

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group ...your local native garden club

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This image speaks of the stillness found inside the cathedral-like space of the Robertson Nature Reserve. Hanging moss is so delicate that it could only exist within the windless preserves of such a place. It hangs suspended from branches and vines throughout the forest, its bright green filaments luminescent in the muted light.

See page 10 for the story of our visit to this remnant of the Yarra Brush. We were guided by APS Southern Highlands founder and scientist, Helen Tranter, who together with her husband, David (also a scientist) and a small group of friends, is responsible for the preservation and maintenance of this forest treasure.

In This Issue

P2 Diary Dates

P3 Snippets

P5 Report on April speaker, Ben Walcott by Annabel Murray, *Landscape Architect*

P7 Notes from the April plant table by Pam Tippett, Jane Pye and Helen Tranter

P10 Report on visit to Robertson Nature Reserve by Sarah Cains

P11 A View from Bundy , by Louise Egerton

P13 Meet the Members - New Treasurer, Bill Mullard and his wife, Fran by Sarah Cains

Diary Dates

June

Thursday 1st: Note change of speaker - We've had a late cancellation from Dr Steve Brown so Trisha Arbib has kindly offered to present her prepared a talk on Bush Foods. Recently Trisha gave the talk to another garden club and it was very well received, so come along and hear our Vice President, a very experienced plantswoman, tell us of her adventures with native food plants. From Trisha..."The focus will be on the plants that will grow locally and their uses. Also a little on the cultural/social usage by aborigines, the commercial bush tucker "industry", and the ethics of this. With a few tastes. It's a power point presentation."

Friday June 9th - Dr Rosemary Purdie will be Guest Speaker for REPS (Robertson Environment Protection Society) meeting on at 7.30pm at the Robertson Community Centre (nearly opposite the Pizzas in the Mist restaurant). She will be talking about her work on plant surveys and why it is important.

Rosemary is a botanist who cut her plant teeth at Adelaide University. After graduating she spent two years teaching at the Agricultural University in Malaysia before doing her PhD in fire ecology at ANU. She then honed her plant skills in western Queensland doing vegetation surveys with the Queensland Herbarium before returning to Canberra to join the Bureau of Flora and Fauna where she helped to edit four volumes of the Flora of Australia. She subsequently diversified her interests, working at the Australian Heritage Commission for 12 years on natural and cultural heritage, then at the Murray Darling Basin Commission for four years on natural resource management, before supposedly "retiring". However she was appointed the ACT's second Commissioner for the Environment for three years before "retiring" properly, which gave her the freedom to become her own boss and a pretty much full time "plant person" once more. Since her university days, she has travelled extensively in Australia, collecting over 11,000 plant specimens that are lodged in the national and state herbaria, where they help contribute to scientific knowledge about Australian plants. She has spent the last four years actively researching the flora of Black Mountain.

Monday 19th: 2.00pm Committee meeting at Kris's house

July

Thursday 6th: *Another change!* The excursion on this day will be to Mt Annan Plant Bank. We can book a 1.5 hour tour with commentary from a guide tailored to our group. We need to know numbers for the tour well ahead so please consider. We will take numbers at June 1st meeting. The fee is \$20 or \$16 concession - minimum 9 persons max 20.

Plan for the day: Meet at Bowral Pool for car pooling and be ready to leave at 9.00am. Travel to Mt Annan - coffee, shop, stroll when we arrive then 11.00am Tour of Plant Bank. After tour lunch - either bring your own or buy at the Melaleuca Cafe (the food there is good). Time to look at the gardens and still get home before dark (early, as it is July)

Monday 17th 2.00pm: Committee meeting at Kay's in Bowral. Visitors welcome.

Details of activities below will be published in July NL

August

3rd: Speaker: Orchids with Alan Stephenson

21st: Committee meeting at Erica's

September

7th: Outing to Sandy Berry's garden in Bundanoon

18th: Committee meeting (Trisha's)

Sunday 24th: Outing to Tree Fern Lodge - Frank Howarth and Peter McCarthy's garden in Berry. 375 Tourist Rd, Beaumont near Berry. Further arrangements to come.

JANUARY 2018 Monday to Friday 15th / 17th - ANPSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc. (ANPSA) presents a national conference every two years, in conjunction with the ANPSA Biennial General Meeting. These rotate through the six states and the ACT. Tasmania is to be the host in January 2018.

Some of our members have booked accommodation at Wrest Point where the conference will be held and you would be well advised to make your booking if you plan to come along. We have booked to arrive on the Sunday night before the conference and return home on the Saturday after it finishes. Keep in touch with Kristine re the booking of air fares if you wish to travel with the four already booked in, though we are all booking independently.

Snippets

Correction: March Newsletter article In the March NL I wrote a little piece on *Eucalyptus cinarea* and included information I was taught during the study of horticulture re the positioning of euc leaves and their movement from opposite to alternate as the stem twists and grows. Subsequently I checked this information with two botanists, Dr Rosemary Purdie and Dr Kevin Mills. Both have obligingly done a little research on our behalf and it seems that my story is...well...just that...a story! Below are their interesting responses. SC

Dr Rosemary Purdie: As the question is not in the area of botany where she usually works, Dr Purdie contacted the herbarium on our behalf. She forwards this response.

"The following is the 'best guess' from the herbarium person: 'The development of a petiole and also becoming alternate on the stem presumably allow the leaf lamina to dangle and this may improve control of leaf temperature and water use by increasing options re orientation to the sun.' It doesn't appear to be something that has been the subject of actual research'."

Dr Kevin Mills: Twists and turns in Eucalyptus: Prompted by the piece in the March issue of the APS Southern Highlands Newsletter, I researched the reasons behind the spiral character of the trunks of many tree species. As some eucalypts grow, the trunk appears twisted, a feature observed in the spiralling wood grain, seen in dead trees where the bark is removed. The phenomenon is apparently common in pines in the northern hemisphere. The twisting can be clockwise or anti-clockwise, and in some trees both can be observed. The reason for this is not clear; there are several theories. These theories include responding to the particular site in which a tree is growing, promoting a spiralling growth to increase structural stability, asymmetrical tree crowns, prevailing winds and the Coriolis Effect (caused by the Earth's rotation). There appears to be no well accepted reason for this phenomenon, although one source stated that the main function of spiral grain is the uniform distribution of nutrients and water from roots to branches. For what it's worth, I think it may be to do with maximising the strength of the trunk; that is, the tree has evolved this habit because it produces a stronger trunk than would otherwise be the case. A spiral grain trunk or branch can withstand stresses caused by winds better than one without a spiral grain. A related phenomenon is likely to be the way lightning strikes a tree. It is usual for lightning to travel down a tree in a spiral fashion, rather than directly down the trunk. This may be because the lightning follows the pattern of moisture in the trunk, which is along the wood grain.

SC...and we can now add the theory (story) told to me by my TAFE teacher. I still like it, even though it seems to be untrue - or at least, unresearched! My apologies for leading you astray.

Wingecarribee Flora Project by *Cathryn Couatts*: BDAS Botanic Artists work out of Bowral & District Art Society and since 2010 have exhibited locally, in Canberra and in Sydney. BDAS artists have works in collections in Australia and overseas. In 2017 we are embarking on a special project comprising paintings of plants of significance in Wingecarribee Shire, with some of these being threatened species. Our first exhibition for this project will be at the Bowral Art Gallery, from 19-30 October 2018. We are seeking suggestions from members of the community about plants to include in the collection. If you have any suggestions please contact on 0417650277 or email to: cathryn.couatts@gmail.com

Mystery Story by SC: It was a five-layer morning; the temperature had not climbed beyond low single figures when I set off into the bush with Orchid Woman. She is tiny and birdlike (though no spring chicken) and she'd told me to bring my camera. "... come ready for a climb up a steep track. It's a bit slippery, too - and rocky". On the broad, deeply-shaded mountain flank, I couldn't imagine how she would find what she was looking for; a native orchid only the size of my thumbnail. It prefers to hide, living tucked away under logs and rocks. She discovered this one a week or so before and was anxious for me to photograph it because the flowers fade quickly. She was quietly excited as this species was not known to be growing in the area. Even after Orchid Woman pointed out the tiny flower it took me a while to see it, but after lying down in wet grass I saw a sticky hood of the darkest purple, almost black. Delicate fringing decorated the rim and indistinct pink splotches flushed the outside of the flower. In the centre, there glowed a mound of



palest, silvered ivory. Many Australian orchids have complicated relationships with insects to ensure fertilisation and presumably this was part of that function. A single leaf, frilled and bright green, sat under the flower, seeming to hold it up as an offering. It nestled under a rock, just as Orchid Woman had predicted. She picked up a stick and, with the greatest care, lifted the hood to reveal what looked to me like a tiny 'widows peak' structure in black. After seeing that, she was satisfied. Clearly that was the defining feature she was seeking.

Often it is easier to see detail of intricate flowers in a photograph rather than real life and we perched on a log to look over the photos and make sure we had captured all she wanted to record; then we scrambled and slid back down the track and headed for the car. She wanted me to drop her at the top of the mountain so that she could make her way home along bush tracks. I watched her in my rear vision mirror as I drove away, a little backpacked figure (close to 80?), eyes to the ground, searching.



Since that day I've tried and failed to re contact Orchid Woman before publication of this NL so that I could tell you the name of the orchid we found and some information about it. I'll keep trying! Watch this space in the July edition.

Orchid people are secretive creatures, seeking to protect these tiny treasures from people who might do them harm. This discovery will be a vital spark in the operating systems of the natural world. Who knows what part it plays?

Moss Vale town - car park line of *Melaleuca styphelioides* in Elizabeth Street



The beautiful row of melaleuca trees opposite the CWA rooms in Moss Vale (where we hold our meetings) is under threat from the excavation for the new Police Station being built next door. Half their root systems has been removed. We will keep an anxious eye on them and hope they survive. Photo on left taken May 2016 and photo on right, April 2017 - SC

* Has anybody had Peter Wohlleben's book, **The Hidden Life of Trees** and would be willing to write us a review for the July NL? I'm told its a 'must read' for all plant lovers.

April Speaker, Ben Walcott : Designing with Australian Plants

Annabel Murray, Landscape Architect



Ben Walcott 's experience stems from two very different Canberra native gardens. One is his private domain and the other, the pair of Australian Gardens within the National Arboretum, aims to capture the attention of the nation. An overview of influential gardens, a discussion of contemporary Australian gardens and the championing of native gardening in the National Capital, tell the story behind his vision. Ben and his wife Ros are confident and experienced gardeners, but when they arrived from the US, they found the Canberra conditions challenging. Their six acre garden attests to their success in overcoming limitations to create an harmonious Australian native garden in a bush setting.

Above: President, Kris Gow chats with Ben Walcott before the April meeting.

Empowering the humblest of gardeners, Walcott told us, "We are all garden designers", and you will learn what you like by looking. A potted history of design style followed, using three iconic European places to underpin a comparison with contemporary Australian gardens. **Christopher Lloyd's garden at Great Dixter, U.K.** accentuated the bold effect of "jamming plants together in mixed, rampant colour". It is a mixture of formal and informal styles, using borders, clipped hedges and meadows. Next came the **Garden of Ninfa** displaying the 'Englsh Style' of gardening in the Mediterranean. Features include planting around ruins and the abundant use of water. Illustrating this point was an image of one stream crossing another. This was certainly to the wonderment of Australian arid climate gardeners!

Two contrasting Australian native gardens are chosen here for discussion from the eight overviewed in the talk. The first is **the Lewins' Garden at Stawell**. Under a baking hot sun, massed *Lomandra* defines an open field of white gravel, generating ample space around large scaled sculptures. This sense of openness is achieved with low planting of sculptural forms of *Eremophilas* and *Acacias*, complimenting the surrounding landscape. To prove his point that there is no 'right way' to design, Walcott pointed out that here we see a highly original response.

An interpretation of Lloyd's tapestry motif of very dense packed planting characterises **Chris Larkin's Garden, Melbourne**. Here, a diversity of plant forms including *Chrysocephalum* are used for colour and texture over steep terrain, cascading over retaining walls and rocks that accommodate the gradient. The way planting spills down into irregular gravel paths and the informal placement of rock make this the most naturalistic of the gardens presented.

Ben and Ros Walcott's own garden in Red Hill has seen an increase, from thirty-five bird species to ninety since they bought the land and began planting in 2001. Past landowners include the French Embassy, post-WWII, and subsequently a developer who planned subdivision for thirty home units. Those plans were stalled due to objections from neighbours either side (Murdoch on one side and Packer on the other!), and the land was sold. Arriving from the U.S. to this heavy clay site, the Walcotts removed senescing and damaged *Pinus radiata* trees and set out to store water for the irrigation system 'a.k.a irrigation system'. As Rainwater tanks and cisterns were not permitted at that time, the solution was



to construct a 'natural' pond in front of the house, edged on one side by a gazebo. Walcott's response to the problem of unsightly duck manure is to sweep it into the pond as fertiliser. A framework of plants that thrive in clay consists of *Callistemon subulatus* 'Overflow' and opposite, *Grevillea* 'Molonglo'. Changes to the design between house and road, where a native meadow had failed and access was needed for craning removal of trees, meant that only the hardier plants, with strong design attributes, remained or were replanted. These include *Olearia lanuginosa* 'Ghost Town' and *Grevillea poorinda* 'Royal

Mantle'. To commemorate the Open Gardens Scheme, this garden featured in an Australian Stamp series alongside Dame Elizabeth Murdoch's Cruden Farm. It was a delightful, if brief, moment of design fame. An increase in the price of stamps saw the stamp removed from circulation! In his leading role within ANPSA, Walcott has established several Study Groups. He now guides the Society towards engaging public imagination through their remarkable garden in Canberra

Photo above November 2015 in the Walcott garden, Red Hill, ACT

Walcott's talk concluded with an overview of one the **two Australian Gardens within the National Arboretum**, partly funded by surplus from the closure of Open Gardens Australia. He described the design as being;

- a formal Demonstration Garden, designed by Lawrie Smith AM
- a response to its dramatic site with views to Lake Burley Griffin over the Governor General's Lodge and
- encapsulating the Great Dividing Range, along which many ecosystems are connected.

Walcott sees ANPSA's mission to support the establishment of this ambitious garden as it will be an invaluable place for learning about, and promoting, creative use of Australian plants.

From the April Plant Table: contributions by Pam Tippett, Jane Pye and Helen Tranter

Acacia iteaphylla, The Flinders Range Wattle by Pam Tippett: The Flinders Range wattle, is one of my favourite wattles and over the years I've planted several. We only have one in our garden in Bundanoon and it effectively screens our neighbours' house. Last year it was attacked by something which left brown spots on its phyllodes. I thought it was probably a fungus but evidently there is an acacia beetle which may have been the culprit. The tree looked quite ratty and I thought it may not survive (it was planted about 10 years ago) however it seems to have recovered and started its main flush of flowering in March and now, in April, is covered with its beautiful perfumed pale yellow blossoms. At least I hope it has recovered and isn't doing its swansong! This medium sized wattle has narrow grey green phyllodes

about 3mm wide to 100mm long with reddish tinged new growth. The branchlets are arched and pendulous, giving the shrub a weeping habit. It flowers intermittently all year but, its main flush is in autumn when not a lot else is in bloom. Unusually, the buds are enclosed in pale yellow bracts with attractive brown markings, before opening into loose clusters of pale yellow flowers. The ensuing pods are also interesting - glaucous and pendulous to about 10 cm long - increasing the weeping effect. It is a large shrub - ours is about 4m high by about 5m wide. It is a little large for its position and will need to be pruned lightly after the main flowering is over or else we will have to fight our way past it when going down the side of the house. I can recommend it in a mixed border/informal hedge and as a screen but give it plenty of room to allow it to show off all its attributes.



Lovely Lomatias: Jane Pye (photo left by Jane of the *Lomita silaifolia* in her garden)

Fairley and Moore's book, *Native Plants of the Sydney Region*, lists three lomatias (out of a total of about 15) all of which can be found in the Highlands. They're all attractive but unusual in cultivation. Two are commonly found on Sydney Sandstone, for example in Welby, Penrose forest and Tourist Road, Kangaloon, and the other is common on creek banks. All these plants are frost hardy, long lived and have lignotubers. Research shows they are often bigger than I have seen them in the wild.

The first species I want to describe is *Lomatia silaifolia*, crinkle bush or wild parsley. It's usually a rather straggly shrub about knee high with sprays of white flowers. But in my garden this is a dense handsome shrub that I keep to about 2+ metres with dozens of sprays of large grevillea-like whitish flowers in summer. These are held well above the foliage. The flowers last for up to 5 weeks if the weather is favourable and they attract more insects than any

other plant I grow. The leaves are large, to 30cm, compound, toothed, bipinnate and rosy bronze colour when new. Each flower spike has many blooms opening from the base. The seeds capsules are decorative too, and leaves, flowers and seeds all last pretty well when cut. It grows easily from seed, and I think cuttings would be successful.

The other sandstone species here is *Lomatia ilicifolia* or native holly. This one is also low in the wild with leaves of a muted greyish colour. The interesting thing about this plant is the leaf texture which is rough to the touch because the lateral veins are raised, a bit like a file. The leaves are oblong in shape, with the prickles mostly pointing downwards. I haven't seen it flowering, but the book describes the flowers as terminal and held above the foliage. I think this would do well in a garden setting, bigger and denser than in the bush. This is said to flower well after a fire, but if this is too extreme a way to get flowers, the leaves are enough of a reason to grow it.

The third species is *Lomatia myricoides*, or river lomatia, and can be found along Berrima River. There it's straggly shrub about 2 metres high with summer flowers on shorter stems within the foliage. I have seen it growing at Wariapendi where there are a couple of well grown (and pruned) plants that are 3 metres tall with very dense foliage, long and irregularly toothed...very handsome. It would make a good dense fairly narrow screening plant to hide a shed next door or a power pole.



Now a bit of information that I gleaned from reading up on Lomatias. In Tasmania there's a critically endangered shrub *Lomatia tasmanica*, King's holly, with rust red flowers. This is a highly desirable plant. However, it is totally sterile, and has been growing and spreading only vegetatively for an estimated 43,600 years! It is claimed to be the oldest plant in the world. Apparently cuttings strike readily but soon die, so great conservation efforts are being made. Perhaps the scientists will make a breakthrough and we'll all be able

to grow it in the future. *Photo: Jane Lemann, Pam Tippett and Jane Pye discuss the Lomita specimen Jane P brought to the meeting.*

Waratahs, by Helen Tranter - We are used to the great show of Waratahs in Spring but we can also have some Waratah flowers in the garden in Autumn, from March to late April, when there are few other bright flowers around. Whether this is caused by temperature, day length or something else we may not know but we can enjoy them just the same. As an example, on the April plant table, there were flowers of *Telopea* "Shady Lady Red" one of the hybrids between the NSW Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) and the Gippsland Waratah (*T. oreades*).

The flowers can be a little smaller than those in Spring and they have a few curious, tough, green bracts hugging the stem below the flowers, rather than the leafy bracts we expect to see, but the bush is showy with 10 or more bright red flowers. Unlike the NSW Waratah, these hybrids are naturally multi-stemmed without having to be pruned, however, remember the bushes can grow to 4-5m, so some pruning over the years will be necessary to make sure they keep to a suitable size.

"Shady Lady Red" is probably the most reliable of these hybrids but "Shady Lady White" is also vigorous and together with "Shady Lady Crimson" and "Shady Lady Yellow" can also produce Autumn flowers.

Photo: Helen with her beloved waratahs at the April meeting.



May visit to the Robertson Nature Reserve; a remnant of the Yarrawa Brush

story and photos Sarah Cains

On a cold, bright afternoon a group of us met to visit the remnant of endangered temperate rainforest at Robertson. In past times, thousands of acres of this forest would have existed, thriving in the low temperatures, high rainfall and heavy mists that define the climate of the area. But given the rich soils and favourable conditions, land clearing for agriculture was inevitable and little respect was paid to the quiet beauty of the Yarrawa Brush or to its vital role in the operating systems of the natural world.



and favourable conditions, land clearing for agriculture was inevitable and little respect was paid to the quiet beauty of the Yarrawa Brush or to its vital role in the operating systems of the natural world.

Photo: Most of us about to set off into the reserve. There were a few latecomers to make up our numbers.

In 1892 tree ferns were removed from the forest and taken to Chicago for exhibition, so clearly there was some fascination and (hopefully!) admiration for the amazing Yarrawa Brush plants. Fortunately, in 1894, far-sighted persons ensured that this little rainforest remnant was set aside as a park. Even so, clearing was undertaken around the 5.5ha to provide for recreational activities. In later years, picnic tables and other structures were removed and the bush was encouraged to grow back, reducing the cleared area and extending the reach of the forest.

Inevitably, weeds thrived in the cleared area and within the forest so it is great good fortune that Helen and David Tranter, both scientists, came to live in Robertson. Quickly they perceived the need to restore and maintain the forest and in 1990 they began clearing the weeds, removing many bags of ivy and declaring an ongoing war on privet.



On our recent visit, Helen guided us through the features that define a rainforest. 70% canopy cover means that light on the forest floor is low. Fungi, bacteria, insect life, spiders, lizards, snakes and other life forms break down the leaf litter, providing nursery conditions for seedling plants and food for birds and the small animals which graze the forest at night. We were delighted to hear the 'machine gun' repetitive call of a Lewin Honeyeater as we moved along pathways. Rainforest plants have adapted to low light levels, developing large leaves to capture light and water; we noticed many with pointed ends,



'drip tips' (see photo, above) which direct moisture downwards towards the roots of the plant. Helen pointed out thorny hooks on vine stems. These enable the plants to scramble upwards through the trees to claim their share of life-giving light. Seedling plants sit waiting, nurtured in moist, rotting forest floor vegetation, until one of the big trees falls, then they take their opportunity and leap into action, growing quickly and reaching up to find their place in the sun.

Many of us were amazed to see familiar species such as *Pittosporum undulatum* and *Acacia melanoxylon* growing to such a great heights. Amongst the dominant trees are *Doryphora sassafras*, with its nutmeg-fragrant leaves and Coachwood, *Ceratopetalum apetalum*, a tall tree from the same family as the well-known favourite, 'NSW Christmas Bush' (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*). The Lilly Pilly, *Syzygium smithii* syn *Acmena smithii* is amongst other familiar friends which behave very differently in this type of forest. Possumwood, (*Quintinia sieberi*) took my eye as a plant could be enjoyed in

gardens. Elliott and Jones's *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants* tells me that it is a small tree or bushy shrub with attractive foliage and small but noticeable panicles of white flowers. It does well in a sheltered situation with a retentive soil and makes an excellent screening plant. It responds well to pruning and tolerates light to moderate frosts. Does anybody have one? We could send in Kris with her plastic bag and secateurs!

Helen has a list which sets out the plants according to their rarity. She gave us all copies and identified specimens for us as we passed through the forest. This made the experience enjoyable and meaningful and the information more accessible. If you missed out and would like a copy of the plant list, feel free to ask Helen or a committee member. Looking up the plants at home is a most absorbing follow-up activity. Particular interest was found in trying to sort out the nine species of ferns named on the plant list. Careful examination and guidance from Helen saw some of us learn to identify a few more plants in this confusing group.

I told my daughter we had visited the Robertson Nature Reserve and she recalled being taken there as an imaginative little schoolgirl. She remembers holding a secret hope that, despite the odds, she might see a sloth hiding away somewhere in that magical forest.

No sloth. But amazing plants, fascinating information and a Lewin Honeyeater to fill our souls with wonder and joy. Thank you, Helen.

Photo above: Good sloth country?



A view from Bundy

Story and photo Louise Egerton

As you will read here, Louise is a relative newcomer to the Southern Highlands. We are delighted that she has joined our group and also, agreed to become a member of the committee of APS S Highlands. She is a great contributor. SC

When I came to this area two years ago I was delighted to discover that the Australian Plant Society had a Southern Highland branch. Being something of a generalist, my passion for native plants springs from something broader. I am fascinated and enchanted by the way Australia's plants and animals have adapted and evolved, over millennia, in response to a continent that has undergone massive turbulence.

Coming from a land of geraniums red and lobelias blue, Australia was a shock to me. On the second day of my arrival here, thirty two years ago, I took a walk down into Middle Harbour in Sydney. An enormous goanna lay sprawled upon the tin roof of a water tank beside one of the World War shacks. Once I had recovered my composure and taken a few step forward, I pointed to the soft yellow bristles of a large cone on a branch. 'What's that?' I asked my companion. 'That's a flower,' he said. Really? A flower? It didn't look like any flower I'd ever seen before. It was, in fact, the flower of the Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*). Gradually it dawned on me that the natural order of things here was quite distinct from anything else in the world.

Once a month, I scabble around in the understorey at Leaver Park in Bundanoon, yanking Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) off the native shrubs, rolling it up and leaving it to rot in the forks of bushes and trees. Another day of the month, I join a team at Penrose State Forest. We are dressed to kill in day-glo vests and hard hats. Some are armed with axes and spray bottles loaded with evil fluids; others wield loppers and handsaws. We head into the forest bordering the swampy areas of Paddy's River searching for pine trees (*Pinus radiata* and the occasional *P. canariensis*) among the gums. These are just two of the many bushcare and landcare projects underway around Wingecarribee Shire. They couldn't be more different.

Leaver Park: Leaver Park is a beautiful piece of bushland bound by a creek on the outskirts of Bundanoon. The air vibrates with birdsong. Once the site of a well-frequented swimming hole, the creek is now best suited to the Platypus, White-tailed Water Rat and Long-necked Turtle, all of which have been recently sighted there. As might be expected of any piece of bush bordered by a paddock, a creek, a railway, a road and residential properties, the weeds have crept in: honeysuckle, blackberry, small-leaved privet, fleabane and thistles. But surprisingly the native vegetation here is in remarkably good condition. One of the dominant trees in Leaver Park is Paddy's River Box (*Eucalyptus macarthurii*). The range of this species, listed as endangered under both federal and state legislation, is restricted. There are mature trees dotted around the Highlands along roadsides, in paddocks and on public land but these are often isolated trees where seedlings cannot establish due to grazing or weed infestation. In this respect we hope to see our weeding efforts in the Park pay off in the future. Another very special plant growing in Leaver Park's woodland is Bauer's Grevillea (*Grevillea baueri*). This species has a fairly limited distribution and has therefore been listed as a Rare and Threatened Australian Plant (ROTAP). Whereas I'd recommend planting Paddy's River Box only on acreage, since it can grow up to 40m high, *Grevillea baueri* is suitable for any backyard. It is frost tolerant, flowers in winter and is available in several forms.

Penrose Forest The group's focus in Penrose Forest is also on weed control but here the target species are the pine trees. It might seem strange to be destroying pines in a pine forest but these highland peat swamps that run through this plantation filter what will one day become Sydney's drinking water. The

Penrose Swamps Conservation Group's job is to prevent the pines from invading the native vegetation that provides a buffer zone, maintaining the health of the water, soil and food webs. We saw, chop, lop and poison the pines and mark any huge trees for the contractors to finish off. We call these bush-invaders pine 'wildings'. There is one very special tree in the swamps. It doesn't look like much but *Eucalyptus aquatica* has a very restricted range, being only found in the swamps of Paddy's River (as far as we know). Listed as threatened at both the federal and State level, a change in hydrology could wipe out this species altogether. There are many beautiful spots along the Forest's riparian zone. Perhaps the jewel in the crown is Stingray Swamp Flora Reserve (see photo left). Visit here in November, when the bottlebrushes are in flower and the honeyeaters descend en masse, and you would never know you



were in a pine plantation. Bush regeneration (aka weed control) is just one way of actively supporting conservation and the biodiversity of our magnificent flora. Joining a native plant group and planting out natives in our garden is just another. Both activities provide a valuable service to the native wildlife and even, on occasion, help save species from extinction. We are all participants in a much bigger movement across Australia to keep our natural heritage in good nick for the future of generations to come and that has to be a good thing.

Meet the members, Bill Mullard and his wife, Fran.

Sarah Cains

We are fortunate that Bill joined our committee at the last AGM and is now treasurer for our group.



Bill and Fran bought their twenty acres at Exeter in 1977. Two years later they built their house and moved to live in the area. Between then and now they moved back to Sydney for a twelve year work commitment (Bill is an engineer and Fran a teacher) but now they are back to stay.

Bill has always loved the bush. He was attracted to the Exeter property by the view down the valley and the idea of having his own little piece of shale woodland to restore. The area had been cleared so that trees coming up were second growth. These have been judiciously thinned by Bill to allow them to develop sturdy forms. APS SH member, Sylvia David's scientist son, Steve Douglas, helped Bill identify the trees on the block. *Eucalyptus quadrangulata* and *E. cypellocarpa* dominate, and in a composition typical of shale woodland, tall trees grow in concert with groundcovers. *Allocasuarina littoralis* self seeds

readily and we examined a recent circular clump of these trees which has sprung up in an open space. Gazing upwards, we wondered if they were courtesy of a birds' nest in the tree above. *Acacia melanoxylon* is another familiar contributor. A deep gully runs across the land and at the lower end is a big, spring-fed dam.

Bill grew up on the Watagan Ranges, a part of the Great Diving range situated in the Upper Hunter. His father was a timber cutter in the days before chainsaws. The use of axes and cross-cut saws engendered in this man the greatest respect for timber and trees. He made some furniture, but his strong aesthetic sense drew him more towards clay and he became a potter. Bill's mother, too, was a potter. She undertook classes

with highly esteemed Japanese potter Shiga Shigeo at the time (1960s) when he was working at Sturt in Mittagong.



Bill tells me that he likes all plants and this makes him inclusive of both natives and exotics in his garden. But his love for native birds sees him planting a dominance of natives to provide them with nourishment and shelter. Conservation is a priority and frogs, lizards and insects are made welcome. Wallabies, wombats and kangaroos also make themselves at home on Bill and Fran's place,

though their tendency to chomp small plants is discouraged! Bill says that, during the three years he has been with APS, he has enjoyed bringing home the little plants Kris has grown. He finds lots of treasures at our meetings. Care of his plants is exemplary; they thrive in a garden where weeds are kept at bay, plants are netted whilst vulnerable and mulching softens soil and provides great growing conditions. The slope of the land means that drainage is good and careful attention is paid to when and how to fertilise plants. Whilst Bill describes his creation as a landscape, rather than a garden, his eye for design and thoughtful positioning of new plantings certainly make for a gardenesque picture.

Bill has a new project in mind. He walked me through the gully running down towards his big dam and explained that he planning to use some of the water to create rainforest conditions. He is keen to try some interesting new plants.

Clearly Bill and Fran love their place and take great pleasure in ongoing engagement with the conservation of their little piece of the natural world.

Thanks to you both, Bill and Fran, for allowing us a peep into your lives.



My job as editor of this Newsletter is made easier and immeasurably more enjoyable by all of you who so willingly and capably write articles for inclusion. There are some really talented writers amongst you and we all benefit greatly from reading what you send to the NL.

Our area is a big one and it is important that we know all the native plant news from the different towns as well as places in between. Please keep writing - or if you have not yet contributed, consider writing up some of your native plant stories.

Even those without gardens (like me at present) can find endless plantings of interest by looking about in parks, public spaces and roadsides. Tiny balcony, town house or pot gardens, or broad acres are all worth noting. Also, we'd love to read your plant travel stories, so when you're out and about...

Many thanks for contributions to this May edition to:

Louise Egerton, Annabel Murray, Jane Pye,

Pam Tippett and Helen Tranter



Above is Bill Mullard's marvellous wood pile; surely it is a work of art?

By my reckoning, and person who keeps a woodpile like this is more that qualified to look after our money!