



APS Foothills Inc. A0013126K

February Newsletter 2023

FEBRUARY MEETING

Nicky Zanen: Far North Queensland

Wednesday 22nd February 2023

Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd,
Knoxfield. 7.45pm.

PROPAGATION DAY

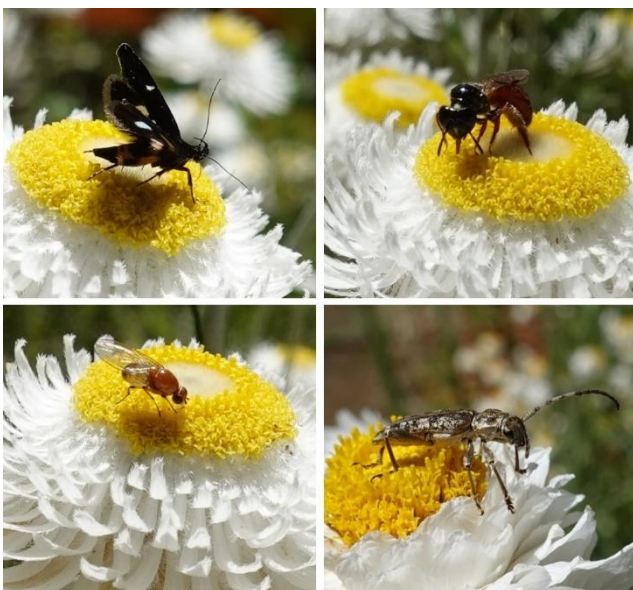
Saturday 25th February 2023

Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd,
Knoxfield. 7.45pm

See page 2 for further details.

Plant Talk and Plant Review

See pages 5 and 9.



Hunting Plants in the High Country

Some of our members visited Falls Creek with the Cranbourne Friends this summer. See pages 6 and 8.

Hi Everyone,

Happy New Year - even though we're a fair few weeks into it already! Hope you all had a great festive season and enjoyed spending time with family and friends.

Thanks again Kerry and Colene for hosting our end-of-year Christmas gathering. We had such a magical day with the weather being kind to us, lots of tasty food and plenty of good company!

All in all, we had a pretty good year last year, especially with our meetings getting back on track after the disruptions of previous years. It looks like this year is going to be a good one too, and if you have a look at our calendar in this newsletter, you'll see what I mean. Nicky has already managed to secure several speakers for the first half of the year for us which is fantastic - thank you! - and from the variety of interesting topics they'll be speaking on, there's much to look forward to.

To start us off, our first meeting of the year will be Nicky talking to us about a trip she took to Far North Queensland. It's a part of the country I've not yet visited, so I'm looking forward to finding out more about it.

Our propagation day is scheduled for the last Saturday in February. This is always a very pleasant morning spent in good company and we finish up with a late morning tea. My little garden is jam packed with some lovely things I've managed to propagate from material brought along by other members, so it's one of my favourite days!

Looking forward to catching up with you all at our February meeting and our propagation day.

Janet Hodgkiss

Foothills Propagation Day - Saturday 25th February 2023

Propagating new plants from cuttings is a great way to grow new plants. It's especially useful if you've got some favourite plants that you'd like to have more of, or if you simply need to replace some old plants. It's also handy if you'd like to try grow something that may not be readily commercially available.

We've got some propagation experts in our group who are always happy to pass on their knowledge, so if you've not tried growing plants from cuttings before, or if you want to pick up some tricks of the trade, then this is the ideal opportunity. Once you get the hang of propagating and how to take cuttings, you'll never look at a plant the same way again.

This is a relaxed morning and we'll finish up with a late morning tea.

All you need to do is bring along some pieces of plants (cutting material) you'd like to propagate or share with others, and a few other bits and pieces - see the list below.

Even if you don't have any plant material to bring along, please do join us because there is always plenty of extra material to go around, and for you to practice your new-found skills on.

Date: Saturday 25th February, 2023

Place: Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd, Knoxfield

Time: 10.00am – 12 noon

Bring: Sharp, clean secateurs; Clean pots to place your cuttings into; Container to hold and safely transport your cuttings home; Plant material to take cuttings from; Small watering can or spray bottle if you have one.

We will provide: Propagation mix, rooting hormone, a good spot under cover where we are well protected from the elements, and of course, morning tea!

Look forward to seeing you there!

November Meeting: Tony Slater – Wildflowers of the Wimmera and Whitehorse

At our November meeting we had Tony Slater talk to us about the Wildflowers of the Wimmera and Whitehorse.

The connection between these two areas seems very remote, so Tony started by explaining to us what the connection was.

He'd been asked to give a presentation at the Urimbirra Cooperative AGM (held at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary), to talk about wildflowers of the Mallee, the Little Desert area and the wildflowers around Blackburn Lake, as the talk was to be followed by a walk around the lake. He was also asked to talk about some of the flowers that might be common to both the Blackburn Lake area and the Wimmera. That meeting ended up being held via Zoom due to yet another lockdown at the time, but we were lucky enough to have Tony give his presentation to us in person.

Tony explained that the connection between Blackburn Lake (in Whitehorse) and Urimbirra is that the Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society had been involved in the fight to save the Little Desert from being subdivided for farming purposes in the late 1960s, with the Urimbirra Cooperative being formed in the early 1970s to acquire and protect remnant bushland in the Little Desert area of the Wimmera. The Urimbirra blocks of land are located on the northern boundary of the Little desert National Park between Kaniva and Nhill. Conservation activities by volunteers of the group (Nicky being one of them), includes ongoing fauna and flora surveys, and raising funds to purchase more land to add to the conservation area.

Tony then compared the Wimmera-Mallee and Whitehorse areas, and looked at climate, soils and vegetation type.

Climate, the prevailing weather conditions of an area, includes temperature, the maximum and

minimum and its extremes e.g. prolonged heat or frost; rainfall, the average and variability; humidity or lack thereof, and evaporation rates. This all affects the flora of an area.

In comparing the climates of the Wimmera and Whitehorse, Tony noted that the Wimmera experiences minor variations with hot summers and mild winters. Most rain is low intensity but summer storms can be intense. Severe frosts occur during winter, and in summer, evaporation exceeds the amount of rainfall.

Whitehorse has a temperate, mild climate. July is the coldest and February the warmest. Rainfall is mainly in winter, and frosts are relatively infrequent.

The Wimmera is comprised of an undulating floodplain and the main soil types found in the region include cracking clays in the Horsham area, weathered duplex soils (with two distinct horizons) in the central Wimmera and sandy and sandy loam soils that may form sandy ridges in the Mallee regions.

Whitehorse, similar to Knox, is undulating lowland with brown sodic duplex soils and grey duplex soils, derived from the mainly sandstone rockbase and the degrading forests.

Whitehorse soils tend to be acidic to strongly acidic, which is good for plant nutrition and growth, whereas the Wimmera soils are alkaline to strongly alkaline.

The comparison of the bioregions and vegetation was interesting. In the Wimmera, nearly all vegetation was removed for agriculture, with the Mallee vegetation being a complex mosaic that gets shorter the further north you go. Tony mentioned that historically the Wimmera supported a savannah woodland, while further north, the vegetation is a heathland interspersed with mallee eucalypts that dominate the area. The area is also home to five National parks and one State park.



Mallee eucalypts interspersed with heathland in the Wimmera (Photo: Tony Slater)

In Whitehorse, the vegetation is very disturbed. This is due to agriculture (much of the area was under orchards and flower farms), and advancing urbanisation. The area is historically dry sclerophyll forest, of which only remnants remain. There are no National or State parks in the area although there are more than 20 bushland reserves. Whitehorse is classified as Gippsland Plain bioregion, whereas the Wimmera-Mallee area is classified as Wimmera, Lowan Mallee and Murray Mallee bioregions. These three regions are very similar but distinct.

We then had a look at photos of the vegetation and flowers of the Wimmera-Mallee. This area is characterised by low-growing colourful heathland and smaller eucalypts.



Melaleuca wilsonii Violet honey-myrtle with small leaves (Photo: Tony Slater)

Leaves of Mallee wildflowers are small and this is a good strategy as the plants can't transpire a lot and lose a lot of water. Some plants in the Wimmera may have no leaves, or a very

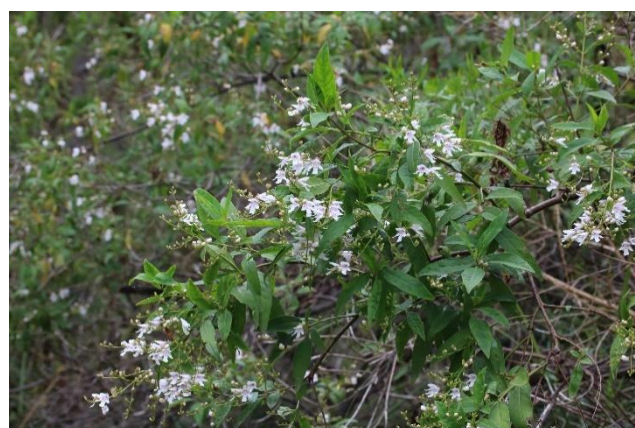
reduced number of leaves, or they have leaves covered in small hairs which also helps to reduce transpiration.



Glischrocaryon behrii Golden Pennants can become almost leafless (Photo: Tony Slater)

When looking at the vegetation of Whitehorse, the difference in the type of forest compared to the Wimmera is very noticeable. Tony says he loves it when the first wattles start to flower in Whitehorse because it means spring, along with the first of the warm weather is usually about three weeks away.

Most of the plants in Whitehorse, such as the Victorian Christmas Bush, have much larger leaves than those found in the Mallee and this is a response to the different climatic conditions.



Prostanthera lasianthos Victorian Christmas Bush Victorian Christmas bush in flower along Mullum Mullum Creek in Yarran Dheran (Photo: Tony Slater)

Stepping through the slides, our attention was drawn to the fact that the leaves of the Black Wattle are quite different to leaves found in

Mallee plants, being fine feathery compound leaves. We discovered that mistletoe is a good indicator of plant health and that *Amyema quandong* is the only mistletoe that holds its flowers upright; *Brunonia australis* is named after Robert Brown, one of the first botanists to use a microscope and who described some of the microscopic cell structures and movement of these structures within cells, along with the observation of the phenomenon of Brownian Motion; Sundews abound in Whitehorse and Tall Sundews have been particularly good this year; *Leptospermum continentale* is found in both Whitehorse and the Wimmera; and *Stackhousia monogyna* is found in both areas. The Whitehorse form has a much whiter flower whereas the ones found in the Wimmera are more yellow in colour.



Stackhousia monogyna
L: Wimmera form R: Whitehorse form
 (Photos: Tony Slater)

In conclusion, Tony noted that the flowers of the two areas are similar but quite different and this is due to the different climatic conditions. Overall, the plants in the Wimmera are smaller and show adaptations to the harsher climate, while plants in Whitehorse are larger and are adapted to the kinder climate. There are also a few species that are common to both areas.

Janet Hodgkiss

Plant Talk – *Dietes robinsoniana*

Included in a talk I gave to Foothills early in 2022 was the very large leaved plant, *Dietes robinsoniana*. At that time I didn't have any pictures of this plant in flower.

Although purchased in one of the last years we were involved with Stringybark, before 2012, it had only flowered once with a single flower stalk. I wasn't sure it was ever going to flower again but I stuck with it mainly because I liked the foliage contrast. At the end of 2022 it went nuts, pushing out eight flower stalks with lots of inflorescences on each stalk. An exciting time. It started to flower at the start of November and is only now finishing because apparently each inflorescence can have up to 100 large showy flowers which are short-lived.



Dietes robinsoniana (Photo: Chris Larkin)

Dietes robinsoniana is an endemic plant of Lord Howe Island (NSW) and is our only dietes. Its strap leaves are broad, with the plant reaching 1.5m. The flower stalks are slightly taller than the leaves. It is widespread on the island from sea level to mountain top in exposed sites.

Given the fact that, as a generalisation, we do not have the same summer rain and humidity, I would suggest the plant needs some shade to protect it on the scorching hot days. I also feel such a large eye-attracting plant needs to be carefully placed in a garden bed, where it blends in rather than dominates the view. In our

climate the leaves can brown off, so this is another reason not to make it the star attraction.



Dietes foliage provides contrast in the garden
(Photo: Chris Larkin)

I can't help believing the reason my plant flowered so well was due to the good rains we had over 2022. If the weather turns dry again, then I might have a long wait for the next flowering. In discussion with a Maroondah member, I do know this plant can be successfully grown in a large pot. Pot culture means there is a greater chance of yearly flowering if you keep up a decent watering regime.

Chris Larkin

Reference: Elliot and Jones *'Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants'*

Out and About

And before you know it, we're in the second month of the new year and the memories and challenges of Christmas and New Year's Eve are well behind us.

Our year finished with a terrific meeting in the true Foothills tradition of an excellent speaker and delicious supper. Tony's talk comparing the flora of Whitehorse and that of Urimbirra, in the Little Desert, was very close to my heart and a highlight.

My year has started with a venture into completely different flora to the Little Desert and Melbourne; Falls Creek in the Australian Alps. Our members have been there many times, but this time it was with the Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne.

Normally access to Falls Creek is an easy 26km from Mt Beauty, but with all the rains at the end of last year, the fear of a massive landslide on the road meant the road is closed! This gave us an additional drive of over two hours, not covering much mileage but being challenged with winding roads and a great dependence on our brakes.

I just love being in the Victorian Alps every summer. The reminder of the vast array of different plants, not many of which we see locally, the deeper colours of the trigger plants, the prolific number of daisies and unusual Epacridaceae and Proteaceae, not to overlook the stunning views that make you feel you are indeed on top of the world.

This year there were so many more butterflies and dragonflies, and it looked as if every yellow flower had an insect clambering over it. The rain, although causing chaos throughout our beautiful country, has had its advantages.



Wallace's Hut, Falls Creek - dead tree limbs are still indicative of recent bushfires

(Photo: Nicky Zanen)

We visited many of our familiar haunts – Watchbed Creek, Copes Hut, Ruined Castle, Pretty Valley with its snow grass, Wallace Hut and Mount Cope. There was one place I was trying to recall and wonder if anyone can let me know where that was. The picture I have in my mind is of a huge pipe going down the hill as you face one direction, and behind you water is coming out of the side providing a lot of fairy aprons and other water loving plants. It might be a hydro station or something. We just couldn't place it – unless it was in the area that was closed to us because of the landslide.



Ana and David McCloskey (our newer Foothills members), exploring the vegetation at the Aqueduct (Photo: Nicky Zanen)

Where we were staying in Howman's Gap we found some bird orchids, which appear to be

Chiloglottis valida. These are relatively common in the Alpine region and flower in summer.



Bird Orchid, *Chiloglottis valida*, Howman's Gap

(Photo: Nicky Zanen)

At home I found a flowering orchid on Christmas day in the little park near my place. I have to admit to being thrilled to find them as the park is very small with limited biodiversity; in fact it is very weedy.



Orchid found in park on Christmas Day

(Photo: Nicky Zanen)

In trying to identify the orchid from Flora of Melbourne I found three plants that it could be; *Corunastylis despectans* – the sharp midge orchid which shows up in our area; *Acianthus pusillus* with a distinctive heart shaped leaf, otherwise known as the gnat or small mosquito orchid, flowering from April to August (not likely then); and *Microtidium alratum*, yellow onion orchid. I put a photo on iNaturalist and it has

come up with a completely different name: *Microtis arenaria*. Notched onion orchid. I'll have to call an expert this year to get a positive ID.

Nicky Zanen

Falls Creek Plant Hunt

A few Foothills members visited the Falls Creek area, January 12-16. It was a Friends of RBG Cranbourne activity. The leader was Chris Clarke, formerly APS Vic President, Keilor Plains member, and alpine plant enthusiast. The organisers were our newest member, Alexandra Stalder, and Nicky. On the last full day, Sunday 15, Alex got participants to blind-pick a plant name from ones she had selected and written on small cards. The idea was to find this plant on our rambles. I had the misfortune of choosing *Geranium antrorsum*, a low-growing herb that Alex admitted she had never seen. And let me tell you, she is very knowledgeable about the plants of the high country. I felt the cards were literally stacked against me while other, more fortunate people had picked a plant abundant and in full view.

In response to the seemingly impossible task, I decided instead to choose a plant for myself. I put this idea to Alex, asking her at the same time if substitute plants had been given to anyone else. The answer was no.

It was a bit of a surprise to see *Stackhousia monogyna* growing alongside the path because it is also one of our local plants. In fact these plants are very varied and wide ranging occurring in all states but not the territories. They grow in a great variety of climatic and soil conditions. You would think this makes them a tough little plant, and in some respects this might be true, but they are not easy to grow and maintain as garden plants.



Stackhousia monogyna (Photo: Chris Larkin)

The common name for *Stackhousia monogyna* is 'Creamy Candles' because the flowers are arranged around the plant as you can see in the picture. There are around 17 species of *Stackhousia*, with 16 occurring in Australia, and in most cases, many flowers are arranged on or around the flower stalk.

What a surprise then, to find a matting plant, dotted with single flowers and growing between rocks at 'Ruined Castle', was indeed a *Stackhousia*, *Stackhousia pulvinaris*. No stack of flowers to be found with this one! No way you would immediately think here's a *stackhousia*.

Both species of *Stackhousia* have perfumed flowers, so next time I need to do more than just look because there is more to these plants than meets the eye.

Chris Larkin

Reference: Elliot and Jones, *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants*.



Stackhousia pulvinaris growing between rocks
(Photo: Chris Larkin)

Plant Review

Callistemon 'Sweet Burst'

Callistemon 'Sweet Burst' is one of a new series of compact Bottlebrush put out by Ozbreed. It has soft pink flowers tipped with yellow, in spring and is followed by bronzy pink new growth.



Growing to only 1m x 1m, it will fit in all sorts of garden spaces and is also fine in pots. I can see this being great as a domed plant or as a small hedge. It's also an excellent pollinator and bird attracting inclusion in the garden.

Liz Triggs

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MEETINGS

Venue: Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd, Knoxfield. (Melway 73 C3)

Date: 4th Wednesday of the month (Feb-Nov)

Time: 7.45pm

Newsletter Contributions

Please email contributions for the next newsletter to Kerry Davis by no later than: 8pm Monday 6 March 2023.

Email:

COMMITTEE

Leader: Janet Hodgkiss

Secretary: Nicky Zanen

Treasurer: Chris Larkin

Newsletter Editor: Kerry Davis

Other Members: Betty Wright

APS Vic Delegate: Janet Hodgkiss

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet. We pay our respects to First Nations People throughout Australia and to Elders, past, present and emerging.

VISITORS WELCOME!

Shows, conferences, plant sales and other items of interest 2023

Important please check APS Victorian website for cancellations

18 March 2023 – APS Victoria Committee of Management Zoom Meeting starting at 10.00 am.

25 & 26 March 2023 - Cranbourne Friends RBGV Autumn Plant Sale. 10 am to 4 pm. Wide range of plants, plant list available one week before sale. Website: rbgfrienscranbourne.org.au

29 March to 2 April 2023 – Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS), Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building. Website: <https://melbflowershow.com.au>.

1 April 2023 – APS Geelong Australian Native Plant Sale, 'Wirrawilla', Lovely Banks. 8.30 am to 4.00 pm.

15 April 2023 – APS Heathcote Plant and Flower Show. Mechanics Institute, 121 High Street, Heathcote.

22 April 2023 - APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, Eltham. 10 am – 4 pm.

29 April 2023 - APS Mornington Peninsula Plant Sale. 10 am to 3 pm. The Briars, Mt Martha.

13 May 2023 – APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh Plant Sale. 9am to 1pm. The venue is expected to be St Andrews Uniting Church at Bacchus Marsh, to be confirmed.

24 & 25 June 2023 – APS Ballarat Winter Flower Show. Flower show, plant sales etc. Robert Clark Centre, Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Gilles Street, Ballarat. 10 am – 4 pm.

2 September 2023 – APS Cardinia Region Group Plant Sale at Akoonah Park, Princes Hwy, Berwick, from 9 am to 3 pm. To be located in the undercover fruit and vegetable market area.

9 & 10 September 2023 - APS Yarra Yarra Australian Plants Expo, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road Eltham. 10.00 am - 4.00 pm both days.

16 & 17 September 2023 – Angair Wildflower Show & Art Show, Anglesea Memorial Hall, McMillan Street, Anglesea. 10 am to 4 pm. Wildflower display, indigenous plant sales, art show and painting sales.

23 & 24 September 2023 – APS Bendigo Flower Show, Victory College, Kairn Road, Strathdale (Bendigo).

23 & 24 September 2023 – APS Grampians host APS Vic September COMM.

30 September & 1 October 2023 – APS Grampians Group Pomonal Native Flower Show, Pomonal Hall.

7 October 2023 – APS Echuca Moama Native Flower Showcase, Echuca Masonic Lodge Hall, 426 High Street, Echuca. 9 am to 4 pm. Flower show, native plant sales, basket weaving display, floral art and painting sales.

14 October 2023 – APS Mitchell Plant Expo and Sale. Wallan Community Centre, Bentinck Street, Wallan. From 9 am to 3 pm.

21 & 22 October 2023 - APS Ballarat Spring Flower Show. Flower show, plant sales etc. Robert Clark Centre, Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Gilles Street, Ballarat. 10 am – 4 pm.

30 September to 4 October, 2024 – ANPSA 2024 Biennial Conference hosted by APS Victoria in Melbourne.

Overseas – United Kingdom

3 – 9 July 2023 - The Australasian Plant Society based in the UK is putting on a joint display with the Hebe Society in the Floral Marquee at the 2023 RHS Hampton Court Flower Festival, on the theme of 'Australasian plants for a Changing Climate.'

APS Foothills Calendar 2023			
2023	Date	Day	Topic
February	22	Wednesday	Nicky Zanen - Far North Queensland
	25	Saturday	Propagation Morning: Knox Park Primary School <i>10.00am – 12noon (to be confirmed)</i>
March	22	Wednesday	Ross Shepherd - Banksias in Seaford
	25	Saturday	Banksia arboretum walk - Seaford <i>(to be confirmed)</i>
April	22	Saturday	Autumn Working Bee: Knox Park Primary School <i>10.00am - 12noon (to be confirmed)</i>
	26	Wednesday	Graham Patterson - From Point Lonsdale to the South Australian Border
May	24	Wednesday	Kathleen Ralston - Lichens
June	28	Wednesday	Member's evening – Five Slides <i>(to be confirmed)</i>

Repotting Orchids

Nicky recently asked Maureen Schaumann for advice on how to manage her (Nicky's) orchid collection (mostly Dendrobiums), and thought Maureen's response would be helpful to other members who grow orchids.

Maureen says, "Dendrobium orchids, I divide any time except when flowering.

"Pterostylis (terrestrial orchids) have a tuber which is dormant in the ground over summer, so no watering. When the autumn rains come, this tuber sends up a single shoot, grows leaves, a new tuber and flowers. These orchids have a growing period, usually mid-autumn to mid-spring and a dormant period from mid-spring to mid-autumn. They need to be repotted while the plants are dormant - usually January. Saying that, I am sometimes guilty of waiting until they shoot in autumn and have leaves. It is important

not to forget when repotting, to include half of the old mix (because of the fungi in it) with half of the new mix. I usually cover the pot with casuarina leaves."



Dendrobium orchid in need of repotting
(Photo: Nicky Zanen)