



APS Foothills Inc. A0013126K

WE HOLD TWO MEETINGS EACH MONTH

DAY MEETING

Date: 2nd Tuesday of the month
except November, December
and January.

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Field Naturalists Hall,
1 Gardenia St, Blackburn.
(Melway 47K10)

EVENING MEETING

Date: 4th Wednesday of the month,
except December and January.

Time: 7.45pm

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

Combined Newsletters 2019

FEBRUARY

-

MARCH

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APS Foothills Inc. A0013126K

February Newsletter 2019

DAY MEETING

Tuesday 12th February 2019

**Adventures of Barnsey & Willy
Western Australia 2017**

Ray Barnes & Mike Williams

EVENING MEETING

Wednesday 27th February

Nicky Zanen – King Island

Foothills Propagation Day

Saturday 23rd February, 2019

**Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn
Rd, Knoxfield**

10.00am – 12 noon

Foothills Facebook Page

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Hi Everyone,

I know we are already one month into 2019 but Happy New Year to you all!

I hope you, and your gardens, have been coping with the heatwaves we've been having and I'm sure that like me, you are looking forward to the less capricious weather and gentler temperatures that autumn will bring.

Our last meeting of last year was on climate change and water in the garden, and it was very timeous given the summer we're currently having. We had a great turn out and had plenty of interesting discussion all round. You can read all about it in this newsletter. We also had a good turnout of people to our end of year break up at Karwarra. It was so nice to see so many of you there. The weather was fantastic, the company was of course great, we wandered about the garden, and with everyone bringing a plate we had the most delicious and varied array of salads and sweets to choose from. Thanks for helping to make it such a pleasant and relaxed day.

We have our Propagation Day coming up on Saturday 23rd February at Knox Park Primary School. It's a great chance to catch up with each other after the summer break and to try your hand at propagating if you've not done it before, so I hope to see you there. Details are in this newsletter.

We've got plenty of interesting speakers and member's meetings planned for this year but if there's something you are particularly interested in, or if you'd like to suggest a topic or speaker, please feel free to talk to any of us on the committee or send us an email at foothills@apsvic.org.au.

Looking forward to catching up with you at the next meeting.

Janet Hodgkiss

Day Meetings

Our first meeting for 2019 is Tuesday 12th February when our own Ray Barnes and fellow Yarra Yarra member, Mike Williams, give us a talk on their botanizing expedition in Western Australia, titled "Adventures of Barnsey & Willy Western Australia 2017". Both have been members of APS for a long long time and will share their incredible travel experiences with us.

I also wanted to introduce a 'chat and chew' or 'cackle and peek' activity for members, based on bringing your own lunch and visiting places and our own gardens, but primarily giving us a chance of a relaxed chat and visit. My proposal is that we start two weeks after our day meeting, which makes it Tuesday 26 February from 12.00 noon, and that the first visit is to my place in Boronia. I'll have details of my address and parking arrangements at our next meeting.

It seems such a long time ago, but our Christmas Break up at Bob and Dot O'Neill's was a super way of finishing the year. The garden has matured marvellously and is such a pleasure to visit, as the abundant birdlife has discovered too.

Thank you once again for opening your home to one of our Christmas breakups Dot and Bob.

Nicky Zanen

February Evening Meeting Speaker

Nicky will be giving us a talk on the visit made January 2018 to King Island when she took part in the ANPSA pre conference tour with other Foothills members Chris, Bev and Shirley.

Foothills Propagation Day

Come and join us for a fun morning catching up with friends and growing some leafy new ones.

If you've not tried your hand at propagation before, then come and learn from some of the propagation wizards we have in our group. They're very generous with their knowledge and once you get the hang of propagating and how to take cuttings, you'll never look at a pile of prunings in the same way again.

Bring along pieces of plants (cutting material) you'd like to propagate or share with others, and if you don't have anything to bring along, then come anyway because there is always heaps of extra material for you to use or practice your new-found skills on.

Date: Saturday 23rd February, 2019

Place: Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd, Knoxfield

Time: 10.00am – 12 noon

Bring: Sharp, clean secateurs; Clean pots to place your cuttings into; A container to hold and safely transport your cuttings home; Cutting material; 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!

See you there.



Bob and Dot O'Neill's garden (Photos: Nicky Zanen)

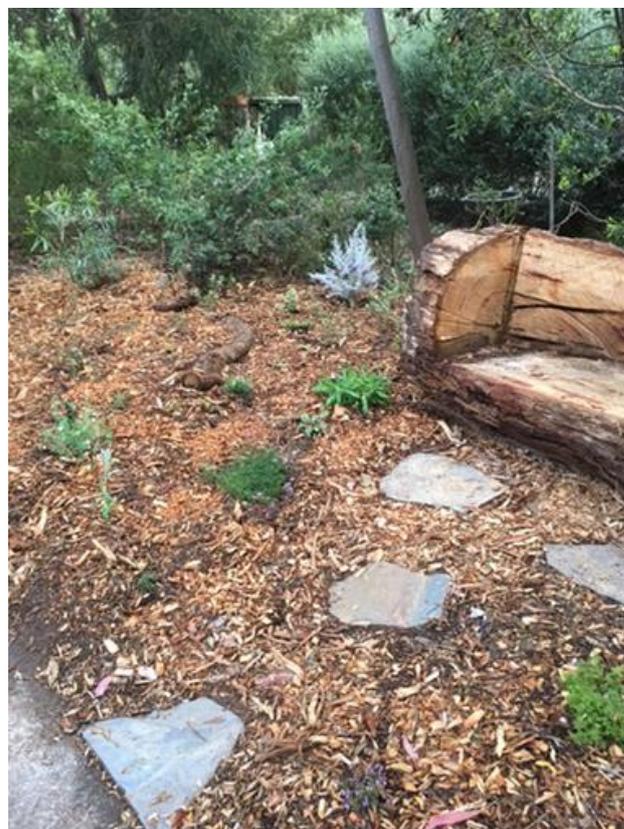
November Evening Meeting – Climate change and water in the garden.

We had a very interesting and thought-provoking meeting with nine members contributing slides or items of interest, along with plenty of lively discussion throughout.

Pam Yarra discussed how she had approached restoring her garden after a large eucalypt fell over during a storm. Obviously, some understorey plants had been damaged at the time and a large gap was left in the garden that needed to be rehabilitated. The large stump was ground out to make way for new plants and part of the trunk itself has been fashioned in to a bench. Pam retained the sawdust from the grinding and mixed it with compost to use as a mulch. Paul cautioned us about sawdust from stump grinding as a mulch layer, saying that it is often contaminated with the oil that is used to lubricate the grinder head during operation and does not decompose readily when mixed into the soil.

This was not to say that Pam's instincts about recycling and putting the sawdust to good use in her garden were incorrect but Paul's caution has a lot of merit. I know from my own experience that machine oils can be directly harmful to plants or soil organisms and that any oil (including too many overripe avocados or even avocado skins in a small compost heap!) hinders the natural decomposition of organic material. It also makes sense, that oils in a stump-ground sawdust layer could easily cause it to become hydrophobic and compacted which may shed, rather than allow water to penetrate. Pam has worked hard to rehabilitate this damaged part of her garden by planting tough plants and is nurturing the ones that managed to survive the tree fall. She is confident that the plants she has put in should be well enough established by summer to get through it without requiring additional watering.

Paul talked about water use and gardening in a challenging environment and showed us the rooftop garden at the Minifie Park Early Childhood centre, which his team now maintains. Many urban designers are now creating or incorporating green spaces on roofs, and this garden was originally designed and maintained by Junglefly who are experts in creating rooftop gardens. It is not accessible to the public and because of OH&S rules they had to do a course on working on roofs and use harnesses while working up there. The roof area is 440m² and supports a very light and thin layer of soil.



Gap left by fallen tree. Bench and newly planted garden (Photo: Pam Yarra)

This thin layer of soil is ideal for supporting grasses and grassland vegetation which does not need a very deep soil. To make it more representative of the original grassland of the Boroondara area, Paul has adapted it to include some of the rarer plants that occur in this type of grassland. He has been able to do this because the garden is not interfered with, and has managed to establish orchids, pimeleas, kennedia and some of the rare glycines that are indigenous to the Boroondara area. The garden has been going since 2012 and Paul and his team go once a week to do maintenance. Irrigation is done using soaker hoses and recycled water which is collected from other roofs in the centre and is stored in huge tanks. The system is automated and run via satellite with Paul getting remote alerts on his mobile phone to any problems that may arise. As a result of the garden, the building itself is very well insulated.

Unlike Paul's snazzy automated rainwater collection and distribution system, I showed the 'grassroots' version I use to collect rainwater. As my property is rented, no modifications are allowed to be made to downpipes to divert rainwater and there are no permanent rainwater tanks either. Using the ingenious method of stretching a plastic sheet/tarpaulin over the washing line, I am able to collect an astonishing amount of water from this small area when it rains. It does mean watching the

weather reports like a hawk, setting up the washing line system as soon as it looks like a good rain is due, arranging the tubs underneath the line to collect the water and then after the rain, transferring the collected water to storage barrels. It is quite labour intensive but my plants are my 'babies', so I will do everything I can to keep them alive and happy. They provide me with much joy, so fair's fair!



Rainwater collection system using tarpaulin and plastic bins (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

Liz looked at the soil and how the use of compost and looking after the soil flora can help with securing water in the garden. Adding organic matter to the soil allows nutrients and water to be stored in the soil which plants can use as they require. We can also change or modify our soils by using GoGo Juice or Seamungus, essentially 'pro-biotics' for the soil, and the organisms in products such as these will kickstart the decomposition process. Mulch, such as straw or bark, protects the soil from heavy rain which may wash precious soil away, or wind which will quickly dry out soil. Saturaid, a granular soil wetter made from coir and other non-toxic ingredients, helps to make soil particles less hydrophobic and allows water and any fertilisers to soak into the soil properly. Water retaining crystals absorb water to form a gel, which is then slowly released back into the soil as it starts drying out. Liz also uses bottles with spikes on the bottom to deliver water directly to the root zone of new plants.

Chris discussed water for plants and others in her garden, and talked about having respect for water by conserving and preserving water. Water can be held in the landscape in the form of tanks and ponds, with smaller, deeper ponds evaporating less. We can also preserve water in the soil through the use of deep channels filled with rubble to create underground reservoirs, such as those that Kerry created in his garden, and swales to slow the movement of surface water and allowing it to sink into the ground. Groundcovers can be used at living

mulches and rocks in the garden will also conserve water underneath them. Chris also sometimes chooses to prune prior to summer to reduce the amount of water that plants will need to support their biomass. She said her *Pomaderris aspera* looked very stressed one summer, so decided to prune before the heat of the following summer and noticed that they were happier for it. Planting plants that can cope with dryness also helps and various *Correa* and *Thomasia* species will take dry shade.

Kerry has a fernery that is covered with 60% shade cloth and this means that water can be more easily retained for plants that require it. He has *Dampiera hederacea* and *D. linearis*, as well as *Hibbertia stellaris* that are all very happy living in this more sheltered environment.

Bob mentioned that potting plants on regularly also helps reduce water stress, as a 6" pot absorbs and retains water more easily than a tube. He's found that you also get a better root to top ratio if you pot on regularly. He marks his pots at planting time to so that he can track how old the plants in the pots are. He said he also prefers giving plants a good soak before a hot day rather than after, and had this good advice about mulch: keep the layer to no more than 2" and break up the surface every now and then with a Dutch hoe to reduce any crusting which prevents water and air reaching the soil. Bob did also have a video presentation for us but sadly his DVD was not in the least bit interested in talking to our computer so we had to miss out on that.

Ross gardens on a dry and rocky patch and says that *Prostantheras* and *Eremophilas* do very well in his garden. They also collect and save all the water on the block in a large tank which is then used for irrigation and other purposes. Monika had rainfall graphs from 2004 -2018, and while there have been ups and downs, it looks like there is an overall drying trend which means we will have to begin modify how we garden or what we choose to plant. Monika has had to find plants that like the dry slope that makes up most of their garden, and says her number 1 plant for coping with dry conditions are the *Persoonias*. She says *Persoonia pinifolia* (up to 3m tall) and the ground cover types (about 1m) such as *P. chamaepitys* and *P. daphnoides* do very well and have not needed any extra water. *Homoranthus papillatus* (Mouse Bush) and *Melaleuca hypericifolia* 'Ulladulla Beacon' also do well with very little water. *Phebaliums* and *Lasiopetalums* were also mentioned as coping well with dry, shady positions.

Janet Hodgkiss

From the Secretary - Passing Members

Faye Candy

I was shocked when Faye filled a cup from her water tank and proceeded to drink the water, full of wrigglers. She, however, was totally unfazed. It was at a Christmas party at their home in Menzies Creek. Another memory is the tree ferns growing in her footpaths - her weed problems were totally different to ours.

Faye and Bruce were very active with Foothills group over the past 45 years and Faye (and Bruce) held various committee positions. The Candys moved from Menzies Creek to Berwick, which brings another strong memory of Faye feeling the climate change and suffering 'heatstroke' having moved away from the hills.

Faye had been hospitalized for several months and passed away in January this year. Our condolences go to Bruce and their family.

Russell Johnson

I haven't been able to find out when Russell and Margaret joined the Foothills group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) but this was in the early 1990s.

The Johnsons were active supporters of our group and also the Victorian quarterly gatherings.

I vividly remember the distinctive slow but steady arrival of Russell and Margaret in their green Morris Minor at these weekends.

When the SGAP Victorian library was decentralized, Russell volunteered to be the librarian and took on the task of sorting books into blue crates which were then ferried round the country - from Warrnambool to Wangaratta, Bairnsdale to Bendigo. He did this for several years till the library was finally disbanded.

Russell's involvement with APS Foothills (as the group became known) was severely curtailed by his health, but we have very warm memories.

Our condolences are extended to his wife Margaret, and their family.

Out and About

I had a pleasure of popping in to see Barbara Setchell in Mansfield on my way to north east Victoria last holidays and was taken by the way her garden has matured so well. Despite the fact that Barbara has to put up with so many frosts and dry conditions, the colourful display around her home was spectacular.



Barbara Setchell's Garden (Photos: Nicky Zanen)



Reflections on coping with Global Warming by Chris Larkin

First of all let me explain what I think might have happened when I came to the meeting with an empty file so the power point I had spent time preparing was not able to be seen. Maybe I changed the file pathway; then saved the old, now empty pathway. The lesson is to check what has been saved to the stick. This is something I would normally do but didn't on this occasion. Ouch! The strongest learning follows on from making generally painful mistakes.

Maybe you noticed I have not used the term we used for the evening discussion 'Climate Change'. If you have seen the film 'Vice' (about George W Bush's Vice President, Dick Cheney) you will understand why I've switched to 'Global Warming'. In the film Dick Chaney has been credited with giving oxygen to the term 'Climate Change' to subtly shift the emphasis and steer away from an unpleasant truth and our role in bringing about global warming. It was ironic that the evening meeting occurred in the month with the best rainfall for the year. And it occurred none too soon I say. Low rainfall made it a very tense time leading into summer. We were saved, in the short term at least, by good rains in November and December. But now the reality of a predicted hotter and drier summer is starting to bite and the effects in the garden are starting to become apparent.

Very hot days, and days of very hot days, take their toll on the garden. I note it is not uncommon for temps in Scoresby to be higher than Melbourne. Generally the difference would be 3 to 5 degrees but on Jan 15 it was a staggering 10 degrees! Melbourne enjoys more of a seaside climate with sea breezes although I'm sure there is a lot of stored heat in such an intensely built environment. We, on the other hand, have an inland climate with little relief possible until you might get the cooling effects of elevation in the Dandenong Ranges. I have just had a look at a Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) graph of the long term temperature averages for Melbourne and there have only been 4 years since 1980 with temps below long term averages.

Is 42 degrees becoming the new 38? I'm just putting it out there. I think we are adjusting to a new normal like someone adjusting to failing eyesight no longer aware of what they used to see. I remember thinking in the drought years – there are 10, 11, 12, 13 even 14 year old children who haven't experienced 'normal' levels of rainfall.

The low rainfall last year was a big worry. The rainfall in November and December cannot compensate for an overall lack of rain. Once again, according to the BOM, Scoresby had only 71% of its annual rainfall. Total rainfall for the year however doesn't tell a complete picture because how much fell at any one time – too little to be useful, or so much it unhelpfully ran off – and how windy it is, affects how much of the rain has been able to be usefully stored in the soil. As we start the new year Melbourne ends Jan with just 11.2mm of rainfall when the average is a bit over 47mm. At the end of Jan last year Melbourne had had 68mm. Normally we would get more than Melbourne's rainfall here but I haven't. That word 'showers' means that rainfall is patchy. Where it falls and how much you get can vary widely and so far I have had no luck – hopefully you have fared a bit better. The average rainfall for Melbourne this month, Feb, is 48mm, so let's keep our fingers crossed.

Already my garden is showing its fair share of stress. I removed a large number of dead or underperforming plants last year so there are a lot of new plants to look after through this summer. I am trying to keep the water up to them as best I can but it is a big job to deep water them all. The jury is out for me on how helpful Saturaid is. I broadcast the granules in the hope that, as they claim, it would assist with breaking down the waxy coating that makes the soils so hydrophobic once they dry out. I did invest in pine flake mulch. It is not the prettiest of mulches. It is the one used by councils and with roadside plantings. It is not generally available at nurseries so order from Bark King. I used it for many years when starting this garden as it holds on slopes – or would except for the blackbirds. The mulch pieces are large, woody and long so it protects the soil while allowing water to get through if you don't put too much on. It doesn't break down quickly so it

is not useful for quick soil improvement but it is long lasting. It is also relatively cheap.

A couple of new plants have 'cooked' on one of the 42 degree days. Maybe too much sun for too long on new plants! Close by in each case there are the same plants coping but the conditions are a little different. In one instance the plant enjoys more shade; in the other instance the plant has had a bit longer establishment time. Establishment time, the time a plant has been in the ground before the stress of summer, is important. So is the all important position, position, position – the sun, shade or partial shade position the plant enjoys. I am pleased to have quite a bit of shade at different times in the garden. Many plants grow in lightly forested situations where they get some relief from the sun at different times of the day.

I mentioned during the meeting I have dwarf *Banksia spinulosa* varieties that did not flower last year and now they are browning off. I will need to remove them in due course. I certainly won't do that now. I don't want to disturb the soil and after all a dead or dying plant is still shading the soil. The big task for the future is solving the problem of what plants to use when replacing struggling plants. What plants will be able to cope with a hotter, drier world. Over the years I have had to shift away from many of the plants I used to grow - and the list is growing. I remember a time when I thought grevilleas were hard to grow but now different tough varieties have become my go-to plants. I have also been successful with many varieties of hakeas. I do want to maintain a big variety of plants though, flowering at different times of the year to provide nectar for birds and insects.

A topic on strategies for dealing with global warming seemed alarmist in our wettest month of 2018 but I imagine you are no longer thinking this. I do hope some of the ideas discussed during the evening have proved useful and that your gardens make it through this trying summer time that can't end too soon for me.



***Kunzea pulchella* grey leaf form** (Photo: Kerry Davis)

Have you read the news lately? by Chris Larkin

There has actually been quite a bit of news on the environment lately. None of it good except for the fact that pressure does seem to be mounting on politicians to do more with respect to the environment. The Liberals still have their heads in the sand and are paying the price with independents ready to stand against them in blue ribbon seats motivated to some measure at least by concerns about the climate. Labor is not exactly making the environment a priority in their pitch to govern and the Greens – say no more.

In The Age, Sat 2nd Feb, there was an interesting article on analysis by Prof Mark Maslin, School of Geography, at the University College London connecting the 'Little Ice Age' of the 16th and 17th centuries with the genocide (their word) on the native peoples of the Americas. The death by disease and slaughter reduced the estimated population from 60 to 6 million people. This resulted in the amount of land under agriculture being drastically reduced in a relatively short period of time. The land then became more forested sucking the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere creating a reverse greenhouse effect. This explanation is also supported by Ed Hawkins, a prof of climate science at the University of Reading. In The Age's 'Good Weekend' a couple of weeks ago it was reported that the WWF International has placed Australia on a deforestation hotspot list. The only developed country to have this rating. It further stated the easiest way to reduce emissions was to increase/preserve forests as 18% of all emissions of co2 is due to deforestation. This article also makes a call for more tough native species to be grown as street trees and generally in urban areas as their tolerance to global warming is greater than many exotic trees.

In Saturday's Age, 2nd Feb, it is reported that commissioner Bret Walker, SC, accuses the Murray Darling Basin Authority of not factoring in climate change and of breaking the law in working out what amount of water can be taken out of the system for irrigation. Finally on the same page as this report

there is speculation that at long last we may need to use the desal plant due to the fires currently burning around the Thomson Dam.

None of this paints a pretty picture but it is the world we live in.



Banksia lehmanniana (Photo: Kerry Davis)



Actinotus helianthi (Photo: Kerry Davis)

APS Foothills Inc.

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ENQUIRIES

Email: foothills@apsvic.org.au

COMMITTEE

Leader: Janet Hodgkiss
Deputy Leader: Elizabeth Triggs
Secretary: Nicky Zanen
Treasurer: Chris Larkin
Newsletter Editor: Kerry Davis
APS Vic & Day Meeting Liaison: Nicky Zanen
Other Members: Pam Yarra

MEETING DETAILS

DAY Meeting

Venue: Field Naturalists Hall, 1 Gardenia St, Blackburn. (Melway 47K10)
Date: 2nd Tuesday of the month except Nov, Dec, Jan.
Time: 10.30am
Enquiries: Nicky Zanen 040 197 5191

EVENING Meeting

Venue: Knox Park Primary School, Kathryn Rd, Knoxfield. (Melway 73 C3)
Date: 4th Wednesday of the month, except Dec, Jan.
Time: 7.45pm

VISITORS WELCOME!



DAY MEETING

Tuesday 12th March 2019

**Dr Roslyn Glow - Beckler's
Botanical Bounty and Artists
Project**

EVENING MEETING

Wednesday 27th March 2019

**Member's Meeting
Hedging with Australian Native
Plants - Liz Triggs**

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Hi Everyone,

The end of February has treated us to another little heatwave... which was not great timing seeing as a few of us had spent the previous weekend at our propagation day making cuttings. The warm weather is probably beneficial in terms of inspiring root formation, but it does mean even greater vigilance on our part to ensure our new babies don't roast in the toasty heat, or dehydrate too quickly.

The question "Will it ever rain again?" came up a lot at our last evening meeting. The BOM (Bureau of Meteorology) website says that the 2019 autumn (March to May) climate outlook indicates a drier than average season for the eastern States, with warmer than average autumn days and nights likely for most of the country. They did note that in the past 20-30 years there has been a general decline in autumn rainfall across southern Australia, citing the example that since 1990, 24 of the 29 years have had rainfall totals in southeast Australia below the historical (1961-1990) average. They also say that in addition to natural drivers such as the El Niño–Southern Oscillation and the Indian Ocean Dipole, our climate patterns are being influenced by the long-term, increasing trend in global air and ocean temperatures. So... will it ever rain again? Probably, but maybe not soon enough for our liking, and maybe not very much when it does.

Well, that was rather gloomy stuff, so on a lighter note... we kicked our series of evening meetings off with a talk by Nicky Zanen on King Island, which was a lovely prelude to catching up with everyone over supper after the summer break. Liz brought a plant in for a bit of 'show and tell' too, a rather sassy-looking *Lomandra* she'd kidnapped from work to show us, and she's written up some details about it in case you'd like to get one for yourself.

I attended the most recent APS Vic Committee of Management Meeting and as usual there was plenty of lively discussion on various topics. They are

working on some interesting projects that will be of interest, or of benefit, to members, but more about those another time as they are still 'works in progress'. Right now though, APS Vic will have a stand at MIFGS (Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show) which runs from the 27-31 March 2019. There are a couple of things they have organised that you may be particularly interested in: Thursday, 28th 11.30-12.30, they will have a someone from Austplant Native Plant Nursery on stage giving a presentation that will encourage questions from the audience that will answered, and on Saturday, 30th March 3.30-4-.30pm, A.B. Bishop is giving a presentation on habitat gardens. If you'd like to volunteer your help on the stand on any of the days (27-31 March inclusive), please let Dallas Boulton know. She asked to be contacted via the APS Vic secretary (secretary@apsvic.org.au) so if you have a couple of hours to spare, it's a great way to help spread your contagious enthusiasm about Australian native plants and get our Society's name out there.

They've also been working behind the scenes on the APS Vic website, and a new development there is that they've decided to upload the newsletter, Growing Australian to the website. The hardcopy March issue of Growing Australian will be posted in the first week of March, but they have already uploaded the digital version to the website, so if you simply can't wait for your hardcopy, then you will find it in the members area of the APS Victoria website (www.apsvic.org.au).

Happy reading, or happy waiting! 😊

See you all next time.

Janet Hodgkiss.

March Evening Meeting

Join us in March for "Hedging with Australian Native Plants".

Australian plants lend themselves to every part of the garden and Hedges are no exception. For large or small areas there are great choices available. We will look at plants, applications, care and tools. If you have a great hedge at home bring a couple of slides to show everyone else. Show us your tools, too, even bring them to the meeting. Remember to bring some foliage to the meeting so we can all see what you are using.

Liz Triggs

Next day meeting – Dr Roslyn Glow speaking on Beckler's Botanical Bounty and Artists Project.

A chance meeting in the Ballarat Art Gallery brings our guest speaker for the day meeting on Tuesday 12 March.

Roslyn is one of the twenty botanical artists who were inspired by pioneer botanical collector Hermann Beckler, the doctor on the Burke and Wills Expedition, and the plants he collected around 1860 and 1861 in the Menindee region. The project went for ten years during which the Victorian based botanical artists visited Beckler's collecting grounds to locate, collect, preserve and illustrate the species he collected.

Dr Glow will tell us about this fascinating project and display some of the paintings she worked on. This brings with it a 'unique expression of art, science, history and country.' She will also tell us about the next trip being planned to Menindee where *'they hope to attract a few botanists/field naturalists to have one last push to find as many of the plants on our list as possible', especially those who are equipped for outback travel and have the skills in collecting and identifying plants.*

Nicky Zanen

February evening meeting

Nicky Zanen: King Island

Nicky was our speaker for our first evening meeting of the year and showed us pictures from her visit to King Island in January 2018. This was one of the pre-conference tours of the 208 ANPSA conference.

As King Island is not very big, 64km long and 26 km wide, they were able to visit most of the places of interest on the island. Nicky pointed out that while they visited in January, September (i.e. spring) would be a better time to visit as there would be more plants in flower, and the west coast of the island is more exposed to the brunt of the weather while the east coast is more protected.

Places they visited and things they saw included: the Scheelite mine site near Grassy on the east coast. (Scheelite is a tungsten ore, tungsten being used in the production of very hard metals and in the

equipment used to work hard metals e.g. tungsten carbide tools for cutting steel.) The open cut mine is not worked anymore and the area around it is being rehabilitated; King Island Kelp Industries where Bull kelp is harvested from the shore, dried and processed and then sold to overseas and local markets. The alginate derived from the kelp is used in a wide variety of products; the Calcified Forest near Currie, smaller than expected but still enjoyable; the Sealers Wall which no really knows why it was built; Naracoopa; the lighthouse at Cape Wickham; and plants.

Nicky pointed out that there were lots of weed species on the island, but she still managed to get plenty of photos of native plant too, even though many of them were not in flower or looking their best at that time of year. Also of interest is that many of the plant species encountered on King Island are also found in our eastern States, which makes sense as historically it was part of a land bridge between Tasmania and the Australian mainland before rising sea levels flooded the area.

Janet Hodgkiss



Currie sea view - brilliant colours (Photo: N. Zanen)



Black Point pirates wooden handrails
(Photo: N. Zanen)



Calcified Forest (Photo: N Zanen)



Sealers Wall and *Leucophytra brownii*
(Photo: N. Zanen)



Sealers Wall view (Photo: N. Zanen)



Swamp Maleleuca *M. squamea* (Photo: N. Zanen)



Cutting material laid out and labelled, ready for use (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

When there are several of you making cuttings, it helps to prepare the cutting material like this. The different plants are easy to see, and the labels allow people to copy the correct plant name onto the label they place in with their cuttings.

Propagation Day 2019

We only had small group this time as a few of our regulars were away but we were very pleased to welcome two visitors from Mornington Peninsula join us. Sue had propagated plants before, so she got stuck right in and Georgie was a very enthusiastic learner. The weather was just right, not too hot and not too cool, so it made for a very pleasant morning all round.

We made up our propagation medium using three parts medium-grade Perlite to one part coir peat. We used a 600g block of coir peat, which when fully hydrated, yields about a 9l bucketful. A handy tip to remember is to use hot water at first to soften it, either from the kettle or the hot tap, and then continue adding cooler/cold water. If you add too much water when you are softening it and it doesn't all get absorbed, don't worry because it is easy enough to simply drain off the excess water. We used a clean ice-cream container as our measure for both the Perlite and peat, and dampened down the Perlite as we went as it sends up an irritating dust. When the Perlite is still dry, standing upwind or wearing a mask also helps with avoiding breathing in this sharp dust.



Tools of the trade (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

Both of these cutters are lightweight, have extremely sharp blades and are easy to use but the green-handled snips proved the winner. The narrow, pointed blades allow for delicate and precise snipping, while the small, light spring makes it easy on the hands.



Placing a cutting into the mix

(Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

After dipping a cutting in to rooting hormone (purple Clonex gel), they are placed in the propagation medium. Sometimes a dibber (thin stick or wooden skewer) is used to make a hole first. This can help avoid crushing/damaging the newly cut surface that has been coated with gel. Some people however don't use dibbers and still have success with their cuttings. The high density of cuttings in each of these tubes does not appear to hinder root formation. The advantage of doing this means that the cuttings will hold each other up and provide a bit of stability for each other. It also helps save space in your tray if you are doing a lot of cuttings.

For identification purposes, it is important to label cuttings while you are doing them. If you have plants that look similar and haven't labelled them, then it is too easy to get their names muddled up later on. Dating is useful to record when the cutting was made and to track how long the cuttings have been in the rooting medium. After about 4-6 weeks, rootlets should have started forming although some species may take much longer.



Trimmed leaves (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

These leaves have been trimmed not only to reduce the amount of leaf area available for transpiration and subsequent drying out, but also to help them fit into the propagation tube. Not all cuttings need to be trimmed this way, and plants with very small leaves are usually left intact.



Labelled and dated cuttings (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)



Propagation in progress (Photo: Janet Hodgkiss)

Sharing plants, knowledge, tips and stories make for a congenial atmosphere. It's a great place to learn about propagation, and for experienced propagators it's often a very rewarding experience sharing knowledge.

After finishing up and tidying the space where we'd been working, we had 'morning tea'. I think from now on we might have to call this 'lunch snack' or something because it's not really 'morning' tea. As we are only there for about two hours from 10-12noon propagating, having a break in the middle isn't really convenient and I know if we started with our morning tea, well, we'd probably never get around to actually propagating! We could start at 9am but that might be a little early, although we would finish at 11am, in which case our morning tea would be morning tea. I suppose it doesn't really matter if our 'refreshments' are morning tea or lunch snack because either way possibly the best part is just sitting and chatting with each other afterwards.

Janet Hodgkiss

February Day Meeting

To start the year we were well and truly entertained by an awesome twosome, Mike Williams and Ray Barnes, presenting "Adventures of Barnsey & Willy, Western Australia 2017".

My bucket list includes the Nullarbor, but on Tuesday we were able to not only experience the Nullarbor but also to pop into the many nature reserves that Mike always makes a point of visiting. Mike has done this trip many times since the 1990s.

My notes were very scrappy but the first comment I made was *Boronia inornata*. On looking this up, according to Wikipedia it was first formally described in 1852 by Nikolai Turczaninow and the description was published in *Bulletin de la Societe Imperiale des Naturalists de Moscou*. It is commonly known as the desert boronia. It is found in all three states, WA, SA and Victoria.

Mike showed us so many spectacular scenes and interesting plants. Here are a couple of the flowers, photos taken from the Western Australia Florabase and Wikipedia.

An amazingly interesting talk, and I can't wait to invite both Mike and Ray to take us on further adventures in Western Australia.

Nicky Zanen



Caladenia polychroma

Photos: A.P. Brown & I. & M. Greeve



Hakea nitida

Photos: H. Adamson, T.J. Alford & M. Hancock



Hakea horrida – photo from Wikipedia

Out and About

Pam Yarra mentioned that she had Passion Vine Hoppers. I've heard of the Vine Butterfly, but not hoppers so looked them up on Wikipedia. What was of interest to me was "*Scolypopa australis*, commonly known as the passionvine hopper, is a species of insect in the Ricaniidae family of planthoppers (Fulgoroidea) that is native to Australia and has been introduced to New Zealand. Despite its name, they are found not only on passion vines, but on many plant species, including the lantana. Brown with partly transparent wings, they are 5–6 mm long as adults and 5 mm as nymphs. As an adult they look somewhat like a moth to the untrained eye, and walk "like a ballerina". The nymphs are wingless and are informally known as fluffy bums. When sufficiently aroused they will hop off their plant "with a 'snap'". Like all planthoppers they suck plant sap. This leaves a honeydew secretion which bees gather. They are also known to cause honey poisoning."



Photo from Wikipedia.

Last evening meeting

At the end of our visit to King Island we stopped by King Island Dairy for a cheese tasting. The array of cheeses was stunning, and we were told that Gorgonzola Blue is the strongest and to eat this at room temperature, two weeks 'best before sale' date. Eat Cheddar straight away and Blue Camemberts can be eaten a couple of weeks after best date.

Nicky Zanen

Plant Review by Liz Triggs

Lomandra longifolia x confertifolia subsp. *pallida*
'White Sands'

A new release, tough and hardy Lomandra for shade and part sun with soft, white and green variegated foliage. It doesn't have the sharp tip many Lomandras have, so is fine to plant along paths or in high access areas. It has yellow flowers from April to October and is dry and frost tolerant.

Size: 60cm x 65cm

Use:

- as a visual point of difference, or contrast in a garden bed
- massed under a tree as a ground cover
- in a pot
- to add movement to the garden with the sway of the foliage in the breeze
- as a habitat plant to attract butterflies and provide shelter for insects, reptiles and frogs



Lomandra longifolia x confertifolia subsp. *pallida*
'White Sands' (Photos: Liz Triggs)

News from Kuranga

Kuranga's latest newsletter advertises their Huge 9 day Plant Sale, between 9/3/19 to 17/3/19.

Sale plants will be on offer between \$3.95 to \$9.95, down from their regular prices of \$10.95 to \$15.95.

At the end of the newsletter they have written an article addressing the question of whether to water or not. An interesting and provocative article I thought.

TO WATER, OR NOT TO WATER: That is the question.

Australian native plants are true and efficient survivors of summer heat and drought. This is true for the many hundreds of species and varieties that are available in cultivation today. They have very little watering requirement once established in the garden.

This topic is relevant year round but particularly throughout summer and autumn when natural rainfall is limited. This is when many people have a propensity to grab the hose everyday to water their plants. Native plants have evolved to cope with extremes of dryness with varied adaptations, however to the uninitiated it is easy to misinterpret a native plant's survival antics. Drooping leaves can be easily confused for the need to water but in reality it is just a plants way of coping. Conversely drooping leaves can even be a result of way too much water.

A common failure of native plants in cultivation is that they are simply over-watered. Whilst there are exceptions to the rule, most plants will establish with a modest but regular amount of water and they will cope effectively for long periods of natural dryness thereafter. So, the question is "What is a modest amount of water?" To demonstrate this best, the following is how we manage the watering needs throughout the nursery during periods of heat and dry. We do in fact water the nursery most days in summer, often for weeks on end unless there is a significant rain event. Our watering regime is based on being very light handed. Only the potted stock is watered, never the gardens. We are very reserved with particular plant species. Some such as *Acacia*, *Correa*, *Crocea*, *Grevillea*, *Micromyrtus*, *Phebalium*, *Philotheca*, *Prostanthera* and many West Australian species of *Banksia*, *Hakea* and *Isopogon* will literally get a lick of water. So too all the grey and silver leaved shrubs.

What does this means for you at home? We understand that there is often a period of time

between purchasing your plant and getting it into the ground. Apply the water regime as above (with rare exceptions). Less is more! Give your potted plants a lick of water, preferably early morning or late evening. It will feel intuitive to respond to a plant's wilting appearance by giving it water but the wilting or drooping is generally a response to heat stress not a cue to be watered. When it comes time to transplant your plant into the ground, you can then water thoroughly before removing it from the pot. Try to avoid planting in the heat of the day. Less stress on the plant. Less stress on you! Water the plant copiously (once only) at planting time. Obviously, the bigger the root-ball, the more water. Weather dependent, go back and water 3-5 days later. Apply the water to the immediate root zone and a fraction out from that. No need to water broadly over a wide area, the new plant's roots will not be there. Get that initial supply of water down low; a good concentrated amount. No need to sprinkle water overhead. Water like this over the period of a few weeks and then effectively wean the plant off water. Less is more!

It will feel counter-intuitive not to lavish water on your new plant but most will definitely benefit from the less is more principal ... and they will stay alive.

Nicky Zanen

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ENQUIRIES

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COMMITTEE

Leader: Janet Hodgkiss
Deputy Leader: Elizabeth Triggs
Secretary: Nicky Zanen
Treasurer: Chris Larkin
Newsletter Editor: Kerry Davis
APS Vic & Day Meeting Liaison: Nicky Zanen
Other Members: Pam Yarra

MEETING DETAILS

DAY Meeting

Venue: Field Naturalists Hall, 1 Gardenia St, Blackburn. (Melway 47K10)

Date: 2nd Tuesday of the month except Nov, Dec, Jan.

Time: 10.30am

Enquiries: Nicky Zanen 040 197 5191

EVENING Meeting

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

Date: 4th Wednesday of the month, except Dec, Jan.

Time: 7.45pm

VISITORS WELCOME!