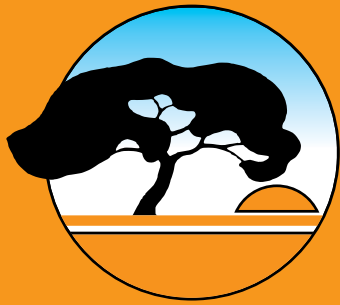




Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



May 2026
Issue #209



Eucalyptus youngiana with Wattlebird – Brian Reichelt

President's Report by John Zwar OAM CF President



John Zwar

Following a long drought Port Augusta had a very hot summer with temperatures up to 50 degrees. The Garden and the surrounding native vegetation were looking quite stressed. Then in late February 59mm of rain fell along with flooding rains across northern SA, followed by 79mm in March and another 10mm by mid-April. The response has been amazing with the country around Port Augusta and much of northern SA now green and lush; a rare event! Friends Secretary Chris tells me the response in the Garden has been amazing, with plants making new growth and many in bud. Flowering displays into winter and spring should be quite spectacular, especially if there is more rain to come. The Sturt Desert Pea Festival proposed by Friends Committee Member Myles McClure is scheduled for Nov 7th and a planning group ably headed by Myles is well advanced with organising the event. Myles also recently co-ordinated a fund-raising sausage sizzle at the Port Augusta Bunnings which made a profit of \$1065 for the Friends as well as promoting the Garden. Well done! He is also a Garden

Guide and often conducts tours of the Garden at weekends when other guides are not always available. With increased tourism to northern SA following the exceptional rains, Chris informed me that many bus tour groups have booked Garden tours in coming months. After a six year wait, and largely funded by the Friends, the new outdoor toilet facility is now complete and the surrounds being landscaped. With the end of the financial year in sight you may like to consider a tax deductible donation to the Friends to help further develop our wonderful Garden. We look forward to seeing those who can make it to our June meeting. Meanwhile, best wishes and thanks for supporting the AALBG!

Beautiful smooth copper coloured bark of *Eucalyptus ravidia*, a mallet from the Eastern Goldfields and mallee regions of WA.



Crinum flaccidum, "Andamooka Lily" has large deep bulbs. These produced leaves and flowered soon after in response to the heavy rain in late February.

sundrop

NEXT MEETING

Date and Time:

Saturday 6th June, 2026 at 1.00pm

Venue: WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker & Topic: Tabitha Jones, Accountant at Sundrop Farms.

Sundrop Farms grows truss tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, and heirloom tomatoes. Sundrop's tomatoes are proudly supplied to customers across Australia through Coles, bringing fresh produce to tables nationwide.

This Tomato Farm on arid land near Port Augusta, is a world-leading, large-scale greenhouse known for its sustainable technology using concentrated solar power and desalinated seawater to grow truss tomatoes all year round for Coles supermarkets; it's a benchmark for future food production.

DIARY DATES

FRIENDS MEETINGS 2026

1.00pm WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

- **6th June:** Tabitha Jones
Topic: 'Sundrop Farm'
- **5th September:** Annual General Meeting
Jim Hayward and Sandra McKenzie
Topic: 'Using Our Australian Native Plants as Bonsai'
- **5th December:** Brian Reichelt
Topic: 'Achievements in the Garden in 2026'

EVENTS

7th November: The Friends in conjunction with the Lions Club Port Augusta and the Port Augusta City Council will be running a STURT DESERT PEA FESTIVAL at the AALBG. Sophie Thomson has been booked as a guest speaker. Not to be missed!

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Watching Field Trips for the Birds SA PORT AUGUSTA GROUP

Sunday 14th June:

Wilmington, Willowie, Melrose.
Meet at the Wilmington Pub at 8.00am.

Sunday 12th July:

Carriewerloo, Illeroo, Wartaka Road.
Meet at the start of Stuart Hwy at 8.00am.

Sunday 16th August:

Beetaloo Reservoir.
Meet alongside the Augusta Hwy at the Gladstone turnoff at 8.30am.

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

Contact: Bernie 0419 863 834
b.haase55@outlook.com

Bird Talk from The Garden by Peter Langdon

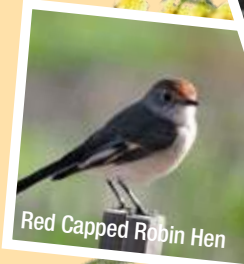
The rain in February and March has certainly made a difference, not only to the Garden, but also the birds.

The Chirruping Wedgebills (*Psophodes cristatus*) have been chirruping and the Rufous Field Wrens (*Calamanthus campestris*) singing. Brown Song Larks (*Magalurus crualis*) were seen and heard doing their display flights near the rubbish pit when the Button Grass got going. Three Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) were seen patrolling over the chenopod for grasshoppers.

However, the hot weather has dried a lot of the Button Grass off now and things have quietened down a bit. The Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*) have nestlings at the chenopod hide and are about to fledge.

A huge flock of Little Corellas (*Cacatua sanguinea*) has been feeding in the Garden on the grass and herbage, with some Galahs (*Eolophus roseicapilla*) amongst them. Other birds of note were two Banded Stilts (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*) seen swimming in the Gulf from the Flinders Lookout, and a Diamond Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*) seen along the Highway Side of the Garden.

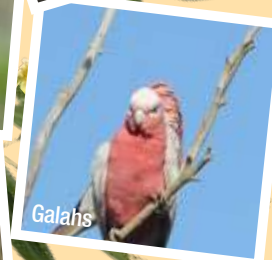
In late April more than three Fork-tailed Swifts (*Apus pacificus*) were seen going north above a huge flock of mostly Tree Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*). A tick for visiting Adelaide Birders. A flock of 21 Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) was seen flying over toward the railway line. A male Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenovii*) was seen at the Chenopod Bird Hide and is a regular visitor in the cooler months.



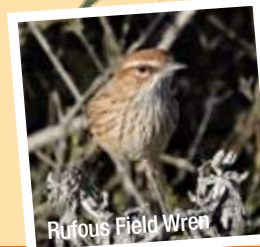
Red Capped Robin Hen



Diamond Dove



Galahs



Rufous Field Wren



Southern White-face

Peter's Plants by Peter Hall

Banksia rosserae was not discovered until the year 2000 when it was found accidentally on the edge of the GREAT SANDY DESERT in the vicinity of MOUNT MAGNET.

It grows to 3 metres high by 3-4 metres wide. The flowers are bright yellow and ball-like. These photos were taken of a plant growing in our garden in Moonta.

The species name was given to honour an artist, Celie Rosser, and being named for a woman the word ends in ae.



Banksia rosserae



Banksia rosserae



Banksia rosserae

Snippets by Shirley Mundy & Myles McClure

Successful Fundraiser by Myles McClure

On Saturday 11th April at the Port Augusta Bunnings store the Friends held a successful BBQ making a profit of \$1065.

Ten members assisted over the day of good weather, and the store was busy having a roll-on effect which benefited us.

Shirley Mundy was kept busy, handing out our brochure and directing people, who were not aware of its location, to the Garden.

We are hoping to have at least another two BBQs over the cooler months.



Bunnings BBQ Fundraiser conducted by Friends - Brian Reichelt

Not Usually Seen! by Shirley Mundy

These photos are of a seedling found growing under an *Eremophila bignoniiflora* in the Eremophila garden. The gardener Nikki Nutt found seedlings when she was weeding in the area.

She identified them as *Eremophila bignoniiflora* because of the seed being still attached. She showed Perry, the Nursery Manager, who then showed them growing to me. We carefully dug this one up, seed still attached, and Perry took the photos with the label.

It is unusual for Eremophilas to grow from seed, but assume that the rainfall from a few weeks ago, sparked these seeds into life. The large shrub was planted in 1996 according to Garden records. This is the first time that seedlings have grown there that we are aware of. The seedlings have been potted up, hopefully to grow into a useful plant.



Eremophila bignoniiflora - Perry Jones

Garden News by Brian Reichelt

With all the rain received over the last couple of months, approximately 160ml, the Garden is looking magnificent. It's very green, plants have commenced flowering, and it is indeed at its best right now. Of course, as we all know, along with rain comes weeds, so the Garden Staff and Volunteers have been busy weeding. The Flinders Lookout has received a major cleanup involving hand weeding, plant pruning and some whipper snipping of areas along paths. This year "Tumble Weed" has proliferated in the Garden and a large portion of time has been put into removing it, along with a spraying program to spray as much Buffel Grass as possible to reduce its impact on the Garden. A big thank you to volunteers Mike and Julia for their dedication with the spraying of the Buffel Grass.



The Arid Smart Gardens have continued to receive the attention of the Garden Staff and Volunteers with the completion of the Eremophila Garden, installation of two Park benches and tables to replace the old decaying timber units, and the installation of some metal cutouts to upgrade the Coastal, Flinders and Mallee Gardens; the photos will best show the outcome. A big thank you to Judy and Rod Manning of Manning Sculptures McLaren Vale for the generous donation of the life size Pelican for the Arid Smart Coastal Garden.



Ian and I have been developing a prototype heat bed for the propagating area at the Garden. It is constructed of PVC Pipe and Poly Pipe and Poly Carbonate roofing panel. This should increase the life of the unit which usually requires repairing every three to four years due to the metal construction parts rusting away.

Christine Nayda advises that tours have recommenced with good numbers and future bookings for the year are looking great. The Guides have regular training once per week usually conducted by Christine.

The propagating Staff and Volunteers have continued their efforts in propagating new plants, weeding pruning and potting on tube stock. Don't forget to look at the Availability List sent out at the beginning of each month to see what is available for your Garden.

COME VOLUNTEER TODAY!

2025-2026 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.

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Fleurieu Peninsula Group

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

Reminder Are you financial?

Renewals for Memberships for the 2026-27 year will be due 1st July, 2026.

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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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

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