

# Golden

Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society  
Latrobe Valley Group Inc.  
No. A0045337C

Issue No. 335 – October 2024

*Grevillea chrysophaea* – Golden Grevillea

## This Month

- Event      A weekend trip to the Eastern Victorian high country.  
Location   Staying at 'Homeleigh' in Buchan.  
Dates      Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October to Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October.  
Time      To be announced later in the month.

The arrangements at Homeleigh are much the same as it was at Mt Baw Baw, bringing your own bed linen and food. Kitchen facilities are provided. As we don't have exclusive use of the premises, bedroom layout is not yet completely known, so it is possible that some may have to share. If you are interested in coming and haven't already contacted Mike, let him know now. He will be sending out further info later in the month to all those attending.

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**F**eral cats are a scourge on Australia's environment having direct involvement in a large number of Australian mammal extinctions.

According to federal environment minister, Tanya Plibersek;

- One in ten mammals have become extinct since cats arrived in Australia,
- 34 mammals are now extinct,
- 48 species of mammals and birds currently are on the endangered list,
- Cats kill over 6 million native animals daily!!!

Cats can carry the serious toxoplasmosis that affect mammals and birds, livestock and humans, particularly pregnant women who can pass the toxoplasma parasite to the unborn child. Persons with compromised immune systems are most at risk if infected by this parasite. Domestic cats that are kept inside and not fed raw meat are very unlikely to carry the toxoplasma parasite.

For years, like many, many others, I have been feeling very overwhelmed about the feral cat (foxes, too) and the rate of extinction of Australia's precious wildlife.

All is not lost though: Science has come up with a new weapon to try and eradicate this pest from the Australian landscape. Artificial Intelligence technology is involved in cat facial features recognition. Once a cat is recognised a poison is sprayed onto the cat's fur and during grooming the feral cat will lick and ingest the poison. I, like many Australians hope it WORKS!!



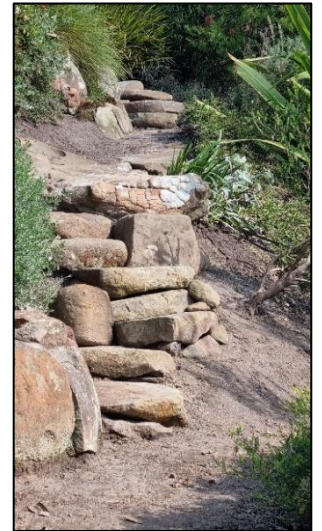
This month's meeting will be starting at Buchan, staying at 'Homeleigh', a former guesthouse that is now owned by the Victorian Speleological Association via the Rimstone Cooperative. We will be exploring the surrounding bush for spring-flowering native plants, perhaps a day trip to McKillops Bridge, and always the possibility of seeing the Buchan Caves.

## 2024 Latrobe Valley Group Events Calendar

Month	Day	Date	Activity	Time
October	Fri-Mon	25-28	A trip to Buchan, staying 3 nights at Homeleigh and exploring the surrounding area. Let Mike know if you are coming.	
November	Thursday	14	Christmas Break-up. We have a booking at the Warragul Country Club for a meal in the Bistro area. We will need to confirm numbers by the 31 <sup>st</sup> of October.	12 noon

*With no activities listed for December and January, our new year will be starting in February. If any of you have ideas for interesting speakers, day trips, and any other excursions, please forward them to the committee members so that next year's activities can be planned.*

As with the previous two months, garden maintenance has been my primary focus. The ANPSA conference tour is still motivating me to whip the garden into shape and, amongst the weeding, pruning and mulching I decided I had better do something about this very steep section of garden path. The original path was longer with a gentler gradient but had been completely overgrown by a Banksia shrub. I have procrastinated on a solution for years but now, under pressure to get it done, I went with the 'natural' rock step look. I started by lifting the front of the large flat rock about 100mm with my father's old Trehwella jack, (a relic from last century, if not the one before, but very effective none-the-less). It seems a little counterintuitive, but I work better building rock steps down from top to bottom (I don't know why, I'll let my analyst explain that). A re-shaping of the path crossfall and the addition of another step at the top of the path finally left me satisfied with the result.



I am always fascinated by textures and patterns in nature. At this time of year, with so much flowering happening, there is a multitude of different 'carpets' underneath the shrubs and trees. Spent flowers, having done their job, are making colourful and interesting patterns as they fall to the ground.

It's not often that I see a wombat out in daylight at home, however this healthy-looking specimen was out feeding on our mowed area at about 5:00 PM and was not too concerned with me approaching within about 6 metres. The Bowerbird seems to be on steroids adding to his blue plastic collection and the King Parrots were decorating the old Banksia stump.



**Species:** *Acacia suaveolens*.

**Family:** Fabaceae  
(previously  
Mimosaceae).

**Derivation:**

**Acacia:** This is a Greek word used by Dioscorides to name some prickly species in Egypt and is derived from *acis*, meaning 'a pointed instrument'.

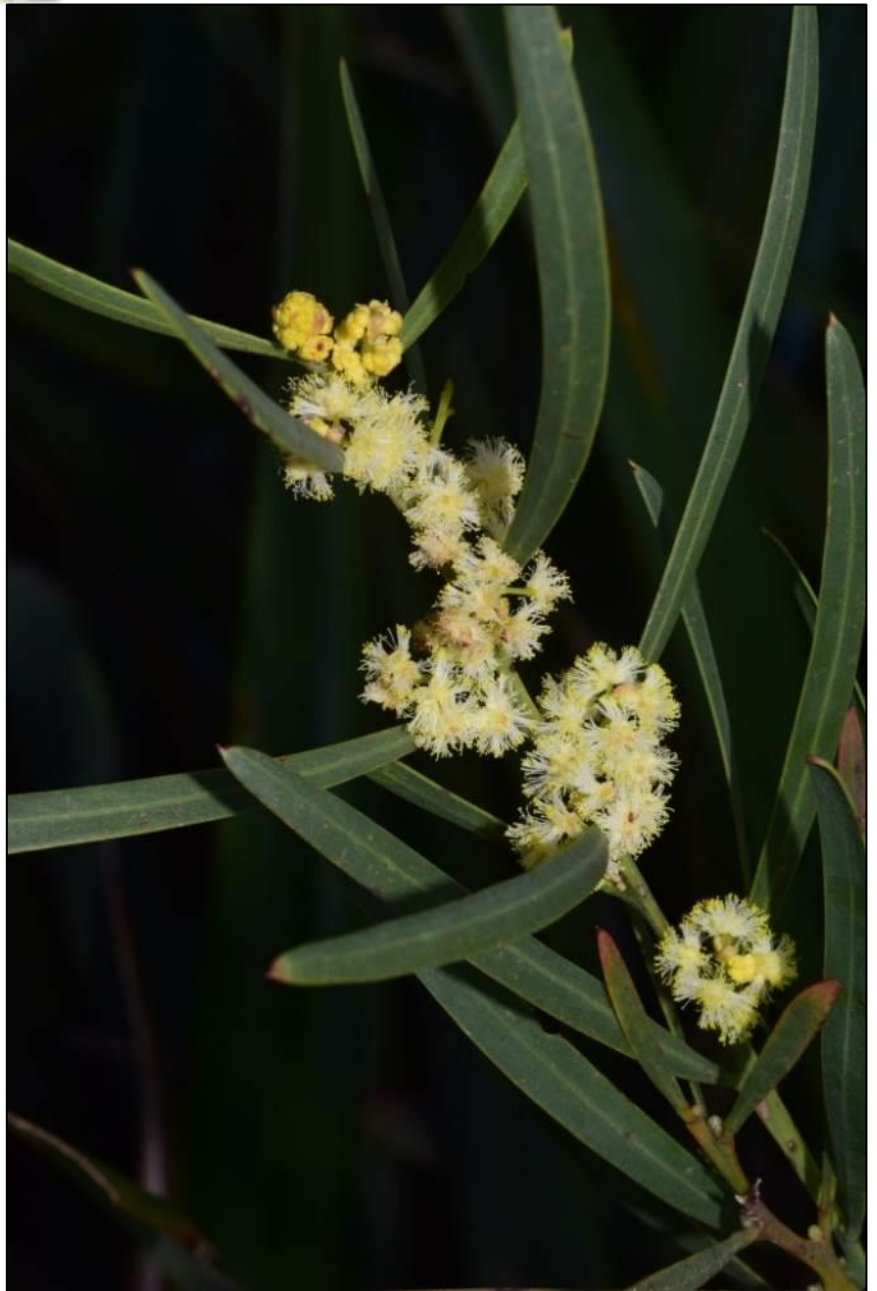
**suaveolens:** A Latin word meaning 'fragrant', obviously referring to the scent of the flowers.

**Common Name:** Sweet(-scented) Wattle.

**Distribution:** Widespread in sandy soils on the coast and ranges of south-eastern Australia, from SE SA, Victoria, Tasmania, NSW and Queensland.

**Description:** Slender, erect blue-green shrub to 3m tall, with stiff and sharply angular stems bearing thick, ascending phyllodes (not true leaves, but swollen leaf stems) up to 15cm long and 1cm wide, with a prominent central vein. Axillary racemes of creamy yellow, scented, globular flowers appear in late autumn to spring. There are up to 10 flower balls up to 8mm diameter in each short raceme. Flat and broad blue-green pods to 5cm long and 2cm wide then form, containing a number of oblong black seeds to 7mm long and 4mm wide, set transversely in the pod.

**Opinion:** I can't remember exactly where my specimen came from, but I suspect I've collected some seed from somewhere and grown it myself. My records show I planted some seed from East Gippsland back in 2001, but the seedlings damped off and were not the source of my current plant. My records also show that I collected seed from my current plant in February 2019, sowed 21 of them, from which 14 seedlings were potted up in ►



January 2020. I remember some of these didn't thrive, but others were distributed around family and friends, and there were none left by April 2022. It's probably time to have another go at propagating, though I suspect some type of microbial inoculation is required to improve thriftiness!

My current plant is in the western bed of the block, in the middle of the clump of Tasman Flax and less than a metre away from the big, historic bull-ant nest on the boundary fence. Hence, I'm very wary of making too much disturbance in this area, even though I'm not sure whether that nest still exists. Back in February, while cleaning up the storm damage in this part of the garden, I noticed the plant had developed a bit of a lean, so took the opportunity to hammer in a stake, keeping an eye on my ankles the whole time. Didn't see a single ant! The wattle is still quite small for its age, less than a metre and quite slender, but it flowers most years, and I've collected seed a couple of times. Not sure if its fragrance is as sweet as advertised, as it competes with a nearby Snowy River Wattle, which also has a strong aroma.

**Sources:** Simmons – Acacias of Australia, Volume 1.  
Costermans – Native Trees and Shrubs of SE Australia.

## July APS Vic Quarterly Meeting – Bendigo

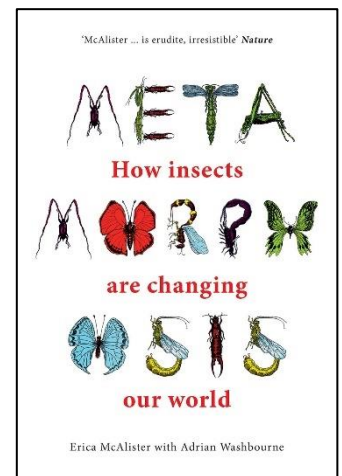
By Jill Fidler

**O**n behalf of Latrobe Valley APS, I attended the July APS Quarterly meeting in Bendigo. The meeting and dinner were held at the Greyhound Function Centre - "Chasers". A really well attended and organised meeting and I was able to re-connect with members I have known from my nearly 30 years of membership. There were several garden visits arranged, and we braved the late winter rain. The highlight was the visit to Marilyn Sprague's Flower Farm. Many of you will know Marilyn as the proprietor of the Goldfields Nursery, Mandurang/Bendigo. She bought the 4.5 Hectare property 43 years ago. Since 'retiring' 15 years ago she has concentrated on massively adding to the original development and establishing an Australian native flower farm. Conducting tours, study groups and a flourishing native cut flower business. On our wide-ranging tour, we were shown how she has transformed the soil composition to suit the many West Australian plants she has hybridised to adapt to the Bendigo climate. She has also perfected a method of grafting difficult to grow plants on more forgiving rootstock. I won't try to expand on her many achievements...If you can't visit Bendigo, I suggest you enjoy the many video clips and information, some from the ABC's Gardening Australia program. Just Google 'Marilyn Sprague'. The next quarterly meeting is in Wangaratta, and I hope to report from there.

And just another quick note. 'Follow the Rain' is a program you should not miss, sharing the spectacular results of 10 years of research in some of Australia's oldest landscapes by two world famous fungi hunters, showing how fungi fit into the world of other living things. A documentary like no other, showing now on Netflix. There are reams of information and photographs on Planet Fungi.

## Metamorphosis; how insects are changing our world. Erica McAlister with Adrian Washbourne.

Whenever I see Erica McAlister's name on a book cover I am always anxious to get started on it. I have reviewed two books on flies of hers in this series (see here <https://botanicalbookshop.com.au/pages/ian-fraser-book-reviews> numbers 25 and 29). Both of them are among my favourites in the hundreds of books I've reviewed over the years – and if you think this makes me a weirdo, well I don't have much to offer in my defence except that I can't help loving a book that makes me laugh while teaching me lots of things I didn't know but am glad to have learnt. She is senior curator of Diptera and Siphonaptera (ie flies and fleas) at the London Natural History Museum. Washbourne is a lot harder to identify, and unfortunately the book doesn't help us at all! However I've finally established that he's an award-winning producer for BBC radio and, probably more relevantly here, an award-winning science writer. Together they have produced a most interesting and readable book. Her two books on flies delve into fascinating facts about various flies (and sometimes about us too, such as maggot-containing Sardinian cheese) – and who knew there could be two books in that?! This book however takes a different tack. The authors introduce Amazing Insects – one for each of ten chapters – and discuss how these insect superpowers are being pirated by humans for their own, mostly utterly admirable, purposes. Some examples are the ability of a flea to jump 60 times its own height, and survive a force of 140g (the force of gravity) – anything over 5g is dangerously uncomfortable for us, 16g is fatal. Moreover they can repeat the feat thousands of times without tiring. While there is much about the process we still don't understand, the principles involved have led to the development of tiny robots for sensing and surveillance, such as assisting in search and rescue through disaster rubble. The Namib Desert in Namibia is one of the harshest places on earth, with very little vegetation and an average rainfall of 15mm a year, and sometimes none at all, and temperatures of up to 45°C. Here live beetles which do handstands in the fogs which roll in from the Atlantic, and harvest moisture using grooves along their backs to guide the water to their mouths. In this way they can harvest up to 30% of their body weight of water in a night! Other desert beetles elsewhere have developed similar strategies, but with different structures. These remarkable tricks have inspired industrial-scale fog-harvesting structures to gather and store water in places where rainfall is sparse (and of course declining). I'd love to share all the stories but that would be spoiling the surprises for you. And there's more. Each chapter includes lots of truly fascinating material on the history of the discoveries and some remarkable people (not all men) who made them, and others who could see the potential there for imaginative adaptations of these marvels. I love a good story, and enjoyed this book for that alone. And for that alone – though not only that – this book is worth its purchase price and more. *Metamorphosis; how insects are changing our world*, Erica McAlister with Adrian Washbourne. Published by CSIRO Publishing and Natural History Museum. 216 pages. RRP \$35



*[Ian Fraser is a Canberra-based professional naturalist and writer. In 2012 he launched the natural history blog 'Ian Fraser, Talking Naturally', at <http://ianfrasertalkingnaturally.blogspot.com.au/> This contribution was submitted by Meg Byers, who knows Ian through previous environmental tours in Australia. Editor]*



## Coming events of interest

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

**21 September till 8 October 2024** - Special Banksia Exhibition at Karwarra, featuring over 60 paintings by Ian Wallace, Juet Sculptures and plant display by Kurunga Native Nursery. Karwarra Australian Native Botanic Gardens, 1190 - 1192 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Kalorama. 10 am to 4 pm weekdays, 1 - 4 pm weekends.

**2 October 2024** - AJ Swaby Address by Phillip Johnson - 3:30PM. "Connected Through Nature". As part of the ANPSA 2024 Biennial Conference, this session is open to the public, free of charge, at The Round, Nunawading. Phillip Johnson is a Landscape Designer and 2013 Gold and Best in Show winner at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London. "By healing our environment, we heal ourselves at the same time". Registrations are required via the website <https://www.anpsa2024conference.com/>

**5 October 2024** – Echuca Moama Native Flower Showcase. Masonic Lodge Hall, 426 High Street, Echuca.

**12 & 13 October 2024** - Cranbourne Friends RBGV Spring Plant Sale. 10 am to 4 pm. Wide range of plants, plant list available one week before sale. Website: [rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au](http://rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au)

**19th October, 2024** – APS Ballarat Spring Flower Show, Robert Clark Horticultural Centre, Ballarat Botanical Gardens, Gillies Street, Ballarat. (Next to the Conservatory). 10am to 4pm. Native Plants for Sale.

**23 & 24 November 2024** – APS Wangaratta host APS Victoria Quarterly Weekend - Early Summer in 'The Warbies'. Committee of Management meeting in the Uniting Church Hall, Central Wangaratta and AGM in Old Town and Country Tavern on Greta Road.



**22 & 23 March 2025** - Cranbourne Friends RBGV Autumn Plant Sale. 10 am to 4 pm. Wide range of plants, plant list available one week before sale. Website: [rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au](http://rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au)

**24 to 30 March 2025** – Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS), Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building. Website: <https://melbflowershow.com.au>.

**12 April 2025** - APS Yarra Yarra Plant & Book Sale.

**2 & 3 August 2025** 15<sup>th</sup> FJC Rogers Seminar on Epacridaceae hosted by APS Mornington Peninsula in the Mornington Secondary College.

**16 to 24 August 2025** - Banksia Week. Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. Includes plant sales, plant walks, exhibitions and displays in the auditorium.

**13 to 14 September 2025** - APS Yarra Yarra Plants Expo.

**11 & 12 October 2025** - Cranbourne Friends RBGV Spring Plant Sale. 10 am to 4 pm. Wide range of plants, plant list available one week before sale. Website: [rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au](http://rbgfriendscranbourne.org.au)

**24 to 28 August 2026** ANPSA 2026 Biennial Conference, in Alice Springs, organised by APS SA and APS Alice Springs. The conference theme is "Amazing Arid Australia".



Rainfall for 2023 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)	21	42	101	112	114	102	41	66	66	177	80	157	1078
Brian	Drouin (east)	22	44	110	93	118	101	38	70	68	184	83	136	1067
Warren	Yarragon	49	35	80	69	119	138	36	71	78	184	74	85	1018
Wayne	Tanjil South	25	43	100	77	131	126	55	74	59	195	106	136	1127
Peter	Mirboo North	35	57	113	96	132	94	32	59	57	205	110	86	1076
Judy	Moe South	26	33	80	66	126	101	86	83	78	193	90	124	1086
Mike	Boolarra	20	43	114	61	113	101	44	62	55	182	60	92	946
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	24	36	94	65	122	91	26	51	58	200	94	105	964

Rainfall for 2024 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)	135	21	13	172	40	41	155	34					610
Brian	Drouin (east)	121	28	14	173	45	50	159	30					620
Warren	Yarragon	97	16	15	153	33	52	166	29					559
Wayne	Tanjil South	137	25	38	169	31	80	139	50					669
Peter	Mirboo North													0
Judy	Moe South	100	6	17	265	35	54							477
Mike	Boolarra	89	12	11	137	35	47	130	36					495
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	71	15	14	130	18	75	149	44					516

<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**