



Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, *Port Augusta Incorporated* **Newsletter**

May 2015

President's Report *by John Zwar*



Santalum acuminatum - Wild Peach or Quandong

The summer and early autumn period has been particularly busy for Friends working as volunteers in various capacities at the Garden and with other activities. On Saturday 21st February a memorial seat, dedicated to the memory of former Friend, John Brook, was unveiled at Matthew Flinders Red Cliff Lookout in the Garden. John was formerly owner of Emeroo Station and trained TAFE pastoral students who built the first section of boundary fence at the AALBG. He had retired to Mount Barker and his Rotary Club friends donated the seat in his memory. The ceremony was attended by John's wife & family, members of Mount Barker Rotary, and Friends and staff of the AALBG on a very hot day.

Bruce and Gwen Leane had been Friends members for more than twenty years. They recently moved to a retirement village in Adelaide and were farewelled at a morning tea attended by some Friends and Garden staff. Bruce had managed and overseen the development of the "Friends" Nursery at the Garden for ten years until it was taken over by Council, was Deputy President for several years and a keen advocate for the Garden. Gwen was Friends Secretary for many years, proposed and organised the Eremophila Festivals and was a regular propagator in the Nursery. She was also well known for her numerous articles, many featuring the AALBG. We wish them well in Adelaide.

Our Deputy President Brian Reichelt and helpers have been extremely busy assisting Orana Sheltered Workshop employees with a landscaping project on Highway One verges at Port Augusta which they were contracted to do by the City Council. More recently Brian and helpers, at short notice, took on a landscaping project in a courtyard at the Port Augusta Hospital. Both of these projects have raised funds for the Friends. Brian is also leading the move to have the historic Yudnapinna Homestead relocated to the AALBG to be redeveloped as a base for Friends, the education programme and other uses. He has also investigated purchasing materials and with other helpers making seats for the Garden, which will be much cheaper than purchasing ready assembled seats. These will comply with the Council design standard for the Garden. Thanks for a huge effort Brian & helpers!

Shirley Mundy seeks out relevant grants that the Friends may be able to access. A recent \$3,000 grant from SA Government provided a split system air-conditioner which has been installed in the propagation shed, making conditions much more pleasant for staff and volunteers. Two other grants are being pursued. Thanks Shirley. With the closure of Augusta Nursery the Friends purchased benches, trolleys and nursery equipment

cheaply at the clearing sale and have donated these to the AALBG Nursery where they are in use.

Cooler weather means our Garden Guides are busier with visitor numbers increasing. I am sorry to report that our Secretary & co-ordinator of the Garden Guides, Chris Nayda, has been unwell but is now back home and improving. We wish you a speedy and complete recovery Chris. Recently John and Julie Barrie donated a gopher which had belonged to John's father for use at the Garden and they were thanked at a morning tea. The Friends have again assisted Tania Danylycha, AALBG Nursery Co-ordinator, with the running of the popular plant stall at the April Laura Folk Fair.

A Friend and Garden benefactor, Les Nicholls from Sydney, accompanied by his daughter Libby, visited the Garden recently and met Friends and staff and enjoyed seeing first hand and hearing about developments. It is always good to meet Friends who do not live locally, and we encourage them to contact us beforehand so we can meet them and show them around if visiting or passing through Port Augusta. I am pleased to report that the former AALBG Trainee Ryan Hayward has completed his training and has been retained as a permanent AALBG employee. Several Friends worked with him during his training which was supported by Playford Trust grants. A new trainee, Matt Hosking, has commenced at the Garden. Recently an app was developed for the Waite Arboretum in Adelaide enabling visitors to easily locate trees and information using their smart phones. We are investigating the development of a similar app for the AALBG and if this goes ahead we would be one of the first botanic gardens in Australia with this facility.

If you are able to attend I'm sure you will enjoy our next meeting with guest presenter Dr Dean Nicolle, a world authority on Eucalypts. We look forward to seeing some of you there. Enjoy the Newsletter.



Julie & John Barrie, Geraldine Davis, Brian Reichelt, Gopher Donation to Friends. - Peter Hall

GUEST SPEAKER - Dean Nicolle **Smaller Eucalypts Suitable for the Home Garden** **Saturday 23rd May**

Dean Nicolle is a consultant arborist, botanist and ecologist specialising in the systematics and ecology of the eucalypts (genera *Angophora*, *Eucalyptus* and *Corymbia*) and in the arboricultural assessment of trees.

Currency Creek Arboretum is a specialist eucalypt arboretum ('zoo of trees'), with its main purpose being research into Australia's most dominant natural group of plants, the eucalypts. The arboretum has the largest collection of eucalypt species in the world, with over 900 species and subspecies (and over 7000 individual plants) having been planted on the site. The arboretum has been established and is managed by Dean Nicolle.



Dean Nicolle

DIARY DATES

Next Meeting: Saturday 23rd May.
1pm in the AALBG Conference Room.

Birdlife Australia Club,
Port Augusta and District, Field Trips.

- Sunday 17th May - Buckaringa Gorge.
Meet at Quorn Pool, 8am.
- Sunday 14th June - Yorkey's Crossing.
Meet at start of Stuart Highway, 8am.
- Sunday 19th July - Telowie Gorge.
Meet at Highway 1, Port Germein Gorge Turn-off, 8am.
- Sunday 16th August - Bernie's Block.
Meet at Mambray Creek Parking Bay, 8am.

Bring sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection,
morning tea, lunch if staying longer and binoculars.

For more information, ring:
Peter on 8642 5723 or Greg on 8648 6630

GOPHER DONATION

On the 16th January 2015 Friends of the AALBG, John and Julie Barrie, gifted a four wheel drive gopher to the Garden. This gopher belonged to John's late father who was a native plant lover and Friend also of the Garden. The donation was gratefully accepted on behalf of the Friends by the vice President Brian Reichelt supported by the Treasurer Geraldine Davis. Once final paperwork is in place the gopher will be hired out to persons who find it difficult to walk the vast number of paths within the Garden. It is anticipated that this will be the first of several gophers to be used in such a way. Thank you John and Julie.

Wattle it be for tea and a coffee anyone?



Hmmmm, with the popularity of using native bush foods in cooking and growing native food producing plants in the home garden, as part of the AALBG Master plan recommendation, the BUSH TUCKER area is being transformed to allow visitor access and interaction with the plantings, with a "Touch, Taste and Smell" theme.

Over the past two months Friends, volunteers and staff have established an immersion path in the area, allowing for disabled access and also parents with prams to wander through the site. A stabilised scalps path (the same as what has been incorporated throughout the Eremophila Garden) has been looped within the site, with three main entrance areas.

A dry stone creek feature has also been incorporated within the garden design in the low lying area towards the bottom of the garden. This creek feature is to be planted with *Eucalyptus coolabah* ssp. *arida* and *Eucalyptus gamophylla* and will be under planted with **Cymbopogon ambiguus* - Native Lemon Grass - great for the chest... Although the Eucalypt species are not really used for bush foods in today's society, the traditional aboriginal peoples used the plants for their seeds and honey, and the established trees are also hosts for lerp and grubs which are a traditional aboriginal "bush food".

The easiest way to access the site is directly off the established "Highlights Walk path". Upon entering the path you are confronted with three very large established **Trioda spp* - Spinifex - for sleepy Kangaroos clumps. These look spectacular at the present time, as being in full flower, the plants are over 1.5m in height with the flower spikes which wave gently in the slightest breeze. The path meanders between these clumps, and directly behind and to the side of the path there is a very large natural grove of one of Australia's best known and most popular bush foods - **Santalum acuminatum* - the Wild Peach or Quandong - emus love them too...

A couple of the trees are actually overhanging the path, so when the trees are in fruit, visitors to the garden will actually be able to pick and sample the fruit, which contains twice the vitamin C content of an orange, and at times can be quite tart!

As you continue along the path, you will find one solitary *Brachychiton gregorii* - Desert Kurrajong. This species of tree was traditionally used for its seed, which was ground to make a paste. The tree has large tuberous roots which were used to extract water from in times of drought and also for the grubs that feasted on the foliage.

After a small incline you will come across a **Hakea leucoptera* - Needlebush - needle sharp!!! The foliage of this attractive plant is truly needle-like, so if you wish to touch the foliage... be careful! These plants' flowers are a favourite source of nectar for aboriginal people. This

was sucked directly from the flowers or added to water to make a sweet drink. When fermented, the nectar formed an alcoholic and very popular drink. Water can be drawn from the roots by cutting them and placing one end in a small fire and the other end above a container to catch the water droplets.

As you begin to head down the incline you will see the full length of the creek feature, meandering across the entire width of the garden. At the base of the incline as you cross the creek there are two very large established *Atriplex nummularia* - Old Man Saltbush shrubs. The dried foliage of the female plant is used extensively in restaurants as flavouring for some bush food products. You may have seen "Saltbush Lamb" advertised in your local butcher shop, as the Old Man Saltbush is very widely used in sheep feedlots in many areas.

**Coffee anyone? Acacia murrayana* - Murrays or Colony Wattle is established on the embankment above and within the creek. These plants are suckers from the original tree which was planted on the site. The early settlers roasted or burnt the seeds of this Acacia and then ground them for use as a coffee substitute. They also made flour for use in bread and biscuits. The aboriginal people soften the seeds with water to make an edible paste or they eat the seeds whole after roasting them in their pods. Edible grubs also live in the roots of this plant.

The original planted *Acacia murrayana* has recently died, however, the tree has been left in situ as it supports a large established **Marsdenia australis* - Native Pear - but it tastes like... (well to me pretty bland, a bit like a choko). The fruit looks like a small avocado, which often hangs shaded and protected by the foliage of the supporting tree. The sweet flowers and young fruits of this climbing plant are eaten raw. The ripe fruit can be boiled or cooked in the ashes. Older leaves are eaten after being steamed, like spinach, while the young leaves are simply eaten raw. Aboriginal people eat the tuberous roots which are like yams in tough times.

Walking along the edge of the creek and up a small incline the path divides, where you can leave the Bush Tucker area and visit the Mallee areas, or turn left to continue your bush tucker experience.

At the bottom of the incline you will come across two **Citrus glauca* - Desert Limes - Twist of Desert Lime... These two plants are in their juvenile stage of growth and are rounded shrubs which consist of large green spikes - which at this stage are actually the "leaves" of the plants.

The Desert Lime is a member of the citrus family and high in vitamin C. The plants produce a yellow or green fruit, similar to a very small lemon, with rind and sour juicy flesh. The lime flavoured fruit measures 1-2cm long and ripens in summer. The fruit is used to make marmalade and jelly, and in cooking to complement other flavours - like chocolate. It can also be used to make a refreshing drink, though sugar can be added to sweeten the very sour citrus flavour.

As you begin to walk up the incline you will see a stone embankment which has recently been constructed by Friends, volunteers and staff. This area has been planted with *Ficus brachypoda* Native Figs and Lemon Grass. These trees will produce small round fruits about the size of a marble. The fruit can be used to make fig jam, can be eaten direct from the tree or the dried fruit can be stored

and later reconstituted in water and eaten.

On the opposite side of the path is a magnificent *Acacia paprocarpa* and in the near future a garden seat is to be placed under the canopy of the tree for visitor use.

Continuing along the path seedling **Acacia victoriae* - Elegant Wattle - Casual Elegance plants are being established. This Acacia variety is one of Australia's most common wattles. In the bush food industry, its seeds are harvested for wattle seed flour. Aboriginal people lightly roast the seed pods while still green and then eat the seeds. The harder mature seeds are also ground and eaten. Edible grubs are harvested from the roots, while a white gum extracted from the trunk is also eaten.

At the top of the rise a **Capparis mitchellii* - Native Orange - Citrus Twist has been established. Although this plant resembles an orange tree, they are not related. Aboriginal people eat the flower bud and particularly the fruit of the native orange since, like a passionfruit, it contains seeds high in vitamin C, protein and thiamine. The fruit can also be dried and stored for later use.

Heading across the top of the garden back towards the path entrance, you will pass a **Santalum lanceolatum* - Wild Plum Bush - Outback Pharmacy, this is a small relative of the Quandong and Sandalwood. The ripe deep blue fruit of the Wild Plum Bush makes good eating since it is very rich in vitamin C. Dried it can be stored or carried on long journeys and then soaked in water to become soft and edible again.

You will then pass through a group planting of *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* - Grass Trees. Their large towering flower spikes are covered in literally hundreds of small white star-shaped flowers which contain a rich source of nectar, often seen being enjoyed by birds.

In the coming weeks the Friends, volunteers and staff will be installing additional irrigation lines and planting many more varieties of plants throughout the area. Plantings will include *Cynanchum floribundum*, *Grevillea stenobotrya*, *Hakea subarea*, *Acacia kempeana*, *Acacia aneura* and many other exciting species of bush tucker plants.

Once you are back in the Visitors Centre, why not try a desert lime, quandong or wattle seed flavoured ice cream, enjoy a fresh hot scone with quandong jam from the Bluebush Cafe, or purchase some quandong leather, dried salt bush seasoning or dukka, or collect a recipe from the AridSmart Gift and Garden Shop, and make a traditional bush tucker treat at home!

Plant names that are underlined with the * at the commencement of the name indicate that interpretive signage is placed adjacent to the plant.

- By Deon Schumann,
AALBG Collection Co-ordinator



Thank you to our New Corporate Members!



GHAN MEDICAL CENTRE



Whiteway Laundry



Memories of the Garden *by Gwen & Bruce Leane*



Port Augusta Secondary School Band playing at the Eremophila Festival 2006. - *Gwen Leane*

The Eremophila Festivals advertised the AALBG far and wide. About 1500 people attended each Festival. The spin off to the Garden and community far exceeded the gate takings of the day. The image we see is Port Augusta Secondary School Band entertaining the crowd at the 2006 Eremophila Festival.



Volunteers L-R: Shirley Mundy; Basil & Joy Porter; Lou Thompson; Ethel Jenkinson; Gwen Leane, Anna Flower, Merle Weber, and Bruce Leane. - *Gwen Leane*

Who can forget the horrific bushfire on Eyre Peninsula and the loss of life? The Friends were not slow to respond to the call for plants of any sort for revegetation of properties and home gardens. Bruce's Suzuki truck is loaded with four hundred Eucalypts for delivery to the Cummins and District Bushfire Recovery Centre in 2006.



AALBG Friends Ronda Hall, Gwen Leane, Shirley Mundy. Planting at Baxter 2006. - *Bruce Leane*

Remember the day we volunteers not only grew the plants but planted up the front of Baxter Detention Centre? Our hair stood on end with dust and sweat. The hot wind swept down from the north unrelentingly. It was so hot. This happened in 2005.



AALBG Main Gates Opening 2004, Gwen Leane far left, Bruce Leane shaking hands with John Stephens, City Manager.

One of the great highlights was the designing and having the Gates built in 2004. It was a great moment of achievement and pride to hand over \$10,000. Another milestone in the life of the AALBG.



AALBG plants gathered ready for delivery to the Port Augusta Courthouse May 2007.

I must stop by at the Courthouse. The garden has matured today but it was one of the Friends then great projects. The Friends tendered for the project and won it, some \$24,000.



John Zwar presented Life Memberships to Gwen Leane, Fay Poole, Brian Powell, Bruce Leane, 2005.

For Bruce and me the moment to cherish most was when we received life membership in 2005. John Zwar, President; Gwen Leane; Fay Poole; Brian Powell; Bruce Leane, Vice President.



Friends, Gwen & Bruce Leane working at the AALBG Nursery.

So many memories flood the mind as I think back over the twenty years Bruce and I spent with the Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. Our life was enriched by learning about plants, and meeting people who loved and studied plants. There are so many people that I can't begin to name them all. In looking back over the photos I saw a rich tapestry of people who have come through the gates of the AALBG and placed a deposit in our lives in one way and another. Thank you AALBG for a fulfilling retirement. The AALBG is in good hands with the present volunteers, and I am confident that it will reach its full potential among the world's unique gardens.

Both Gwen and Bruce were very keen and loyal volunteers for the Friends & supported the FAALBG & the Garden in many ways, all the while being excellent mentors & encouraging & working with many Friends. (See President's Report for further details of the Leane's active involvement.) We thank them both for all they have done for the AALBG over many years and we extend our very best wishes for their move and relocation to Adelaide.

Friends Fundraising Activity

Vice-President Brian Reichelt applied for a contract at the Port Augusta Hospital to install a garden within the courtyard, and the resulting tender was accepted. Over a period of three days, Brian, with the assistance of his wife Beverley, and Peter and Ronda Hall, completed the project. As can be seen from the photographs it consisted of using self-watering raised garden beds planted with hardy native species including Grasses, Eremophilas and Boronia crenulata. Twelve raised beds were used for the project along with 440 kg of washed sand, 1960 L of potting soil and 32 native plants. Comments from the hospital staff were very encouraging and we all are looking forward to watching the plants grow and changing the sterile environment that was the courtyard before this project.



Friends setting up planters, hospital courtyard, early 2015. - *Brian Reichelt*



The completed planters, hospital courtyard. - *Brian Reichelt*

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Issued May 2015 by Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc. Designed, Produced and Supported by Multi Print SA Port Augusta ~ Telephone: (08) 8641 0900



Shirley's Snippets *by Shirley Mundy*

Thanks to Ryan Hayward, who discovered it, we have been able to see Maria Buschmann on Google Maps, riding her bike to work at the Arid Lands on 2nd December 2014. Maria, who was our intern for four months, is now back in Germany, having resumed her University studies.

A Grant for \$3000 was obtained and a split system air conditioner purchased for the propagating shed. 'This project is supported by a grant from the Government of South Australia.' Volunteer Support Grant from Office for Volunteers. There was \$260 left over, so we hope to be able to purchase some paint for the surrounds of the air conditioner, and also perhaps a bookshelf for our library of botanical books.

Two Grants have been applied for, to cover the cost of a chipper/mulcher for the Garden (Grant for Seniors, and another from Community Benefit SA).

Pots and tubes for propagating were obtained when Bruce and Gwen left town. Many hours are spent each week, sterilizing and sorting tubes and pots to save disposing of them in Landfill. A roster has been set up so that the Wednesday Volunteers each take a turn in washing pots.

Making sure that the tyres on the wheel chair are pumped up is another job that Shirley undertakes each week, with Ringo the appointed pumper upper. This is apart from her two days as Tour Guide. A few weeks ago, she had tours on three days in one week. It is certainly getting busier at this cooler time of year.



Matthew Hosking, new trainee at the AALBG painting the surrounds of the newly installed air-conditioner in Nursery Shed. - Tania Danylycha

We wish Chris a speedy recovery, and will welcome her back to her two days of guiding.

Another job attended by two volunteers, Mandy and Robyn, is to make sure that floral decorations on the Bluebush Café tables are fresh.

Other volunteers, Viti and Julie, take turns in engraving metal labels for newly planted plants in the Garden. A tiring job.

Viti Smith also gathers 6 pack cartons which are used to carry 6 plants at plant sales.

The Garden maintenance volunteer crew - Brian, Peter, Peter, Andre, Ian and others, have been involved in planting at the SA Water site on Highway One, and also the Withers Street Reserve.

UPSIDE DOWN PEA BUSH *Leptosema chambersii*

Because of the way that it flowers *Leptosema chambersii* must be one of Australia's most unusual native shrubs. The flowers are at ground level with the upright foliage being above. The young branchlets are greyish-green and silky-hairy and the leaves are reduced to scales. It is a member of the Fabaceae or Pea Family. The name *Leptosema* is from Greek, leptos meaning slender, and sema meaning standard, referring to the narrow standard of the flower; chambersii is after James Chambers a 19th century mail contractor from South Australia. The upside down pea bush (to use a common name) grows to about 0.2-0.4m x 0.3-0.8m, and the flowers are pea-shaped and red. It grows in Central Australia (S.A. W.A. and N.T.) on sand plains and sand dunes. Aboriginals used to eat nectar from the flowers, and nectar feeding birds are believed to be the pollinators. - by Peter Hall



Leptosema chambersii near Kings Canyon - Peter Hall



Leptosema chambersii - Peter Hall

Bird Talk from the Garden *by Peter Langdon*

BROWN QUAIL (*Coturnix ypsilophora*) *race australis*

Brown Quail usually live in small groups. They tend to be relatively sedentary but disperse far and wide if forced by adverse conditions. There appeared to be a large movement of Brown Quail around 2010 to Central Australian regions which may have ironically been due to huge floods in the east. Some turned up at the Gardens and others were seen from Gidgealpa to Whyalla. There have been a few around since and are still at the Gardens, five birds having been seen in the middle of February 2015. See photo of a pair, the male being the front bird; this photo was taken at the chenopod Bird Hide.

Brown Quail feed on seeds and some insects, so the Garden is an attraction with the seeding grasses etc growing along the drip lines.



Brown Quail Pair - Peter Langdon

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Annual: \$30.00

Any donation will be gratefully accepted. Donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible. Please make cheques payable to 'Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc.' Receipts will be posted. A SAE would be appreciated but not obligatory.