

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group

...your local native garden club

Thursday 6th April, the
iNaturalist app with Jen
Slattery

Sat/Sunday 22nd, 23rd April
SH Botanic Gardens Fair

Thursday 4th May Exeter
garden visit together with
Canberra group

Southern Highlands

SHAPS Committee:

President

Louise Egerton

Vice President

Jen Slattery

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Committee Members

Marjorie Lobban

Paul Osborne

APS Committee

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Southern-Highlands



Beautiful looking plant with its glossy evergreen leaves and shiny black berries. My female plant is currently covered in fruit with the male plant on its left, all the better to assist pollination by our westerly winds. It is the edible Tasmanian or mountain pepper, *Tasmannia lanceolata*. Some websites declare that “pepperberries have a mild, fruity pepper flavour.” Don’t you believe it! Certainly when eaten on its own it is so hot and spicy with an astringent edge that it makes your tongue and mouth tingle. Leaves have a milder flavour. It is a shrub native to woodlands and cool temperate rainforest of south-eastern Australia. I’ve found it hard to grow in the garden, even in a moist spot. But it does very well in pots in the shade.

Upcoming Program

Southern Highlands APS 2023 Program Summary

Lots in the pipeline.

	General Meetings 1st Thursday 2pm Feb, April, June, August, October.	Outings 1st Thursday in next month after general meeting	Committee Meeting 2nd Monday of month
April	Thursday 6 th April Discover the iNaturalist app with Jen Slattery at CWA Moss Vale, 2pm	Weekend 22/23 April SHBG Garden Fair, Bowral	10 th April at Kim's
May		Thursday 4 th May Exeter garden visit and morning tea together with Canberra APS (ANPSC). Meet at 150 Devon Road, Exeter at 10.30 am	8 th May
June	Thursday 1 st June Talk by Mt Annan botanist - TBC		12 th June
July		Thursday 6 th July Herbarium at Mt Annan - more details later	10 th July
August	Thursday 3 rd August Talk on plant selection challenges for farmers - TBC		14 th August
September		Saturday 9 th September, Visit to Illawarra Grevillea Park 11am	11 th September
October	Thursday 5 th October Jen Slattery talk on grasses		9 th October
November		24-27th November BioBlitz Medway	13 th November
December		Thursday 7 th December Xmas party	11 th December

Details of coming events

Thursday 6th April, CWA Moss Vale, 66 Elizabeth Street, at 2pm.

Learn how to use the iNaturalist app with Jen Slattery



iNaturalist is a citizen science platform where you can record your observations of living things and get help to identify them. It connects you with a community of scientists and nature enthusiasts, plus your verified observations help to create a more detailed picture of Australia's biodiversity.



You can use iNaturalist from your desktop computer/laptop or smartphone/tablet.

At our April meeting you'll be introduced to using iNaturalist, submitting observations, hints and tips, and an overview Bioblitz.

If you wish to practice using iNaturalist on the day, particularly the app, please

- sign up / create an iNaturalist account, and
- if you are an app user download the iNaturalist App from App Store or Google Play before the meeting.

<https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/>

A Guide to Installing and using iNaturalist by Nillumbik Shire Vic will be emailed out in our meeting reminder or you can download it using this link (It's a pdf towards the bottom of the page) <https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Explore/Events-and-festivals/Events-calendar/Great-Southern-Bioblitz-2022>

Saturday/Sunday 23rd/24th April, the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens Fair

The SHBG will have gardens open and plant stalls at the SH Botanic Gardens site in Bowral. We will be sharing an information tent with other local garden groups, chatting to and enthusing visitors and handing out our flyers. Volunteers welcome.

Thursday 4th May, at 10.30 am. A combined visit to a local Exeter garden with the Australian Native Plants Society, Canberra Region (ANPSC)

This is a chance to meet and socialise with another APS group. Meet at the garden of Bill and Fran Mullard, 150 Devon Road, Exeter. SHAPS will be hosting morning tea at Bill and Fran's, followed by a walk around their beautiful bush garden. The garden is steep in parts, so you may need a stick. Please car pool where possible, and **park in the street**.

Members of the ANPSC will continue on to lunch in a Bundanoon café. We are welcome to join them.

February 2023 Meeting and AGM

Bill Mullard gave the President's, and John Desmond the Treasurer's report.

As there were no more members nominating for positions than there were positions available, the new committee was declared elected and in operation.

Changes to the committee. Bill Mullard resigned both as president and as a member of the committee. Former vice president Louise Egerton was voted in as president, Jen Slattery as vice president. The other committee members remained the same. Please refer to the green box on the first page of this newsletter.

The incoming president Louise Egerton thanked Bill for all his work over the past 2 years, particularly guiding us through the APS weekend in the Southern Highlands in November 2022. This was a great effort. Louise then gave Bill a present on behalf of all members. Louise said she would like our branch to get more involved in some environmental issues.

There followed short talks by three of our members. **Kris Gow** gave an informative talk and short demonstration on pruning native plants. **Sarah Cains** talked about the issues of creating an urban forest – particularly as it relates to the Cains’s residence with a forest of *Eucalyptus gregsoniana*. **Paul Osborne** inspired members to attend a walk at Lake Alexandra in Mittagong on 2/3/23 where we would walk through several different environments, providing photographic opportunities in preparation for the April demonstration about iNaturalist.

2022 President’s Report

Bill Mullard

Welcome everybody and thank you all for coming, especially to an AGM.

I begin today by acknowledging the Gundungurra and Tharawal peoples, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

A big thanks to all those who participated in events and supported our group. As you all know, we had to contend with Covid in 2021 and in 2022 it was the weather. Twice, in March and July, we had to postpone garden visits because of extreme rain events however we still managed two garden visits unaffected by rain with both events attracting 30 to 35 attendees. The end of year party was held at Jonquil Temple’s home in Mittagong where finally, on the 3rd attempt, we were able to wander through her wonderful garden. Thanks, Jonquil, for the effort you put into preparing your garden and for hosting the banquet that followed.

I would also like to thank Margaret Hammond for opening her inspiring garden in Moss Vale in September and a special thanks to Kay and Margaret for the ongoing care that they lavish on the three native plant boxes outside Coles in Bowral. They have certainly drawn some positive comments and interest in native plants.

In April we had a stall for two days at the “Garden Fair” sponsored by the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens where we outclassed every other local garden group with a brilliant display of native plants.

In June we had a stall at the Wingecarribee “Greener Footprints Fair”. We sold plants propagated by members and considered it a great success as we completely sold out of plants.

Then in October we took part in The Great Southern BioBlitz which was a highly successful event at Medway Reserve attended by 17 members and a visitor from the Mt. Annan Botanic Gardens. We identified *Grevillea raybrownii*, a plant not previously known to exist this far south and are awaiting

confirmation that a prostrate *Kunzea* may be a new species. We fully intend to participate in this event again this year.

Finally in November we hosted the NSW APS for a weekend in the Southern Highlands attended by about 70 people from across the state. Despite the weather the event was well received, especially the talk at the Saturday night dinner given by Jane Lemann.

Our eNewsletter continues to be published every second month under the editorship of Trish Arbib who somehow manages to keep improving the publication. Many members contribute articles so don't forget anyone can put forward articles or ideas for the newsletter. Trish can be contacted though our Southern Highlands email which is on the front page of the newsletter.

Thanks to Louise Egerton, a detailed response to the South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2041 was submitted to the State Government. Due to the overwhelming response the plan is being revised and will be re-released for further submissions sometime this year.

There were 5 speaker events held during the year, each attended by at least 25 members. All speakers were enthusiastically received and the topics covered were:

- Greening Australia.
- Birds and plants of the Southern Tablelands.
- Edible native plants.
- Photography of plants and animals followed up by an excellent practical session at Mt Annan gardens.
- Those forgotten pollinators - beetles and flies.

Before I hand over to our treasurer John Desmond to give the treasurer's report I would also like to congratulate John for his appointments to the APS NSW board and the ANPS federal board as National Treasurer.

Remember that guests are always welcome at our events. It is a great way of recruiting new members.

Thank you all for participating in the 2022/23 AGM and as this is my final year as president, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the outgoing committee members for their dedication and enthusiasm.

Treasurer's Report 2022 Year

John Desmond

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY – SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS DISTRICT GROUP

Total revenue for the year, excluding the November Gathering was \$2,438 of which the largest part was the plant sales and raffles at our regular meetings, which totalled \$1,755. Membership fees were \$670 with some renewals processed late. There were only a limited number of meetings so our hall hire and speaker expenses were lower than normal. Our most significant expense during the year was the purchase of flyers and banners for use at our meetings and outings on which we spent \$916.

After the end of the financial year we received a significant share of the profits from the APS Gathering hosted by our group in November. This has led to our holding a very healthy bank balance of \$5,886 at the end of February.

Due to the conversion by BDCU into a Bendigo Community Bank all our bank account details have changed from 4 March. However it is not expected that this will change financial management to any significant extent.

Conifer Deaths in Wingecarribee and Beyond

Compiled by Sarah Cains



Dead conifers on the main road just south of Bowral. Some of many. Note the few still unaffected.

Local land owners in Wingecarribee have been enthusiastic planters of exotic conifers. These trees are usually planted as sight screens and wind breaks. Tree-aware residents of the shire, together with our many visitors, are watching with alarm as many conifers have died or are showing clear signs of ill health. Particular favourites of hedge planters are the many forms of “Leyland Cypress” This plant is unusual in being a bi-generic hybrid - a cultivated cross between two genera, *Cupressus* and *Chamaecyparis*. This cross

results in the scientific name of the small genus *XCupressocyparis*. *C. leylandii* is noticeably dying in large numbers around Wingecarribee.

The two parent plants of the Leyland Cypress:

Genus *Cupressus*: A genus of evergreen coniferous trees mostly columnar in habit. It differs from its closely aligned group, *Chamaecyparis*, in being on the whole, less hardy. They do not transplant easily into open ground and are therefore pot grown. They are tolerant of a wide range of soils but not wet conditions.

Genus *Chamaecyparis*: is a small genus of evergreen trees with a number of features distinguishing them from the genera *Cupressus*. Although the species of this genera are few in number, it has given rise to the cultivation of an astonishing number of cultivars. These are beloved of gardeners, noted for their wide range of shapes, sizes, foliage forms and colours.

XCupressocyparis leylandii, the “Leyland Cypress” exhibits features of both parent genera. In Australian conditions, it grows to be a large, extremely vigorous tree of columnar habit. Plantings of this tree, particularly hedge plantings, cause endless controversy and neighbourhood arguments as these towering trees turn roadways into tunnels, block views and spread dense patches of shade. As very fast growing hybrids, these trees have found great popularity in Australia and are widely planted in Wingecarribee.

Tree losses can easily be seen as we drive around our district. It’s a reasonable guess to assume that the conifers (plus other species) are dying from stress caused by changed and changing climate conditions, there might be an additional factor at play here.

Cypress canker is a significant disease and is killing exotic conifers. It is a fungal disease and was first observed in the Monterey Cypress, *Cupressus macrocarpa*. The disease has since proven to take hold in all species of Cypress. This, of course, includes "The Leyland Cypress" with its parental link to the vulnerable species. More than 25 other conifers are affected, including Castlewellan Gold, Leyton's Green, Naylor's Blue, Swane's Golden, Pencil Pines and the Arizona and Lawson Cypresses.

The disease has been known for some years in Victoria and subsequently moved into NSW. 'Cypress Decline' is now the preferred term for referring to cypress canker. It recognises causative factors in addition to the fungal species of *Seiridium* fungi.

These fungi can all cause dieback symptoms, especially when environmental conditions put trees under stress.

It is possible that Cypress canker is a factor in tree death. Stress has been caused by long dry periods with very high temperatures followed by years of unseasonably cold and very wet weather.

There is no proven cure for this disease.

Agriculture Victoria: "We believe that the last drought weakened the cypresses and left them vulnerable to infection. Disease development has also been favoured by waterlogging or warm, humid conditions in some areas."

Scientific proof would be needed to establish whether 'canker' fungi are to be found in Wingecarribee trees and therefore Cypress Canker is part of the dieback story.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, run a Plant Clinic offering scientific identification of such problems.

Cause of cypress canker

Previously this disease was thought to be caused by a single *Seiridium* species, but scientists now believe that three species (*S. cardinale*, *S. cupressi* and *S. unicorne*) are causing the same symptoms. These fungi have been present in Victoria for more than 50 years.

Symptoms

Branches die rapidly, yellowing almost overnight as the foliage is starved of sap. If untreated, the disease will eventually lead to death of the whole plant.

Sunken cankers, with a reddish tinge, form at the entry point of the fungus, and resin often exudes from the edges of the cankers or through cracks in the bark. Individual cankers are long and thin and may be numerous along a branch. Spore-producing structures of the fungus can be seen on the bark surface as small, circular, black dots.

Disease spread

Spores are carried on rain splashes or by insects, birds and other animals. New infections develop when spores are washed down the tree or splashed from tree to tree by rain or overhead irrigation. They can also be transferred from plant to plant on pruning tools, or through the transport of infected cuttings or plants.

Control

Again, there is no cure for Cypress Decline but measures can be taken to slow the spread. Regular feeding and watering (in dry conditions only), and reducing the chances of wounding, are advisable. Any obviously infected branches should be removed by judicious pruning to prevent infection spreading to the main stems. All tools should be disinfected before and after use with alcohol or dilute bleach.

Severely diseased plants should be removed and destroyed. No fungicides are effective in controlling the disease once infection has occurred.

References:

Agriculture Victoria and Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

Abertillery Rainforest

Deanna Pryke-Abertillery



Abertillery Rainforest is a micro-rainforest I have established behind my house on a quarter-acre residential block on basalt soil in Burrawang in the NSW Southern Highlands.

When I acquired the land in 1989 I inherited 2 existing ancient Brown Barrel trees *Eucalyptus fastigata*, under which there was a general mix of weed species including

Small-Leaf Privet, English Ivy, English Holly, Tradescantia, Kikuyu and Cats' Piss Creeper. The weeds were removed and burnt off in an outdoor fireplace and scattered kikuyu was sprayed out with glyphosate.

The first plantings consisted of a zig-zag array of *Pittosporum undulatum* just inside the property boundaries, especially just inside the west-facing boundary colourbond fence, the colourbond fence was subsequently painted black to cause it to disappear behind the tree plantings. The *Pittosporum undulatum* laid the groundwork to develop the rainforest by shading out common farm weeds such as thistles and dock leaf and creating large quantities of leaf-fall which created the mulch cover for the forest floor.

My aim was to create a Coachwood-dominated rainforest type, which was helped when Randwick Council Nursery in Sydney's south had a surplus tray of about 50 Coachwood tubestock left over from a heavy flowering year at the Fred Hollows Reserve in Sydney's east. I brought the whole tray up and planted all of the Coachwood *Ceratopetalum apetalum* around the whole of the back of the block after clearing the weeds. 2 of the Coachwoods are now quite large with trunks 20 to 30cms diameter, others remaining smaller.

One of the most satisfying moments was during the 1990s. In my old job I was dumping rubbish from the La Perouse national park at the Matraville Transfer Station when I noticed a big pot had been dumped nearby that had a Blueberry Ash *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* "Prima Donna" in it which I promptly placed into the tray in the back of the garbage truck I was driving, then drove the garbage truck back to my station wagon and placed the Blueberry Ash in the back of the car, bringing it up to the Highlands on my next trip and planting it, and it regenerated successfully and now stands around 8 metres tall amongst other rainforest trees I was planting around the same time which are also all now about 8 metres.

One tree that has grown extremely well in my rainforest (and has a now quite big 30cm trunk girth) is Pigeonberry Ash *Elaeocarpus kirtonii*, this one I sourced at Burringbar Rainforest Nursery on the NSW Far North Coast. The red new growth is just discernible in the title picture of this essay.

Some of the other trees I have (all around the 5 to 10 metre tall range) include Pinkwood *Eucryphia moorei*, Sassafras *Doryphora sassafras*, Native Frangipani *Hymenosporum flavum*, Brown Beech *Pennantia cunninghamii*, Red Cedar *Toona ciliata*, White Cedar *Melia azederach*, Native Quince *Alectryon subcinereus* (with its distinctively fissured trunk), *Callicoma serratifolia*, Turpentine *Syncarpia glomulifera*, and I was lucky enough to have a (now mature) *Myrsine howittiana* self-set just inside my western boundary line. There are also a number of Lillipillis including *Acmena smithii* and *Syzygium oleosum* among others. A number of now-mature *Acacia melanoxylon* were self-setters and there's also a mature Illawarra Flame Tree *Brachychiton acerifolium* from my first plantings.

Other plants include the Cabbage-Tree Palm *Livistona australis*, Bangalow Palm *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* and *Cyathea cooperi* Tree Ferns. Some of the Rasp Fern *Doodia aspera* is also doing well.

A number of vines/scramblers have self-set including Wombat Berry *Eustrephus latifolius*, also *Geitonoplesium cymosum*, *Smilax australis* and *Pandorea pandorana*.

Ziggy my housemate has since constructed a number of lengths of low-stature basalt dry-walling along the various paths I have within the rainforest area, and about three years ago I added a recycled-timber viewing platform within the area.

Over the hedge with Kim and Erica

Kim Zegenhagen and Erica Rink

Drought proofing your Australian garden.



There is much talk that we are entering another dry period. No one can be sure if this is cyclical or longer term. So, what to do? The answer is to drought proof your garden. Expect more on this in future articles. But for now, here is some good advice:

Mulches:

Mulch garden beds regularly. Wood chips, leaves, straw or even ripped up newspapers can be laid over the top of your soil to hold in moisture. But note that wood chip mulch, especially recycled bark, eucalyptus mulch and pine bark mulch, is the best mulch for natives, promoting microorganism activity and enhancing nutrients in the soil.



Watering:

A chopped-off milk container or empty plant pot can be half-buried near trees and other big bushes and shrubs to help deliver any rainfall or hand-watering closer to deep roots.

To make your garden more drought-resistant it is best to cultivate the soil deeply and dig in large quantities of organic matter to improve soil structure, the soil water retention and water availability for your plants.



Also, you can make your garden absorb water more efficiently by following some simple steps. Hard-packed clay soils and other soils can become crusted and resist wetting, letting water run off instead of absorbing it. To re-wet, repeatedly sprinkle the surface lightly, making sure there is no runoff. As we said earlier covering the surface with mulch such as straw, leaves, wood chips, or compost will also help.

Gardeners often wonder can I put soapy water on plants? Plants can be watered with shower, bath, kitchen and washing machine water (**from rinse cycles**), collectively referred to as 'grey' water. It varies in quality and may contain contaminants such as soap and detergent.

Fertilisers:

Apply fertiliser as plants use water more efficiently when nutrient levels are adequate. Australian natives don't like manufactured or chemical-based fertilisers that are high in phosphorous. However, they do like to be fed in spring and autumn. So, look for specifically Australian native plant food or an organic based fertiliser such as blood and bone or pelletised chicken manure.

Walk at Lake Alexandra – Thursday 2 March 2023

Marjorie Lobban

Photos by Marjorie Lobban and Robyn Kremer

Paul Osborne had planned a beautiful walk from Lake Alexandra for our state get-together weekend last November but rain meant only two people braved the wet conditions. It is such an accessible and lovely plant walk that it was decided to repeat it as an APS outing. The afternoon also provided an opportunity for members to gather photographs to use at our iNaturalist workshop in April.

Twenty people gathered at the Lake and, armed with cameras and phones, headed west along the creek. The beginning of the walk is beside the fern-filled creek gully with sheer rocky cliffs on the other side. This is a wonderful area to spot waratahs in spring. We reached a fork in the path, indicating the return of the loop we were to walk, and headed away from the creek up the hill to a higher plateau.

A bonus of walking now is that the scribbly gums, *Eucalyptus haemastoma*, have just shed their bark and their pale apricot trunks present as pale, glowing ghosts.



As always, the group spread out as plants were spotted and identification discussed. There were several species of geebung, with the smaller, *Persoonia linearis*, in delicate flower.



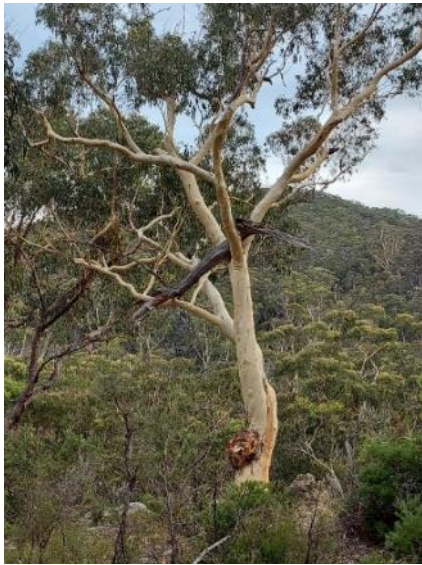
The plateau to which we ascended was dotted with scribbly gums, and a scattering of flannel flowers beneath indicated that it would be a spectacular carpet in spring.



Along with the flannel flowers, close to the ground were many grasses, including curly wig, *Caustis flexuosa*, and an intriguing little *Lomandra obliqua* (below right) identified by Jen Slattery.



The track made a small descent to a high rocky area with magnificent views down into the fern-filled gully leading to Forty-foot Falls. Again, the trees were the star of the show. From there we completed the loop back to the main track.



Back at the lake we were joined by Jane Lemann for afternoon tea, after what everyone agreed was a fabulous excursion. Thanks, Paul!



A rather faded end-of-season Cassinia aureonitens



Isotoma axillaris

Plant Profile – *Hakea petiolaris x laurina*

Kristine Gow



If you are looking for a small tree that ticks all the boxes look no further than *Hakea petiolaris x laurina*.

H. petiolaris is commonly known as sea-urchin hakea, and *H. laurina* as pin-cushion hakea. It is easy to see why they were given those common names.

I have one growing on the council verge outside my home, unfortunately hidden behind other shrubs and rarely noticed by walkers.

But certainly not overlooked by the birds and bees. It is a smaller tree than the straight species only growing to about 4 metres high by 2 metres wide, frost hardy once established and requires a sunny aspect and good drainage.

Flowering occurs late winter into spring, unfortunately to date my tree hasn't set seed.

Hakea "Pin Ball" is a beautiful, small, feature tree with spectacular flowers, dense habit and a winner with the birds and bees.

Snippets

Habitat Gardeners, Bundanoon Plant Sale on Saturday March 25 – Earth Day and Election Day. All proceeds to benefit Wombat Care, Bundanoon.

LOCATION: 24 William Street, Bundanoon
9.30am to 1.00pm

While at our plant sale, please celebrate Earth Hour with a wander around the back and front gardens and see where we get a lot of our cuttings and seeds used for propagation.

As always, please remember:

- Cash only
- If possible, BYO bags/boxes to take your plants home in
- Return of tubes/small pots very much appreciated

Glossies in the Mist – Autumn Tree Planting Days - Saving Our Species 'Feed the Birds' Program

Just a reminder. Some of you may have taken part in the tree plantings earlier in March. There are still two planting days – 4th and 12th April.



Glossies in the Mist is a landscape recovery project for our threatened Glossy-black cockatoos. We happily invite you to a series of tree planting events on the Southern Highlands to rebuild flyways, food and nesting spots for these special birds.

- Friday 3rd March - Exeter
- Fri 17th March - Canyonleigh
- Tues 4th April – Robertson
- Wed 12th April – Sutton Forest

Glossies in the Mist along with our wonderful community partners have been working hard for five years to Cockatoos. Our "Feed The Birds" initiative is a federally funded bushfire recovery corridor

building program designed to reconnect the Blue Mountains with Morton National Park, and to help Glossies move and feed throughout the landscape. We are aiming big for five habitat corridors that span the deforested parts of the Southern Highlands, and we are almost there. We will try to finalise these corridors by the end of Autumn 2023.

If tree planting is what you like, come join us! Contact Beth to register and for more details. beth.mott@environment.nsw.gov.au



ANPSA 2024 Biennial Conference in Melbourne

Gardens for Life, hosted by APS Victoria starts on 30th September 2024.

If you are interested in the conference, please go to their website (apsvic.org.au) and register your interest, and also see high resolution photos.

This link takes you to their first newsletter. This will give you the opportunity to see information about the conference, register your interest and access the glossy newsletter.

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