



Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden,

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter

August 2020
Issue #186

President's Report *by John Zwar OAM CF President*



John Zwar

Thysanotus at the AALBG - Peter Hall

With the gradual easing of Covid-19 restrictions in SA activity at the AALBG for Friends is increasing. Our volunteers are able to work at the Garden again on Wednesdays, but with limits to numbers. I am sure the Garden staff who were able to work right through the Covid-19 restrictions will appreciate this extra help. The half-price sale of plants from the AALBG Nursery was very successful with plants being delivered to purchasers locally or posted or bus freighted all over Australia. Purchasers reported that plants were very well packed and arrived in excellent condition. This was good promotion for the Garden and kept stock moving rather than becoming overgrown, but our volunteers along with nursery staff will have plenty of work propagating plants to restock the nursery. A Zoom Meeting was held recently to vote on minor changes to our constitution to comply with our tax deductible status. The meeting went well, changes were passed and following this, Vice President Brian Reichelt gave an update on the Garden. Brian and Secretary Chris Nayda have been working with a local IT business to develop the Friends new website. I have seen a draft of it and was very impressed and it is expected to go live soon. Although the Garden remained open for visitors during the Covid-19 shut down the Café and Gift Shop were closed and Garden tours ceased. Chris reports that couples are now arriving from around the state for tours and food. With good rain early in the year and some showers since then, Chris predicts that the spring display at the AALBG should be great, so well worth visiting in August and September; although every time I visit, regardless of the time of year I see something new and interesting. We are hoping that our AGM and guest speaker from the Barossa Bushgardens in September will be held at the Garden, as Covid-19 restrictions ease further, which is something to look forward to. Meanwhile, keep safe and thanks for supporting our wonderful Garden.

Best Wishes, John Zwar - 10/07/20

#1 TOP 10
GARDENS
TO VISIT IN
AUSTRALIA
2020
AUSTRALIA
UNWRAPPED

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc. will be held on Saturday 5th September 2020 @ 1pm.

The following positions are up for election: Vice President, Treasurer and 4 Committee Persons.

If you wish to nominate for one of these positions, please contact the Secretary (contact details page 4) who will provide the necessary nomination form.

NOMINATIONS CLOSE ON 15TH AUGUST 2020.

NEXT MEETING AND AGM

Date and Time: Saturday 5th September, 2020 at 1.00pm

Venue: WMC Herbarium and Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker and Topic: Doreen von Linde. Barossa Bushgardens

Doreen von Linde migrated from Germany to Australia in 2009 and her love and passion for Australian native plants grew from travelling around Down Under for one and a half years, and her work on a flower farm in the Adelaide Hills, from 2010 until 2017. From 2014 to 2016 Doreen studied the Diploma of Conservation and Land Management at TAFE Urrbrae, and started a gardening business, specializing in native gardens, in 2017. She took on the role as Natural Resource Centre Co-ordinator at the Bushgardens from February this year and enjoys working with volunteers from all different backgrounds, educating people about the importance of a sustainable lifestyle, biodiversity, natural resource management, and is open to what others can teach her as well. She has volunteered at the Mount Pleasant Community Garden and Recreate shop since January 2018 and loves their approach to recycling, reusing and recreating materials that otherwise would end up in landfill.

"I love the Bushgardens because 19 years ago it was literally one sad looking Red Gum in an empty paddock and has, through the hard work of volunteers, students and different community groups, evolved to a beautiful asset that showcases not only plants and attracts animals and birds, but also brings people together."

She would like to keep expanding the gardens to include more drought resistant plants, introduce critically endangered Peppermint Box Grassy Woodland and expand the educational, as well as health and wellbeing focus of the Bushgardens. She also aims to empower young people to gain knowledge and skills and take on leadership roles when it comes to taking action on environmental issues.



Doreen von Linde

BIRD TALK from the GARDEN *by Peter Langdon*

The Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa*, a regular visitor at this time of the year was seen near the Boardwalk in early June. They are a very active small bird, performing vigorous aerobatics pursuing insects in the air and amongst the foliage, making it hard work to obtain a decent photograph.

A group of seven Striated Pardalotes *Pardalotes striatus* was also seen at this time. These small "leaf gleaners" are mostly heard in the tops of the eucalypts, searching for lerps and other small invertebrates.

Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* and Black-eared Cuckoos *Chalcites osculans* were seen but have not commenced their mournful calls.

White-winged Fairy-wren *Malurus leucopterus* and Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti assimilis* were numerous, with males in colour very conspicuous.

A few raptors have been sighted these being the Whistling Kite *Haliastur spheurnus*, Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*, Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus* and of course the resident Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*.



Grey Fantail at the AALBG, Peter Langdon.

Thysanotus are small annual or perhaps perennial plants that grow from tubers or rhizomes. Their flowers have mostly blue, dainty fringed petals leading to their common name of Fringe Lily. There are some 50 species in Australia.

There are two species of *Thysanotus* growing naturally at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. They are *Thysanotus baueri* and *Thysanotus exiliflorus*. (Thanks to Bernie Haase for providing the list of plants that grow naturally on site.) They can be found growing in the open space between the overflow carpark and the Chenopod Birdhide. They came up and flowered last year (2019) when it was very dry and not much else was in evidence.

If you are looking for these plants remember that they are only about 15 to 20 cm high at the most, and should be able to be found at the AALBG in the spring months, depending of course on the vagaries of the weather.



Garden News *by Brian Reichelt*

Hooray! Volunteers are now able to work once again in the Garden and Nursery due to a relaxation of Covid-19 rules, however, we are limited to a maximum of 6 volunteers at any one time in the Garden and 6 volunteers in the Nursery. Our current volunteers are indeed happy to be able to again make a contribution to this magnificent Garden.

Whilst the volunteers were on Covid-19 lockdown the Garden staff kept busy packing plant orders for posting across Australia and offering a free delivery service within Port Augusta. In the Garden they completed the new Events area, upgraded the Coastal Garden in the Arid Smart Gardens and upgraded the garden bed on the outside of the plant sales area at the Visitors Centre. Wildflowers have been planted around the Garden and should provide a fantastic showing around August / September.



Events Area, Brian Reichelt

The volunteers returned on Wednesday 1st July and the propagators have been extremely busy potting on plants and propagating new cuttings for the heat beds. The Garden volunteers have weeded and pruned the Desert Courtyard, Arid Explorers Garden and commenced on the Eremophila Gardens.

The Friends have contributed money to the purchase of a Fire Fighting/ Plant Watering Unit, a Cement Mixer for mixing soil for propagation, potting soil for propagation, and aluminium for plant labels in the Garden (3,000 of the new-type labels have been made to date).



Volunteers propagating and potting on, Chris Nayda.



Volunteers and Staff on a well-deserved break, Chris Nayda

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Watching Field Trips for Birds SA,
PORT AUGUSTA GROUP

ALL trips are subject to any Covid-19 restrictions which may occur...

Sunday 13th September 2020:

At Bernie's Block. Meet at the Mambray Creek Parking Bay at 8:00am.

Sunday 11th October 2020:

At Telowie Gorge & Nelshaby Reservoir. Meet at the Telowie Gorge Car Park at 8:00am. Sunday 8th

Sunday 1st November 2020:

At Chinamans Creek, Mt Grainger. Meet at the Chinamans Creek Turnoff just off the Highway at 7:30 am. Wear beach walking footwear.

Please bring: binoculars, sturdy footwear, hat, sun protection, morning tea and lunch.

Contacts: Peter 86425723 / 0457708859 or Bernie 0419863834 / b.haase@telstra.com

Bird Week: 19th – 25th October: an early morning Bird Walk at the AALBG is planned, subject to any Covid-19 restrictions. Closer to the date check the Visitor Centre notice-board and/or Facebook for details.

Amazing Mistletoe *by Chris Nayda*

Mistletoe is partly parasitic producing its own energy by photosynthesis but obtaining water and nutrients from the plant. The seed is mainly spread by the small Mistletoebird and is a sticky, gelatinous, glucose-rich pulp around a single seed which is edible. The stickiness of the seed helps it to adhere to the branch of a tree or shrub when the birds excrete it. The seed then grows a root which attaches into the sap of the plant from which it obtains water and nutrition. It's a fascinating process to watch. There are over 90 species of mistletoe in Australia and AALBG has four of these all in the Loranthaceae family, these include;

- *Lysiana exocarpus* ssp. *exocarpus* Harlequin Mistletoe
- *Amyema quandang* Grey Mistletoe
- *Amyema miraculosum* ssp. *boormanii* Fleshy Mistletoe
- *Amyema preissii* Wireleaf Mistletoe This grows mostly on wattles and sennas.

Mistletoe is very rarely responsible for the demise of a tree but rather acts as an indicator of poor health. It is now generally recognised that mistletoe is an important part of our ecosystem helping bring birds, insects and invertebrates into our gardens. They all have attractive flowers especially the Harlequin species.

2020 CORPORATE MEMBERS OF FRIENDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARID LANDS BOTANIC GARDEN

We welcome the additional corporate member and encourage Friends to patronise their businesses

Don't forget to mention that you are a Friend of the AALBG and that we appreciate their business participating as a corporate member of the Friends.



Ripe Mistletoe seed, Chris Nayda



Seed after a week, Chris Nayda



3 Mistletoe seeds growing together, Chris Nayda



Lysiana exocarpus, Chris Nayda



Amyema miraculosa ssp. *boormanii*, Bernie Haase



Amyema preissii, Bernie Haase



Single Mistletoe seed, Chris Nayda



Mistletoebird, Bushpea

AALBG Bonsai Interest Group

An article recently appeared in the Australian Plants Society journal about our bonsai workshop at Kadina in March. It attracted interest from the APS Eremophila Interest Group and so an article on Eremophila at the AALBG as Bonsai will appear in their next newsletter.

Some time ago I looked at our *Acacia cyperophylla* in the AALBG and wondered about its potential as a bonsai plant. It is sometimes called 'Red Mulga' because of its reddish minni ritchi bark curls, and grows to 8 metres in its natural habitat in the far north of South Australia along stony watercourses. That started me looking for tubestock.



Acacia cyperophylla at the AALBG

I found one. Only one. I trust the AALBG nursery staff will not mind but I acquired it and potted it on. Here it is before and after a prune. Growing well! The next challenge is to give it a root prune at the end of winter and transplant it into a bonsai pot



Before



After

And just in case you are looking for something different – here is *Eucalyptus woodwardii*, not growing straight up, but rather twisted. Another challenge!



Eucalyptus woodwardii

Kudos for the Garden *by Julie Owen*



AALBG listed as Number 1!

Australia Unwrapped has just featured ten stunning gardens from around Australia with a summary of what each has to offer. The article also states:

"Australia is a continent country known for its natural highlights and immense tourist attractions. There are hundreds and thousands of gardens in Australia. Some gardens are purely for research purposes and some are for tourism. If you are in Australia in 2020, then make sure (you) visit these gardens to satisfy your aesthetics."

Of the 10 stunning gardens, our AALBG is listed as number 1! This comes after Australian Geographic also gave our wonderful Garden a Number 1 rating.



Black's Flora of S.A. 4 volumes, and The Native Forest and Woodland Vegetation of South Australia, Chris Nayda

A Special Thank you!

A special thank you to Bronwyn Ellis who has kindly donated her late husband Richard Oertel's valuable Flora of S.A. (4 volumes,) and the book shown next to them, to the FAALBG Library. Both Bronwyn and Richard were Friends of the AALBG back in the 1990s and as they met, married and lived in Whyalla were able to attend some meetings and enjoyed the contact with the Friends. Thank you Richard and Bronwyn!



FAALBG

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