



**“IT’S YOUR GARDEN”**

With these words, spoken emphatically, guest presenter, Ben Walcott, started the group’s third annual mid-winter public forum. So far from expecting rigid rules to be followed, the approach presented is to create the garden in line with your wishes. There are common conventions, however, that most people follow but ultimately, garden design is an individual thing. The main focus of Ben’s presentation was his garden in Red Hill - a task shared with wife Ros who is also present. Both are well and truly into garden design with both having led the APS Garden Design Study Group. The garden is large giving scope for a lot of diversity. The garden beds are planted densely and this feature is supplemented with regular pruning. As Ben said, having scattered plants without regular pruning, a garden will start to look untidy like a piece of bush which is not the object of a garden for most



Ben Walcott is welcomed by APS group president, Peter

As Ben pointed out, pruning may reduce somewhat the time the flowers are enjoyed for, but the extra pruning may lead to new growth with the promise of a greater flower display the following season. This practice suits well the garden where most plants are cultivars as seed is less likely to be collected from these than from ‘standard’ species. Paths wind through the garden with the low-growing plants beside the paths and taller shrubs to the back. Scattered shade trees as well have a role to play. One of the shade trees is the white cedar, *Melia azedarach*; this tree is deciduous, losing its foliage in winter.

In Canberra, water storage in rainwater tanks is not allowed and makes water features more difficult. This however, has not deterred the pair and there are a couple of connected ponds which eventually trickle down to a small dam. These water bodies have their own suites of surrounding vegetation, carefully chosen to cope with the degree of moisture available and to match foliage and flower types..

Another unexpected feature is a small piece of grassland which Ben refers to as meadow. While it is a natural piece of native grassland, Ben laments that the multitude of birds which visit it unfortunately bring seeds of the many exotic grasses growing in nearby areas.

A feature of the gravelled paths that Ben enjoys is the fact that they may be ‘invaded’ by the nearby plants as seedlings pop up. Seedlings of plants such as paper daisies and similar are particularly welcome in the Walcott garden. One such plant is *Rhodanthe anthemoides* ‘Sunray Snow’. This plant is very true to its description as when Ben had the image on the screen, it looked like a patch of snow on the ground. Another favourite with white ray florets is *Brachycome* ‘White Delight’.

The garden has a range of wattles as befits any Australian garden. A favourite is *Acacia coventyi* ( a native of the South coast near Moruya and the nearby hinterland). The attraction of this species is the bluish phyllodes and the common name is ‘Blue Bush’. An unusual wattle is *A. argyraea* which has its natural occurrence in the Northern Territory. It is quite a surprise that a species from the NT would be able to cope with the Canberra area climate, but it does. Another wattle which Ben mentioned is *A. subulata* which has a scattered occurrence which is roughly north from about Capertee Valley. It has the common name of awl-leaf wattle but a surprising fact about it is that the ‘type’ is actually a specimen from the garden of Napoleon near Paris. The ‘type’ for a species is the plant which is the official standard for that species. You can read a bit about the French connection at either <http://anpsa.org.au/acaciaSG/acacia124.pdf> or <https://austplants.com.au/Acacia-subulata-Awl-leaf-Wattle/>. The Flinders Range wattle, *A. iteaphylla*, is also a favourite in the Walcott garden.

A range of banksias adorn the garden. One of the varieties mentioned by Ben and which he recommended for smaller gardens is known as *Banksia* ‘Bulli baby’. This is a variety of *Banksia ericifolia* and as the name suggests it is from a form which grows near Bulli. The ‘normal’ form of *B. ericifolia* can grow to 3 metres - this includes the form that grows on the sandstone areas to the east of us. However, the ‘Bulli Baby’s’ height is 1.5 metres with a spread a bit less. It is - like *B. Birthday Candles* - very prolific when it comes to flowering. It again is also a variety that comes

from plants that grow very close to the coast where they have to cope with a special range of conditions and being low-growing helps this.



The attentive audience listens to every word

There are eucalypts in the Walcott garden. Two local ones are the mallees - *E. stricta* (Blue Mtns mallee) and *E. gregsoniana* - Wolgan snowgum. By far the most numerous genus in the garden is *Eremophila* and it takes up about three pages in the seventeen-page list. As Ben remarked, this genus is attracting a lot of attention from gardeners and members of our own group can attest to this.

*Grevillea* figures prominently in the garden as you would expect. On of the favourites is one known as *Grevillea* Lady O' which flowers all the year in the Red Hill garden. It was sourced from the Bywong Nursery where Peter Ollerenshaw produces a lot of cultivars of various genera. Ben mentioned the argument that Lady O (named after Mrs Ollerenshaw) should have been named G. "Long John" as it is a hybrid of *G. johnsonii* and *G. longifolia*.



Smiles all around and enjoying the forum

Is there anything that they cannot grow? Ben confessed to failing with *Crowea* species. He remarked that in Queanbeyan, they grow like weeds but not on Red Hill. He did mention another species which has defied them to this point. This is *Grevillea rhyolitica* - named after its restricted occurrence on a rhyolite ridge in the Deau National Park. It is common in

cultivation; when we went to Wee Jasper a few years back, there were some growing in the grounds of the school there and I am fairly sure that some members have it in the ground as well.

### 'THE CANBERRA BOOK'

When Ben arrived at the hall, he had with him a box of the latest (fifth) version of *Australian Plants for Canberra region gardens*. The book has descriptions of a huge range of species and cultivars. At \$20 for the 386 page book, all were quickly snapped up and a second order made. Also and very useful for beginners are the first three sections titled 'The Canberra environment', 'Designing your garden' and 'Managing your garden'.

### CALENDAR

Sat Aug 3	Walk - Alison Hone Reserve
Sat Sep 7	Walk - Caves Road
Sat Sep 19	Propagation
Sun Sep 22	Propagation
Sat Oct 5	Walk - Dalton Reserves
Wed Oct 16	Wetlands working bee
Sun Nov 3	Riversdale plant stall
Sat Nov 16	Walk - Penrose State Forest
Sat Dec 7	AGM + end of year function

### NEW SHADEHOUSE

Peter and 'friends' recently erected a large shadehouse on Peter's property and it backs on to his American barn. Peter estimates that it has a capacity of more than five thousand plants. Peter has kindly allowed us to use the new structure for our Spring propagation days.



### CALENDAR CHANGE

I have changed the destination for the September outing as I have not yet after a recent effort located a simple way to Ettrema Gorge; the aim has been to avoid the dense vegetation as much as possible. The area is quite diverse in its flora and well worth a visit. However, I have selected another destination. This is a bit northwest of Mittagong and not far from the Nattai NP where we have been before. The walk here is well defined and has interesting vegetation.