

Dianella admixta



AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY
SOUTH EAST MELBOURNE REGION INC.

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NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2018

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, February to December except November.

The venue is the Hughesdale Community Hall, Cnr Poath and Kangaroo Roads, Hughesdale (MEL 69 C7)

Visitors are always very welcome.

COMMITTEE:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| PRESIDENT: | John Thompson thomme@netspace.net.au |
| DEPUTY LEADER: | Helen Appleby |
| SECRETARY: | Helen Appleby |
| TREASURER: | Catherine Irwin irwincs@hotmail.com |
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| NEWSLETTER EDITOR: | Marj Seaton normarjs@bigpond.com |
| COMMITTEE: | Amanda Loudon amandalouden@icloud.com |

Please forward any newsletter contributions, comments or photos to Marj at 36 Voumard Street, Oakleigh South 3167 or to the email address above.

Note: Deadline for the DECEMBER newsletter is November 22nd

NOVEMBER OUTING

Sunday 18th November 2018

Our outing this year is to the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. We are to meet at 10:30am at Gate "F" which is beside the Herbarium. Of course, your visitors, spouses etc are also welcome to join us.

A walk along the Australian Forest walk is planned first, taking note of the big Araucarias amongst others, after which we can adjourn to either the Eucalyptus lawn where you can have your lunch, bring your own or go to the Lakeside Café where you can purchase from their offerings. We won't be far from Guilfoyle's Volcano for those who wish to see how it is faring.

Hats, sunscreen, raincoats (whatever is appropriate to the weather of the day) plus cameras/phones, water bottles and maybe lunch.

There is car parking not far away, but please be aware of the roadworks at the corner of Domain Road and St. Kilda Road. One alternative is to take a tram from Flinders Street Station and then walk across the Shrine lawns to the entrance. Another option is to go to South Yarra, catch a tram then walk from there. That tram no longer goes along Domain Road.

Hope to see as many as possible there.

2. CALENDARS

Our 2019 CALENDARS were available at the October meeting. Price is \$15 per calendar. Some will also be available (as long as stocks last) at the November gathering and the December meeting.

RAINFALL RECORDS

The following are our rainfall records for 2018 (in mm) so far.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|------------------|------|-----|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| Oakleigh South | 67.6 | 1 | 26.2 | 20.5 | 71 | 54.3 | 29.5 | 54 | 25.2 | | | | 349.3 |
| Highett | 52.2 | 1.6 | 16.5 | 17.1 | 50.1 | 38.1 | 38.7 | 22.8 | 15.3 | | | | 252.4 |
| Hampton | 51 | 0 | 18 | 18 | 39 | 34 | | | | | | | Gauge broken |
| Cranbourne South | 47 | 4 | 31 | 26 | 78 | 70 | 79 | 66 | 38 | | | | 439 |
| Caulfield Sth | 76 | 1 | 25 | 17 | 58 | 44 | 26 | 45 | 17 | | | | 309 |
| Elsternwick | 63.3 | 1 | 22 | 13.6 | 42.55 | 36.8 | 23.7 | 38.5 | 9 | | | | 250.45 |

OCTOBER MEETING

Speaker: Cathy Powers

GRASSLANDS – a disappearing habitat

Cathy started her talk by showing us a world map indicating where the major grasslands of the world are to be found. They are to be found on all continents except Antarctica and occupy about one quarter of the Earth's land. Grass is the dominant vegetation in each case.



Temperate grasslands are found north of the Tropic of Cancer (23.5°N) and south of the Tropic of Capricorn (23.5°S). These grasslands have various names such as: Veldt (South Africa), Pampas (South America), Steppes (Eurasia), Prairies (mid-west, US) and Savannah (Australia). In general soils tend to be deep and fertile which also make them ideal for cropping and farmland. For grassland, conditions need to be not wet enough for forests yet not dry enough that deserts form.

We moved to the Badlands of the US now. The Badlands transitions between tall grass prairies in the east and short grass prairies in the west. Inhospitable rock escarpments are separated by green areas where bighorn sheep and big bucks graze. Coyotes and buffalo also occupy this niche. Prairie dogs (herbivorous burrowing rodents, left) acquire all of the water they need from the food they eat eg grasses, roots and weeds and are an essential part of the diet of the black footed ferrets. These last were almost sent to extinction when the prairie dog towns failed (Farmers and ranchers eliminated many prairie dogs because their



underground complexes were destructive to fields). Flowers found there include scarlet gaura, low fleabane, tufted evening primrose, bracted spiderwort, prairie groundsel, bearberry and blue-eyed grass. Cathy showed us pictures of all of these and compared them with some of our wildflowers eg patersonia, senecio and wahlenbergia. There were surprising similarities. Milkweed (right) is prevalent and is one of the major food sources of the migrating monarch butterfly. Echinacea too is common and supplies many insect colonies with nectar.



3.

In Victoria, we saw maps of the main vegetation forms of the State, and modelled maps of our grasslands pre and post 1750 AD. The current map shows hardly any grasslands in existence.

Grassy Woodlands – open eucalypt woodlands, trees to 15m tall. Poorly drained fertile soils. Sparse shrubs and herbaceous ground layers in the understorey.

Some examples:

1. Cobra Killuc Wildlife Reserve. In 2016, Cathy noted lots of flowers in the remnant grasslands with thousands of greenhood orchids. *Stackhousia subterranean*, chocolate lilies and bulbines in abundance and the golden moth orchid present.
This is a high quality grassland which has had little disturbance, weeds are contained and a variety of tussocks, forbs, bryophytes and subterranean organisms exist.
2. Cressy Shelford Road. Road verges are frequently sites where rare and endangered species can be found, eg *Utricularia* sp. The Colac Otway Council advertises the presence of some of these, such as the striped legless lizard and the spiny rice flower, on prominent signs. They also indicate significant native vegetation on big signs saying “No spraying, No slashing, No grazing and No burning”.

Poorer Quality grasslands. – grazed, unstable with high concentration of weeds, less structurally rich so there is no bryophytic crust (mosses, lichens, slimeworts). Without rain these can become deserts.

What has occurred in the past?

Most of our grasses have come from the Gondwana period. In the last 1800s, most of our plains previously dominated by Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) and flowering herbs had gone due to the increase in soil nutrients, heavy grazing, rabbits, introduction of weedy grasses and spraying. Once, these areas were frequented by emus and curlews (ground nesters). Grasslands were natural hunting grounds for raptors eg eagles cleaning up carrion, black kites, black shouldered kites fed here. Long nosed bandicoots, dingoes, wallabies have disappeared though we still have echidnas. The ecological impacts of cats and dogs have not been recognized until recently. Introduced herbivores such as hares and rabbits have destroyed plant habitats.

What is being done?

Cathy instanced one farmer who is trying to preserve his plot despite activities of human colonization. Special plants are marked and the area is grazed only at particular times.

The Mulla Mulla Grasslands (Bush’s Paddock) near Melton is being managed by the Melton Council and Pinkerton Landcare. Isolated patches are being replanted with vulnerable groups of plants and the City is helping to protect the area.

There is one large significant tree – a lone Blue Box.

Laverton North Grasslands. A small triangle surrounded by industrial development has been neglected for a long time. A group is working to protect and re-establish this area which contains blue devils (*Eryngium ovinum*) and the Sunshine diuris (*D. fragrantissima* - right).

Cathy has her own citizen science project along her own road where there are many grasses, weeds included. She has tried to ascertain the preferred grass of wood swallows in her area.

Plants in our Grasslands.



Cathy showed some of the plants we need to protect. These all provide food for insects and indicate healthy grasslands. The endangered golden sun moth (left) relies on communities of *Austrodanthonia* (*Rytidosperma* sp) for its existence.



Lemon beauty heads (right)
Ptilotus
Kangaroo grass
Red anthered wallaby grass

Bulbine
Dianella
Convolvulus
Stylidium

Plantago
Chamaescilla
Glycine clandestina
Orchids



4.

Finally we saw a couple of overseas grasslands. The Thunder Basin National Grassland in Wyoming (right) is a really tough environment – most of the bushes were very grey, but there were many coneflowers (Echinacea), prickly poppies and tickclover. Cathy described another grassland in NZ where pine trees had been planted, then removed some years later but seedlings keep coming up so management must be ongoing. And this is true for all of these areas where modern life impinges on our environment. A reference of interest: “Start with the Grasslands” – a brochure put out by the Victorian National Parks Association – just google it.



Marj Seaton

SPECIMEN TABLE - OCTOBER MEETING



Once again spring was a very welcome addition to our meeting in the form of a full specimen table, so there was a lot to talk about.

Marj started us off with a series of prostanthera, *P. rotundifolia*, a variegated prostanthera and one sold as *P. melissifolia* but which John thinks is *P. linearis*. This is a lovely open bush, about 1m high and with pinkish mauve flowers. A special plant to her is *Bossiaea aquifolium* (left) with



its pretty foliage and a mass of yellow and brown pea flowers – 1m x 1m. After the last couple of warm days, the flowers had faded but other years the flowers have been later so not available for our meetings. Several grevilleas, a pink chamaelaucium (bees love it) and *Astrolasia asteriscophera* (lemon flowers – but it could be *A. hexapetala*, right)



were part of her offering for the night.

It was interesting that there were three *Asterolasia*s on the table with different sized flowers and colours – *A. asteriscophera* (Marj), *A. phebaloides* (Ray) and *A. corriefolia* (John).

From Mandy, we started with *Boronia clavata*, 2-3m high, lemon flowers, tough, with a pleasant scent. *Hovea elliptica* has bright purple flowers and is very floriferous. Her *Acacia glaucoptera* is a sea of yellow -height 1m, width 3m and bronze new growth.

Homoranthus darwinioides is a tough NSW plant which has lemon flowers – its flowers are in pairs and ‘go on for ever’. Mandy brought in a large spray of *Eucalyptus albida* to show the difference in the juvenile and adult foliage, very marked.

5.

Robert and Gail have a much smaller garden now with lots of pots but still colourful. He has a



Diplolaena angustifolia (left) which is happy with some cactus and succulents in one pot to which he has added a dash of lime. Another striking small plant he had was *Boronia "Blue Waves"* a cultivar of *B. heterophylla*? Highly perfumed it is covered in blue-purple flowers. H:1m W:1m. Robert has to watch for scale which he treats with white oil.

Ray brought in another wonderful basket of



goodies, too many to write up individually here. *Banksia coccinea* (left) always draws attention but so too did the vigorous, dark red *Kunzea baxteri* (right). Other striking ones were *Darwinia lejistyla* (below right) which he prunes with hedge clippers and the blue *Lechenaultia biloba*(?) Of course it would be remiss if his favourite *Daviesia horrida* was left unmentioned.



A vivid purple *Hovea elliptica* (see Photo gallery) was one of Mandy's specimens included the tiny leafed *Melaleuca micromera* (left) which grows fairly narrowly and has branches that twist. A cutting of *Eucalyptus albida* showed contrasting juvenile leaves on the same branch as its adult leaves. *Homoranthus darwinioides* is a tough plant which has its lemony flowers appearing in pairs. It flowers for long periods.

John too brought in a lot of plants, particularly from the Sterculiaceae family. These

included *Thomasia pauciflora* from Vic and SA, *Thomasia solanacea* x *T. purpurea* (sold as *T. purpurea*), *T. sarotes*, *T. angustifolia*, *T.*



triphylla, three lasiopetalums: *L. macrophylla*, *L. schultzenii*, *L. Behrii* as well as a favourite of his *Lysosepalum involucreatum*. This last is very hardy, grows in dry, sunny or shady spots and has a rusty looking calyx and purple flowers. Others in his collection included pink *Calytrix tetragona* (left) and *Verticordia plumose* which is over 25 years old, has purple flowers, likes it dry and needs pruning regularly. His *Cassinia leptcephala* (right) has plate like heads of



bitter yellow tightly packed flowers.

Pick of the Bunch October 2018

Thomasia triphylla (Labill.) J.Gay

Specimen grown by John Thompson

Thomasia triphylla is a small, multi stemmed shrub, 0.3m -1m x 0.3m -1m. It occurs along the coast from Nambung, north of Perth to Augusta in the south, growing in calcareous sand, coastal limestone and dunes. Smaller populations can be found around Denmark through to Esperance. The foliage is irregularly lobed. The flowers are produced in racemes consisting of up to five flowers. They are pink or pale pink to whitish and are produced in spring to summer.



6.

It is best grown in a partly protected position in well drained soil but will cope with full sun. It will tolerate dryness once established. Propagation is from cuttings.

Thomasia is a member of the Malvaceae family. A family of c.1500 species in more than 70 genera with 25 genera and c.180 species in Australia. Australian genera include *Brachychiton*, *Commersonia*, *Lasiopetalum*, *Lysiosepalum* and *Rulingia*.

The family contains the plants that yield cola (*Cola acuminata*) and cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) so without them there would be no chocolate or cola flavoured drinks. Thomasias are found in the south west of Western Australia with one species, *Thomasia petalocalyx*, being found in WA, SA and Victoria.

Thomasia is named after Pierre and Abraham Thomas and Abraham's sons who were collectors of Swiss plants. The specific name, *triphylla*, meaning three leaves, is in reference to the two large stipules at the base of the leaf giving the appearance of a group of three leaves.

DIARY

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|--------------------|---|
| November 18 | Annual Outing – Melbourne Botanic Gardens, details on page one. |
| November 26 | Committee meeting, Catherine's 7:45pm |
| December 4 | Members slides, "Clear the Decks" sale |
| 2019: | |
| February 5 | Sapphire McMillan-Fisher of Fun Ecology on Fungi |
| March 5 | TBA – hopefully , otherwise Marj Seaton on Arnhem Land. |
| April | Trevor Blake: "Malvaceae" |
| May | Christine Huf? Forensics and the Plant World |
| August | AGM, Members' slides and photo competition? |
| September | Mike Beamish: The Pilbara? |

Plant Sales and Shows 2019

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| April 27 | APS Geelong plant sale at 'Wirrawilla', 40 Lovely Banks Road |
|-----------------|--|

7.
PROMOTIONS



Several gardens associated with Garden DesignFest will be open in November. Here are two of them:

Rick Eckersley's garden will be open to the public (\$12 entry) on November 17th and 18th at 371 Musk Creek Road, Flinders

The following link has a description of the garden and its design features and some great pictures.

<http://gardendesignfest.com.au/garden/rick-eckersley-flinders/>

or try this one for \$8 on November 10 and 11: Lee Adams Spring Gully (Bendigo)

<http://gardendesignfest/garden/lee-adams-spring-gully-bendigo>

You can find out more on the website:

www.gardendesignfest.com.au

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**CRANBOURNE GROWING FRIENDS SPRING PLANT SALE**

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October 2018 10am to 4pm both days

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria - Cranbourne

Plant-list available one week prior to sale

[www.rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au](http://www.rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au)

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8.

MONTHLY PHOTO GALLERY

From Mandy's garden, *Hovea elliptica*



And from the wilds of Ray and Eva's garden in Cranbourne

Comfy?



Ozothamnus for lunch



This coot is nesting on the lily pad bridge at Cranbourne Gardens. They do pick the darnedest places

