



HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER Group of APS NSW NEWSLETTER – November 2023

NEXT HARBOUR GEORGES RIVER EVENT:
Wednesday 13th December, 6 pm
Our Christmas Party
And Annual General Meeting
Socialising, Fun and Party Games

Clemton Park Uniting Church Hall
6 Dunkirk Avenue, Kingsgrove, (Corner of Miller St).

Please RSVP to Liz on elsmere02@gmail.com to confirm you are attending.

Welcome to the November 2023 edition of the APS Harbour Georges River Group Newsletter.

Last Christmas, we had to announce that we were having an actual meeting, face to face! How things have changed. This year, we're having a big party, so come along and meet your fellow plant lovers. Learn a thing or two about the local plant species and have some fun.

I have a lot of people to thank for contributing items to this newsletter and to the game I invented for the party, so they are all mentioned in the newsletter.

Enjoy.

Dorothy Luther, Editor

In the spirit of reconciliation, the APS Harbour Georges River group acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

<https://www.austplants.com.au/Harbour-Georges-River>

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1 The Greenway, Cadigal Reserve



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

APS President's Report

As many of you are aware, our President, Marie O'Connor, is currently in St George Hospital after suffering a mild stroke. Consequently, as one of our group's vice presidents, I am writing the monthly President's report.

We had a very interesting tour of the Royal Botanic Gardens on the 15th November. Our guide, Amanda Gibson, arranged for us to have access to a glasshouse which is normally not open to the public. It featured some stunning orchids and other amazing tropical plants. I was also very pleased to walk through the rainforest garden which is near the Calyx.

In the early 1980s when I worked in the city, I often lunched in the gardens and I remember when the rainforest was first planted out. At that time, conservationists were running a major campaign to stop the logging of rainforest in NSW (some of our older members might remember the Terania Creek campaign) and when Neville Wran became Premier, he supported the move. Fortunately, he convinced the Labor Party to support it and rainforest logging was phased out over the next few years. Wran suggested to the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney that it should celebrate that victory by establishing a rainforest garden. So, this wonderful forest we explored on our tour is the result. It's hard to imagine that where huge trees now grow, 40 years ago the area was just grass. Unfortunately, I didn't see any sign in the area about the history of the rainforest garden.

The wet weather this month is most welcome, not just for our gardens but elsewhere in the state where bushfires were causing much damage and the rural sector was having serious concerns about how their crops and livestock were going to get through the predicted hot dry summer. My garden certainly appreciated the rain, particularly one night when we received 55mm and I didn't hear a drop!

At the back of our property is a Red Cedar (*Toona ciliata*) which I planted around 40 years ago. It is now a substantial tree even though it is growing on a sandstone ridge with very little soil. It always flowers in November and to our surprise we saw two rainbow lorikeets the other day industriously picking off the flower stalks; nature is amazing.

Don't forget our end of year gathering which will include the AGM but also feature a fun identification game, social supper and plants for sale. Please come along to enjoy the company of your fellow members; you might even find some plants for your garden.

Graham Fry

Vice President HGR APS



2 *Toona ciliata* (Red Cedar) photo by Graham

NEXT MEETING

Christmas Party & AGM

Our Christmas meeting will be on Wed 13th December, from 6 pm, at the Clemton Park Uniting Church Hall, at 6 Dunkirk Avenue, Kingsgrove, (Corner of Miller St).



Fun and Games

The event will start in the grounds of the Church, where we can inspect the area to be turned into a Community Garden, as discussed at our last meeting. A design is one thing, but there is a lot of heavy lifting to turn it into a reality. We may meet some of the congregation (mostly Tongan) who will be doing the heavy lifting.

Then we will go inside to play a new card game that a team of members has been working away creating. Again, inventing it is one thing, but actually making the cards has required a team of Greg, Phyllis & Kerry to do a lot of text editing and others cutting up cardboard. We hope you have as much fun playing as we did making the cards.

The game is quite easy - a bit like a jig saw puzzle, the idea is to learn about native plants along the way. All the plants in the game are selected from the local Flora. And Fauna might get a look in too. It's a team game, so even if you don't know much about plants, come along & join in the fun. You might meet someone who knows a bit more. And if you have been reading the newsletters closely, you will be ahead of the game.

Annual General Meeting

Following the game, we will have a short formal AGM to report on the past year's activities and elect a leadership team to carry the group forward. If you have any suggestions for activities you would like to participate in, now is the time to speak up.

Agenda:

Annual report from President, Secretary & Membership Officer – combined report by Liz Cameron.

Treasurers Report – Sandra Rogers

Election of Office Bearers, chaired by Trevor Jennings (minister of CECP Uniting Churches).

Elected Positions: President, two Vice-Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. Following incumbents have signified their intention to stand again: Vice-Presidents: Dorothy Luther and Graham Fry; Secretary: Liz Cameron; Treasurer: Sandra Rogers. Marie O'Connor does not wish to stand again as President.

Appointed positions:

Board Delegate: **vacant**; Newsletter Editor: Dorothy Luther willing to continue; Website editor and Membership Officer: Kerry Snelgrove willing to continue former and take over the latter role from Liz; Propagation Officer: Graham Fry willing to continue; Speaker/Events Co-ordinator: **vacant**; Hospitality: Liz Cameron willing to continue; Publicity (publicity, updating Facebook group, basic coordination of events): Andrew Sinclair willing to help out; Plant Table Recorder: Boyd Webster willing to continue.

Karen Fong has indicated that she will not stand again for the committee.

As you can see, our leadership team is looking a bit thin, so it would be lovely if you could put up your hand to take on a task or two. None of them require a lot of work; all our leadership team meetings are on Zoom – about 5 a year. You are not locked in for life. And you might even learn some useful leadership skills.

The Party

This is a Traditional Aussie Party where there is a BYO supper. The group is providing:

- cold ham + dinner rolls, vegan snacks
- Punch/fruit juice, tea and coffee, milk, sugar

We're asking members to bring:

- 1) Christmas food - sweet or savoury
- 2) Something for a raffle – items suitable for gardeners recommended; There will be 1st and 2nd prizes
- 3) Decorations
- 4) Tablecloths

Please tell Liz what you will bring, by email on elsmere02@gmail.com

Graham will bring some of his plants for sale. We will have our trusty Square terminal.

We are inviting members of other groups that we have met during the year, such as the IWEG/ Greenway people, Wollie Creek Preservation Society members, Unwin Green Street campaigners, and volunteers from local councils.

LAST MEETING

Royal Botanic Gardens, Wed November 15th

Meet our volunteer guide, Amanda, at the Woolloomooloo Gates (Mrs Macquarie's Drive, near the Art Gallery) at 10:30 am. Itinerary:

Fernery & orchid house (which is only unlocked for official tours like ours, although we did have some freeloaders join us). Orchids & pitcher plants

Cycads, which are pollinated by weevils.

Rainforest with its cassowary and sensory walk.

Calyx – how plants pollinate – the games they play with insects & other animals.

Meadows – being redeveloped, but still a lovely display of 'wild' flowers.

The Australian Rockery – many grevillea cultivars, then other species groups, along the edge of Farm Cove.

Stories From our Group

Description from Liz

Our group of 10 was privileged in having a volunteer RBG guide, Amanda Gibson, who showed us some highlights of the Garden that the general public doesn't see. First stop was a tall tree sheltering a young Powerful Owl; by craning our necks we could just distinguish it high in the dense canopy. Beneath the tree were pellets of indigestible prey 'bits' that the owls regurgitate (these pellets inform research on the prey species of the birds). Fluttering around us were many white butterflies – not introduced Cabbage Whites, but native

Southern Pearl White Butterflies whose caterpillars feed on Brush Caper Berry (*Capparis arborea*); this plant occurs naturally north of the Hunter River and has been planted in the Garden. <https://www.purvision.com/pearl-whites-in-the-royal-botanic-gardens/>

We paused at the Cadi Jam Ora – First Encounters Garden where the First Fleeters cleared land for the First Farm and attempted to grow crops, such as bananas and wheat, that were unsuited to the nutrient-poor soils and harsh climate. It is ironic that the site is now planted with local species that had provided food and many other resources for the Cadigal people and other Indigenous clans for thousands of years. Amanda pointed out ancient paperbarks *Melaleuca quinquenervia* whose bark was used to wrap food to cook and for medicinal purposes; these actual trees were probably present when the First Fleet arrived. Another tree with multiple uses was the Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus coronata*); string was made from the bark, wooden weapons were given a final polish with the leaves, and the fruit was prized food. A placid Eastern Water Dragon was happy to eat Native Raspberries (*Rubus rosifolius*) from another local food plant.

The Fernery was a cool shady space housing ferns of many different shapes and sizes as well as tropical perennials. The slatted iron roof is supported by walls of sandstone recycled from stone carved by convict stonemasons for the Governor's harbour-side bathing house at Farm Cove. <https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/royal-botanic-garden-sydney/garden-highlights/fernery>

A series of rectangular pools supported water lilies and one of the 'Must See in November' features – a red-flowering pitcher plant from eastern US - *Sarracenia leucophylla*. The single flower emerges on a separate stalk from the insect-trapping pitchers, to ensure pollinators are not trapped. I also noticed a Dusky Moorhen swimming happily amongst the water plants, and heard a frog calling nearby – the Garden is a haven for wildlife.

Amanda then let us into a glasshouse filled with flowering orchids and other tropical plants that thrive in a controlled humid atmosphere; this space is only accessible to small guided groups.

On the way to The Calyx, we meandered through a dense planting of rainforest trees, understorey plants and ground cover. The Calyx has one of the largest living green walls in the Southern Hemisphere and the current display - 'Love Your Nature' - features over 20,000 plants. While some of our party explored the exhibition, others settled for a coffee break on the very attractive terrace.

Leaving The Calyx our group photographed another 'Must See in November' plant, the Dorrito Waratah, and a flowering Norfolk Island Hibiscus. Amanda led us finally to the Australian Native Rockery beside Farm Cove on the way to the Opera House Gate. Here there were many small colourful natives from different parts of Australia including blue scaevolas and golden daisies.

The Calyx, from Dorothy

The current display - 'Love Your Nature' – is about the reproductive behaviours of plants. Since they can't sing or dance, plants have devised many methods of attracting their pollinators, ranging from bright flowers to setting traps. And there are a huge variety of pollinators, from wind to dragon flies to bugs and birds. Plants also have to ward off predators after their fruits, preventing reproduction. It's a complex life, just sitting still.

"Orchids have no shame & no morals – they will play any trick"

There are now many human interventions in reproduction as well. Scientists use 'Tissue culture' to clone specific features, such as consistent flowering or larger fruit or flannel flowers with long stems.

Some methods are necessary to preserve endangered species. Some plants now have to be artificially pollinated because their natural pollinator is extinct. For some, such as the Wollemi pine, scientists use air layering to produce clones which can be distributed to other botanic gardens to ensure genetic diversity of such a rare plant.

The Fauna, from Gail

A delightful photo montage, which your editor has had to reduce somewhat. Photos supplied by Gail [and noted in square brackets].

It was a great day at the Royal Botanic Gardens [welcome sign]. Not too hot and not at all cold. Our guide, Amanda, took ten of us first to a garden which held a secret, an owl

[photo], which was sleeping in a tree. Those of us with good eyesight were excited to see it in the foliage, so in high spirits we sauntered past a Masked lapwing [photo] and along a cool, green pathway where, unbelievably, a Water dragon came to greet us and ask for food. [photo, left]

One of the group, obviously understanding water dragon speak, fed it some wild raspberries which

were growing nearby [photo right]. Once she (I'm told) (the water dragon that is) had had her fill, she wandered back into the undergrowth so, after bidding her farewell, we proceeded along the path beneath a canopy of green, where we discovered a number of magnificent goldfish [photo], congregating at the edge of a pond, waiting, I guess, for a bug or two to drop by. Sadly, all the bats have been scared away [so no photo], even those which/who dropped by on April Fool's Day. So, to end the day, I fed my lunch to the seagulls, pigeons and bin chickens that were anxious to assist and wandered off to Woolloomooloo for a glimpse of the naval vessels docked at Garden Island.

The plants were nice too!!

Photo Essay from Carol



3 barrel cactus at Woolloomoo gate



4 close up of barrel cactus



6 orchids in hot house



5 Australian native green lily



7 Floral display in Calyx.

Note the 'Green Wall' is actually living plants.

Plant Table

Notes from HGR Botanic Gardens walk on 15 November, by Boyd Webster

The guided walk provided members with a chance to see in flower several trees and plants from outside the Sydney area

Alloxylon pinnatum – also known as the Dorrigo Waratah

[This one was popular – both Carol & Karen contributed photos too].



The 3m high flowering tree was in the rain forest section of the Gardens, near The Calyx. Naturally restricted to forests on the Dorrigo plateau (NSW) and the McPherson ranges to the north it can grow to 25m. The wood was sought for furniture. The nectar-rich red flowers attract birds and insects for pollination.

Cultivation from seed has been done, but the seedlings need loamy well drained soil and a sheltered site. As with this specimen, most success has been from cuttings grafted onto root-stock of the Queensland Tree Waratah – *Alloxylon flammeum*

Helmholzia glaberrima -Stream Lily

We also saw this lily in flower in a shaded part of the rain forest section of the Gardens. It is naturally found near streams in northern NSW and Queensland rain forests where it can grow to 2m high and wide. The flax-like leaves can be 7cm wide, while spikes up to 70cm long bear the white flowers.

Horticultural use has been for planting in similar surroundings. Propagation is from the rhizome or freshly collected seed.



Grevillea leptopoda

The prickly leaves of this *Grevillea* attracted my attention in the

rockery section of the Gardens. *G. leptopoda* was found in heath land areas around Geraldton, WA in 1986. Naturally a shrub up to 1m in height with the white flowers appearing in August to November. As the flowers are fragrant there has been garden use of the plant in Perth. Grafting is advised for planting in the Eastern states.

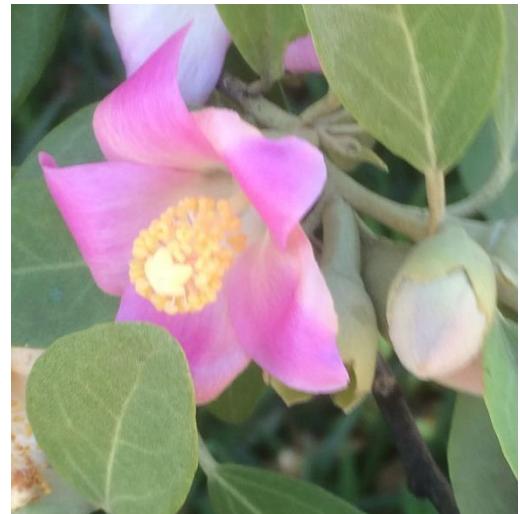


Lagunaria patersonia – Norfolk Island Hibiscus.

Queensland White Oak

Also in the rockery area was a 2m high tree with abundant pink flowers. Identified as *Lagunaria patersonia*: the tree can grow to 12 – 20m in its native state on Norfolk or Lord Howe Islands. As the leaves are tolerant to salt winds, *L.patersonia* has become a popular street tree in coastal areas of NSW and Queensland. (I have recently seen it on the Iron Cove and Coogee foreshore).

It is stated to be easily propagated from seed or cuttings.



Lepidozamia peroffskyana -Pineapple Cycad



At the edge of the rain forest section of the Gardens is this slow growing Cycad now with a thick 2m high trunk. *L.peroffskyana* is native to northern NSW and Southern Queensland forest edges. The plant has become popular in landscaping and can be grown from seed.

Not obvious in the photo above was that one of the female cones had matured and burst, scattering seeds onto the ground. As signage around clearly indicated – “The colourful seeds of these cycads are poisonous and should not be touched”

[This was the favourite plant of one of our revered members, so is locally known as Kyrill's cycad].



(Photos and Notes by Boyd Webster)

GROUP NEWS

The Newsletter Archive (Hugh Stacy's Legacy)

Phyllis is powering through the old newsletters, making a catalogue of the plants described on the Plant tables. This started out as a memory of Hugh Stacy, who wrote the plant table notes for many years. The idea was to provide the notes to Dan Clarke for the APS NSW plant database. The list is also proving very useful for our Christmas Party card game and we will find other uses for it too.

Phyllis started from 2015, and still has 2020 & 2021 to go. 2022 & 2023 were done by others. She has already identified 480 individual species that have been presented. About 200 have descriptions & photos. Only about a quarter have been covered in the APS NSW or ANPSA online databases.

Update on Marie

From Liz.



This afternoon (Monday 27th Nov), Graham and I visited Marie O'Connor in St George Hospital and took some flowers and a card from HGR, wishing her a speedy recovery. After several moves, Marie had just arrived at Ward 6 West where she expects to remain until she is discharged. She was cheerful and 'on the ball' and pleased to receive our gesture. Marie is making good progress but agreed she would not stand again as President of HGR.

Here is a photo of the flowers we took to Marie – a mixture of florist flowers and kangaroo paws from our garden - definitely not a match for Marie's creations - but I suggested she could have a fiddle with the arrangement as a form of occupational therapy.

8 Flowers for Marie. photo by Graham

Plans for Next Year

Next year hasn't been thought about yet, except for a few general ideas.

Our meetings occur at different times and days of the week. We're trying to work out what suits our members best.

We usually have 3 or 4 evening meetings at Burwood RSL or in the church hall, on Wednesday nights.

Otherwise, daytime meetings are usually on the weekend, if it can be arranged. They are outings to some nice bush place or a garden.

We'd love to hear your ideas, especially any secret bush patches that you know about, or people with amazing knowledge on a plant related topic.

Our **first Business Planning meeting** for the new year will be on **Wednesday 17th January 2024**, at 7:30 pm, via Zoom. We will work out a tentative plan for the year at that meeting, so come along with your ideas.

We hope to hold an indoor meeting on Wed Feb 7th at 6 pm at Burwood RSL, with Ruby Sweet, a visiting horticulturist from the UK, who has a particular passion for the study of native plants & wildflowers and their conservation. Details to be confirmed.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

There is a lot happening in our patch, with community groups and local councils being active in promoting native plants. I welcome contributions - stories about your other favourite groups.

The Joys of Bushcare

From the WCPS Bushcare group newsletter:

Last month we had a bang-up session with 10 volunteers and all felt very pleased with themselves. Around the regenerating tennis court there has been some successful spraying of *Trad*. We were able to rake back the dead *Trad* and follow up on the *Anredera*, leaving *Microlaena* and a beautiful patch of *Entolasia stricta*. A small cache of little old but unbroken glass bottles was a fun find. We also made a start on the densely weedy opposite side of the path to give the better side some breathing space and stop the spread of Balloon Vine and *Alstromeria* (New Zealand Christmas Bells). Alas, we were all so busy we forgot to take pictures. Have to remember next time!

From Bankstown Bushland Society

Last week (early November) I had the pleasure of hosting Melbourne botanist Geoff Carr in Bankstown. Geoff is the leading researcher on the genus *Dianella*, which contains many undescribed species. In Bankstown there are no fewer than four undescribed species. How more widespread they are is not known, but all are likely to be very rare.

Complaining Does Work

From the Unwin Green Street campaign (Lydia Li Feng):

After a joint complaint by Wolli Creek Preservation Society (WCPS) and Unwin Street Residents Group about overgrown vegetation and dumped rubbish on the footpath of 14-18 Unwin Street, we received a letterbox drop last Friday from the NSW Office of Strategic Lands (OSL) which manages the site, acknowledging residents' concerns.

Yesterday afternoon (14th November), OSL's maintenance team came to the site as promised and cleaned up the footpath. Now the pedestrian path outside 14-18 Unwin Street is safe to access and walk on for all who want to enjoy seeing and hearing the songs of the beautiful bush birds that are now busy in their breeding season in our street.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

These are items of general interest found on the World Wide Web & other sources. All contributions for future editions gratefully accepted.

Old Growth Forests

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/nov/13/conserving-restoring-forests-sequester-carbon-study-trees>

Forest conservation and restoration could make a major contribution to tackling the climate crisis as long as greenhouse gas emissions are slashed, according to a study.

By allowing existing trees to grow old **in healthy ecosystems** and restoring degraded areas, scientists say 226 gigatonnes of carbon could be sequestered, equivalent to nearly 50 years of US emissions for 2022. But they caution that mass monoculture tree-planting and offsetting will not help forests realise their potential.

Thousands of different projects and schemes are needed to preserve and revive forests. It can be achieved by millions of local communities, Indigenous communities, farmers and foresters who promote biodiversity.

Cut Flowers Bring Native Garden Blooms Indoors!

Thanks to Sandra for spotting this & providing the following summary:

Earlier this year we were lucky enough to have Marie provide a demonstration on cut flowers. It seems Clarence from Gardening Australia heard! In a recent program (9



SEGMENT 1 OF 11

Perfect for Picking

Clarence creates a stunning bouquet of homegrown native plants to enjoy indoors.

10 Nov 2023

November, 2023) he started the program with a segment on cutting native flowers for indoors.

Clarence placed cutting flowers as one routine of our gardening process. He suggested we plan a garden so that we will have flowers for indoors. No matter the size of your garden or how 'green' your thumbs are, he had some species suggestions - from waratahs to daisies to grasses - for you to plant so that you could take blooms indoors. He also encouraged viewers to see cutting flowers as part of the pruning process and gave tips on different species, including a warning about how to handle grevillea cuttings. He then gave a demonstration that made flower arranging look as easy as Marie had done.

And if you don't have a garden, maybe show the segment to your friends so they can grow the plants and you can some of their blooms in your home!

You'll find the segment (about 5 mins) on iView at https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/how-to/perfect-for-picking/103087224?utm_campaign=abc_gardening&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_gardening



9 Gardens at Eveleigh Precinct – we may visit one day, when visiting the Rooftop garden

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Newsletters Received – November

The full text of the APS newsletters is available from the APS website, on the District Group pages – usually under ‘Resources’.

Australian Plants Society, Sutherland Group - Newsletter November 2023

NSW legislation in how weeds (and feral animals) are managed and categorised, by Council officers; Recollections of our monthly meetings [over 300], from Rhonda Daniels.

Australian Plants Society, South East Group - Newsletter November 2023

Isopogon & Petrophile Study Group presentation. Plant swap at meeting. Visit to the Narooma property of Joan Lynch - 40 hectares of mostly bushland. There is a protective covenant on some of the land to maintain, conserve and restore species habitats.

Other Groups Newsletters

We have begun to swap newsletters with other environmental groups in the Harbour Georges River area. Links to their web sites are provided where available. Copies of newsletters are available from the editor on request for about a month.

National Parks & Wildlife Service – Naturescapes, November 2023

Two scent-detection spaniel dogs, Alice and Echo, have been trained to detect *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a soil-borne disease that damages native plants and the health of our national parks.

Conservation Hut reopens in Blue Mountains National Park, at the Valley of the Waters in Wentworth Falls.



10 Some of Marie's grevilleas

COMING EVENTS

For further details of coming events for other district groups, please see the APS NSW website at <http://austplants.com.au/calendar>

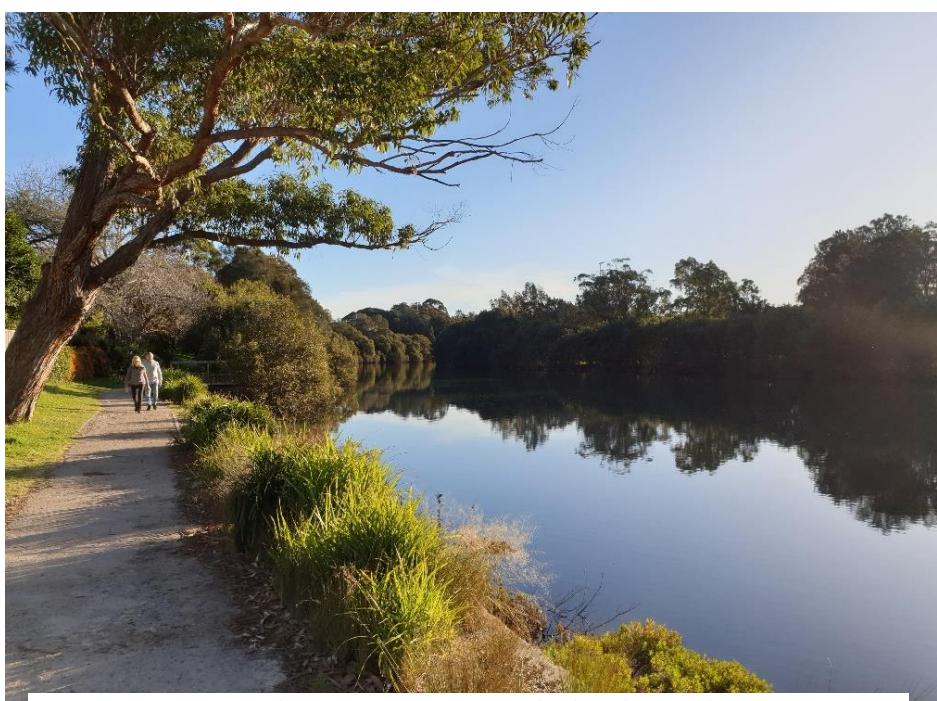
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|---|--|
| Wed December 13th at 6 pm | APS HGR Christmas Party & AGM, at Clemton Park Uniting Church hall. 6 Dunkirk Avenue, Kingsgrove, (Corner of Miller St) |
| Sun 10 Dec, 3-5 pm | Sutherland Group end of year gathering, Joseph Banks Reserve, Manooka Place, Kareela. All are welcome at our end-of-year afternoon tea gathering. Please bring something to share. |
| Wed 17th January 2024, at 7:30 pm | APS HGR first Business Planning meeting for the new year, via Zoom. |
| Wed Feb 7th at 6 pm | Tentative - APS HGR meeting at Burwood RSL, with Ruby Sweet, a visiting horticulturist from the UK. |

EAST HILLS GROUP CONTACTS

| | | | |
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<https://www.austplants.com.au/Harbour-Georges-River>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1328674687627886>



11 Cooks River opposite Ewen Park, photo by Dorothy