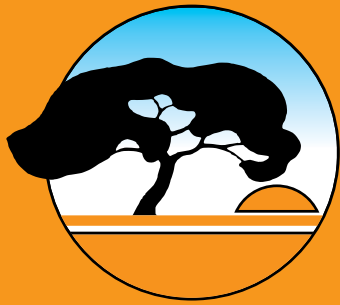




Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

Port Augusta Incorporated | ABN 72 979 332 415

Newsletter



Sept 2026
Issue #210

View to the Ranges looking across the AALBG, June 2026 – Brian Reichelt

President's Report by John Zwar OAM CF President



Port Augusta has received 231.2 mm of rainfall year-to-date (mid July), which is significantly higher than the long-term historical average of 125.4 mm for this period. This wetter-than-average trend was largely driven by heavy storms, including a maximum daily downpour of 35.4 mm in late February (Elders Weather). If you have not visited the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden

for some time, this is the year to do it with drought breaking rains and the likelihood of very impressive spring flowering.

"SA Gardens & Outdoor Living" September (Spring) magazine (produced by SA Life magazine) and available at nurseries and garden centres will feature a story on AALBG by horticulturalist Kim Syrus. It's concise and comprehensive and well worthwhile obtaining a copy, I can assure you.

If you are able it would be great to see you at our AGM in September (see details in the newsletter). Another excellent reason to visit is to attend our first "Sturt Desert Pea Festival" on Sat Nov 7th. Besides various displays and activities guest presenters will include our Patron Sophie Thomson. Please promote this event to people who may be interested. It promises to be a very enjoyable and informative day. Meanwhile, keep warm and enjoy South Australia's ongoing drought breaking rain.



The AALBG is green following drought breaking rains. View looking east over the Garden to the Flinders Ranges from the car park.



The Arid Smart Gardens in the AALBG are being progressively upgraded. This view is looking into the Flinders Ranges Garden.



Jim Hayward became a Friend, and a tour guide, and also a committee member at the AALBG eleven years ago when he moved to Pt Augusta, and it was then that he became interested in Bonsai. With no background or training he played with Acacias, Eremophilas and other Australian native plants. Subsequently he became a member of the Australian Plants Society, the Adelaide Bonsai Society and the Victorian Native Bonsai Club. His learning began. Since that time he has run many 'Bonsai for Beginners' workshops. This photo shows him at Bunnings, Victor Harbor, where he has presented in each of the last three years.

NEXT MEETING

Date and Time:

Saturday 5th September, 2026 at 1.00pm

Venue: WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

Guest Speaker & Topic: Jim Hayward, 'Using our Australian Native Plants as Bonsai'

DIARY DATES

FRIENDS MEETINGS 2026

1.00pm WMC Meeting Room, AALBG

• 5th September:

Annual General Meeting Jim Hayward

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

Friday 11th - Saturday 12th - Sunday 13th September:

Gluepot Reserve.

Meet at the Gluepot Visitor Centre at 12 noon. (Camp out. Facilities available. Costs apply.)

Sunday 11th October:

Bernie's Block, Mambray Creek.

Meet at the Augusta Hwy parking bay at 8.00am.

Sunday 15th November:

Wirrabara Forest, Bluff, Block 9 Rd.

Meet at the Wirrabara Pub 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 continual rain has certainly "greened" things up and started the birds into action.

Rufous Song Larks (*Megalurus mathewsi*) have taken up a few positions around the Garden, and a few Brown Song Larks (*Megalurus cruralis*) are displaying over the chenopod area. Fairy wren (*malurus spec.*) males are colouring up for the breeding season, and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalisi*) and Black-eared Cuckoo (*Chalcites osculans*) have been seen and heard but are only just getting going. White fronted Chats (*Epthianura albifrons*) are in very small numbers probably because it is good everywhere and they are spoilt for choice.

An immature female Western/Golden Whistler was seen in the Sandhill area and is a scarce winter visitor and has now been "lumped" back into the Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) instead of (*Pachycephala occidentalis*) by the learned taxonomists.

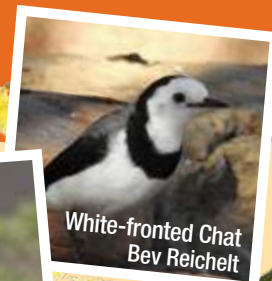
The resident pair of Red Throats (*Pyrholaemus brunneus*) near the Boardwalk Gazebo are getting vocal again but last weekend (04/07/26) only the female perched and sang, the male skulking and scolding from the thicker cover.

Over the last two years, birders both resident and visitor, have been commenting on the colour of some of the House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in the Garden. Some have a very fawn hue and lately some are decidedly red. We think that the colour is a result of the birds dustbathing in the crusher dust which is purchased from a quarry near Iron Knob. Their "dust baths" can be seen near the main entrance to the Visitor Centre.

In the raptors, a Spotted Harrier (*Circus assimilis*) was seen quartering the chenopod, and a Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus axillaris*) hovering and then perching conveniently at the Boardwalk Carpark. The Nankeen Kestrels (*Falco cenchroides*) have begun nest building and mating.



Rufous Songlark



White-fronted Chat
Bev Reichelt



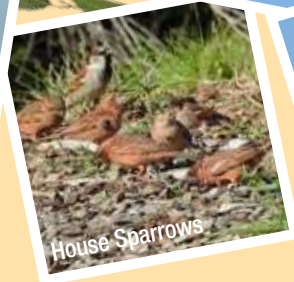
Red Throat female



Nankeen Kestrels
mating, Bev Reichelt



Black-shouldered Kite



House Sparrows



Rufous Songlark,
Bev Reichelt

Peter's Plants by Peter Hall

Prostanthera florifera is a plant that grows naturally in the Gawler Ranges in South Australia to about 75cm x 75cm.

Flowers come in various colours. Photos used in this article were taken on the hill behind the Mt Ive Station Homestead. I have a form with clear yellow flowers growing in a pot.



Prostanthera florifera



Prostanthera florifera

Snippets by Shirley Mundy & Myles McClure

FROG IN A BOX! by Shirley Mundy

One never knows what the day may hold!

I found this frog in a box of plants at the AridSmart Nursery, and it was identified through the Frogwatch website by Perry Jones as a Desert Trilling Frog or *Neobatrachus sudellae*.

Scan the QR Code or Search the link below to follow the link.

I'm sure you'll find it quite fascinating

www.frogwatchsa.com.au/species/view/26



FROG WATCH SA



Desert Trilling Frog
(*Neobatrachus sudellae*)



Desert Trilling Frog
(*Neobatrachus sudellae*)



Desert Trilling Frog
(*Neobatrachus sudellae*)

Another Successful BBQ! by Myles McClure

Our 2nd fundraising bbq at Bunnings for the Friends; we made \$650.





The Garden has never been greener with annual rainfall so far this year at around 268mm. The header photo of this Newsletter edition shows the Chenopod area to the east of the Garden looking green, not a regular sight for our beautiful garden. I'm sure that the flowering as the weather starts to warm will be wonderful this year.

The volunteer propagators have continued to do what is needed to keep up a good supply of native tube stock, but of course weeding has become more prevalent due to the wet conditions. We welcome a new volunteer propagator Ken and know he will enjoy volunteering at the nursery.



As I mentioned in the last Newsletter the weeds are growing faster than we can remove them, this has caused some projects to step back a little whilst we contend with the weeds. The Friends have purchased a new 200L Spray Unit which fits into the back of the off road vehicle to enable the spraying of the Buffel Grass which is enjoying the wet conditions. Mike and Julia have taken up the role as our Buffel Grass eradication specialists and are making their mark spraying as much of the Buffel Grass as possible.



We welcome a new Garden Volunteer in Dennis and know that he is already enjoying working with the outside garden group.

As I mentioned above much of our time has been spent hand removing weeds, whipper snipping etc; we have also commenced preparing an area for National Tree Day and it is anticipated we will plant around 300 trees on Friday 24th July with the assistance of school children and the community. Only two of the Arid Smart Gardens are now left to be revitalised and work has commenced on them.



The path from the carpark to the new outside toilet and on to the café is currently being paved by contractors and then the garden plantings and irrigation will take place to finalise this project.



A retaining wall will be installed by contractors at the new disabled carpark area and near the Childrens Explorer Garden to finalise this area of the Garden.

The same contractors who installed the path via the toilet will also pave the Courtyard side of the Café verandah area to replace the old fretting concrete slabs and this will create a much better area for visitors.

The materials for the last three projects have been funded by the Port Augusta City Council, with the Friends funding the labour component of these projects.

I'm sure that when you next visit the Garden you will find that these projects further enhance your visitor experience. (All photos by Brian Reichelt.)

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.



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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Join or Renew

BECOME A FRIEND

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 \$ _____ . _____

Name: (Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

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

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

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.
BSB: 035 065 Account: 228049

Account Name: Trust FAALBG Donation Acct

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

Donation \$ _____ . _____

