

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

Southern Highlands Group

...your local native garden club

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We love the extraordinary 'surgical stitching' around the branch/trunk connection on this baby eucalypt. Not sure which one it is, but the owner thought it to be "E ... something...maybe "Little Snowman"" We'd love to hear from you if you can be more botanically accurate!

Diary Dates

April 5th General meeting with speakers. Presentation with photos by members who attended ANPSA January Conference in Tasmania. Combined input from Sarah, Kris, Erica and Jonquil.

Please remember to bring snipped pieces for the *Plant Table* discussion. - also plants, fruit, veggies for *Sale Table*. Let's not leave all the money raising to Kris!

Committee members please arrive at 1.00pm to discuss proposed new planting outside CWA rooms.

Monday, April 16th committee meeting Bill and Fran's place in Exeter.

Sunday 6th May outing to Grevillea Park. Car pooling from Bowral Pool leaving 9.00am. Contact Trisha Arbib on 0437 974 191 or email (address above) for car sharing from the Bundanoon area. Light refreshments available but the plan is to take our own picnic lunch (and a chair?) \$5 entry fee.

Monday, 21st May committee meeting Trisha's in Bundy

Thursday, June 7th General meeting - speaker subject - Birds (more info to follow in email)

Monday, 16th June Committee Meeting Kay's



Thursday, July 5th 2.00pm at 7 Arthur St, Mittagong Join in an outing to Erica and George's vital and much-loved Mittagong garden followed by another arvo tea at Rose's Cafe. Here we are, enjoying ourselves at Rose's after visiting Roma Dix's garden in early March. We now plan another visit to check out those delicious cakes! Contact friends or committee for car sharing.

Snippets

Remember that we all get more from SHAPS if as many people as possible contribute. What do you have to offer? Writing a piece for the next Newsletter (May 21st deadline)? Lemons for the sale table? Tomatoes? Spinach? Perhaps you will look up some information about that plant specimen you are bringing for discussion or cook something to share at afternoon tea time. And keep your ears and eyes open for interesting speakers to suggest for the calendar into the future (suggestions to Kay.) We look forward to seeing you at the April meeting.



Purslane Jane Lemann brought a piece of this familiar plant to our February meeting and drew our attention to the fact that, as with so many 'weeds', it is edible. It seems that it's an Australian native, but, like bracken, it is native to other parts of the world as well. Not only is it edible, but it is highly nutritious, being rich in vitamins. C and A and also providing vitamin B. It is a super-rich source of Omega 3 oils which are said to be marvellously good for us. So keep your eyes to the ground and when you see this familiar sprawler, (as with many 'flat weeds' it thrives on being mown so is often growing in lawns and on pathways) dig up a piece to replant in your garden, or pile up a few plants onto a sheet of newspaper and collect the seed. Predictably, our Australian aboriginal people have always known about purslane and its benefits.

Purslane Yogurt Dip

1 cup tight packed fresh picked purslane leaves, stems removed

1/2 cup good yogurt

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon good olive oil

Blend garlic, salt, oil then fold in the leaves and chill. Enjoy!

Lest we forget - what we were never meant to know... "How did 105 priceless and irreplaceable historical specimens sent here by the French end up being destroyed by biosecurity officers?" A quote from an article in the Good Weekend about the recent destruction in Australia of botanical specimens collected by the French botanist Labillardiere in the 18th century. The collection was captured by the English in 1795 and Labillardiere appealed to Sir Joseph Banks for its return. The collection was eventually returned to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. It survived WWII and later various French institutional budget cuts but was cut down in the most mundane fashion by Australian Government biosecurity officers. They achieved what the Nazis did not!

The collection contained a number of "type specimens", the first known examples of new species, highly important for later research. I recommend the excellent account of the fiasco by the SMH, but their researches into this have been met by what is essentially a cover-up by the government. ". Australian officials refusing to speak beyond bland bureaucratic statements of regret." The botanist who ordered the specimens ".. has been instructed not to talk to the media."

I'm sure steps will be taken to ensure this doesn't happen again (if any institution would ever again consider sending specimens to Australia!) Nevertheless the incident speaks volumes about the lack of transparency in government here. No official seems ever to be willing to accept responsibility for such stuff-ups and measures are taken to shut down any real enquiry by silencing those who know the facts. It is no wonder that whistle-blowers are a threatened species here, despite supposed legislative protections!

*Peter Tinslay,, The Antique Bookshop and Curios .
Above extracted from the Foreword to Antique
Bookshop Catalogue no 324.*

Exhibition: 'Glimpses in a Rainforest'- Inspired by the Robertson Nature Reserve - at Robertson CTC Gallery.

Paintings, drawings and printmaking by SHAPS member, Cathryn Coutts

'Glimpses in a Rainforest' is an exhibition of art works, to be held in the Robertson CTC (Community Technology Centre - 58-60 Hoddle Street Robertson) from 21 April to 19 May 2018. Gallery hours are Thursday and Friday 10am to 4pm, Saturday 10am to 1pm and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

The purpose of this exhibition is to support the local community and raise awareness of the rainforests growing in the Robertson area. The artworks aim to show the beauty of our native plants and emphasise the

Paintings>drawings<printmaking

**Glimpses
in a Rainforest**

Cathryn Coutts

21 April - 19 May 2018
CTC Robertson
58 - 60 Hoddle St (Illawarra H'way)
 Thursday, Friday : 10 am - 4 pm
 Saturday : 10 am - 1 pm Sunday: 10am - 2pm

Official Opening:
 Saturday 21 April 2 pm
ALL WELCOME
 for more information contact: info@robertsonctc.org.au

importance of protecting our endangered natural flora. Members of the APS Moss Vale were taken on a walk through the Robertson Nature Reserve in 2017, led by Helen Tranter. The artist has drawn her inspiration from the plants and habitats found there.

Catherine has a keen interest in the conservation of native plants, and in the relationship between art and science in exploring the natural world. In her art works she uses observation drawings in the field, to become familiar with the plant in its natural habitat. These drawings enable her to understand the structure and 'character' of a plant, while at the same time exploring the expressive possibilities that it suggests to her. From the initial drawings her works evolve using a variety of media: drawing, painting and printmaking, which includes techniques such as etching, collagraph and monotype. At times actual plant material is incorporated into the art work.

The exhibition will be officially opened on Saturday April 21 at 2pm, by Susannah Blaxill, one of Australia's leading botanic artists.

All hail this brave plant! Rodger Elliot and David L Jones (Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants) tell us that there are six or seven species of clematis endemic in Australia. I suspect the one in this picture is *Clematis aristata*.



This specimen put on a magnificent flowering in late February atop a wall alongside Loesby Park in Bowral. Its roots are under bitumen beneath a curiously grandiose brick gateway into Loesby Park which is situated behind Bowral Hospital, on the corner of Ascot Rd and Sheffield Rds. Strangely, the crumbling, red-brick edifice includes a bricked ticket office. These days the gates hang free and it is hard to imagine why anyone would be required to pay for entry to this dusty corner of parkland, or indeed, why there is a high and expensive-looking fence to exclude wanderers. Little else is left of a planting undertaken (one suspects) many years ago, though a native plant enthusiast can detect struggling remnants of *Hardenbergia violacea* and a few additional clematis plants along the Sheffield Rd fence. The stressed eucalypts are likely remnant original vegetation. The site is dust-dry and has recently been dug up for extensive roadworks which included a new footpath built directly over the root-run of this clematis.

Typically, natives have been planted then totally neglected. A merciful watering, mulching and a little weed control might have seen a beautiful display along that park fence. SC

Report from our February meeting - Speaker, Elizabeth Jacka

Sarah Cains

Our Southern Highlands Group (SHAPS) had the good fortune of starting our year of 2018 with this most interesting speaker. Elizabeth Jacka, formerly a Victorian and more recently (with her husband, Ken) a resident of our district, is the daughter of Mollie and Morton Boddy who, from their Eastern Park Nursery in Geelong, were trailblazers in the cultivation and distribution of Australian native plants.

With photos from the time (1950s) to illustrate her story, Liz told of the establishment, early days and development the nursery. The project was driven by Morton and Mollie's passion for the natural landscape and their great concern about the devastation caused by large scale clearing of bushland for the establishment of soldier settler blocks after World War 2.

Inspired by Alf Gray, who was growing natives at the Natural Resources and Conservation League's nursery at Wail, Morton and Mollie moved to Geelong in 1951 with a plan to grow low-cost native trees and shrubs for use on farms and in gardens.

By the mid 1950s, Eastern Park Nursery had been moved onto a nearby plot of several acres where the Boddys erected a small glass house and a shade house. Wood-veneer tubes were used to grow new plants (no plastic!) and it was interesting to hear that these were assembled by local children. Many would see them as fortunate kids to be part of such a worthwhile learning experience!



Fruit tins were collected from schools and hospitals, together with smaller food and drink cans, to be used as containers for growing on. Photos showed semi-trailers packed with large, cardboard cartons filled with plants for distribution all over Australia. Further photographs show migrant women, their heads covered in neatly tied scarves, working at planting and weeding in the nursery.

Elizabeth's brother, Ralph, entered the business and the nursery became grower and distributor of the truly remarkable number of 3,000 species of Australian plants. Extensive plantings were established as display gardens with all plants carefully monitored for growth. It is worth respectfully remembering that plant identification in the days before books by Leon Costermans and his cohort would have been an exacting and time-consuming task.

It was a privilege to be invited into the family to hear of the early days of this important Australian endeavour. Morton and Mollie and their family made excursions all over Australia to collect seeds and cuttings. Elizabeth told us of sitting around the family table cutting up venetian blind pieces for labelling the plants. It was hardly surprising to be told that,

"At home we never talked about anything but plants and the nursery."

"Poor Ken!" she exclaimed to me later, speaking of her then visiting boyfriend (now husband). She felt he must have struggled to find common ground for conversation with her passionate and single-minded family members!

Important figures from the world of native plants appear with the Boddys in the photographs. A J Swaby, founder of APS (SGAP as it was then), Ben and Dulcie Schubert and writer and artist, Thistle Harris, to

name a few. Harris declared that she was amazed to see the development of the nursery and its attendant plantings. Ellis Stones' name is stamped on the cover of the precious Eastern Park Nursery Planting Guide which has recently come into Liz's possession.

The nursery closed in 1968 and it is sad to see that not a trace of this far-sighted enterprise

remains today. Hopefully, in more enlightened times, a heritage order would have been placed on Mollie and Milton's plantings, if not the whole Eastern Park Nursery site.

Morton continued his contribution by writing articles as well as a guide book on the cultivation of Australian plants. He kept a comprehensive slide collection which he used to illustrate his talks

This interest in native plants and the creative and productive efforts of their early champions such as the Boddys, are a Victorian claim-to-fame. Given the activities of these innovators, it is unsurprising that, as a direct follow-on, the remarkable, world-class, landscaped garden celebrating and displaying Australian native plants, is positioned at Cranbourne, in Victoria.



Roma's Garden

Elizabeth Smith



On a balmy, early-autumn afternoon, our group spent a peaceful hour or so in a Mittagong garden. Here, the owner's long-time friend, Elizabeth Smith, tells the story of this place and how one woman, with a little help from her friends and a very small budget, developed two suburban blocks into a serene and lovely natural garden.

Roma's garden is, I suspect, the greenest, 'nativest' garden any of us will ever see outside a piece of regenerated bush. Not always, however, was it as we see it now. When she came to that house, Roma found herself living next door to a vacant block. Like many vacant blocks, it was fenced in on three sides by neighbours, open to the street and covered in weeds. For twenty one years, stick by stick, root by root, with the owner's permission, she cleared it of mainly blackberry, honeysuckle, ivy and privet. When there was a space, she planted trees,

including a Bunya Pine and when there was grass enough, a neighbour mowed it. By three years ago it had become a grassy patch with a few old and few young trees. The old trees filled it with their presence. It was a nice place for a body to sit and think or just stand and stare. Then, minutes before an estate agent had it razed, Roma became the owner.

The unwanted fence between the blocks came down and a new one went in on the street to keep the dog in. A rainwater tank went in on the top of the slope. Some serious tree surgery put dead trees, weed trees and broken branches through a chipper. Not a leaf or chip left the block. Roma and her son made a fence to fence carpet. The only weed-killer is mulch. Now there is no grass for the neighbour to mow.

The older part of the garden, near the house, is tightly packed between and under the original trees, big old gums, shears (*casuarina* sp) tree ferns and once, a beautiful, big, old native cherry (*exocarpos* sp). In feeling, if not in fact,, the old garden is expanding into the new space.

A braiding of paths, one-woman paths, is threading its way through the whole garden leading to this, around that and sometimes over something else, joining, separating and joining again like the waterways in a wetland. If anything not-a-weed comes up in a path or leans over it, it is possible that the path will be moved. Whatever makes sense.

Heavy rain, which could seriously erode the slope of this piece of land is carefully channelled to dissipate itself across the slope and pool before sinking into the ground to be there for the dry times.

Besides plants and paths, dear to this gardener's heart are rocks and ponds, the bigger the better, I suspect, to be used not as a bed or path edging but as features in the landscape. Ponds might even be breeding. Every so often a new one appears. Large and small, they are occupied by fish and frogs. These have to be carefully managed. When pond weed is more than enough, it is dumped where it will do most good as mulch. When frog spawn appears, it is protected from being eaten by the fish. Fish, whose job it is to eat mosquito wrigglers, you probably will not see as they are native, small, brown, transparent and shy.

Ro's choice of plants is like that of so many of us, "If its native and grows here happily". South the new space, new plants came: gifts from friends, treasures from nurseries and markets, divisions from near the house and what was brought in by wind, rain or birds or fell from the plants already there. If a plant self-seeds or strikes readily from cuttings, that is what happens. If a pot-plant can be divided it is, and set free in the open ground. The first Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum laciniatum*) was probably brought in by birds



from The Gib (Mount Gibraltar). Since its first beautiful, blue flower, there are now its children - Kangaroo Apples of all sizes and ages. They grow happily where they choose and when one dies (they are not long lived) the empty ground and sky space are soon reoccupied - probably first by native violets.

If you find yourself by one of the big trees, you could have a stag-horn or orchid looking you straight in the eye. They are small plants now, newly arrived, but promising. If you stand under the big, old plum tree, you will likely be knee-deep in ferns, but watch where you put your feet, there are orchids down there.

Among the original trees are Red Cedars, Blueberry Ash, Lemon Myrtle and Grass Trees. In some cases you will only recognise them if you know the bark of the trunk or a leafy twig that leans down from the canopy. The understory now includes banksias, Tea Trees, Eriostemon (*Philotheca*) Kangaroo Paws, Poa and baby gum trees, with a carpet of native violets that seem bent on reaching the far fences as soon as possible (and a carpet of native violets is nothing to be sneezed at). At one end of a paling fence is a Hoya vine looking disgustingly lush, as lush as the passionfruit vine beside it. There is a path nearby, losing itself between lines of thriving, flowering Poa.

Clearly this is not a flower garden. What native garden is? Flowers come and go as and when they will but this is a garden of shapes and textures you will. More important is the joy in growing, the liveliness of plants that are happily growing. It is a very nice place to be, to just stand and stare.



Loveable plant nerds! This is a very familiar sight on our outings.

Resurrection Story

Jenny Simons

More than twenty-five years ago, when I was establishing my first native garden at Burradoo, I bought eight pots of *Correa* 'Dusky Bells' as they were said to be suitable for a shady spot. I planted them under an ornamental plum tree, which I decided to leave in the new garden for a while. Trouble was, one after another the *correas* died. I was disappointed, but as I didn't like 'Dusky Bells' much at all, the flowers being of a rather dull colour, I left the space under the plum tree bare (but heavily mulched) for a few years. Then becoming tired of the plum, and wanting more space to plant natives, the plum was removed and replaced by native grasses and the blue creeper *Sollya heterophylla* on a pole. Tiring of the creeper's unruly growth, and its weed potential, this was eliminated after a few years and a wattle (of course) planted instead. Three or four years ago, near the wattle, a *correa* appeared. It grew slowly and after a few years, it bloomed. Astoundingly, it is 'Dusky Bells' and now a second *correa* has made an appearance. After many years of absence, the blue creeper is back and making its way up a nearby wattle. There seems to be a strange regenerative force in the soil here! Even the plum, after being sawn off at ground level, took many years to die, after dogged removal of its suckers whenever they appeared.