

# AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

*Southern Highlands Group*

*...your local native garden club*

## **Southern Highlands**

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*Photo by Trisha Arbib*

This amazing Banksia sculpture is beautifully displayed against the escarpment in Kangaroo Valley. It is surrounded by prostrate and shrubby Leptospermum in flower. The sculptor is Megan Waud and she was part of the recent Sculpture in the Valley held over two weekends this September. The sculpture is 200cm x 250cm x 250cm. It is made of steel and weighs 100 kg. The price tag is \$28,500.

## WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW EDITOR FOR OUR SHAPS NEWSLETTER

I will be definitely retiring as editor at the AGM in February 2024.

This is my sixth September newsletter for SHAPS. My last newsletter will be the January 2024 edition, the last one before the AGM. I have really enjoyed doing this but it is time to move on.

So we will need a new newsletter editor. It is only once every two months that the newsletter goes out, to our members and on to the NSW APS website. If you would like to build on my and previous editors' efforts and contribute your own style and flair and ideas please contact your committee on [southernhighlandsaps@gmail.com](mailto:southernhighlandsaps@gmail.com).

On the job training will be available by helping me prepare our November and January newsletters if you wish. And I will always be available to help. I really appreciated help in my early days.

I'm sure to say this again, but I want to thank our SHAPS members who contribute original writing and/or photographs. They really make the editor's job easy, and make this newsletter different from many others.

### Upcoming Program

	<b>General Meetings</b> 1st Thursday 2pm June, August, October, at Moss Vale CWA, 66 Elizabeth Street, Moss Vale	<b>Outings</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b> 2nd Monday of month
<b>October</b>	Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> October, 2pm at Moss Vale CWA - talk on Grasses: An Introduction	<b>Saturday</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> October. Visit Pam Tippett's garden, together with the Bundanoon Garden Club. 9 Ross Street Bundanoon. 10 am to 1 pm.  <b>Saturday</b> 21 <sup>st</sup> October, 10am to 1pm. Habitat Gardeners' Plant sale at Sylvia David's, 24 William Street, Bundanoon	9 <sup>th</sup> October At Marjorie Lobban's 2pm
<b>November</b>		<b>W/e</b> 18, 19 November APS Annual get together in Goulburn <b>Friday</b> 24 November BioBlitz at Medway	13 <sup>th</sup> November
<b>December</b>		<b>Thursday</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> December Xmas party	11 <sup>th</sup> December

## Coming Up Next

- At our next regular meeting at the CWA Moss Vale rooms, on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October** the **talk** is titled *“Grasses: An Introduction”*. Two common questions asked are “What's that grassy plant? Is it a goodie or baddie?” This talk will focus on what is a grass, grass flower heads and seasonal growth period. After an introduction by Jen Slattery, Council's bio security officers Peter and Jim will chat to us about Biosecurity Grasses.

Please bring samples of grasses with their flowers if you can, both for display and ID.

## We have some extra activities in the next few months.

- The **Illawarra APS group** has invited SHAPS to join them on **Saturday 23rd September** at **Barren Grounds** car park at 10am. The president, Michael Swire, hopes some keen bush walkers will join their group for the day. Barren Grounds is about 42 kms from Bowral. The link below will help determine the location.

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/barren-grounds-nature-reserve>

- Note: The visit to **Pam Tippett's garden** is on a **Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> October**. This is a Bundanoon Garden Club event but they, and Pam, have kindly invited us to join them. We will need to sign on to a SHAPS list.
- **Habitat Gardeners' spring plant sale** on **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October**. Australian native plants are propagated by this small committed team of women, with proceeds going to support the work of Wombat Care Bundanoon. Sylvia's beautifully tended garden of mainly native plants, chooks, vegetables and her quirky pottery is a delight and an inspiration to walk around. **CASH ONLY** please. Sylvia has suggested we might wish to hand out our flyers and chat to visitors about native plants.
- **APS Annual Get Together** will be in **Goulburn** on the weekend of **18 – 19 November**. Remember we held it in the Southern Highlands last November. Saturday will be a talk on eremophila, a tour of Goulburn wetlands, and a dinner with speaker, Dr Brian Faulkner, on threatened species of the Goulburn-Mulwaree district. Sunday includes a bush walk or garden visits. Cost \$35 for APS members. Extra for the dinner. **Register asap**.

Details are in the eNewsletter of APS NSW – September 2023. We received this by email on 31<sup>st</sup> August. Or go to the APS NSW website. [www.austplants.com.au](http://www.austplants.com.au)

- Meet at **Medway** for a 9.30 am departure for our **Bioblitz** on **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November**. More details by email closer to the event. Those who took part in this last year really enjoyed being in a group noticing and noting plants and insects.

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## Biodiversity and the Farmer's Dilemma, a Conversation with Frances Simons

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**Paul Osborne**

For the August meeting a different format was enjoyed by members sitting in on a conversation between Louise Egerton and Frances Simons, horticulturist and Exeter farmer.

Louise felt the themes of balancing conservation intentions with the practicalities of making a living from agriculture would be relevant and interesting to residents and gardeners in this semi-rural district.

For 10 years Frances and her husband have run a small breeding herd of miniature Murray Grey cattle on their 40 acre property. It's evident that much thought, research and energy inform their farming methods and efforts to enhance the environment.

They practise "cell grazing", where the herd is regularly moved about the property allowing fenced off areas to regrow aided by nutrient left by the livestock. This involves much work and investment in electric fencing but is considered worthwhile for the health of the soil and grass. The cattle get into a rhythm of shifting into new pasture.

As first generation farmers they feel freer to try different ways of doing things.

Those who have spent a lifetime working like their forebears may be resistant to change, but they hold much knowledge and experience and wisdom not to be easily disregarded.

From traditional to experimental, there is a great range of farmers out there today.

A question about windbreaks and shelterbelts led to a discussion of some complexity. Trees and shrubs have long been used for protection and privacy but the choice of species has complications. Leylandii cypresses are commonly placed as single rows to block the elements, taking out a minimum of productive land. They are quick to establish and nothing much eats them or grows beneath them. Little mowing or maintenance is needed.

Studies show that planting native species as shelter has benefits relating to biodiversity improving longer term productivity. There is a larger range of insects, birds and good soil health, as well as being attractive. To be effective they are usually set out as staggered rows or blocks with a variety of heights. More effort, time and land is required to nurture this alternative.

Frances has planted a spot with eucalypts, wattles, hakeas and more and explained the extra precautions needed against cattle and wildlife for these to thrive. It has taken quite a few years for this to be an adequate windbreak and illustrates choices and constraints for land holders. So too for shade planting within paddocks.

Fighting weeds takes much work and despite painstaking efforts pests like blackberry return and must be dealt with. That is cutting back and removal, then treating the stems with herbicide. Sometimes plants which others consider weeds, as they take up precious ground and are not good eating for livestock, such as bracken ferns, have their benefits. Cows like to tuck their newborns amongst the fronds. Retaining some natural areas for such advantages is a satisfying trade off.

A weeping willow gives shade near the dam and continues to hold the ground there while elsewhere other invasive willows are vigilantly destroyed.

Managing the herd around the creek and dam is important for the condition of these environments, however total exclusion is not deemed practical.

Biosecurity is an important part of farming these days as pests, diseases and weeds must be stopped from coming in and out of properties where possible. Attention has to be paid to cleanliness of equipment and vehicles.

Necessary vaccines contribute to animal health and their use is also responsible behaviour towards neighbouring farms.

Diversifying production can seem a way of helping income but pros and cons have to be weighed up. As Frances put it “every farm activity requires a different machine”, so moving from a core enterprise takes more expenditure and financial management considerations.

Many more topics could have been covered had there been time. For instance, managing native vegetation and wildlife while dealing with ferals like pigs, deer, rabbits and more.

Computers and newer technologies are part of rural life today, and the employment of drones for herding was briefly touched on. Unfortunately these disturbed the animals more than their familiar human handlers.

The afternoon’s exchange with Louise and the audience flowed easily and acquainted us with a conservation approach to a type of modern farming. Frances also prompted an understanding of the difficulties and complexities, as well as successes, of living and working in a rural environment.

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## Visit to the Illawarra Grevillea Park

Photos Marjorie Lobban and Louise Egerton

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The Illawarra Grevillea Park in Bulli was commenced in 1987 and opened in 1993 with the aim of housing the APS Grevillea Study Group's plant collection, and providing information about Australian native plants and how to use them in the home garden. It is manned by volunteers and is open to the public on just 2 weekends in each of winter and spring.

SHAPS members took advantage of one of their Spring Open Days on 9<sup>th</sup> September. About 20 SHAPS members met up with 10 from Nowra APS. They had great pleasure wandering around the extensive gardens, populated not

only by the colourful grevilleas. There was also the rainforest and the bookshop to explore, plants to buy, and a picnic to enjoy.

Most of Marjorie’s photos are of a fabulous avenue of flowering grevilleas leading towards the chapel. Such a range of colours.

**A Little Background**

The collection of grevilleas was a valuable scientific collection, which aroused the interest of both the Sydney and Canberra Botanic Gardens. The land was leased from Wollongong Council and the indefatigable Park Manager Ray Brown both designed and constructed the infrastructure for the 2.4ha park. In 2022 the Park become a Botanic Garden.

As well as housing the collection and educating the public, the Park is a member of the South East NSW Bioregion Working Group which does collaborative field collecting, promotes conservation, and shares information and resources.

The display gardens have plants from all over Australia, not just grevilleas, although they are to me the main event and are amazing. It makes me wish that our cold climate allowed us to grow more of the stunning big flowered varieties. In 2022 the rainforest area was enhanced with a new sensory walk.

Current projects include the development of two new display gardens, a new shelter, a new bush tucker garden, and another picnic area.



*Lake in the rainforest area of the garden*



*Chris, Erica and Kim intent*



*Erica swallowed by a monster plant*



*Happy picnickers*

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## Over the hedge with Erica and Kim – September 2023

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### Erica Rink and Kim Zegenhagen



There is no doubt that El Nino is on the way to us again. After 2 or 3 years of above average rainfall we must contend with dry conditions. There is no need to panic! We just need to choose suitable plants.

Choosing drought tolerant plants is essential. Here is a small selection.

How to spot a drought tolerant plant:



*Eremophila glabra* in the Mount Annan Botanic Garden Ack: Wikipedia - By Geoff Derrin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,

- Silver leaved plants, for example *Eremophila glabra* (Common Emu Bush also known as Tar Bush). This is very widely spread across Australia. It does need to be in well-drained soil, as it does not like wet feet. It is very hardy with beautiful flowers and silver leaves. Can grow either prostrate or upright.



*Eucalyptus pauciflora* Ack: Wikipedia By Toby Hudson - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0,

- *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, commonly known as snow gum, or white sally, is a species of tree native to eastern Australia. It has smooth bark. It is widespread and locally common in woodland in cold sites above 700 m. There is a dwarf variety and it can be pruned.

Grevilleas are fast growing, tough and low maintenance. They grow in poor soils, so long as they are well drained. Our September SHAPS event was a visit to the Illawarra Grevillea Park at Bulli, we will say no more now.



*Grevillea diminuta*. Photo Trisha Arbib





*Hakea dactyloides* - Ack: Wikipedia - John Tann

- Thick fleshy or leathery leaves and stems are common in drought tolerant plants. Some examples are:  
*Hakea dactyloides*, commonly known as the finger hakea, is a widely distributed species found in southeastern New South Wales. It is an attractive shrub (1-3m) or small tree for the home garden bearing sprays of cream-white flowers.

- Succulents are well-known drought hardy plants. *Carpobrotus rossii* (pig face) is a terrific ground cover plant. It is fantastic to grow on hot exposed areas, such as nature strips as a grass substitute.



Photo by Trisha Arbib

We will not discuss grasses now. Jen Slattery will be covering this topic at a SHAPS talk in October.

In our next article we will be discussing swales. Stay tuned!

## Snippets

### One Maple Is Not Like Another

#### Louise Egerton

I am happy to advise our members that Wingecarribee Council has removed the Box-elder Maples (*Acer negundo*) from the new garden at the Civic Centre. SHAPS alerted Council in February 2022 that these new plants were a poor choice, given that they head up the Council's own Environmental Weeds list. They have been replaced by the non-invasive *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki', a very decorative maple with striking red bark, especially when bare in winter. The bright green leaves of Spring turn golden in Autumn.

Thank you, Sarah, for bringing it to our attention.

## Some Tippett Snippets!

### Many thanks to SHAPS member Pam Tippett

1. Pam represented us at the Bundanoon Garden Club's (BGC) last meeting on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September in conversation with BGC President Ted Ayers. Over a hundred BGC members heard about our group and were treated to a series of photos, large on the big screen, of beautiful Australian native flowers that Ted had photographed in the Morton National Park. Pam ably identified them all. Such a good way of introducing the members to the beauty of Australian natives.
2. Pam will be opening her Bundanoon garden to both members of the BGC and SHAPS on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October from 10am to 1 pm.
3. Pam recently ran a "workshop" on propagating plants for the BGC in her Bundanoon garden which has a good mix of native and exotic plants and which as a side benefit demonstrated to those attending how well they co-exist. Here is Pam writing on her recent workshop.

### Bundanoon Garden Club Native Plant Workshop – Pam Tippett

At the August meeting of the BGC I was approached to see if I would run a native plant workshop for a small group of garden club members. It wasn't really a workshop - people were mostly interested in knowing what to plant and the conditions the plants need. I thought the easiest thing was to walk around the garden and show the group (about 8 people) what has survived both the drought and the heavy rains of the last few years.

There were quite a few plants in flower looking lovely, there were plenty of examples of what not to do - plants which I'd let get leggy, or fall over so they are growing horizontally and other examples of more successfully keeping a plant looking cared for with regular pruning. After having lost more than 50 plants from drowning, I stressed that gardening is an experiment, a work in progress and to not be afraid of trying new plants which may just turn out to be perfect! Or repeat planting with known thrivers.

I also used the opportunity to extol the virtues of an informal hedge of native plants, grasses, lomandras, shrubs of different species, flowering at different times rather than a mono plant formal hedge - more interesting, not a disaster if one or two plants die, provide food and habitat for native creatures and beautiful in their sequential flowering.

I think (hope) the participants went away feeling slightly more adventurous and keen to try more or new natives in their gardens.

*Editor: The piece below, written in the September Bundanoon Garden Club newsletter, shows that they did enjoy their visit. The photo shows Pam and Jenny inspecting a Grevillea sericea in her garden.*

## Workshops



We had a lovely morning exploring Pam Tippett's gorgeously rampant garden benefitting from her extensive knowledge at our native plants workshop. We were able to discuss questions about fertilizing, pruning, plant selection and choosing native alternatives for hedging and specific conditions and see native plants growing in different locations including amongst exotics.

Thank you to Pam and our keen attendees for another opportunity to share our passion for natives. The spring flowering in the Morton is really ramping up if you are looking for further inspiration.

**Penny.**

*Editor's note: It is great to be forging links with other plant groups. Not only the Bundanoon Garden Club, but also Bundanoon's Habitat gardeners. You will also remember that the Canberra APS joined us earlier this year in Bill and Fran Mullard's Exeter garden. And that some of the Nowra APS met up with us at the Grevillea Garden this month. And now we have a request from the Illawarra APS group to join them in a bush walk later in September.*

### **A Report from the Guardian Newspaper on Regenerative Farming**

Following on from the conversation between Louise Egerton and Frances Simons at our August meeting on the Farmer's Dilemma it was interesting to read this article in the Guardian.

This article suggests that whilst regenerative agriculture is the new farming buzzword few can agree on what it means.

It posits that restoring degraded soil is at the heart of regenerative agriculture, a farming practice that relies mainly on natural rather than artificial inputs – manure from grazing animals rather than superphosphates – as well as longstanding practices such as rotational grazing and multi-species pastures, and restoring a landscape's natural water cycles.

Fifth-generation wool producer Charles Massy wrote about his transition from traditional to regenerative agricultural methods in his 2017 memoir *Call of the Reed Warbler*, which many of you will have read.

To read more go to:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/sep/10/regenerative-agriculture-is-the-new-farming-buzzword-but-few-can-agree-on-what-it->

[means?utm\\_term=64fd2327c840a57d63bd0b2a0670ab1c&utm\\_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU\\_email](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-09/wildfires-portugal-greece-california-hawaii-euclyptus-trees/102760264?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=abc_news_newsletter_email&utm_term=&utm_id=2203216&sfmc_id=129949304)

### **Our Eucalypts Proving a Fire Danger Overseas**

Well worth reading.

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-09/wildfires-portugal-greece-california-hawaii-euclyptus-trees/102760264?utm\\_source=sfmc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_newsletter\\_email&utm\\_term=&utm\\_id=2203216&sfmc\\_id=129949304](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-09/wildfires-portugal-greece-california-hawaii-euclyptus-trees/102760264?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=abc_news_newsletter_email&utm_term=&utm_id=2203216&sfmc_id=129949304)

### **Cabbage Tree Palms and Cabbage Tree Hats**

One of the delights in travelling from the Southern Highlands down to the Illawarra coast are the scattered sightings of the Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistona australis*) at the foot of the escarpment. The Cabbage Tree Palm is a native tree which prior to Colonisation grew in a greater abundance in the wetland areas along Australia's eastern coast.

I recently discovered the following long article published by the Maitland Historical Society.

<https://www.maitlandhistorical.org/resources/Bulletin%20Vol%2030%2C%20No%203%20-%20August%202023.pdf>

It describes how the fronds of Cabbage Trees back in the 1800's were used to make the Cabbage Tree Hat. A hat - worn by men and women from all social classes, since they provided excellent protection from the Australian sun.

It continues with the fascinating history of the wearers of the hats over the years. During the convict era for instance, gangs of insolent youths were known as *cabbage tree mobs* because they wore the hat. One of their favourite pastimes was to crush the hats of men deemed too "full of themselves". Cabbage tree mobs are recognised as a predecessor of the larrikin.

And if you want to know how to make a hat there is a full description here.

### **The Hidden Extinction**

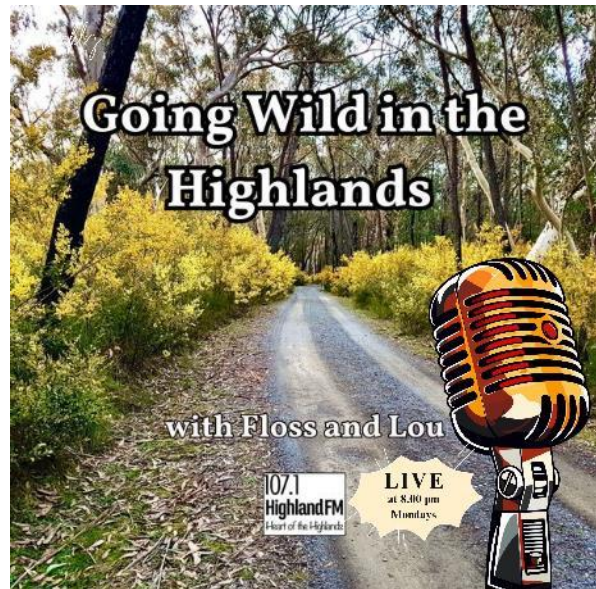
*You can follow up on the Hidden Extinction in New Scientist 15/4/23. This fascinating and frightening article, written by Graham Lawton, was brought to our attention by Jane Lemann.*

Microbiologists have come to question the assumption that bacteria, fungi and other microbes, indispensable to life on Earth, are so abundant and reproduce so quickly, that they couldn't possibly be threatened. They are now sounding the alarm that microbe populations are in decline.

And quoted from WinZero's latest email:

"A fun new podcast, "**Going Wild in the Highlands**" with hosts **Floss & Lou**, has been launched. The podcast explores our very own beautiful and wild Southern Highlands.

In each episode, **Floss & Lou** take listeners on a journey to a different part of the Highlands, sharing their knowledge and experience about birds, wildlife, plants and more. They also tell us about nature events happening in the Highlands that month.



The first two episodes of "**Going Wild in the Highlands**" are now available. In each episode the two nature nuts poke their noses into places to go in the Highlands, talk about what you'll see there and recount their adventures.

The podcast is available on all major podcast platforms. [Apple](#), [Spotify](#), [YouTube](#) or wherever you usually get your podcasts. Or listen on Highland FM 107.1 Mondays at 8.00pm - 8.30pm or anytime on the [Highland FM website](#).

We hope you'll join Floss and Lou on their journey through the Highlands! Don't forget to like and subscribe."

You may recognise one of the voices.

Many thanks to our contributors. To Paul Osborne, Marjorie Lobban, Louise Egerton, Erica Rink, Kim Zegenhagen, Pam Tippett and Jane Lemann. Wonderful!

