

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY – NORTHERN GROUP NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER 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 before normal meetings at 6.45 pm 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. 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 August 2011 newsletter:

16 August – General Meeting - The speaker was Dr. Doug Friend, his subject 'Domestication of Native Grasses'. He has been looking at native grasses of which there are 200 genera and 1,000 species in Australia since 1950 as the exotic pasture grasses are not suitable to grow on poor soils or in times of drought. The first to be domesticated i.e. made more manageable was Wallaby Grass. Others researched were Weeping Grass (high forage value), Kangaroo Grass which is a tropical species, Wheat Grass, Silver Tussock and Poa.

Native grasses are used for rehabilitation of degraded pasture so must be drought resistant, smut and insect resistant and have high palatability. In 2000 collections were made from grazed pastures in the Derwent Valley, Fingal Valley and the East coast and tested at Cressy and Prospect. There is limited use of Native Grasses because of high cost and low yields, but interest from private landowners, governments and community groups is increasing, especially with new developments in technology. Nutritional value is related to soil fertility. Exotic species won't grow well on poor soils but are highly competitive with native species on better soils. There are not many, if any, areas of native grasses left that have not been contaminated with exotics. He recommended "Common Grasses of Tasmania" for further reading.
J.C.

Plant of the Month – Janet Hallam spoke about *Hakea salicifolia* (Willow leafed hakea) She put the question 'Is it weedy?'

Hakea salicifolia is a commonly used garden and landscaping plant and it is also an excellent hedging species. It is endemic to the wet sclerophyll forests of the eastern slopes of the Great Dividing Range in northern and central coast New South Wales. It has also successfully colonised into Victoria and South Australia.

Investigating whether it is a weedy species was prompted by what occurred in our garden. A few years ago a 30 year-old specimen died. The natural life-cycle of this species is between 30-40 years but drought had also contributed to its demise. It was a few months before we actually cut it down and removed it. After the winter rains, to our surprise, between 50-100 seedlings emerged and grew vigorously. It was only then I wondered whether it had a weedy reputation.

After some cursory investigation of the Internet we found a South African Research paper detailing the weediness problems of several introduced species of Australian hakeas in South

Africa (*H. decurrens*, *H. suaveolens* and *H. sericea*). But it specifically stated that *H. salicifolia* which had been introduced as a shelter belt plant in the Kenyan tea plantations had not caused problems. Contrary to that we then found a New Zealand paper that told a very different story about serious weediness of the introduced *H. salicifolia* in the Abel Tasman National Park in New Zealand. So is it or isn't it weedy?

All was revealed by our guest speaker in July, Jane Schapter, when she showed that it had been named in the Australian Weed Handbook as a weed. But in its description, the Handbook stated that it doesn't readily seed unless the environmental conditions are right – fire or drought. So presumably the right environmental conditions had not converged to cause problems in South Africa, while in New Zealand, they had.

The specimen in our garden had for years produced and accumulated fruit that sat awaiting the right conditions to shed its seed, rather like a ticking time bomb. The stress from the drought was enough to activate the accumulated fruit resulting in the forest of seedlings. But on the other hand there were 30 years of no seedlings, so in my opinion this makes it an entirely acceptable garden plant, but potentially a problem in the bush.

So what happened to all our seedlings? We let some grow and transplanted others to create a truly lovely hedge. Today I looked and it is in flower, the bees are excited and so here we go again!

J.H.

21 August - Visit to Sarah Lloyds property

'A beautiful sunny Sunday in August found approximately 20 keen APS fungi folk from North and North-west Groups, sloshing happily through the mud and puddles with notebooks, cameras and lenses at the ready. A Grey Shrike Thrush and some Fairy Wrens serenaded us as we walked. We took over three hours to cover the 2km track which abounded in fungi of every size shape and colour. One very new prospective member was rather disappointed, having anticipated an "Open Garden" situation, but most of us were amazed to see how different the fungi appeared when viewed under a hand lens. For those members with reference books there were few surprises, only a little difficulty sometimes identifying the specimens. As well as fungi there were Slime Moulds, Mosses and Lichens, yellow worms and a native snail shell.

Lunch was eaten in the sunshine outside Ron and Sarah's environmentally friendly stone house. Sarah pointed out a pair of Flame Robins that are nesting outside their bedroom window. Special mention must be made of 4 year old Chelsea who completed the excursion happily with no grumbles except when the supply of Sao biscuits ran out and who instructed us on the whereabouts of Fairies and Trolls and took an amazing interest in the natural world around her. Congratulations to Grandma for fostering that interest.

Below are a few of the fungi that were found. I crave your tolerance if the spelling is not correct! Horse hair fungus, many different Stereum species, Mycena (which was tiny), Laccaria species, *Dictyopanus pusillus*, *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* (phew!) better known as White Icicles slime mould, lichen with fruiting bodies, Orange Jelly fungus and *Hypoterigium didictyon* a beautiful moss.'

J.C.

3 September – Visit to Judy and Lloyd Whish Wilson's property.

What a wonderful interesting and colourful garden! We parked outside and walked down the long drive. The first shrub we noticed was a large Solanum in full flower, the next an *Alyogyne huegelii* with beautiful large double purple flowers all over it. The drive was lined with a variety of mature eucalypts, grevilleas and hakeas with many other interesting plants in between.

As there was much to see, we walked slowly along the drive which circles around the house to the front which faces the Tamar River. This garden faces the north-west where the prevailing winds

whip in which earlier made growing plants there very difficult. However this problem has been overcome with the establishment of a dense fairly tall windbreak of native trees nearer the river.

Many banksias were in flower as well as an interesting range of eremophilas. As well we were impressed by a large plant of *Stackhousia monogyna* (forest candles) covered with dark red buds.

More recent gardens have been established down a north facing slope with informal paths giving easy access with many more interesting plants thriving there.

We were very fortunate to be able to view this garden and our thanks go to Judy and Lloyd for allowing us to see it.

Rosemary Whish Wilson then generously invited us to have our lunch at her home which most of the party did with pleasure. Our thanks go to Rosemary as she supplied us with coffee as well.

Our next appointment was at 'Grassy Banks' to attend to pressing plant matters and where members prepared and set cuttings, weeded pots and painted liverwort in the pots with vinegar to kill the green mass. The remainder of the party were soon busy placing name tags on many of the pots ready for the Plant Sale.

18 September – Sunday - – Visit to Gilly Zacks place

'A selection of brave souls from APST and FOTR (Friends of Trevallyn Reserve) and guests gathered for a picnic at Gilly's land at Notley Hills....

'Fortified with lunch and cake we saw a variety of plants, birds, fungi and even some slime moulds...Amongst many birds we enjoyed hearing the Grey Shrike Thrush and Prue had a private viewing of a Strong Billed Honeyeater. It gave us a thrill to find the little honey pot like flower of ant's delight (*Acrotriche serrulata*) and blue lovecreeper (*Comesperma volubile*) was just coming into flower. We saw buds on the *Pimelea nivea* and the dainty white flowers of *Leucopogon collinus* and some fascinating slime moulds and fungi that I had not spotted before...We also saw the leaves of the bird orchids and so many other plants.. Roy kindly made a list...

The weather was perfect and all seemed quite content with the experience, and fortunately, my fears of losing someone, were unfounded.'

G.Z.

My thanks to Jill Clark, Janet Hallam and Gilly Zacks for their help with providing notes for the above events.

20 September - General Meeting – A business meeting was held prior to the General Meeting. Minutes were passed and reports presented regarding activities at the Plant Nursery and Heritage Forest. Members were advised of books available at large discounts through APS in Hobart.

John Simmons gave the **Plant of the Month** segment. He chose *Solanum lacinatum* (kangaroo apple) the first plant in full flower seen when walking down the drive at Judy and Lloyd Whish Wilson's garden. He commented that you usually don't plant kangaroo apple they just mysteriously appear and are probably spread by wallabies.

It belongs to a large cosmopolitan family Solonaceae, a family of 90 genera and over 2600 species widely distributed mostly in Central and South America. It is represented in Australia by 23 genera and about 200 species of which 132 species are endemic and 66 naturalised. The family contains many plants that are important to us such as potato, tomato, tobacco, cayenne, chilli, capsicum, paprika, belladonna and ornamentals. Some species have a high alkaloid content and are either poisonous plants, drug plants used medicinally or for the production of narcotics, e.g. tobacco.

In Tasmania we have 20 species three of which are indigenous, one of them endemic. The latter is *Cyphanthera tasmanica* (Tasmanian rayflower) that many of you saw when you walked in to the sandstone gorge near Buckland. The others are *Solanum opacum* (greenberry nightshade) a sprawling annual herb to about 1 metre diameter and the third plant our plant of

the month kangaroo apple with its large blue flowers and fruit like a small ovoid green tomato that turns golden yellow when ripe. It is often seen as an annual to 1 metre tall but can grow to 3 metres and live for many years. It is reported that Tasmanian Aborigines ate the ripe fruit. Kangaroo apple occurs in all southern states of Australia as well as New Zealand where it is cultivated. It is also cultivated in U.S.S.R., Eastern Europe and recently Thailand. The plant is a source of solasodine for cortico-steroid drugs used to make the contraceptive pill. A most interesting plant.

Our speaker Stewart King, Management Officer with DPIPW spoke about the **Land for Wildlife Programme**.

Firstly he took us on a personal journey of how he became involved with forestry, the different places and countries where he had worked and how over time he came to Tasmania and what made him passionate about forests.

He spoke on Land for Wildlife matters describing different types of covenants that may be placed on private properties, the conditions, restrictions, benefits and responsibilities of such arrangements.

Stewart spoke a lot on how people relate to their land and the motivation that brings them to consider a covenant on the property. He spoke of the problems in Tasmania, the lack of funds from government, of dieback in the Midlands, salinity, serious lack of regeneration in some areas and the lack of weed control. He mentioned gorse, bracken and Spanish heath in particular.

He urged people to notice what was happening on their land for example the arrival of a new weed infestation and seek advice from the Department as early intervention could prevent a major weed explosion.

Gilly Zacks introduced and thanked our speaker.

Heritage Forest: Lynne presented examples of what was flowering in the native garden and suggested that now was a good time to visit.

Plant Propagation: Members have attended on both 3 September and 1 October and much preliminary work has been done to prepare for the plant sale.

PROGRAMME:

15 October – Saturday – 1-3 pm - An extra propagation day to be held today to finalise preparations for the Plant Sale. There are still a lot of time consuming things to be done like weeding, naming and pricing pots for sale among other tasks.

18 October – Tuesday – Club Night. Well-known member John Duggan will speak on 'Restoration of Wetlands. Plant of the Month – Roy Skabo

22 October – Saturday - PLANT SALE- from 10 am- 4 pm at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road, Trevallyn. Make the most of your opportunity to purchase plants at very reasonable prices and support the efforts our local group. A good variety of plants will be available.

22nd October – Saturday – The Understorey Network will provide a free lesson on plant propagating skills at Trevallyn Primary School, directly opposite the Max Fry Hall from 10am to 12.30 pm.

21-23 October – APS Get Together at Coles Bay. See 'Eucryphia' – July 2011 issue.

31 October – Monday – Prue Wright has invited club members to visit York Town heritage area for a native plant tour. Meet at the picnic area at 10.30 am on Bowens Road just off Greens Beach Road. It will take 50 minutes to an hour to drive from Launceston. Take the left hand fork at the end of Beaconsfield (Greens Beach Road). Bring your lunch, drinks, maybe a folding chair etc. This is a very interesting area with over 200 different plant species to be found. If the bush is flowering as well as it is elsewhere at the moment, it should be fantastic.

If there is time Prue would like to take the group to check out wildflowers at the old Salisbury site at Flowery Gully. Sounds like an interesting day!

Any queries phone or text Prue on 0438 410 192 or e-mail: redgum101@gmail.com

5 November – Saturday -**Plant Propagation** session at ‘Grassy Banks’ 1-3 pm

5-6 November – Saturday-Sunday. This is a joint excursion with Launceston Field Nats. Members to visit Royal Botanic Garden in Hobart as well as several other interesting places.

Please contact Roy on 6334 6787 asap if you plan to attend the weekend activities, as numbers need to be known, especially for the RTBG session.

5th Saturday 10 am SHARP Meet at Antarctic House (within the Gardens) for a guided tour of the Millennium Seed Bank and the propagation area for endangered plants. These are areas of the gardens which are not usually open to the public. **(Members driving from Launceston on the Saturday morning should allow plenty of time to get to the RTBG)**

Lunch will be at the Gardens (either bring lunch or buy it at the Cafe).

Saturday 1 pm: Drive to Snug Tier where we will be guided through this interesting area by David Marrison from the RTBG, who lives in the area.

6th Sunday 10am: Meet at turning circle at southern end of Saundersons Rd, Risdon, for a walk in the East Risdon State Reserve looking for wildflowers. This is a fairly easy walk of up to 2km each way through delightful bushland. Bring lunch and then drive to Launceston, after the walk, via Old Beach.

For those people who do not want to bushwalk a visit to the Plants of Tasmania nursery at Ridgeway (near Ferntree), perhaps combined with a drive up Mt Wellington, is a delightful way to spend an afternoon or morning.

Members will need to organise their own accommodation.

15 November- Here’s a change in programme - This Tuesday will be an early **Christmas Party** time instead of the usual general meeting. More details later.

3 December -- Saturday – Plant Propagation session from 1-3 pm

11 December – Sunday - For the trip to Miena we plan to meet at the Great Lakes Hotel on the corner of the Marlborough Highway and the Highland Lakes Rd at Miena. **Please let Roy know if you are coming (or may want to) as we are going with the Field Nats.**

Meet at the hotel at 10am; it takes about 1.5 hours to get there from Launceston. People will need to be on time because we will move as a group to start the walk at a nearby location (at a friend's shack). Let Roy know if you intend to come so he can phone you if the weather is

bad enough to cancel the excursion. Usual thing: bring lunch, drinks (hot and cold), boots and rain jacket etc etc.

This area has some beautiful orchids and other interesting plants at that time of year. After looking around the Miena area we could go and look at some nice highland bushland flora on the Bothwell road and return to Launceston from there.

Launceston Field Naturalists Club Meeting

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 Noel at 6344 2277.

November 1 Tuesday - Speaker: Lesley Kirby
Subject: Royal Botanic Garden
November 5/6 - Visit to Hobart - see above
December 6 Tuesday - Speakers: Mick and Helen Statham
Subject: Native Rodents

Marion Simmons