

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY – NORTHERN GROUP
NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2011

Meetings are held on third Tuesday of each month (except December and January) at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road, Trevallyn at 7.30 pm when the Northern Group library is available to members.

A **Committee (business) meeting** will be held separately from normal meetings at least every three months as and when required. Notice will be sent by e-mail.

Propagation Sessions are held on first Saturday of each month at Sharon Percy's place at 'Grassy Banks', South Bridgenorth Road. Time is from 1 pm to 3 pm. Remember that Gardeners Friend Potting Mix is available at the nursery for \$6 a 25 litre bag, Osmocote native plant fertiliser for \$4 for 500 g. and plant name tags 50 for \$5. Contact Sharon on 6396 6107.

Welcome to new members: We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and other events.

Activities since April 2011 newsletter:

Position of President: Northern Group President, Ken Saunders has found it necessary to retire from the position for personal reasons and we would like to thank him for his contribution to our group during his tenure. Fortunately our Vic President, Janet Hallam, has agreed to fill Ken's unexpired term and we thank Janet for that.

19 April: General Meeting: Plant of the Month was given by Julie Nermit who chose *Leptospermum grandiflorum* (autumn teatree), a Tasmanian endemic of the Myrtaceae family that also includes eucalypts, melaleucas, bottlebrushes etc. This species was first grown, described and illustrated in England before 1821. In Tasmania there are eight species of *Leptospermum* five of them endemic.

Autumn teatree is largely confined to the East Coast among granite rocks e.g. the Lake Leake Highway and is common on Freycinet and Tasman Peninsulas. It is a 1.5 m tall shrub that flowers prolifically in autumn; flowers 2.5-3 cm wide occur in various colour forms from white to pink. Leaves are green to greyish green, ovate to elliptical. Woody capsules 5-celled and 1-2 cm in diameter are persistent on shrubs for several years. In cultivation it has proved to be hardy in dry conditions and has been used as a garden specimen and as a suitable plant for a hedge or low windbreak. It will grow in full sun or part shade and is wind and frost tolerant. Propagate from cuttings or seeds.

Speaker for the evening was **Eleanor Cave** whose subject was '**Early Tasmanian Botanists.**'

Eleanor touched on the stories of Joseph Dalton Hooker, an early plant collector who succeeded his father Sir William as Director of Kew Gardens in London where plant collections from around the world were forwarded, the collections of Ronald Campbell Gunn in association with William Archer of 'Cheshunt' and their considerable contributions to the collection of plant material used in the publication of Hooker's '*Flora Tasmaniae*'. Another botanist in Tasmania, Robert W. Lawrence was mentioned who first encouraged Gunn's interest in botany and who put him in contact with the Hookers which opened many doors for Gunn.

As well Eleanor mentioned famous plant collectors from Victoria, such as Ferdinand von Mueller, Government Botanist in 1853 and others associated with collections in Tasmania such as Labillardiere who collected extensively in 1790's and botanist Robert Brown who collected widely in 1805.

Apart from dried specimens, many live plants including orchid tubers were sent back to Kew Gardens and many plants were known to be growing successfully in English gardens in the 1800's.

A later well-known Government Botanist in Tasmania, Leonard Rodway in 1903 published the work 'The Tasmania Flora' which remained the current reference book until the first volume of the 'Students' Flora of Tasmania' by Winifred M Curtis was published in 1956. A current revision of this work is now under way.

16 May 2011 – General Meeting. As she did last meeting Prue Wright provided cryptic clues that required a plant name as the answer. Luckily we do have members who are good at solving this sort of quiz! Thanks Prue.

Plant of the Month – Lynne Mockridge chose *Goodenia ovata* – a member of the Goodeniaceae family that also includes for instance, species such as *Scaevola*, *Lechenaultia* and *Dampiera*. There are about 200 species of *Goodenia* mostly confined to Australia with 7 or 8 species occurring in Tasmania. They are not widely cultivated in spite of being suitable plants for small gardens.

G. ovata is a shrub or undershrub, erect or spreading, 0.5-2 m tall. Its leaves are dark glossy green with distinct venation and bright yellow flowers that occur in spring.

Lynne showed us samples of her plant, a prostrate ground cover, suited to most soils. She mentioned that last year it was affected by frost but has recovered. Propagation is easy from cuttings most times of the year.

'Planting for Pollen and Nectar Supply'. Guest speaker for the meeting was Mark Leech, a freelance consultant whose current project is research for the publication of a book of the above title for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, RIRDC.

Mark is researching this subject on behalf of beekeepers and the honeybee industry because of concern that the honeybees, the chief pollinators in our food chain, are in decline and concern is rising globally for the long term survival of their populations as forests are being denuded and/or dramatically changed at an unprecedented rate or are becoming unavailable to beekeepers. This global threat to food security in the future is possible unless urgent action is taken to ensure populations of honeybees are maintained worldwide.

He spoke of the necessity for more research especially on the medicinal uses of honey and the possible benefits to be obtained from honey derived from flowers of several teatrees, e.g. *Leptospermum polygafolium* from Queensland and New South Wales and *L. scoparium*, known as manuka, from Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales

Mark suggested that everyone could play a part to help reverse the loss of honeybee numbers as they forage across all landscapes including domestic gardens, streetscapes, urban and rural lands that include trees, particularly mallee eucalypts, shrubs, perennial and annual plants, including herbs. It seems that even the smallest space can be useful for growing flowering plants to help with this worldwide problem, a flower box, a pot of herbs, community and home gardens, as well as natural bush areas, all have a role to play. He wanted to encourage everyone to grow flowering plants to feed the bee population and doesn't stop at suggesting native plants but also listed a couple of exotic, weedy plants like

gorse and willows as being great sources of pollen, especially to build up bee populations after winter

He suggested that farmers too could play their part by introducing changes to their grazing management, using different pasture species and exercising weed control. Also mentioned that a change of emphasis was needed to consider what they could do to enhance feeding of the bees that pollinate **their** crops and suggested that they could consider beekeeping as an alternative or added occupation.

Heritage Forest Garden Report: Lynne reports 'that the garden is looking particularly well-cared for at present as the weekly two hour sessions with the Active Garden project have really boosted the amount of care it has received since these sessions started on 8 March. The first few weeks were devoted to weeding, pruning and seed collection. Since then we have had 3 weeks mulching and planting out the new garden beds. The new table and seats are a really welcome addition, not that we have been doing much sitting around. The Green Corps team has installed a composting area and has also erected a raised garden bed. We have also established a bog garden.

The Mayor of Launceston officially opened the garden in early May with several other aldermen, members of staff from LCC associated with the area and lots of APS Northern Group members making a special effort to attend. Thank you all very much. The opening was followed by bush tucker snacks and a tour of the garden. I think everyone was impressed with how much we have achieved. I certainly heard lots of favourable comments. There is now an information sign erected outside the gate which states the purpose of the garden and acknowledges the contribution of APST with an invitation to seek further information.

The project has not been well supported by the community with only 2 persons outside the APS membership attending but they have both been very enthusiastic and will hopefully continue to do so. I am very grateful to all those members who have attended sessions. I couldn't have managed without you especially when it came to choosing the plants and where to put them. Rosemary Verbeeten needs special mention as her expertise in this area was invaluable though the rest of us are improving all the time.

In some ways being part of Active Launceston has been very worthwhile as our garden received a lot more attention than it otherwise would have done but the support from the local community was disappointing. The promotion was not well targeted and there should have been much better signage around the area. As coordinator of the Friends of Heritage Forest I intend to make a concerted effort in future to encourage local residents and users of Heritage Forest to visit the garden and help maintain it. This garden would never have survived without the considerable efforts of the APST but I think the time has come for others to contribute as well'.

Plant Propagation and Nursery Report:

Sharon reports 'A big thank you to all who continue to support the nursery & our propagating sessions. It is now a bright work area with alsonite skylite in place, thanks to Mike.

Also thank you to John Duggan & Jane Baldry for hosting a most enjoyable visit to their wonderful garden. Lunch & propagating afterwards was abuzz with talk of their wonderful garden and setting. Cutting material from many different species was brought back to process.

This seems to be a popular activity and perhaps another garden visit pre September propagating might be on the agenda. I won't be available but am happy to organise it. June propagating was productive, with still some root growth on cutting material, and some pots even needing potting up.

The heat bed is up and running. I have set it up in my hothouse, I believe this will help maintain temperature and protect & shelter it from weather & animals, and it is convenient for me to check it each day and water appropriately.

With the spring **Plant Sale** booked in for **October 22nd at Max Fry Hall**, at September & October propagating sessions there will be much to do, and unfortunately (or fortunately for me) I will be away from 15th August to 9th October, with a very brief overnight stop on 26th Sept before returning to Adelaide for the ANPSA Biennial Conference and a pre conference tour of Kangaroo Island.

I would like to request an extra propagating session for Saturday 15th October to do last minute weeding and pricing/naming of all the pots.

We do need more trays for ease of storing and transporting plants. Is anyone able to source any more of these? The green trays are ideal, as they are a good size and sturdy.

I would like to remind members that although the Nursery is not "open to the public", it is open to members anytime, and they are welcome to come or bring friends wanting to purchase plants. Please just phone first. Or if members can't come to propagating on the first Saturday of each month, 1 – 3pm, they are welcome to come at another time to help with the maintenance of the plants.

We also stock Potting Mix, Osmocote, Vermiculite, & Plant Labels for sale at a reasonable price.

Sharon Percy. Nursery Manager

THANKS - Lynne and Sharon are to be applauded and thanked for the huge effort they have made on behalf of APS North. Lynne in the establishment and continuing involvement in the maintenance of the Heritage Forest Garden and Sharon in the successful development and running of the APS North Plant Nursery.

Business Meeting: 14 June

21 June Tuesday General Meeting – a Club evening will be held from 7.30 pm.

2 July Saturday 1-3 pm. Plant Propagation at Grassy Banks

19 July Tuesday General Meeting: The speaker will be Jayne Shapter, a member of Land Care; her subject will be on 'Weeds'

Plant of the Month will be given by Janet Hallam

REMINDER: The opportunity is there for members to have their favourite native plant featured in the Northern Group's web site "Gallery". Contact Trevor if you would like to contribute.

Launceston Field Naturalists Club Meetings

APS members are welcome to attend meetings held on first Tuesday of each month except January at Scotch Oakburn College, Penquite Road at 7.30 pm. Contact John at 6344 9303.

July 5 Speaker: David Seymour
 Subject: Geology of the Mathinna Group
August 2 Speaker: Debbie Searle
 Subject: Maatsuyker Island

Next newsletter will be issued in August 2011

Marion Simmons