

Golden

Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society
Latrobe Valley Group Inc.
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Issue No. 297 - May 2021

Grevillea chrysophaea - Golden Grevillea

This Month

Event: Visit to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens for the friends plant sale.

Location: Ballarto Rd and Stringybark Drive, Cranbourne.

Date: Saturday May 8.

Time: Arriving 10:00 am at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens.

Please make your own transport or car-pooling arrangements, meeting at the entry area near the café at 10:00 am. You can buy lunch at the café, but it is suggested it may be busy with long waits, so be warned! Otherwise, BYO lunch is a practical option with seating generally available just inside the entry area.

Directions are probably best obtained from GPS or Google Maps, or you can call Col Jackson if you would like to make convoy arrangements.

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On Sunday 11th April, 14 intrepid members ignored the weather forecast to visit Mike and Cathy's garden in Boolarra. In between showers we marvelled at the sheer number of plants and trees in such a small space, all of which seem to have ignored the suggested size on the labels. This is the source of the 'Plants in my Garden' segment that arrives monthly in the newsletter; it was hard to believe we were in 'the burbs' but had to remember we were looking at the result of half a lifetime of planting. Vegetables were not forgotten either. Then it was off up the road to Col and Mary's hillside haven, another lifetime project which Col assures us isn't finished. Looking at the massive boulders and rocks creating terraces, thoughts of 'Samson' come to mind. We took advantage of some sunny breaks to ramble along the paths and ended up at the heart of the place: the propagating area crowded with cuttings. Two quirky Bee Hotels currently in use looked quite at home prompting me to think I will ask you to send photos of your bee hotel creations to the editor for a future article. Fourteen pages isn't enough to list the wealth of plants in those two gardens so thanks to Mike, Cathy, Col and Mary for sharing your little pieces of paradise. A special thanks to Mary for the fresh scones and cream enjoyed sitting by a warm fire.

Next month on Saturday 8th May we will carpool to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens for the Growing Friends weekend sale starting 10am till 4pm. For the plant list, contact the website www.rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au. Since it is bound to be very busy, we suggest you bring lunch rather than waste precious time waiting in the café. In June we plan to visit the Woolenook Native nursery in Maffra. Established in 2008, Mitch and Cath propagate plants on site and the continued success of the venture speaks to their dedication and knowledge. Many of you will be familiar with the nursery but it is some time since we visited as a group. Surely you can find space for 'just one more' plant even after our Cranbourne visit. Date and details to come in our next newsletter.

While scoffing scones and cream last Sunday, we canvassed the merits of daytime excursions or meetings versus evening meets. Overwhelmingly the daytime visits won out. However, we realise that this may affect members who have daytime jobs. We will do our best to vary the dates and times.

Hopefully, you are busy collecting your best camera shots for the Calendar Photo Comp. to be held online in June. Cathy will be sending final details closer to the date.

I couldn't resist including a photo a friend sent recently. She and another friend (members of APS Strathbogie) were on a bus trip to the Flinders Ranges and found this solitary stem of an Australian Hollyhock (*Malva pressiana*) among the dunes above Lake Mungo. An herbaceous perennial, in friendlier surroundings it can grow 3m x 3m, bears pink or white flowers and lasts for 3-5 years. As a 'townie' I still feel a buzz when I see our native plants growing in their original surroundings. Hope to see you at Cranbourne,

Jill Fidler



After several weeks of gradual preparation for the garden visit; pruning, removing terminal plants, and a general tidy up, I finished it all off in the last few days with a thin topping of mulch (made from my prunings). Of course, mulch is always an invitation to the lyrebirds to come and scratch in the hope of finding critters. On the very morning of the garden visit



I did an early garden check and disturbed two lyrebirds in the process of upsetting my good work. They glided off to the gully where they voiced their indignation for a while. Since then, we have spent some time away visiting grandkids, only to return to find mulch spread onto paths and

smaller plants, with even some holes dug in the search for juicy prey. It is said that a lyrebird will move up to 11 standard dump trucks of forest litter and soil in a year (see Land for Wildlife article on page 9). I sometimes think that this much is getting moved in my garden. For all the 'mess' they create though, we still love the fact that they feel safe enough to come and use our garden as part of their home range.



As far as flowering is concerned, in my garden it seems that Banksias are in fashion, with most species putting on good shows. Pictured are examples of *B. ericifolia*, *B. spinulosa*, and *B. integrifolia*.

Last month's newsletter contained a couple of requests for help: one from Warren looking for advise on Eucalypt borer problems, and the other from me needing help naming a groundcover plant. In Warren's case it was Chris Long who replied with some further info relating to borer attack on Snow Gums, and in my case, it was Daryl who had just purchased the very plant in my photo and so identified it for me. We should all consider using the newsletter to share problems and ask for solutions. If you have a question or issue, drop me a line and I will publish it. Someone out there may have a similar experience or an answer for you.

Hope to see you at the Cranbourne Botanic Garden, Col Jackson.

Species: *Eucalyptus kitsoniana*

Family: Myrtaceae

Derivation:

Eucalyptus – from Greek *eu*, meaning well, and *calyptos*, meaning covered, referring to the operculum on the flower buds, which fall off when the flower opens.

kitsoniana – named after A.E. Kitson, a 19-20th Century geologist in Victoria.

Common Name: Gippsland Mallee or Bog Gum.



Distribution: Endemic to Victoria, where it mainly grows on the South Gippsland coastal lowlands from Yarram west to Wonthaggi, on Wilson's Promontory, on Cape Otway and around Portland and Mt Richmond. Collections from further inland require verification.

Description: Single-trunked small tree to 8m in height or a multi-trunked mallee. Bark is smooth, yellow, cream, or grey and often sheds in ribbons. Adult leaves are thick, glossy green on both sides, densely veined with numerous oil glands and up to 18cm long and 4cm wide. Juvenile leaves tend to be sessile (stalkless) and more orbicular to 10cm long and 8cm wide. Flowers occur from late winter to early autumn and grow on flattened peduncles in the leaf axils in bundles of 7 buds. The stamens are creamy in colour and the bundle is about 30mm across.

Opinion: I was hoping for the mallee form when I purchased this plant, I think from the South Gippsland Flower Show prior to when I started keeping records back in 2004. Of course, I got the single-trunked, illiterate form that promptly grew into a giant, at least a couple of metres taller than its description indicated. And of course, being the unintelligent and inexperienced gardener that I was back then, I planted it in exactly the wrong spot for a 15-metre gum tree, too close to the house, right next to the vegetable garden and underneath my telephone cable. Duh! The roots invaded the vegie patch and proceeded to lift the adjacent garden edging and footpath, some of the canopy kept on dying back and threatened to drop branches and the 60cm diameter trunk developed borer damage at the first fork, about 4m off the ground, which frightened us into thinking the tree could land on the roof of the house at some inopportune time, although I'm not sure when an opportune time would be. So, when we made the decision to utilise some tree-loppers (yes, **those** tree-loppers), this tree was one of the targets. ►

The lopping was done in the late summer of 2020, just before the pandemic set in and, ignoring all the dramas with **those** tree-loppers, the bulk of the tree was removed to leave a stump about 45cm tall. We placed a tub on top of the stump to improve the aesthetics while we waited for the tree's response. It took a while, but eventually a few epicormic shoots revealed themselves around the perimeter of the stump. Now we can no longer see the tub clearly, the shoots have grown to about a metre tall, and we have the multi-trunked mallee form that we initially wanted. There is no guarantee that we will keep this plant, but we will keep assessing its progress over the next few months and keep our fingers crossed that the coppiced version won't be as much of a nuisance as the original.

As for propagation, cuttings don't usually work with Eucalypts, so seed or grafting is the way to go. I doubt that this species is attractive enough to be bothered with the time and effort of grafting, so seed it is. My amateur attempts at propagation utilised the area in the vegie garden beneath the original tree, so over the years various Eucalypt seedlings have self-sown into my nursery pots. One of these was planted into a mate's garden in Mirboo North and has proven to be a Bog Gum showing the same symptoms of steroid abuse as my original. So, my tree is fertile! I collected some capsules before **those** tree-loppers did their thing and the seeds obtained were sown in March 2020. Germination was quick and ten of the batch survived the winter and spring to be potted up into tubes in January 2021. Would anyone like an illiterate "small" gum tree for their garden, assuming they survive the disturbance?



Sources: Online – Flora of Victoria.
Costermans – Trees and Shrubs of South-eastern Australia.
Elliott & Jones – Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, Vol. 4.

2021 Calendar photo spot - May

By Mary Jackson

As we adjusted to our limited activities during 2020, we counted ourselves in the lucky category as we live in the Jeeralang hills. Living in this blissful bush environment allowed us to enjoy autumn walks that delivered constant scenery changes.

On the morning I took this photo the Latrobe Valley and Billy's Creek area below our vantage point were shrouded in low cloud and fog and the air was crisp. The gum trees in the foreground framed this moody scene of rising mist and layers of cloud formations.

On our return walk back to the car 30 minutes later the cloud was lifting and the sun starting to penetrate to deliver a beautiful sunny autumn day.



Eucalyptus of the Year Competition

By Jill Fidler

Do any of our members know about this competition? I certainly didn't and Col sounded mystified when I asked him. The inaugural competition was in 2018 and conducted in conjunction with the REMEMBER THE WILD organisation, Australia's first nature connection charity. The competition is conducted online in March each year and voting starts in February.



The winner this year is *Eucalyptus Salubris* (known as Gimlet), a species of Mallee endemic to low-rainfall areas of the wheat belt and goldfields regions of Western Australia. Other winners were – 2018 *E. Camaldulensis*, 2019 *E. Pauciflora* and 2020 *E. Erythrocorys*. There is a wealth of information both about Eucalypts and the competition on the website www.eucalyptusaustralia.org.au/national-eucalypt-day, and an entertaining video presentation of a 12-month project featuring a tree per month produced during Covid lockdown 2020. An annual Eucalyptus Photography competition started this year too, the

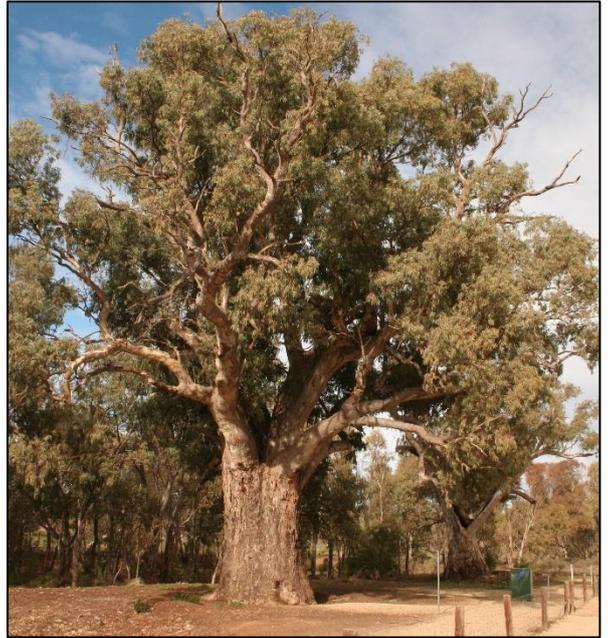
finalists are displayed on the site. A 'brief' look at the site before I penned this piece turned into a couple of hours clicking away and I could have kept going. So, I won't spoil things for you by writing any more...happy clicking and we'll remind everyone in time for the competition in 2022.



Redgum Huggers

By Col Jackson

I have always loved the River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). Anytime I am travelling in outback Australia I love to see it growing along riverbanks; the matriarch of the waterway with its semi-exposed roots anchoring it firmly to the earth and defying the floods that try to sweep it away. The gnarly and twisted branches hint at decades and even centuries of droughts and floods, heatwaves and overnight lows that go to the sub-zero range. Of course, one should never camp underneath a mature Red Gum. It has a well-deserved nickname of 'Widow maker'; dropping branches without warning on anyone unfortunate enough to be underneath. Even this has an upside; the termites that eat out the old dead wood in the centre of the branches



are helping create the hollows that can accommodate so much of our native wildlife, both birds and animals. I remember lying on the ground, with binoculars, underneath one such tree on the banks of a waterhole near Innamincka. I found Galahs and Budgies using hollows, and the nests of a hawk, a Mudlark, and a Willie Wagtail. All this in just one tree!

As we were passing through Orroroo on the way home from South Australia in 2019, we pulled into a side road that said 'Oldest Redgum'. It is an old Redgum, estimated to be 500 years old, with a trunk 10.4 metres in circumference to a height of 6 metres before branching. Even then, the branches are large enough to rival the trunks of many normal trees! This timescale is humbling; when Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay this tree was already 250 years old. We spent some time just absorbing the wisdom of the tree and thinking about what has passed by in its lifetime.



Coming events of interest

Note: Please check the Vic APS website for cancellations before attending.

1 May 2021 - APS Mornington Peninsula Plant Sale, Seawinds Gardens, Arthurs Seat Park, Purves Road, Arthurs Seat. 10 am - 3.30 pm

8 May 2021 - APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh Plant Sale. 9am to 1pm. The venue is expected to be St Andrews Uniting Church at Bacchus Marsh, yet to be confirmed.

8 & 9 May 2021 - Cranbourne Growing Friends hold a weekend plant sale in the gardens from 10.00 - 4.00. Check www.rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au for plant list and to ensure that the sale is going ahead prior to the sale.

5 June APS Vic COM Shepparton – morning for business, visit to Shepparton Botanic Gardens and a private garden.

26 & 27 June 2021 – APS Ballarat Winter Flower Show. Flower show, plant sales etc. Robert Clark Centre, Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Gilles Street, Ballarat. 10 am – 4 pm.

4 Sept 2021 – APS Wilson Park (Berwick) Plant Sale, Wilson Botanic Gardens, Berwick.

11 & 12 September 2021 – APS Yarra Yarra Australian Plants Expo, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, Eltham. 10 am – 4 pm.

18 & 19 September 2021 - APS Bendigo Flower Show. 9.30 - 4pm \$3 entry Kangaroo Flat Primary School, Freeman Drive, Kangaroo Flat.

25 & 26 September 2021 – APS Grampians Group host APS Victoria COM Meeting.

2 & 3 October 2021 - APS Grampians Group Pomonal Native Flower Show, Pomonal Hall.

9 October 2021 - APS Echuca Moama Native Flower Showcase, Echuca Masonic Lodge Hall, 426 High Street, Echuca. A huge flower display, plant sales, floral art, Native Bonsai, basket weaving and other displays and demonstrations. 9 am - 4 pm.

16 October 2021 - APS Mitchell Annual Flower Expo and Sale, Memorial Hall, Kilmore.

23 & 24 October 2021 – APS Ballarat Spring Flower Show. Robert Clark Centre, Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Gilles Street, Ballarat. 10 am – 4 pm.

13 & 14 November 2021 Garden DesignFest, Metro Melbourne & Mornington Peninsula

20 & 21 November 2021 Garden DesignFest, Regional Victoria: Ballarat, Euroa, Geelong and Macedon Area.

11 – 16 September 2022, ANPSA Biennial Conference 2022 – Kiama, New South Wales. Preliminary details of the Conference, pre- and post-Conference tours and the beautiful town of Kiama can be found on the APS (NSW) website.

26 to 30 September 2022 - 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress, Melbourne. *Influence and Action: Botanic Gardens as Agents of Change*. Includes a youth program for future gardens' leaders aged 18 to 24.

15 & 16 October 2022 – 14th FJC Rogers Seminar. Topic: Fabulous peas (the typical 'pea-flowered' plants from the sub-family Faboideae. York on Lilydale in Mt Evelyn. Expressions of interest and queries to fabulouspeas2022@gmail.com

The superb lyrebird is best known for its sophisticated and powerful calls, which echo through the forest and mimic the song of other birds as well as human sounds such as car alarms and chainsaws. New Australian research has discovered this songbird is extraordinary in another way: superb lyrebirds move more soil than any other land-based animal in the world, including earthworms. This has significant implications for the forest ecosystems where they live in Victoria, NSW, and Tasmania. Scientists from the Centre for Future Landscapes at La Trobe University have discovered that, on average, superb lyrebirds displace 155 tonnes per hectare of forest litter in a year. In the Sherbrooke Forest, in Melbourne's Dandenong Ranges, researchers found an individual lyrebird could move up to 11 standard dump trucks' worth of litter and soil a year. In scientific terms this makes them an "ecosystem engineer" par excellence, says primary author and ecology PhD candidate Alex Maisey, whose study is published in *Ecological Applications*. "We believe wildfire is the only comparable natural disturbance process that shapes ecosystem structure at this scale." Superb lyrebirds spend most of the day tilling the soil, facing uphill and scratching the litter behind them with their powerful feet so they are aided by gravity. Mr Maisey tracked the activity of wild superb lyrebirds over two years in the Central Highlands of Victoria across three locations and found, like beavers in North America, the songbird changes the environment in ways that can benefit other organisms. As they search for insects on the forest floor the lyrebirds change litter decomposition and "fluff up", or aerate, the structure of soil on the forest floor, making it easier for seeds to germinate. For more information click on the following link (or copy and paste): <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2020/release/lyrebirds-natures-ecosystem-engineers>

Article sourced from: Newsletter of The Victorian Land for Wildlife Program - Spring 2020.

Photo by Mary Jackson showing that magnificent earth and litter moving claw!



2021 Latrobe Valley Group Events Calendar

Month	Day	Date	Activity	Time
May	Saturday	8	Cranbourne Botanic Garden Friends Plant Sale	10:00am
June			Woolenook Native Nursery visit - Maffra	
July			Traralgon South garden visit and lunch meeting	
Aug			AGM and Calendar Photo winners slide show.	

Rainfall for 2020 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)	121	147	40	170	123	51	64	154	70	121	89	60	1207
Brian	Drouin (east)	124	136	46	163	125	47	53	158	80	100	69	47	1148
Carolyn	Yarragon	105	171	35	138	125	48	55	138	61	120	44	49	1087
Wayne	Tanjil South	136	108	66	163	134	72	91	107	57	123	55	86	1198
Judy	Moe South	99	95	33	159	137	53	55	128	71	138	37	40	1045
Mike	Boolarra	93	126	40	159	121	73	78	115	63	133	32	63	1093
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	86	134	39	152	93	73	97	98	53	110	37	48	1019
John	Traralgon South	76	55	15	134	105	55	46	115	53	108	51	32	842

Rainfall for 2021 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)	92	57											149
Brian	Drouin (east)	83	58	80										221
Carolyn	Yarragon	79	30	60										169
Wayne	Tanjil South	108	37	89										234
Judy	Moe South	97	25	89										211
Mike	Boolarra	95	43	81										219
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	79	35	98										211
John	Traralgon South	83	16	135										233

<https://apsvic.org.au/aps-latrobe-valley/>

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Golden Grevillea
Grevillea chrysophaea

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Title page photo: *Grevillea chrysophaea* at Holey Plains State Park by Mike Beamish