



Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden,

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



President's Report *by John Zwar OAM*

November 2016



Mistletoebird and Mistletoe - Peter Langdon



It's almost the end of another very busy and eventful year for the Friends at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. Our members who are able to volunteer at the Garden continue to do some amazing work, developing new areas and building and installing facilities, maintaining the Garden, tour guiding, plant propagation and a range of other works, which complements what paid staff are able to achieve. The children's nature play area, the Arid Explorers Garden, is progressing well and scheduled for opening next year. A new nursery manager, Tim Kolaczyk, has commenced work at the Garden. His passion is the Eremophila genus, and the nursery is in full production, with some very encouraging bulk sales occurring. Visitor numbers to the Garden are increasing following record numbers last year and it appears will be very close to 100,000 this year, a record! It is estimated the Garden brings in about \$12 million to the local economy each year as visitors patronise local accommodation and businesses. It is 20 years since the official opening of the Garden in September 1996 and this was celebrated by both Council and the Friends in events at the Garden.

Despite all this there is a cloud hanging over the Garden because of a dramatic reduction in the City Council's rate revenue since the closure of the power stations earlier this year and the state Housing Trust offloading much of its rental housing to charity organizations who pay only a small portion of the rates previously paid by the Housing Trust. As the city has \$2,000,000 less rate revenue to spend, the Garden (which is operated by the City Council) is one of a number of Council facilities in the spotlight. A vocal small minority of rate payers want the Garden closed. I urge Friends to do all they can to support the Garden, write to the City Council, local and state newspapers, radio talkback and so on to highlight the value and importance of the Garden, and to urge Council to continue to operate the Garden. One option may be to seek State or Federal funds to assist with the operation of the Garden. I understand the Garden is costing the Council about \$700,000 a year to operate. This is not a huge sum of money, but a lot when you don't have it. Friends may also like to seek State and Federal support for the AALBG so this shortfall in funding can be covered. Please consider writing to relevant members of parliament seeking government support for this very significant Garden and collection of plants. It is expected that Port Augusta's Mayor and City Manager will address Friends at our December meeting to provide more information on this situation.

On a positive note, I recently visited Pangorinda Botanic Garden at Wellington East on the Lower Murray in SA, just over 100 km from Adelaide. The garden of native plants mainly from SA and WA was magnificent in bloom at

its spring best. It has been developed by a small group of volunteers over the last 25 years or so. If in the area (a few minutes' drive from Taillem Bend) I thoroughly recommend a visit.

My best wishes to all Friends for a very enjoyable Christmas season and a wonderful new year. Thank you all for supporting the AALBG. - *John Zwar*

NEXT MEETING

Guest speakers: Ken Warnes

Venue: Conference Room at the AALBG Visitor Centre

Date & Time: 1pm Saturday 3rd December, 2016.

Ken Warnes is a farmer at Owen who has long held love of the Australian Inland and desert flora, specialising in a study of the genus Eremophila. He first ventured into the Gawler Ranges in 1967 and has returned about 25 times to study and enjoy the unique region, also leading groups of up to 24 plant enthusiasts on camping expeditions there. The 2015 Pinery fires and their aftermath prevented Ken from attending in November of last year as our guest speaker and so we look forward this December to his presentation which will focus on the Vegetation of the Gawler Ranges.



Ken Warnes
by Peter Hall.

An example of a Gawler Ranges plant follows: Grevillea parallelinervis, or Gawler Ranges Grevillea, is a dense, upright shrub which grows to about two metres. It has stiff, silvery, grey-green leaves, up to 9cm in length by 2mm in width. The name 'parallelinervis' comes from Latin, and is a reference to the parallel veins in the leaves. Grevillea parallelinervis grows only on the western end of the Gawler Ranges, on the rocky hillsides around Yardea Station. It has attractive red and cream flowers that can be partly hidden by the leaves. The pendant flowers are visited by honeyeaters. In our home garden in Port Augusta, Gawler Ranges Grevillea is growing very well on deep red sand. It suckers a bit and can be propagated reasonably easily from cuttings.



Grevillea parallelinervis
by Peter Hall

DIARY DATES

Thursday night sunset dinners at the AALBG every Thursday night from now until Christmas.

Enjoy a regional SA red or white with your meal selected from the Special Sunset Dinner Menu. Bookings are essential & are filling up - call 86419117 to reserve a table.

Christmas get-together, for Friends of the AALBG

Saturday 3rd December - 4:30pm
(after the 1pm Friends meeting).

Nibbles provided, buy your own beverages.

AALBG Friends Christmas Shopping Extravaganza

Monday 5th December - 5:30pm to 7:30pm

There will be specials on the night, nibbles and light refreshments provided. Friends are welcome to bring a friend! RSVP to 8641 9116

Bird Watching Field Trips of the Birdlife Australia Club, Port Augusta Group

Sunday, 13th November - 8:30am

Whyalla Wetlands/Point Lowly. Meet at Whyalla Wetlands.

Sunday, 4th December - 7:30am

Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. Meet in car park. Christmas Lunch in the Bluebush Cafe.

Please bring sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection, binoculars, morning tea and lunch if staying longer. For further info contact:

Peter 86425723 / 0457708859;

Greg 86486630 / 0459088052;

Bernie 0419863834

The Arid Explorers Garden *by Chris Nayda & Brian Reichelt*

The Friends of Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden together with staff are very busy building the new Arid Explorers Garden for children. A large area (approximately one acre) has been fenced off, Old Man Saltbush hedge planted on the outside of the fence, and a safety gate added so that children will be safe. So far, construction of a stone creek bed, wooden stepping stones, both high and low, balancing poles, two bridges and a triangular prism shaped play space have been completed. The area has some large trees for shade, around which seating is being built, and on the high end of the Garden a shelter for mums to sit and watch their children. Suitable plants will be grown to enhance the Garden and sensory plants in particular will afford the children an opportunity to gain further insight into this flora group.

A grant for \$38,000 has been applied for and, if approved, will cover the cost of construction of a building inside the fence suitable for children's birthday parties, large tour groups (both children and adults) and other educational functions. The cost to date (excluding buildings) is about \$15,000 which the Friends have contributed. Management consulted with local Mums to get their ideas and this proved to be extremely helpful in the design of the Garden. When completed the Arid Explorers Garden will not only give children a place to play but will also encourage and foster learning about the arid environment and what they can do to ensure the survival of our flora and fauna. The area is to be opened in April 2017 so a great deal of hard work hard by the Friends and Garden staff is required to finish this project on time.



Shelter erected in the Arid Explorers Garden



Pine play space for kids, Arid Explorers Garden - Bev Reichelt



Bridges built to cross the dry creek bed, Arid Explorers Garden - Brian Reichelt



Gabion seats at entrance to AEG, constructed by Ian Hopwood, one of our very willing Garden Volunteers, with balance rails in background - Brian Reichelt

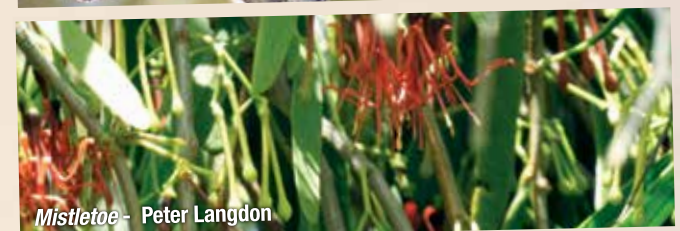
Much Maligned Mistletoe *by Peter Langdon*

In most instances Mistletoe does not kill the host plant. This would be self-destructive and there would be no Mistletoe. What it does, however, is draw water and nutrient from the host. The leaves of Mistletoe are highly nutritious, containing abundant water and high concentrations of metals in the tissues. Mulch from Mistletoe leaves is therefore good mulch. At least 27 species of Australian butterflies lay their eggs on Mistletoe leaves, and these leaves are also relished by domestic and native animals.

The Mistletoe flowers provide nectar and pollen for birds and insects and are also visited by possums and bats where these animals occur. The Mistletoe fruits (berries) are coated with a sugary, sticky coating and are highly sought after by a number of birds. The tiny Mistletoebird, whose diet is primarily Mistletoe berries, has a reduced intestinal tract and the berries pass through quickly, sometimes as quickly as in 20 minutes, thus retaining some of the sticky coating. When the seed is voided, it may stick to a suitable branch, germinate, and continue the cycle. The dense habit of Mistletoe provides shelter and nesting sites for some 245 bird species.



Mistletoebird - Peter Langdon



Mistletoe - Peter Langdon

Angus Stewart Visits the AALBG *by Robyn Place*

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary year of the Opening of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden the Friends invited a "native plant" enthusiast to be the guest speaker. None other than the well known Angus Stewart, a presenter from the ABC Gardening Australia programme, and this was arranged for the long weekend in October.

Firstly he touched base with the Nursery staff at the Garden and was shown around the propagation area and the plant nursery. He was then taken to the Matthew Flinders Red Cliff Lookout and then on to the Bluebush Café to meet some of the Friends Volunteers.

In the afternoon he was driven to Quorn to view the Powell Gardens where he met Faye Powell, whose late husband Brian planted and developed them.

A Welcome Dinner in the evening at the Garden Cafe was enjoyed by all present.

On Saturday morning Angus spent time walking in the Garden with the Tour Guides and this proved to be most enjoyable with exchanges of knowledge in relation to many of the plants.

In the afternoon he spoke to a group of Friends and members of the public about native plant gardening with a wonderful power point presentation depicting:

elements of design, making a garden including soil requirements, and examples of gardens. This was followed by an extensive Q&A.

Sunday was an early morning Walk with Angus through the main planting area of the Garden, again with Friends and members of the public. This was indeed very informative and enjoyable and showed his wealth of knowledge in relation to native plants and their use within a garden.

Angus was very impressed with the whole Garden and referred to it as **world class and unique among botanic gardens**. Also he confirmed that **the Garden has an essential role to play in the conservation of our arid plants**.

His latest book "The Australian Native Garden" was available throughout the weekend and many copies were signed and sold. The book is a practical guide to native planting with a wonderful section on native plant cultivars.

A great weekend was had by all involved and we were very privileged to have had Angus for this short time.



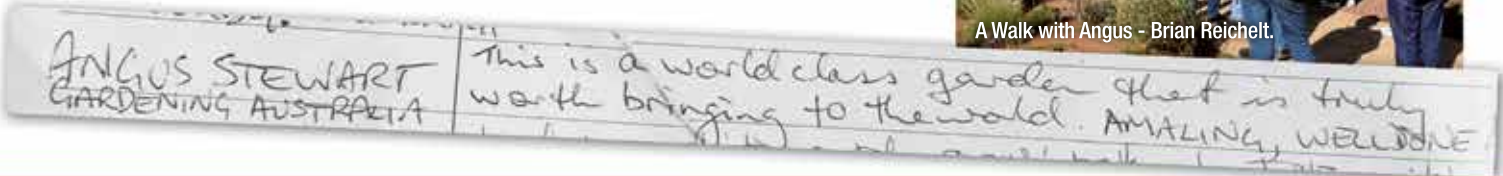
Tim Kolaczyk & Angus Stewart in the new Eremophila Garden with Neutrog Bush Tucker, a fertiliser developed especially for native plants - Brian Reichelt



Angus Stewart shares his knowledge - Brian Reichelt



A Walk with Angus - Brian Reichelt



Peter's Plants *by Peter Hall*

Eremophila rostrata is a shrub that grows to about 3 metres high by about 2 metres wide and has very narrow, dark green leaves. The bright pink flowers are a great contrast when viewed against the dark green foliage.

Eremophila rostrata grows naturally near Cue in Western Australia. The name 'rostrata' means beaked and refers to the beak-like end of the fruit.

Eremophila rostrata can be found growing on the right hand side of the path going through the Courtyard into the Visitor Centre at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden.



Eremophila rostrata - Peter Hall

Be dry, be shaded! *by Peter Hall*

Thank you to Andrew and Maria Watherston and Diesel the dog, who, according to his owners, is the 'Managing Director' of Acacia Ridge Motor Inn. Whenever he sights a camera he poses for the photo! They have very kindly donated to the FAALBG fifteen umbrellas that can be used during inclement weather. Visitors pay a \$10 deposit on an umbrella and receive \$10 on its return. Just ask at the Gift Shop.



Ronda Hall thanking Diesel & Andrew Watherston of Acacia Ridge Motor Inn - Peter Hall



Ronda Hall thanking Corporate Members Maria & Andrew of Acacia Ridge Motor Inn - Peter Hall

Garden praised on Trip Advisor

"Exceptional gardens"

Our second visit, this time more plants in flower. Gardens are laid out in different sections representing various Arid Zones of South Australia. Some of the plants are on sale in the nursery. Great displays, and the shop & café also worth a visit. - Visited October 2016

"Unexpected beauty in the semi desert."

This wonderful garden started by volunteers is a must stop for gardeners, bird watchers, overseas visitors, children...in fact everyone. There are well maintained gravel paths through well planned areas of vegetation, and garden exemplars. The bird life is wide, varied and if you are lucky and Brian is busy volunteering, he can answer any questions you can formulate on the gardens, the history of the gardens and the birds. Tranquil, inviting, and accessible to prams, wheelchairs and walkers. - Visited August 2016

"Spectacular September Flowers"

Pick up a map first from the Cafe/Visitor Center -you will need it to find your way around the grounds. The plantings were well thought out with region specific plants in designated beds. It was lovely to see the amazing native flowers in a natural environment. Dress appropriately as some of the walks are quite long - I got caught in a lightning storm, which was a bit scary as there wasn't any shelter. Well worth the stop. - Visited September 2016

"Nice gardens and visitors centre - a peaceful stop"

This is a recommended stop just outside of town. Lovely modern visitors centre building with great café and guided paths/walks for adults and children. You can spot animal sculptures, go to lookouts, bird hides and see medicinal/food and other specialist plants. Nice little stop. - Visited October 2016

AALBG Finalist in two SA Awards!

Finalist in the 2016 South Australian Tourism Awards – Ecotourism category!!
Recognising & promoting excellence in the tourism industry - a silver medal!



AALBG - Finalist in the 2016 South Australian Regional Awards!!
Made it to the final three!!

From the AALBG Manager by Cherie Gerlach

We are very fortunate to have Tim Kolaczyk join the team at the AALBG. Tim won the advertised position as a full-time nursery worker and commenced work on Monday, July 25. He is a passionate Eremophila grower and collector and relocated from NSW to take up his new role with the AALBG. He has previously worked in large scale native plant nurseries and is highly skilled in plant production, so will be able to streamline systems and processes to ensure we are getting the best results. His knowledge will also be valuable in working with Ryan and Cory on the AALBG plant collection.

I would also like to thank Ryan, Cory, Perry and Tania who put in extra effort and time, and took on additional responsibilities, to keep the nursery running while this position was vacant. Thank you too to all of our Volunteers and Friends who have worked to raise production which is showing great results. A particularly big thank you to Volunteers Ronda and Peter Hall for the time they have dedicated and the knowledge they are always willing to share.

Join or Renew Subscription & Contacts

TO JOIN OR RENEW SUBSCRIPTION

Request a form from **Contacts** or collect one from the **Visitor Centre**
Or fill in this form and send with remittance to:
Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Port Augusta Inc.
PO Box 2040, Port Augusta SA 5700
www.australian-aridlands-botanic-garden.org

PLEASE TICK: New Membership Renewal of Membership

NAME: Dr / Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms:

Address:

Email Address:

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.

Enclosed is my:

Subscription \$

Donation \$

TOTAL \$

Date:

DIRECT DEBIT BANKING DETAILS

BBS: 035-065

Account No.: 164 604

Account Name: FAALBG

Reference: 'name of person banking'

Please notify by email to friends@aalbg.sa.gov.au

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Individual (1 adult) \$30

Due annually 1st July. Includes 1 membership card.

Family (2 adults & dependent children under 18) \$50

Due annually 1st July. Includes 2 membership cards.
(2 forms must be filled in).

Corporate \$250 Due annually 1st January.

(includes 1 membership card issued in one name
nominated by the business)

President: John Zwar **Mobile:** 0408 887 565 **Work:** (08) 8372 6876 **Email:** jzwar@bigpond.com

Vice President: Brian Reichelt **Mobile:** 0418 896 995 **Email:** breich@bigpond.net.au

Treasurer: Geraldine Davis **Phone:** (08) 8648 6399 **Mobile:** 0418 447 020 **Email:** glgadavis@bigpond.com

Secretary: Christine Nayda **Phone:** (08) 8642 4684 **Mobile:** 0434 717 382 **Email:** b.nayda@bigpond.com

Editor: Julie Owen **Mobile:** 0408 866 385 **Email:** jayowen@bigpond.com

PO Box 2040, Port Augusta, South Australia 5700 **Email:** friends@aalbg.sa.gov.au

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