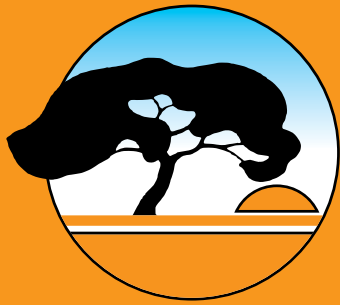




Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



Sept 2024
Issue #202



From Left: Bottlebrush Grevillea-*Grevillea paradoxa*, Flame spider flower Grevillea-*Grevillea Kennedyana*, Honeysuckle Grevillea-*Grevillea juncifolia*, Mt Finke Grevillea-*Grevillea treuriana* - Brian Reichelt

President's Report by John Zwar OAM CF President



John Zwar

Hello Friends,

Our last meeting was well attended with an excellent presentation by Colin Harris on Mound Springs, which promoted considerable discussion. It was also the occasion when the Friends 40th year since inception was celebrated. Thanks to Bev and Brian Reichelt for organising a cake which was appropriately decorated – see picture in the newsletter. We now have 9 Garden Guides who conduct tours of the Garden for visitors. This shares the workload of guiding for the few long term guides and out thanks to the new guides who have commenced in this role. Long term Friend and garden guide, Shirley Mundy has resigned as a tour guide after many, many years, and we cannot thank her enough for her years of dedicated service. She will still be volunteering in the garden doing other jobs, so thank you Shirley. We welcome Phillip Cammarano, retired accountant, seconded to the committee as Assistant Treasurer, assisting Treasurer Geraldine Davis with this ever expanding role. We extend condolences to Newsletter Editor Julie Owen on the sad loss of her husband Ray recently, and to Treasurer Geraldine Davis on the sad loss of her husband Graham in June.

Unfortunately there is no further news at the time of writing, on the proposed toilet facility in the garden to be accessible to visitors at times when the Visitor Reception building is closed. The friends have promised significant funding for this project which we hope will be completed soon, after several years of waiting. The Friends also donated a large tipping trailer recently which has proved to be a valuable asset used by both paid Garden staff and our volunteers. We are currently in consultation with Neutrog Fertilisers regarding developing a partnership with the Friends and we should have details in the next newsletter. I will be attending the biennial conference of The Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens being hosted by The Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, in August, representing our Friends group and the AALBG. Friends may remember that we hosted this conference in 2012. The video produced to commemorate the 40th year of our Friends group will be shown at the conference, followed by a Q&A session on our garden. Here is a link to the video in case you have not yet seen it: <https://youtu.be/WKMER52WfPY?si=zvsg00uhr2Wf3pKk> The visitor survey prepared by Uni SA and conducted at the AALBG is now being processed and it will be interesting to see the results; both what we are doing well and how we may improve. This was funded by the Friends.

We look forward to seeing those who can attend our September AGM followed by the general meeting, where we will hear about the very successful Arid Recovery Project, and the reintroduction of locally extinct animals, at their site north of Roxby Downs.

Cheers for now.



Dr. Katherine Tuft

NEXT MEETING AND AGM

Date and Time:

Saturday 7th September 2024 at 1.00pm

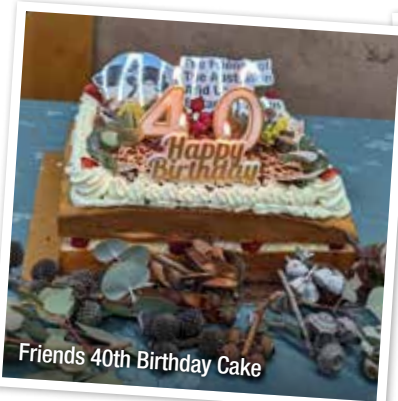
Venue:

WMC Herbarium and Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker & Topic:

Dr Katherine Tuft - Arid Recovery

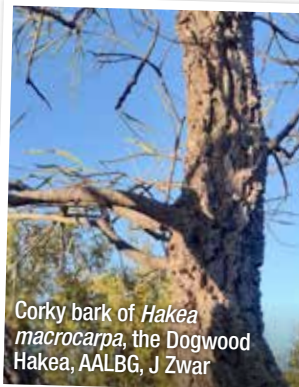
Dr. Katherine Tuft is the Chief Executive of Arid Recovery, an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to pioneering conservation science to support threatened species across the Australian outback. Kath earned her PhD in the ecology of rock-wallabies in New South Wales and spent six years in the remote Kimberley region, working to understand and improve the declining populations of mammals in northern Australia. At Arid Recovery, she oversees Australia's largest predator-proof fenced reserve and a leading centre for conservation research focused on arid ecosystem restoration and the recovery of threatened species. Thanks to Arid Recovery's efforts, species such as the greater bilby, burrowing bettong, Shark Bay bandicoot, western quoll, and kowari have been reintroduced to South Australia.



Friends 40th Birthday Cake



Retiring tour guide Shirley Mundy with Tour Guide Manager Christine Nayda



Corky bark of *Hakea macrocarpa*, the Dogwood Hakea, AALBG, J Zwar



Crotalaria cunninghamii, Bird Flower, AALBG, native to sandy country in much of arid inland Australia, J Zwar.

Oranges and Capers

by Anne Campbell

On a walk during a trip to the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park, I was interested to see some mature examples of the Wild Orange¹, *Capparis mitchellii* and to be able to compare the plant in the wild with our younger one in the AALBG Food Garden. It is not related to oranges but to capers.

In the language of the Adnyamathanha people, it is referred to as iga or iga warta; indeed, earlier I had been puzzled by a directional sign from the road, IGA (short for Independent Groceries Alliance), and wondered why there was a supermarket in such an isolated location; until I was appraised of its Aboriginal name! It is significant in Adnyamathanha Dreaming.

The immature plant which is straggly and very thorny gradually grows to a small tree (5-8m) with fewer thorns. Apparently, the round, raw, ripe fruit is a good source of vitamin C and has a pleasant but tangy taste; the skin is inedible. For European tastes it can be used in desserts (e.g. ice creams) or added to casseroles. The fruit can be dried and stored for later use and Aboriginals also used the bark for medicinal purposes.

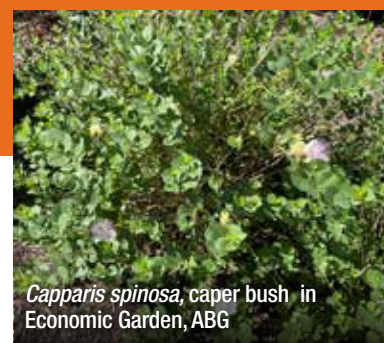
By contrast its domestic relative is *Capparis spinosa*, the caper bush². This is a sprawling shrub of some 30-50 or more cm high with rounded fleshy leaves. It is used in Mediterranean cooking as a seasoning or garnish (either generally as salted flower buds, capers; or as pickled fruit with their seeds, caper berries). The example in the Economic Garden at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens (ABG) gets denuded annually by the larvae of a moth, the Caper White Butterfly, but recovers; an example of biological pruning perhaps!

References:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capparis_mitchellii
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caper>



Capparis mitchellii immature plant, AALBG Bush Food Garden, Jan 2021



Capparis spinosa, caper bush in Economic Garden, ABG



Capparis mitchellii tree in the wild with fruits on the top & lowest branches



Capparis spinosa same bush but denuded by a moth



Capparis mitchellii fruit in the wild, Balcanoona July 2023



Capparis spinosa flower, flower bud (caper) and flower berry (caper berry)

Bird Talk from The Garden by Peter Langdon

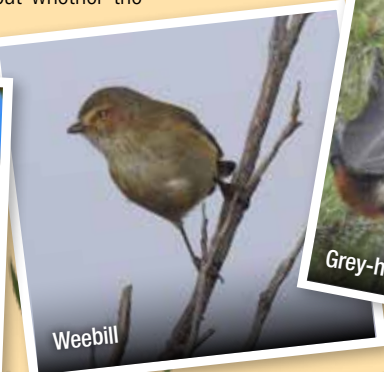
Volunteers having "smoko" at the Visitor Centre were treated to about 20 + Musk Lorikeets (*Glossopsitta concinna*) flying into the River Red Gum in the Reflection Garden on 12th June 2024.

Flocks had been reported visiting flowering Eucalypt species, mainly *Corymbia citriodora*, Lemon Scented Gum, in the town for the previous week, and were still present in late July. They are seldom seen in Port Augusta and this is the first record for the Garden.

A few Weebills (*Smicromis brevirastris*), Australia's smallest bird (by length) had been about since May, but seem to have disappeared now. A Grey Fantail (*Rhipidura alisteri*) was reported and also sightings of Western Whistler (*Pachycephala occidentalis*) both female and male. (The male was reported by a visitor who unfortunately did not leave a phone number so that we could check out whether the bird was in colour or not.)



Musk Lorikeet, Brian Reichelt



Weebill



Grey-headed Fruit Bat

Two Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoos (*Chalcites basal*) were seen on 14th July near the work compound, and were possibly a pair as one was fluttering its wings as they were flying together.

Footnote: While checking on the Musk Lorikeet report back at the start of June, I had a look for large bats reported from near the Pastoral Hotel, and saw 30+ Grey-headed Fruit Bats (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) roosting in pine trees opposite the Hotel. Apparently they had been seen feeding on blossoming (*Corymbia citriodora*) Lemon-scented Gum growing about the town. Blossoms and nectar and pollen are the favoured food of these bats as against fruit. These bats are expanding their range having only recently recolonised in Adelaide.

DIARY DATES

FRIENDS MEETINGS 2024

1.00pm WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

- **7th September:** Annual General Meeting, Arid Recovery by Dr. Katherine Tuft.
- **7th December:** Achievements in the Garden in 2024, Brian Reichelt.

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Watching Field Trips for the Birds SA PORT AUGUSTA GROUP

Sunday 15th September

Bernie's Block, Mambray Creek.
Meet at the Augusta Hwy parking bay at 8.00am

Saturday 19th - Monday 21st October

Gluepot Reserve.
Meet at the Gluepot Visitor Centre at 12.00 noon.
(Camp out. Facilities available. Costs apply.)

Saturday 3rd November

Chinamans Creek. Meet at Augusta Hwy turnoff at 8.00am (Wear beach walking footwear.)

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

Contacts: Bernie 0419 863 834
b.haase@telstra.com

Garden News by Brian Reichelt

We started off the year with a very dry period and no rain, however, with the onset of winter we have experienced rain, drizzly showers, frost and low temperatures, which slows down the growth of our arid zone plants.

The Garden propagating staff and volunteers continue their good work in planting cuttings and seed, potting up, and in maintaining the plant stock to ensure a good supply of plants to the plant sales area at the gift shop.

The outdoor Garden staff and volunteers have been extremely busy despite the colder than normal weather. The Courtyard upgrade to the annuals bed is now done, and it will be fitted with an enclosure to ensure that rabbits and kangaroos do not damage the plants. We are looking forward to seeing a great display this spring.



Many areas of the Garden have received attention to remove weeds, prune etc, those being the Eremophila Gardens, Carpark area, Matthew Flinders Redcliff Lookout and the Boardwalk Lookout.

The Flinders Lookout and Boardwalk Lookout areas will be part of the Plantings for National Tree Day. The external toilet block for which the Friends have been advocating for a number of years is in the final stages before construction, so the area set aside for this building has been cleared ready for construction when it commences.



Chris Nayda, Guide Manager, reports that:

the Tour Guides have been very busy during the last 3 months with many schools coming to the AALBG for Bush Tucker tours; and students from Adelaide schools requesting information about biodiversity and how arid zone plants survive in our climate. It is great to see schools including this in their curriculum.

I am happy to announce that we now have 9 tour guides, which is wonderful. A big thank you to all Guides for making themselves available when needed. I am busy organizing uniforms, especially jackets, for this cold weather.

There have been 1117 people taken on tours in this last financial year with a value of \$7540.

B.I.G. FAALBG Bonsai Interest Group by Jim Hayward

In April I presented 'Bonsai for Beginners' to the Goolwa Probus Club with 35 people present. They seemed to enjoy themselves, talked about the event ... and in May I presented to the Middleton/Port Elliot Probus Club with another 35 people present.

At each event I didn't need to talk about the Arid Lands Garden in Port Augusta ... other people were very happy to do that.

People seemed very interested in my experimenting with Eremophila as bonsai ... and you can see why in these first two photos, *Eremophila maculata* Orange and *Eremophila racemosa*.

Duncan, from Coromandel Native Nursery, was very generous in providing some Melaleucas for me to play with and give to workshop participants. The third photo is a *Melaleuca nesophila*, one of three he gave me, that I have work to on.



Eremophila maculata Orange, September 2023



Eremophila racemosa, 2023



Melaleuca nesophila

Peter's Plants by Peter Hall

Capparis lasiantha or Native Orange is a shrub, or, given the opportunity, a climber, reaching to about 3 metres.

It has thick, ovate, dark green leaves, and flowers with white petals and numerous fluffy white stamens. The fruit is orange and ovoid in shape.

Native Orange is very hardy and its fruit, which ripens in February – March, was eaten by Aboriginals and early settlers.

I took these photos in the East MacDonnell Ranges.



Capparis lasiantha



Capparis lasiantha,

2024-2025 Corporate Members

The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc acknowledges its wonderful Corporate Members and requests that you support these businesses whenever you are able.



BRUCE AND STEVE AUTOS



We also welcome any additional business owners/ managers supporting us by becoming Corporate Members. For more information, contact Brian Reichelt on 0418 896 995 or email breich@bigpond.net.au

Book Review by Anne Murrie

'Gum: The Story of Eucalypts and their Champions', by Ashley Hay, revised and updated edition published in 2021.

Geraldine Davis recommended this book, and it was a great read. I quote something from it in almost every tour at the Arid Lands Botanic Gardens.

Gum is a fascinating story of different colonisers' interactions with Australian eucalypt trees. Sir Joseph Banks accompanied Cook on his 1770 voyage to Australia, bringing an enormous amount of scientific equipment. On the trip, thousands of botanical specimens were collected. Some involved the felling of a whole tree for leaves and flowers. These specimens were taken back to England and left in boxes in his house for years for others to examine and classify. There is also the story of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller who was the first director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. He was enamoured with the growth and quality of the blue gum timber, sending packets of seeds all over the world. His scientific passion was not appreciated by the colonial administration.

A study by Melbourne Museum found that a single river red gum on the Murray River had more than 320 different species of living things dependent on it and was home to over 4000 insects and invertebrates alone. An ecosystem in itself. With over 800 species of eucalyptus across Australia they seem ubiquitous, but many of the species can only exist in a very small area or specific environment. Well worth a read.



Reminder Are you financial?

Renewals for Memberships for the 2024-25 year were due 1st July, 2024.

Discounts for the purchase of meals and gifts in the café and gift shop only apply to the Friends Membership card holder/s and cannot be transferred to family and friends who are not members.

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Join or Renew

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Individual (due annually 1st July).....\$30
Includes 1 membership card

Family (due annually 1st July).....\$50
2 adults & dependant children under 18
Includes 2 membership cards

Corporate (due annually 1st July).....\$250
Includes 1 membership card per business

To join or renew please fill in form and make payment to:

The Secretary
The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc
PO Box 2040, Port Augusta South Australia 5700

Cheques: Please make membership cheques payable to The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Port Augusta Inc.

Direct Debit Details: Please use your name as reference
BSB: 035 065 Account: 164604 Account Name: FAALBG

Online: visit www.friendsaalbg.org.au/membership

Please tick a box: ☐ New Membership
☐ Renewal of Membership

Enclosed is my: Subscription \$ _____ . _____
TOTAL \$ _____ . _____

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2nd Name: (Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____
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Donate

Donations are gratefully accepted. Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. Receipts will be posted with the next newsletter.

Cheques: Please make Donation cheques payable to The Trustee for FAALBG Donation Account

Direct Debit Details: Please use your name as reference & notify via email (friends@aalg.sa.gov.au) of any direct debits.

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Online: visit www.friendsaalbg.org.au/sponsor-us

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