



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group June 2023

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Vale Margaret Olde

It is with deep regret we say farewell to one of Menai Wildflower Group's most loved ladies.

Our prayers and thoughts go out to Peter, their family and others that were fortunate enough to know her.

Marion Payne very kindly went back into the archives to give us some idea of the impact Marg had with the Group.

Marg joined the Menai Wildflower Group in the late 1980s, became an Office Holder in 2008 and may have taken on the role of Delegate to the then Society for Growing Australia Plants (the precursor to APS) assisting husband Peter with his involvement with the native plant movement.

Marg gave presentations to the Group on *Ferns* (late 1989), joined Peter on a talk on *Late Spring Plants, Dividing and Repotting Ferns* in early 1990, and also

that year an audio visual presentation entitled *Candles of Colour*.

In the early 2000s they bought a property at Oakdale, near Camden. This had been a passion of Peter's for many years and as the property progressed Marg and Peter hosted many functions down there including one that featured Don Burke and Angus Stewart as Guest Speakers.

Back in Illawong Margaret kept up her relationship with Menai Wildflower Group, becoming Secretary in 2008 through 2012.

There were many visits to Silky Oaks with Open Days, plant sales and entertaining guests and throughout remained a Committee Member of MWG up until 2022.



Peter and Marg at the MWfG 2015 Christmas Lunch

Margaret's smile was a constant through these years – whether it was with a cuppa and cake at the conclusion of a MWG meeting or at Oakdale or assisting Helen Patience creating a Floral Tribute to Ron Fraser who passed away in early 2020.

Through these years however, Marg struggled with ill health but always remaining positive and smiling throughout.

Farewell Margaret Olde – a lady who will never be forgotten by those who knew her.

Personal News

Jean and Kevin Beckinsale have been members of our group for the last decade or so.

Sadly, both had to leave their Kinsela Street, Illawong home to move into aged care not too long ago. Only difficulty with night time driving had stopped them coming to meetings in recent times. (I remember Jean lying along the ground to reach weeds under prickly bushes in the IRFS garden!)

Both Beckinsales caught COVID recently and sadly Jean passed away last week.

Our thoughts are with daughter, Kay and their many young relatives.

P.J.P.

(Acting) President's Report

Well winter has now attacked and the days are getting shorter. Not happy Jan!

I can't change the weather but if I was ever asked, I would vote YES for Daylight Saving to be year long. Trouble is no one has ever asked me and somehow I suspect no one ever will.

Despite that, a lot has happened so far this year.

The Mounds are having a makeover at the moment thanks to Lloyd and Anthony who have moved a lot, and I mean a LOT of material to cover the planting areas. It makes so much of a difference, doesn't it.

And our motor mower is working properly as well after a stint in hospital.

Added to that we have one new flag that was displayed out front at the last meeting and some sandwich board notices are in the works. After that we are looking at a more permanent new sign making people aware who it is doing all this planting and growing plants to sell. There is another sign we're looking at for around the corner on the side of the road to advise people they can get in any time to have a wander. Lloyd is improving a few steps and path to that end.

After a seemingly good Outings year things have fallen a bit flat lately so we're trying to stir up some excitement and get our bodies back into moving mode. Lloyd is planning a walk soon so keep a look out for that and our Herbarium tour at the Mt Annan Gardens is still on the plate. Plus we were going out to Barangaroo to have a look (that will be a train and hoofing it day) and a BBQ with Sutherland Group at Joseph Banks Gardens in spring. I'll phone Rhonda re the Joseph Banks BBQ.

Now there were a few others we shouldn't forget – Dan Clarke gave us a great talk on conserving Western Sydney's endangered plants and offered us a tour of the area. Once again spring would probably be

best for that too. I'll see if Sutherland would like to join us on that one.

And finally Grevillea Park is open first 2 weekends in July and September. Joy and I haven't been there for quite a while so why not join us for that one.

We have to stop talking and get on with it folks. Hands up anyone who would like to take control of one of those activities. Thanks.

As Helen P. told us at the last meeting, we won 18 awards at the Easter Show this year including one Category in which we were placed First, Second and Third! What a marvelous effort. Thank you Helen, Jan, Cameron and whoever else was involved. A great effort.

Of course on a sad note, one of our hard-working members – always with a smile – Marg Olde passed away a short time ago. Foremost in this issue we mention some of her important participations in APS and MWG activities. A lovely lady who will be sadly missed.

I have sent a card to Peter and the family expressing our sorrow and offering our thoughts and prayers in support of their grief. We are looking at a more permanent way of remembering Marg's contribution to MWG – any ideas please feel free to give them to the Committee.

Finally I will be away in June and will miss our next meeting. Jan Riley will run the June meeting in my absence.

The attendance at Mira's talk on the gene spread of the Pink Flannel Flower was extremely poor. It will be hard for us to attract speakers if we can't improve our attendance numbers. So please come and spread the word. Thanks.

All the very best. Stay safe and I'll see you at the July meeting.

Graeme Davies

Nursery report May 23

Activities have slowed down because of the cooler weather but also because we do not know if The Glossies campaign is going to be refunded. This policy of the NP's always seems an unlikely way to get good results. Adrian, Janine and Amanda are still sowing and tubing for some of their spring projects and Adrian is organising some down country planting events. Pam F, Greg and Marian W sometimes participate so if you are interested in joining in please contact Adrian. The details are in this newsletter.

The main plants we sell are the Flannel flowers but the white and the pink have both been difficult to

propagate for the last two years because of the wet and humid conditions. The situation is now improving and we have seedlings coming through so hopefully we will have some more for sale in a couple of months.

The IRFS gardens

This long, wet period coupled with the loss of some members last year have made life difficult in the gardens. Most Tuesdays the grass seemed too wet to cut and the gardens too wet to weed. Some plants died from excessive water including our most loved *Banksia praemorsa*. We are gradually getting back on top but there is still a way to go.

Lloyd Hedges

Orchid Corner

In speaking with others, last year's flowering season was not the best for native orchid growers with flowering generally very patchy.

In my case I had a reasonable showing of my many hybrids but very little in the way of speciosum.

No one seems to know why, but as orchid growers always do there seems to be a thread throughout – too much rain and not enough sun.

Of course those who have heated orchid houses (if you can afford the power costs) can adjust to that and there have been a number of excellent hybrids on offer from various orchid nurseries.

In my case, having spent a few years building up my collection of speciosum, I have been very quiet on the hybrid front. Maybe I might add a few others this year.

I've included photos of some of my better hybrids and speciosum and hope this next flowering season will be a good one. It's looking promising at this early stage, so fingers crossed.

Here are some photos that give me that promising outlook – flower spikes well underway with various plants.

OK so not heaps of flowers last year BUT the growth since then has been nothing but spectacular. So good in fact I'm still getting quite a few new canes in many of my plants. Strangely late for this kind of growth but I'll take it anyway.

Now you may see this orchid in flower in the wild and while some might like to add it to their collection, the odds of you growing it will deter you from trying. First you have to get a plant and that will be nearly impossible. Second, and this is the reason you won't see any of it for sale, while it looks good in the photos, the roots requires a special blending of fungus

and other litter for it to survive. Getting that right only happens with Mother Nature and not by well-meaning humans. So please don't even try – enjoy your other plants.



My orchids in flower.

Graeme Davies

One of My Favourite Plants

Calytrix tetragona or Fringe Myrtle has been growing in my garden in Illawong for at least ten years. It is a small to medium shrub flowering in late winter with open clusters of star like flowers which vary from white to pink. The calyx remains and turns reddish. It is drought resistant and has also tolerated prolonged wet weather. My plant is growing in dappled sun. The garden soil here is sandy. *Calytrix* grows in lightly wooded areas and I have seen it as far west as Hill

End in N.S.W.

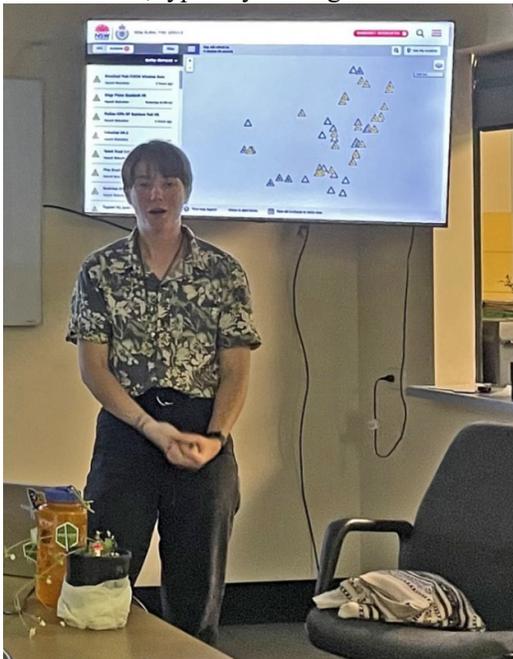


After many trials it seems to strike from cuttings best in late summer to early autumn. So far I have never been able to collect seeds.

Anne Burns.

Mira Jordan and the Enigmatic Pink Flannel Flower

Mira Jordan gave a very interesting talk based on the findings of an Honours thesis on *Actinotus forsythii*—the pink flannel flower, particularly its geographical distribution on the East Coast and the population genetics of this fire ephemeral. It is found in damp areas in eucalypt forests and heaths on shallow soils on sandstone, typically on ridges.



Mira Jordan giving a talk on Pink Flannel Flowers

Mira explained how the simultaneous blooming of great numbers of plants following previous fire events

maximises the genetic diversity of the seeds which then enter the seed bank to lay dormant for extended periods of time (50-70 years) until the next fire. Genetic comparisons of the geographically quite dispersed populations of this plant have identified their affinities, and were also compared with the population genetics of the white flannel flower.

Mira also explained how this research was relevant to current research programs of the NSW Government on developing resilience in plants populations to future climate change.

Mira's research study, which was financially supported by the Menai Wildflower Society, certainly stimulated much discussion and many questions.

Ross Jeffree

More on the Pink

I hope you all enjoyed Mira's talk. Her youth, enthusiasm and energy were infectious and will take her a long way. It seems likely that her PhD may well be about our other favourite flower, the White flannel, *Actinotus helianthii*. Its genetics proved to be so disparate as to offer no easy explanation for a plant that is widespread and consistently flowers at the same time.

Mira Jordan described *Actinotus forsythii* as an 'obligate fire ephemeral' during her talk to our group. This indicates it is short-lived and fire is essential for its survival. To be specific, smoke is required to stimulate the mass germination of the seeds following bushfire. This survival strategy is necessary because of the hostile environment of downslopes of the sandstone ridges of the Great Dividing Range where there is little soil, just denatured sandstone that has little water holding capacity, little nourishment and is exposed to the worst of the weather.

By germinating after fires the Pink flannel maximises its chances of survival. In the post-fire environment there are plenty of nutrients and competition has been eliminated so there is a brief time of plenty. As the fires generally are mid to late summer the germination probably happens in the first decent rain afterwards which is likely to be in autumn as the worst of the heat is over. They grow an initially weak main stem incapable of holding the plant off the ground so the side stems take over that job and assisted by the dead remains of their fire-killed competitors, they form a low wind resistant tangle.



Pink Flannel Flowers depend on fire for their survival.

The growth rate is slow as the seedling heads into winter. There are more rain days at this elevation and I have little doubt that dew formation also helps the water regime, as does its position at the bottom of a heathy slope likely devoid of competition. As the temperature rises with spring the growth rate increases and sinuous leaders head off in all directions as far and as fast as possible.

By December the growth habit changes to a quick thickening of the main and secondary stems as moisture is packed into them. Flower buds appear at the nodes. As flowering approaches the growth rate is frenetic. When flowering starts the stems rapidly become white and wiry as all the plants reserves are put into the flowering and the setting seed through January and February, though it does vary from place to place and year to year. I estimated there were 3000 seeds on a typical plant.



Mira with much admired Pink Flannel Flower seedlings.

The plant is dead by the time last seeds are set and this briefly dominant plant disappears to all but the discerning eye within weeks of its last flowers. I have seen them when the main stem has failed bowling about like tumbleweeds.

This may explain the response I got from a Blue Mountains resident when I told him that I was searching for the pink flannel flowers. They are a myth he said: I was told they were covering a whole hillside but when I went to have a look there was no sign of them.

Which prompted a poetic moment:

Denizens of High Places
Wreathed in Smoke and Fire
Mystical perhaps Mythical
Unfindable, Ubiquitous, Non-existent
This is the Pink Flannel Flower.

Lloyd Hedges

Sutherland Shire Bushcare help Menai Wildflower Group

On the first Thursday of each month SSC Bushcare give MWG a hand to reduce the exotic weeds around the IRFS.

Greg and Pam are normally in the MWG contingent so in their absence in Europe numbers might have been down but Brad and two SSC bushcare volunteers, Neville and Stuart, have kept the numbers up and we are getting in some good work, particularly on the Morning Glory.



Neville, Brad and Stuart from SSC help MWJG.

If you want to join in call me on 0400 431 216.

Lloyd Hedges

Coming Events

14 June Wed. ANSTO walk on The Pink Track approx. 3kms

Meeting place ANSTO cafeteria 9:30am for a 10am walk start. You can return to the café for lunch.

This walk is rated easy-moderate. Much of it is flat and easy but there are a couple of poorly made sections where the footing is unstable.

Wear suitable walking boots or walking shoes, Wear a sunhat and carry water.

Please register with L Hedges on 0400 431 216 before the day.

Walk time approx. 2hrs.

8 July Sat Meeting. This meeting will feature our newish member Ross Jeffree who will be giving an introduction to the Dragons of the Komodo Islands.



Komodo Dragon courtesy of Ross Jeffree.

10 July Mon The Canberra APS are scheduled to visit us. This will be a morning visit so I would suggest we supply a morning tea at the IRFS. Is there someone willing to organise this? It is a way off but they were thinking about 10 people may be coming after attending the Grevillea Park over the weekend.

You can make an ecological transformation!

Join like-minded people to 'regreen our country' and save our species.

By planting 5,500 native trees and shrubs in the coming spring, you can add to the essential habitat for the endangered Superb Parrot which is breeding at 'Moorlands' located in the South West Slopes of NSW.

On April 19, an initial BirdLife Australia survey was conducted by Graham Fry, Liz Cameron, Graham Lalchere, Vicki Bolling, Janine and Adrian Polhill and Vince Heffernan (property owner) on five sites at 'Moorlands'. This survey provided baseline data for monitoring bird populations and the effectiveness of

planting projects. This data will also be relevant when selecting the species of trees and shrubs to be planted in spring.

Call or text Adrian Polhill (0424 478 498), or email me at adrianpolhill@hotmail.com to register or have any questions answered. Alternatively, free registration is available on Eventbrite, via this link: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/oatley-flora-and-fauna-conservation-society-64276597523>

It will be a real pleasure to meet like-minded people who care about our environment and make a difference. Read on for further information.

'Moorlands' is owned and managed by Vince Heffernan, a sixth generation sheep grazier and noted expert on new forms of regenerative land management.

The 1200 ha (3,000 acre) property which has been in the family for over 180 years is located 3.5 hours from Sydney (1.5hrs from Canberra).

Located in the southern tablelands fronting the Lachlan River, its contrasting terrain includes lush pastures along the river flats and rolling hills. Vince follows a combined organic/biodynamic approach coupled with rotational grazing to produce lamb which has won gold medals in 'Delicious' Produce Awards three times in the past four years.

In the past 20 years great efforts were undertaken to recreate an open woodland environment by rebuilding the functionality of the natural ecosystem at Moorlands. This included the planting of >60,000 native trees, shrubs, grasses & native aquatic plants. Vince is the former Chair of Upper Lachlan Landcare Inc. which supports land owners in the region to enable them to care for the environment. For more information: <https://moorlandslamb.com.au/>

In August, September and October this year, another 5,000 trees and shrubs (supplied by Greening Australia (4500), and Rotary Adopt A Tree (1000)) will be planted in three paddocks adjoining previous plantings completed in 2020, 2021 and 2020. The tubestock will include eucalypts, acacia, callistemon and many other native species indigenous to the area.

Goals: One goal is to provide essential habitat for native fauna including endangered species like the Superb Parrot which breeds in the South West Slopes during spring and early summer in grassy box woodlands. Refer to Saving our Species fact sheet: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Threatened-species/saving-our-species-superb-parrot-fact-sheet-180432.pdf>

Another goal is to incorporate this planting with the work of thousands of landholders and partners to create Australia's biggest carbon sink and establish one million hectares of habitat across southern Australia. Refer to the following link for more information. <https://www.greeningaustralia.org.au/pro>

[grams/great-southern-landscapes/](#) To achieve this goal, Greening Australia provides assistance in terms of tubestock, nature fibre weed mat and tree guards.

Schedule: The available weekends (based on the very busy farming schedule) are:

- 12&13 August
- 26&27 August
- 9&10 September
- 18-22 September (for volunteers who wish to continue planting during the week)
- 23&24 September
- 30 Sep & 1 October
- 14&15 October
- 28&29 October

The schedule is flexible, e.g. if family groups wish to come during the school holidays.

Process: Soil is prepared ahead of time by Vince, so digging with minimal effort is required. Volunteers will be assigned specific tasks. These can be rotated to avoid fatigue:

- 1.making tree guards and preparing natural fibre weed mats
- 2.digging holes of tubestock (5 meters apart)
- 3.laying out tubestock, tree guards, weed mats
- 4.planting tubestock, fixing tree guard and weed mat
- 5.watering

Facilities: Shearers' kitchen, hot showers, camping, power available to charge phones etc, potable drinking water

Meals: Self catering

Accommodation is available in nearby towns (Crookwell, Gunning, Yass) for those volunteers who are not camping.

The following are suggestions for other activities before or after your visit to Moorlands:

The Upper Lachlan district is frequented by a huge variety of birdlife e.g wedge tailed eagles, nankeen kestrels, lyrebirds, eastern rosellas, australasian grebe. There have been almost 200 species of bird identified as being residents or visitors to the region, including many rare birds such as the powerful owl and turquoise parrot. Some recommended bird watching locations, and approx driving times from Moorlands follow:

ACT. Canberra nature reserves are spectacular. near Gungahlin, ACT)

- Mulligans Flat nature reserve (75 minutes drive, near Gungahlin, ACT)
- Goorooyaroo nature reserve (80 minutes drive ,
- Jerrabomberra wetlands. A favourite bird watching spot. Vince saw Golden headed cisticola and Lathams

Snipe on his last visit. (75 minutes drive , near Fyshwick, ACT)

NSW

- Pejar Dam is excellent for water birds (60 minutes drive , east of Moorlands, towards Goulburn)
- Mundoonen Nature Reserve is very good.(45 minutes drive , south west of Moorlands towards Yass)
- Bango Nature Reserve (60 minutes drive , south west of Moorlands towards Yass)
- Narrawa Road (bridge over Lachlan River) (45 minutes' drive , north of Moorlands towards Boorowa)

Birds of the Upper Lachlan

<https://www.upperlachlan.nsw.gov.au/sites/upperlachlan/files/public/images/documents/upperlachlan/Community/Birds%20of%20the%20Upper%20Lachlan%20Shire%20Oct%2719new.pdf>

The threatened Superb Parrots nest and breed at Moorlands after Vince planted various species of Acacia. For more details of threatened native animal and plant species in Upper Lachlan use this link.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/ThreatenedSpeciesApp/profileData.aspx?id=10645&cmaName=NSW+South+Western+Slopes>

Other points of interest

- History of Gunning <https://gunninghistory.blogspot.com/>
- Gullen Range Wind Farm – there is more than 1 wind farm in the region
- Recently restored 'Royal Hotel' (circa 1865) in Dalton - <https://www.visitupperlachlan.com.au/stay/hotels/royal-hotel-dalton/>

Adrian Polhill

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Note: this issue of the Newsletter was compiled by John Prats in the temporary absence of Pam Forbes.