

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY – NORTHERN GROUP
NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2010

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 separate to normal meetings at least every three months as and when required. Notice to be sent out by e-mail.

Special welcome to new members: We look forward to seeing you at our meetings or other events.

Activities since February 2010 newsletter:

16 February Meetings: Annual General Meeting took place and new office bearers elected:

President:	Ken Saunders
Secretary-Treasurer:	Trevor Yaxley
Other appointments:	
‘Meet and Greet’	Maureen Johnstone
Librarian	Margaret Killen
State Delegates	Ken Saunders, Maureen Johnstone
Nursery Manager	Sharon Percy
Supper Co-ordinators	Jane Bawdry and Gilly Zacks
Webmaster	Trevor Yaxley
Committee	S. Percy, J. Clark, M. Johnstone, J. Hallam, R. Skabo, N. Manning, J&M Simmons
Newsletter editor	M. Simmons

General Meeting followed and these decisions were made:

1. Plant Sale to be held at Max Fry Hall on 10 April from 10-4 pm
2. Grow Local Booklet project has been dropped.
3. Post Office Box cancelled, correspondence to go to Secretary’s address
4. Northern Group to host next State Get Together. Enquiries to be made regarding a venue.

Plant of the Month was presented by Trevor Yaxley. He chose *Swainsona formosa*, Sturt’s Desert Pea and brought a beautiful flowering specimen in a container that he had grown from seed. Sturt’s Desert Pea the floral emblem of South Australia was named after Charles Sturt an early explorer. It has suffered a few name changes from *Clianthus formosus* until re-classification placed it in the genus *Swainsona*. Although the change has been generally accepted it does differ significantly from other Swainsonas. As a result Alex George of Banksia and Dryandra fame proposed that it be named *Willdampia formosa* in honour of its collector the early explorer William Dampier. This proposal does not seem to have received broad acceptance.

Propagation is best from seed that has been treated by scarification (rubbing between two pieces of sandpaper) or by soaking in hotwater. The seed is best sown where plants are to grow, in late winter or early spring if frost is a problem.

Trevor also took us through the updated Northern Group website which is a great asset to the Society with lots of relevant information and appropriate links to other similar interest groups.

Jill Clark then took us on a 2009 pre-conference tour that was escorted by well-known APS members, Wendy and Neil Marriott to the Grampians, Mt Arapiles and Little Desert areas of Victoria, spectacular places with wonderful flora and loads of birds including a mallee fowl nest in the Little Desert Nature Reserve.

Sharon Percy followed up with a presentation taking us, among other places, to the really impressive Kevin Hoffman Walk at Lara, Victoria. Inspirational work started by one man to beautify an unsightly flood levee with Australian native plants. Over the years it has developed into a project of some significance that now involves many layers of local society. The result is a truly beautiful seemingly natural bushland walk.

On another trip the group visited wonderful Cranbourne RBG returning to Geelong by ferry. Next day trip they visited the Great Otway National Park and a private garden with an impressive collection of Banksias, Acacias and some stunning Dryandras.

16 March General Meeting – Plant of the Month - Jill Clark chose *Eucalyptus caesia* ‘Silver Princess’ that belongs to a huge genus of over 700 species, of which all but two occur in Australia. They are widely grown and where a tree is required, there is a Eucalypt for every situation. However, Jill stressed that great care should be taken to check height, width and climatic requirements as the majority are not suitable for a small suburban garden, although most are adaptable and can be grown in different areas from where they are native. Many are well-known for dropping branches and many shed bark annually. Apart from Acacias they are the most widespread of Australia’s trees, the subject of songs, poems and providers of nest hollows for our native birds and animals, not to mention the nectar from their blossom. The fruits delighted May Gibbs and inspired the “Snugglepot and Cuddlepie” stories.

Flowers are generally cream but while in Geelong Jill was introduced to *Eucalyptus caesia* ‘Silver Princess’ (which she mentioned was not silver at all, but a glorious red) which is a registered cultivar with larger fruits, flowers and leaves and a more pendant habit than the species.

Speaker for the evening was Miguel de Salis, a marine botanist with Australian Antarctic Division with a hobby of studying and growing carnivorous plants. He gave us an insight into the world of these fascinating plants through a powerpoint presentation illustrating and explaining the different types from round the world.

Miguel told us that essentially a carnivorous plant is one that has adapted in a number of ingenious ways to attract, trap and kill insects and other small prey that are then digested by way of the enzymes secreted by the plant. The plants extract nutrients that are often lacking in the soil in which they grow.

He mentioned several species from tropical climates in Australia such as Tropical Pitcher Plant (*Nepenthes mirabilis* occurring in Queensland on Cape York and WA Pitcher Plant *Cephalotus follicularis* from southern WA

It seems that a number of species are suitable for growing outdoors in Tasmania. Miguel brought with him about ten different plants in pots for us to view. These included several Pitcher Plants, including several overseas species as well as WA pitcher plant which feeds almost solely on ants. Also included were some pots of *Drosera* species and flowering plants of *Utricularia dichotoma*, known as fairies aprons, both common in Tasmania.

Sundews (*Drosera* species) are sticky leafed plants that are especially common in WA. There are about 8 species in Tasmania that occur widely in varying conditions. A number of them die down to underground tubers during hot dry summers to avoid drying out. Insects that land on the plants are attracted to the sticky secretions that occur on glandular hairs present on the leaves which then bend over the insect holding it tightly while it is absorbed by the digestive juices produced. Flowers are white or pink, one species is orange.

About 6 species of *Utricularia* (bladderworts, as they are commonly known) occur in Tasmania. They have tiny bladders hidden in the mud, damp moss or drifting in freshwater that open up when

triggered, suck in water and whatever insects are present and through a complex process close expelling the water through tissue walls, digesting the contents then re-setting for the next victim. Colonies are found in most suitable habitats including the edge of freshwater lagoons and damp roadsides in winter-wet areas. The most common species is purple flowered Fairies Apron (*U. dichotoma*) that occurs in virtually any permanently wet patch.

Advice was given on how to grow these plants. Use a mixture of ½ peat made from sphagnum moss and ½ red washed sand. Leave punnets or pots on water trays. Most Tasmanian species can be grown from seed and most are self pollinating. We were asked to please not dig plants out of the wild – instead collect a couple of seed pods from mature plants. Mature plants are grown in a couple of seasons. Miguel suggested researching on the web for more details.

APPRECIATION:

Lynne Mockridge as secretary and Roy Skabo as programme co-ordinator were thanked for their efforts and services last year on behalf of the Group; letters of appreciation were presented to each of them.

NURSERY REPORT:

Propagation Sessions will be held on a regular basis at Sharon Percy's place 'Grassy Banks', 636 South Bridgenorth Rd 12 km up Ecclestone Rd. from the Riverside Pub, turn right into South Bridgenorth Road opposite Launceston Zoo, first driveway (white gates) on the left, from 1-3 pm on the first Saturday of each month.

Our second propagating session was another success on Saturday 6th, with about 10 members present. We planted lots of seed varieties and cuttings. John and Marion were unable to attend but John was able to deliver the first of our lovely new workbenches. There will be three. They have a top of galvanised iron and are so easy to clean up afterwards.

A slight correction, there are 29 trays of plants in the nursery. The last of the seed raising mix has been used and plans are in hand to experiment with 1/3 peat, 1/3 coarse sand & 1/3 perlite for the next mix. I have also used 1/3 potting mix, 1/3 sand and 1/3 perlite, just to fine it down a bit. The first seeds have germinated from our February session, *Chorizema*. Coincidentally the cuttings of *Chorizema* died straight off. Most other cutting material is still green, although the *Philothea* is looking a bit doubtful.

We certainly won't have to worry about water this summer. With 53mm over the weekend and tanks full again. We had only used about 1/20 of a tank at a guess, in 2 months. Thanks Sharon.



The Shade-house



Propagation Day

HEAT N GROW PROPAGATION KIT is a small compact unit suitable for the home gardener
Dimensions: 1300mm x 400mm TPSK020

Single tray heated propagation kit – Kit complete is \$66.00 including GST

Contains TPS 020 single heated (9 watt 240 volt) propagation tray without thermostat, TPS TOP clear dome top with 3 vents, TPS TRAY a seedling tray and TPS DRIP plastic catchment tray.

There are larger units available. Trevor has all details. If you are interested in the above neat unit please forward the cash to Trevor together with your order.

REPORT ON HERITAGE FOREST GARDEN: with thanks to Lynne

At the meeting of the Heritage Forest Advisory Group on 17 March Friends of Heritage Forest Group was made official. At this early stage the group numbers 5 persons, all APS members. It is also official that Lynne has been elected as a member of the Heritage Forest Advisory Committee, but instead of being elected as an individual member she requested that she be there as a member of the Friends Group. Lynne thought it important that this group be represented as in future she hopes it will be made up of people who either live in the area or use the Forest for their recreational activities.

Lynne plans to utilize ‘National and International Days’ to promote the Friends Group. The meeting was quite enthusiastic about chosen dates for events in Heritage Forest. We can go ahead with promoting Earth Day on **Thursday 22 April** with LCC help with flyers. Lynne has planned another 200 letter drop in the immediate neighbourhood prior to the event to invite neighbours to attend and to indicate to all that the Friends Group is up and running. The event will be advertised to other groups who may be interested in taking part. This day would suit APS quite well as we usually have our working bee on a Thursday morning 10 am till 12 noon. It will be a weeding/pruning day so please bring suitable tools for these tasks. Please let Lynne know by e-mail if you are attending: lynnem@timeclocks.com.au

National Tree Day on 1 August is another good day to use to promote the Friends Group. It is promoted by Planet Ark who have a very good website where events can be registered with the insurance covered by Planet Ark. Lynne suggested to the above meeting that the Friends Group could do some understorey planting in the native plant precinct where the Eucalypts have been planted. She plans to make this a much bigger event with promotion from the council as well.

Lynne reports that: “At our working bee in February it only took us an hour to clear all the weeds so I think we are winning at last!! The fact that the grass areas have been kept mown more

regularly and spraying of weeds on the paths and around the fences of the garden has meant not so many seeds germinate in our garden beds. In view of this I am going to suggest that the APS reduce their working bees to one every 2 months. This means our next working bee will be on Earth Day on April 22nd. If we can get some action on weeds in the whole precinct either by the hordes of volunteers the Friends of group attracts or the LCC suddenly finds tons of money to employ more staff we'll have it cleaned up in no time, right?

I have a copy of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th December 2009 and a list of meeting dates for the rest of the year. These are 16 June, 15 September and 15 December. If members have comments or questions they wish me to bring up at the next meeting of the Advisory Group I would appreciate receiving them by email before 16 June.

The six month Action Plan has ended with most items completed. We need to have another meeting with council staff shortly to set up another plan for the coming months. I intend to expand it a little to include some of the area outside our garden. Hopefully the Friends group and council will do the work there. There is ongoing discussion about signage for the Forest but it doesn't seem to progress very much.”

COMING EVENTS:

3 April - Saturday – Propagation Day at Sharons from 1-3 pm to prepare and price plants for the plant sale.

10 April - Saturday - Plant Sale at Max Fry Hall from 10 am to 4 pm.

Sharon will be at the hall from about 9.30 am. We plan to have the sale outdoors if the weather is fine. Help would be appreciated with setting up the trestles and general preparation for the sale. Please bring plastic bags or boxes for people to take their purchases home. Prices are very reasonable and the range of plants is quite extensive. So don't miss this opportunity to support your Society and buy some plants that are not usually available at other nurseries.

18 April, Sunday – Invitation from Tasmania Bushland Gardens - APST members are invited to the opening of the Gardens, near Buckland on the Tasman Highway, next to Pulchella Nursery, on Sunday from 10.30am.

Luncheon meals will be available, tea/coffee, music, plant stalls, children's activities, guided tours and more. The opening will be at about 11.30 am when Christine Milne will unveil a special plaque, and new entry gate may also be unveiled. No rsvp required.

20 April – Tuesday – Club Night – Introduction to the Library and the extensive range of books that may be borrowed. Members have been asked to bring along their favourite plant books or perhaps their oldest book for discussion at the meeting.

22 April – Thursday - Earth Day at Heritage Forest from 10 am until noon. See above notes.

18 May Tuesday - General Meeting – Our speakers will be Margaret and Bill Chestnut of Inverewe Native Gardens near Margate who are well-known members of APS and who have developed this lovely large water-wise garden in the south.

Launceston Environment Centre – A reminder that our Group is a member and that their extensive library is available to members from 9 am to 5 pm at their rooms opposite Design Centre in Tamar Street.

Launceston Field Naturalists Club Meeting:

APS members are welcome to attend LFNC meetings held on the first Tuesday of each month except January – at Scotch Oakburn College, Penquite Road at 7.30 pm.

6 April - Subject: Telescopes and their uses Speaker: Peter Warren

17 April - Viewing of Night Sky at Skemps Myrtle Bank

4 May - Skemp Memorial Lecture- Subject: Geology of Local Area
Speaker: Peter Manchester

For more information contact K or N Manning 6344 2277

Next newsletter due in June 2010

Marion Simmons