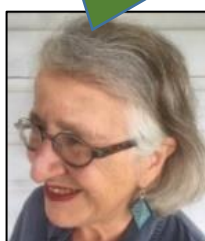
*Tetradlea thymifolia* Black-eyed Susan  
Photo Kris Gow

**More about *Xanthorrhoea australis* (Photo on the front of this newsletter)**

The trunk only grows a few centimetres a year depending on aspect and climate. As well as being dramatic looking they have many uses. The creamy white flowers initially on the flower spikes produce a lot of nectar which attracts birds, bees and ants. The old grassy leaves and trunk provide nest sites for small marsupials. And aborigines used the long stalks of the flowers spikes for spear shafts, and made glue from resin extracted from the leaf bases and burnt stumps.

**STOP PRESS**

The organising committee of the ANPSA Biennial Conference has made the difficult decision to postpone the September 2021 Biennial Conference to September 2022. They are keen to host everyone in Kiama in 2022 and showcase the beautiful Illawarra area and beyond.



I'd like to thank Kay Fintan, Bill Mullard, Chris Goodwin, Sue Stewart, Helen Tranter, Pam Tippett, Kim Zegenhagen, Kris Gow and Robyn Kremer, all of whom contributed to this newsletter. Contributions are always welcome. Please write to me at [trisharbib@gmail.com](mailto:trisharbib@gmail.com) with suggestions.