

NEWSLETTER

APS - Illawarra Group

Issue No. 3

May/June 2024

A Note from the President

Our dream, for a local community bush regeneration project initiated by the Illawarra APS group has been realised, we are part of a team making a difference. Landcare Illawarra are our project leaders, while Kembla Joggers, Wollongong City Council, and the local community are all our partners. The first Thursday in the month, 9am -12:00, we meet in the Public Carpark just past Kembla Joggers Clubhouse. Our new plantings have survived the recent worst flood in 26 years, only losing a few plants. We still have not seen the Platypus that have been sighted there, but that's fine, they are our prime motivation to get these 400 metres of creek and Woodlands as natural as possible.

Welcome to our new members!

Did you know that we have a monthly walk on the third Sunday of each month? Our walks are chosen for most people with some level of walking fitness to join in, and are a great way to meet other members and to learn about the native flora in the beautiful region we live in.

We usually meet around 9:00am or 10am and the walk will be followed by refreshments at a nearby café where possible, we also will hold our monthly group meeting after the walk. *Partners and friends are very welcome to walk!*

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our team. Illawarra@austplants.com.au The schedule of upcoming walks for the 2024 is listed in this Newsletter. I hope you will be able to join us throughout the year!

At the AGM on 21 April 2024, the Committee positions were voted and accepted as detailed on this page.

Michael

About Illawarra Group:

We meet on the third Sunday of the month for a morning walk, followed by a meeting. See calendar of upcoming walks inside this issue.

President:
Michael Swire

Vice President
Tracee Lea

Treasurer:
Geoff Dernee

Secretary:
Ruth Livingstone

Membership Officer:
Danielle Robinson

Newsletter Editor:
Mary Swire
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Committee Email:
Illawarra@austplants.com.au



Link to our FB group.

**[Australian Plants Society
Illawarra Group](#)**

***Illawarra Grevillea Park Botanic Garden
Open Weekends - 3/4 May and 11/12 May!
10.00am - 4.00pm***

Expansive native display gardens, rainforest walk, sensory trail and picnic areas.
Extensive range of natives for sale including tube stock and grafted plants.
Adults \$7.00, Children under 12 free, dogs on leash welcome



Banksia spinulosa



Grevillea Miami Pink



Grevillea Dorothy Gordon



Grevillea maccutcheonii

Photos provided by Tracee Lea and Mary Swire

Wollongong City Council's "first" Koala Food Forest at Eleebana Reserve Koonawarra - by Glennis Wellings

Under the Urban Greening Strategy Council has joined with Symbio Wildlife Park to plant a new Koala Food Forest to feed their growing population of Koalas at Symbio.

This is a great idea, food for koalas and canopy cover and more oxygen into our atmosphere. For us humans here in Koonawarra which had been pinpointed as in need of canopy cover within the LGA, Eleebana Reserve Koonawarra was an ideal location.

Eleebana Reserve is in Eleebana Crescent which runs off Wallabah Way in Koonawarra. Eleebana Reserve runs along the south western bank of Brooks Creek. The Creek is lined with mature *Casuarina glauca*. The reserve is grassed with no canopy cover, so offered a great location to grow trees. There is a large area in front of the planted forest for community recreation and dog walking which will remain.

On 17 October 2023 students from nearby Koonawarra Primary School joined with Council in planting 700 selected local Eucalyptus tube stock in this reserve beside the creek.

Koalas love fresh new green leaves. It's a long-term project taking 18-24 months before the first of the leaves can be harvested. Once the trees have established good roots the leaves will be harvested regularly to feed the koalas that live at Symbio.

In the event of large-scale natural disasters like the 2019-20 bush fires, leaves from this Koala Food Forest can be used as an emergency food source for Koalas in emergency care.

The new Koala Food Forest in Koonawarra was planted with specially selected local Eucalyptus species. Symbio staff selected the species as they offer the tastiest leaves for Koala taste buds. Once established in 18-24 months Symbio will harvest 25 to 100 small branches (around a Ute load) every few weeks depending on the growth rate. Koalas change their preferences seasonally so they need a range of species. Koalas eat about ½ kilo leaves daily so to feed one Koala sustainably for 12 months needs upwards of 1000 trees.

Koala Food Forest at Eleebana Reserve Koonawarra - cont. by Glennis Wellings

10 species were planted, several are local endemic species:

Swamp Mahogany	Eucalyptus robusta
Forest Red Gum	Eucalyptus tereticornis
Cabbage Gum	Eucalyptus amplifolia
Grey Gum	Eucalyptus punctata
Tallow Wood	Eucalyptus microcorys
Pink Flowering Ironbark	Eucalyptus sideroxylon
River Red Gum	Eucalyptus camaldulensis
Lemon Scented Gum	Corymbia citriodora
Rose Gum	Eucalyptus grandis
Sydney Peppermint	Eucalyptus piperita



Photos by Gleniss Wellings

Ponds for small backyards - by Tracee Lea

I always wanted to have a little pond in my courtyard and after many years of thinking about it finally went out and did it. Here are a few of my thoughts on what to do.

Why have a pond - To provide a micro environment for frogs, birds and insects, an interesting array of plants, the sound of running water and happy frogs and a restful addition to the garden, there is something about water that calms us all.

Consider size - my pond is a plant pot about 600mm diameter and 300mm deep with the drainage hole sealed over. I think this might be about the minimum size to consider.

Position - put the pot in a spot that get sun for at least half a day as this will affect plant growth.

Plant selection - if you utilise plants like reeds and sedges, they will help to filter your water and keep it clean. Others will provide cover for fish/tadpoles or provide interesting leaves or flowers. Rocks and old pieces of logs can help hold plants in place and again provide cover for fish and tadpoles.

A fountain - helps aerate the water, helping to keep it clean and it also disturbs the water surface. Apparently, mosquitos prefer still water to lay their eggs. I got a solar powered one, which is slightly problematic in that it only works when the sun is shining on it.

One of my motivations was to attract frogs, locally Striped Marsh Frogs and Peron's Tree Frogs are present. I chose mostly local native water plants but have a couple of exotic plants in there as well. I have juncus, nardoo, native water lily, native plantain and the exotics are water iris and water hibiscus.

It took a bit of effort and fiddling around get the plants in an arrangement that looked nice to me. Use old bricks and pavers to raise plants to a height near the pond water level. Lastly install your fountain if using. Due to the relatively small size of my pond I am able to rely on the Juncus to filter the water for me without having to resort to mechanical filtration and aeration. This would be something to consider in larger ponds.

This is also a process that needs to take place over several days. I used tap/town water to fill my pond, which has additives such as chlorine in it. The water needs to sit for a few days to give these additives time to break down and disperse before you add fish for example. I then left my pond to settle and kept an eye on water levels and the occasional fallen over plant. Evaporation can be an issue particularly on hot days as can overflowing during periods of rain. I just top it up with the hose when levels drop and leave it after rain. Depending what material your pond is made from you could possibly drill a few holes near the top rim to let out water at a certain level.

A few weeks after setting up my pond I heard the distinctive call of a Striped Marsh Frog coming from it, very exciting! Not long after I noticed small wriggly things in the water which with time got bigger and turned out to be the tadpoles. There is now quite a large population in the pond. I don't provide food, they seem to eat the algae in the pond and the old water lily leaves. I have continued to add things like fake water lily flowers sitting between two pots that the frogs seem to like hiding under, and a little bridge made of a sliver of paver and a couple of pebbles for the fountain mechanism to sit on that gives the tadpoles somewhere to hide as well. Perhaps the only problem I have had has been an outbreak of string algae which came out one of the pot plants. Now I add a splash of organic barley to combat it.

It is such a joy to listen to my frog each evening and to know that they are thriving and have a spot to live happily.

In recent weeks I have noticed mosquito wrigglers in the pond, so after a bit of research I am going to add some Pacific Blue Eye fish to eat them. Will let you know how that go!

Photos provided by Tracee Lea



Upcoming Program

Our walks take place on the **third Sunday of the month** followed by our monthly Committee meeting. All APS NSW and Interstate members are very welcome. It is always possible that a date/location may change so please check any email correspondence or RSVP Illawarra@austplants.com.au to check times.

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Details</u>
19 May	Tallawarra Wetlands	More info to follow via email and Facebook.
16 June	Stanwell Tops	More info to follow via email and Facebook.
21 July	Providential Walk Royal National Park	Invitation to Sutherland APS group.
18 August	Dharawal National Park	
15 September	Croome Reserve Albion Park	
20 October	Barren Grounds Jamberoo Mountain Road	Invitation to Nowra & Southern Highlands APS groups
17 November	Bungoona Lookout Royal National Park	Invitation to Sutherland group APS
15 December (to be confirmed)	Kembla Joggers Clubhouse Christmas Festivities	

Members and friends, if you have a story/news item/photo you would like included in the Newsletter, please contact Mary via: maryvalentine999@gmail.com