

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



MAY 2018

NEXT EHG MEETING:

Karl Schurr on 'Dark Emu' by Bruce Pascoe

7.30 pm, Wednesday 2 May 2018

Please bring specimens for the plant table and something to share
for supper

LUGARNO-PEAKHURST UNITING CHURCH

909 Forest Road Lugarno (opposite the Chivers Hill Lugarno shops)

VISITORS WELCOME

WELCOME to the May 2018 edition of the East Hills Group Newsletter.

This issue includes notes from our April meeting, including the talk on soil beasts by Doug Rickard and our plant table, and an article about the Sydney Royal Flower and Garden Show. There's also information about several activities that you may wish to add to your diary – see details of the APS NSW Quarterly Gathering, the FJC Rogers Seminar, the Botanica exhibition at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, and the four Autumn open days at the Illawarra Grevillea Park.

Happy gardening, and see you at the meeting!

Jan Douglas
Editor

<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

At our last meeting we were privileged to have Doug Rickard give us a very good talk on soils. Doug has done a lot of research on this subject, and his explanation of what is achieved underground and out of our sight by the millions of organisms living there was mind boggling. Even more important was how the health of these organisms directly affects our plants.

Coincidentally, I am currently reading a fascinating book, separately recommended by two friends, that covers a similar theme. 'Call of the Reed Warbler' was written by Charles Massy, who is a life-long farmer and who ran a successful merino stud in the Southern Highlands of NSW. Later in life he realised that the standard grazing practices used on the stud were slowly degrading the land, and so he started researching better ways of achieving successful farming. This book is about his research on how to achieve this, and not surprisingly a lot of it is about soil and the many organisms contained therein. But it was not just the soils - it was also about using water more efficiently while re-creating creek lines which had run dry and re-establishing many of the original Australian native grasses that stock had wiped out through over-grazing.

One of the book's important points is the need to establish deep-rooted plants so that nutrients produced by the plants through photosynthesis will penetrate deep into the subsoil where they can be better used. In this regard I have been trying to work out how growers of native plants in an urban garden can use this technique. I guess in many gardens our planting of shrubs rather than annual grasses does achieve some of these aims, but one of Massy's recommendations is to avoid bare ground. Therefore, I wonder whether, when we avidly remove weeds and grasses from our garden beds to achieve a visually satisfying weed-free garden, what we are doing is really the best for the soil. This book has been an eye-opener for me and will probably change the way I garden in the future. So my thanks to Doug Rickard and Charles Massy – their words have given me much to think about.

Graham Fry
President, APS East Hills Group



APS NSW

Annual General Meeting and Quarterly Gathering



Saturday, 26 May 2018



10 am to
12 noon

A choice of activities:

- 1 Ian Cox's garden: 5 Ivy Place Kenthurst (off Jones Road).
- 2 Bush walk with Jennifer Farrer:
Meet at the end of Trevors Lane Cherrybrook, which runs off Purchase Road. The walk leads to an extensive stone outcrop which overlooks Pye's Creek, where the large expanse of sandstone is a fun place to explore. The route passes through typical Hawkesbury sandstone vegetation, which includes *Banksia serrata*, *Corymbia gummifera* and *Eucalyptus haemastoma*. More Banksias, including *B. spinulosa*, *B. oblongifolia* and *B. marginata*, form the understorey. The main attraction of the walk in May, when few plants are flowering, will be the scenic outlooks along the walk.

Arrange your own lunch till 1 pm.

1 pm

AGM at Gumnut Community Centre Gumnut Place Cherrybrook, NSW.

For the agenda, see page 31 of *Native Plants for NSW* January 2018 edition.

1.30pm

Talk by Peter Olde: When is a Grevillea a Hakea?

Peter is a Life Member of APS NSW, recipient of the Australian Plants Award at the ANPSA Biennial Conference, Canberra 2015 and the leader of the Grevillea Study Group. He is an excellent and entertaining speaker who will discuss the current state of play regarding the relationships between the two genera. Peter will also discuss some of the new Grevillea cultivars and is always keen to share his knowledge of Grevilleas with us.

Australian native plants will be available for sale.

PLANT TABLE – APRIL 2018

Notes by Graham Walters.

Thanks to everyone who brought plant specimens.

**Acacia cognata* 'Limelight' – Bower Wattle

**Adenanthos sericeus* – Albany Woollybush

Asplenium bulbiferum x *saratogum* Note: *A. saratogum* is from Norfolk Island

Auranticarpa rhombifolia – Holly Wood

Banksia ericifolia – Heath Banksia

Buckinghamia celsissima – Ivory Curl Flower (Photo at right – David Crawford)

Goodenia ovata – Hop Goodenia

**Graptophyllum ilicifolium* – Holly Fuchsia

Grevillea 'Hills Jubilee'

Grevillea lavandulacea Black Range form – Lavender Grevillea

**Grevillea leptobotrys* – Lilac Tangles

**Ficinia nodosa* (also known as *Isolepis nodosa*) – Knobby or Knotted Club Rush

Pittosporum revolutum – Rough-fruited Pittosporum

Stenocarpus sinuatus – Firewheel Tree

**Westringia fruticosa* compact form – Coastal Rosemary



Grevillea lavandulacea Black Range form (Lavender Grevillea) This form of *G. lavandulacea* is small shrub and rarely exceeds 1 m in height. It has narrow grey-green lavender-like leaves. Small bright frost-proof pink-red flowers start to form in July and peak between September to March. Avoid limy soils.

Grevillea leptobotrys (Lilac tangles) is native to the wheat belt and south-west regions of Western Australia. It is a low-growing and sprawling shrub from 1- 3m across and up to 0.5 m tall. Its wiry much-divided grey-green leaves are a feature, as are its pretty mauve-pink flowers which are on display for much of the year. Grafted plant recommended.

Photo – Karlo Taliana.



Ficinia nodosa (syn. *Isolepis nodosa*) is commonly known as Knobby Club Rush or Knotted Club Rush and occurs naturally in South Australia, Victoria, NSW, Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania. Family Cyperaceae. This upright to gently-weeping evergreen sedge has cylindrical foliage from 800 mm to 1 m high with spread of 600 mm - 800 mm. The semi-spherical brownish-cream flower heads occur in spring and summer. Extremely hardy and fast-growing, valuable as sand binder in some coastal locations. Excellent for use in filtration beds. It grows well in free-draining sandy soils.

Pittosporum revolutum (Rough-fruited Pittosporum) is a shrub or small tree with yellow flowers. The leaves are broad and may be covered with rusty hairs on the under-surface when young. This distinguishes it from *P. undulatum*, as do the yellow flowers. Fruits are large, to about 25mm across, rough and orange-coloured. When mature they split into three parts to reveal bright red seeds. The specific name 'revolutum' refers to the way the petals are rolled back. Habitat: sheltered forest and rainforest margins. Distribution: Widespread in NSW from coast to mountains; also found in parts of Queensland and Victoria.

Westringia fruticosa compact form. Coastal Rosemary is a common shrub along sea-cliffs and rocky foreshores in coastal zone from the far south coast and lower north coast of NSW. It is also found on Lord Howe Island. It may be up to 1.5 m tall but is often dwarfed and gnarled in exposed areas. The compact form is usually no more than 1 m tall. Leaves are in whorls of four, narrow and lanceolate, 1-2 cm long. The branches, under-surface of leaves and the calyces are hoary white with appressed hairs. Flowers are white with pink or orange spots on the lower lips and are borne in the upper leaf axils. Some flowers all year.

* The arrangement in the photo below includes foliage of the six plants marked with asterisks in the plant table list. Can you identify them?



Photo and arrangement – Jan Douglas

FROM OUR APRIL MEETING THE AMAZING CREATURES THAT LIVE IN OUR SOIL

A talk by Doug Rickard of APS Sutherland Group.

The article below is adapted from an account kindly supplied by Doug.

Doug started by asking how many of us thought that the creatures that live in the soil were 'orrible, squishy things. Although no one in the audience was game enough to put up their hand, Doug felt sure that many of us thought that most of the critters tended to be a bit on the 'orrible, squishy side. Doug then set about convincing us that by far the great majority of them were not only essential to the health of our soils, but most of them were cute and often colourful little creatures.

Doug told us that it wasn't the native snails and slugs that ate our plants, as they only ate lichen and moss: it was the dastardly Pommy ones that had stowed away on countless ships from the UK. Many of us were surprised to find out how complex snails were, as they all had a brain, heart, liver, a kidney, a lung, and a sense of smell that is over a thousand times better than ours.

Then it was the turn of worms. Doug explained that they are not just squishy tubes, for they too have a brain, a complex nervous system, and five hearts, they breathe through their skin and lay eggs. Not only do they produce their own weight in worm casts every day, they also dig miles of tunnels that allow water and air to enter the soil.

Doug told us that slaters are crustaceans and are more related to prawns than insects and that they have blue blood, carry their babies in a pouch and generally try to be different to every other living thing on this planet. We were even told to love mites! Tens of thousands of different species of them are beavering away in the soil and doing a great job of breaking down organic matter. The predatory megastigma mites looked as they have just come out of a Star Wars epic.

Although mites can be colourful little creatures, Doug awarded the prize for colour to the springtails. These industrious creatures can be found in their thousands all over the world doing a great job recycling the organic matter in the soil.

[Photo - Andy Murray,

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Megalanura_tasmaniae_\(13662640264\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Megalanura_tasmaniae_(13662640264).jpg)]



The first prize for cute, however, Doug said, must go to the tardigrades – minute creatures that have eight legs and are known as Water Bears or Moss Piglets. They are almost indestructible. You can boil them and freeze them, subject them to nuclear radiation, take them down to the bottom of the deepest ocean or into the vacuum of space and they will survive. They will also survive for years without water.

[Photo - Willow Gabriel, Goldstein Lab <https://www.flickr.com/photos/waterbears/1614095719/>]

[For a video of a Tardigrade in motion, see

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tardigrade_in_real_time.ogv - Editor.]



Then Doug moved on to the ants and termites (not related) which also do a great job of recycling organic matter. One must only marvel at the way they organise themselves and build complex nests. Both play an important role in the environment. Doug reminded us that it's only a few species of termites that will eat your house – 97% of them are really good guys, he said.

Doug also explained to us the important role that nematodes play in the soil, particularly in the way that they help control the numbers of pests and stop the population of any one species from getting out of hand.

Finally Doug tunnelled down to the bottom of the food chain, to the protozoa, bacteria and their mates, the actinomycetes. Doug explained that they not only decompose organic matter, they also produce antibiotics that suppress soil-borne and plant diseases, make nitrogen available to the plants, give soil its earthy smell and stop it smelling like rotten eggs.

We came away from the meeting with a far better understanding of the roles played by the countless amazing creatures that live in the soil. Doug's message is that without them, life on this planet could not exist, that no one creature is more important than the others - it is the balance between the different creatures that matters. So we should look after them, and they will take care of the soil, get rid of dead vegetation, feed the plants, control pests and diseases and ensure that we all survive! And that when you get to know them, you can't help loving them.

ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK OPEN DAYS AUTUMN 2018



Can you believe it? This year the Illawarra Grevillea Park celebrates its 25th year! So now might be a good time for a visit, to remind yourself of past pleasures and to enjoy the new plantings.

Or perhaps you haven't been there before? Here are some of the features:

- Large colourful display gardens with hundreds of grevilleas and other native species and hybrids
- Rainforest walk
- Acres to explore, including a well-marked bushwalking track
- Barbecue and picnic facilities
- A large range of native plants for sale
- Extensive range of books for sale
- Advice on growing native plants
- Birdwatching.

The park is at the rear of Bulli Showground, Princes Highway, Bulli, a ten minute walk from Bulli Train Station.

The open days for Autumn 2018 are:

Saturday 5 May and Sunday 6 May
Saturday 12 May and Sunday 13 May

10 am – 4pm Entry \$5 for adults; no charge for children.



Photos are from the Grevillea Park website <http://www.grevilleapark.org/>

2018 SYDNEY ROYAL FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW

Jan Douglas

For the first time since 2014, EHG entered the Royal Flower Show. This time we didn't use any material from Sylvan Grove Native Garden, but relied entirely on plants in members' gardens. Karlo Taliana put together five entries from his garden, while I made ten entries using material supplied from six members' gardens, including ours. Thanks to everyone who provided material – I hope you can spot some of your contributions in the arrangements. Unfortunately I ran out of stamina before I ran out of material, so it wasn't all used. (It was nearly 2 am, after all!)

Four APS Groups entered: Sutherland, Central Coast, North Shore and East Hills, and there were a few independent entries.

The native plants entries made a lovely display at the Show. They attracted a lot of interest, and I enjoyed watching people's reactions and hearing their comments about the display. However, after looking back at photos from previous Shows, I do think that the drought had an effect on what was available and the volume and quality of the flowers this year.



The two Champion winners are shown in the photos at right. The Banksia display was by Sutherland Group, and the container plant was entered by Jonathan Steeds of Central Coast Group.

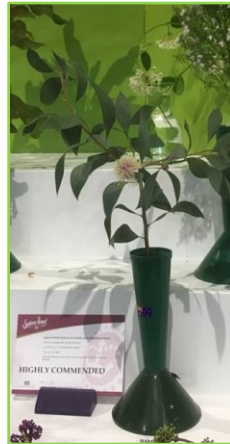
L: Champion mixed or unmixed blooms – Sutherland Group

R: Champion Australian native plant – Central Coast Group



EHG made 15 entries in eight classes, and received eight awards: three Firsts, one Second, one Third and three Highly commended. That's a 60% success rate, but we didn't get our entry fee back this year: our prize winnings totalled \$18 and our entry fee was \$34!

Below are photos of some of East Hills Group's entries. The full list of entries and results is at www.rasnw.com.au/globalassets/document-library/rasnw/competitions/flower--garden/2018flowergardenresultslistweb.pdf Go to page 38 for the native plants information.



THE BUSINESS

East Hills Group meeting – 4 April 2018

Minutes by Liz Cameron

The meeting opened at 7.40 pm with twelve in attendance. There were two apologies.

Our guest speaker was Doug Rickard from APS Sutherland Group who spoke about organisms living in the soil. [See page 5 for an account of Doug's talk - Editor.]

Business:

- Graham Fry welcomed members Chris King and Des O'Connor who had not been able to attend recent meetings.
- Native plant entries at the Royal Easter Show by East Hill Group members Jan Douglas, Karlo Taliana and Marie O'Connor (as a member of Sutherland Group), were very successful.
- Reminder that the APS NSW Gathering and AGM will be hosted by the Parramatta-Hills Group at the Gumnut Community Centre, Gumnut Place, Cherrybrook, on 26th May. Details of the program at:
<https://www.austplants.com.au/resources/Documents/Events/APS%20NSW%202017%20Annual%20General%20Meeting%20and%20Quarterly%20Gathering.pdf> [Or see page 3 of this newsletter – Editor.]
- At the next meeting of the East Hills Group on 2nd May, Karl Schurr will be talking about Bruce Pascoe's book, Dark Emu, which questions the concept of pre-colonial Indigenous Australians being hunter-gatherers, and provides evidence of village populations, crop harvesting, and irrigation.
- Graham Fry mentioned he had been reading a book about the history of colonial agriculture in Australia – Call of the Reed Warbler by Charles Massy.

Graham welcomed the recent rain which had greened up gardens, but more East Coast lows are needed to bring adequate falls.

Plant sales, raffle then supper followed.

Income at meeting: Plant sales -\$6, raffle tickets - \$25. Total: \$31.



COMING EVENTS – CHECK YOUR DIARY!

You can find more district group events on the APS NSW website at <http://austplants.com.au/calendar>

Wednesday 2 May 2018 From 7 for 7.30 pm	East Hills Group meeting – Karl Schurr, APS East Hills Group, will speak about 'Dark Emu', the book by Bruce Pascoe. Please bring supper to share and specimens for the Plant Table.
Saturday 5 May 1 pm	East Hills Group propagation meeting with Menai Wildflower Group. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. [click for map]
Wednesday 9 May 7 pm	Menai Wildflower Group – Maureen Connolly on Canberra Botanic Gardens. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. [click for map]
Wednesday 16 May 7.45 pm	Sutherland Group meeting – David Bain, Threatened Species Officer, OEH. Gymea Community Hall, 39 Gymea Bay Rd, Gymea
Saturday 26 May	APS NSW Annual General Meeting and Quarterly Gathering Cherrybrook. See page 3 for more information.
Wednesday 6 June 2018 From 7 for 7.30 pm	East Hills Group meeting. Details to be advised.
20th and 21st October 2018	12th FJC Rogers Seminar: The Goodeniaceae family. Horsham, Victoria. Registration commences 1 April 2018. For more information: https://apsvic.org.au/fjc-rogers-seminar/

BOTANICA: SYMBIOSIS

This exhibition is open between 10am and 4pm from **Saturday 21 April to Sunday 6 May 2018**. It includes more than 150 original artworks from some of the best botanic and natural history artists in Australia and beyond.

Highly recommended by your Editor on the basis of past years' exhibitions!

Location: Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. **Entry is free.**

All artworks are for sale and include framed and unframed originals, prints and cards.

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