



KUNZEA

Australian Plants Society Maroondah
Preservation by Cultivation



January 2021

A Real Get-Together!

6pm Friday 15th January, 2021

Yarran Dheran, Mitcham

(parking is off Ashburton Drive, Melway map 49 B6)

We are planning to have a BYO picnic on the evening of the third Friday in January (unless there is a setback in the CoVid situation).

This would normally be the night for our first member meeting of the year.

Meet in the picnic area at Yarran Dheran near the Visitors' Centre from 6pm.

Bring anything that you want to eat and drink.

A chair is probably a good idea as well.

We look forward to seeing lots of you there.

Plans for the New Year

At this stage your Committee thinks that there is still too much uncertainty around CoVid to plan for a meeting in the hall in February. We are intending to hold a Zoom (computer) meeting including a speaker presentation in February.

Of course, the situation could be quite different by then. Full information, including helpful hints for participating in a Zoom meeting, will be in February's *Kunzea*.

Urea

Ray Turner

Now I know why a lot of my plants die straight after they are planted! I have been getting in to big trouble from the boss because I don't look after them well enough.

After looking at November's *Kunzea* and reading the article from Alan Lacey, I went out and read the "destructions" on the label and sure enough it was 8.6% urea. I did buy a big bag of the stuff and put it into a couple of big plastic drums to make it easier to access and for some reason cut off the part showing the contents and kept it with the drums. I don't know if that was luck or what but that damn bit of plastic has been somehow been moving around lately and I nearly threw it out a couple of times.

The last time was yesterday but I was too lazy to do it and just put it back where it came from.

I'm not sure if all that means "you win sometimes, or you lose" sometimes !!!!

Looking forward

Only time will tell what will happen with CoVid in 2021. However, at the moment infection rates seem to be staying low, and there is the prospect of successful vaccination. On this basis, the following are tentatively planned for the early months of the new year.

APS Maroondah events on Friday Nights

15th January – BYO Picnic at Yarran Dheran

19th February – Member meeting with speaker via Zoom (details next month)

Plant Sales

17th April – APS Geelong Australian Native Plant Sale, "Wirrawilla", 40 Lovely Banks Road, Lovely Banks.

24th April – APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale, Eltham. 10am to 4pm.

1st May – APS Mornington Peninsula Plant Sale, Seawinds Garden, Arthurs Seat Park, Purves Road, Arthurs Seat, from 10am to 3:30pm.

Is this your Last Kunzea?

There are still some Maroondah members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for the year from July 2020 to June 2021. We have given a longer grace period this year due to the exceptional circumstances created by CoVid.

However, all good things must come to an end. So, if you are currently unfinancial, you will need to contact our Membership Officer Jan Nicholls at 9893 4422 or email: maroondah@apsvic.org.au as soon as possible.

If we don't hear from you, this will be your last *Kunzea*.

Mt Cannibal

Sue Harris, of The Friends of Mount Cannibal Inc., has sent the following update on rehabilitation of this reserve.

We have been very grateful to receive the \$1,000 from the APS Maroondah. If you recall, the Mt Cannibal Flora and Fauna Reserve was completely burnt on 1st March 2019. There has been extraordinary regrowth since then, aided by very good rains, however our botanist, Dr Robin Adair, who produced a list of plants prior to the wildfire also combed the mountain since the fire and discovered there are over a hundred species that appear to be missing, i.e. they may not have come up yet - they may be lost or he may not have seen them. We have put your generous donation to good use purchasing and putting in some of the missing species. The plants were obtained from the Cardinia Environment Coalition's indigenous nursery where we made sure that the stock was sourced from sites close to Mt Cannibal.

As all of your members would be aware, we have been subject to severe restrictions due to the CoVid19 virus. Mt Cannibal, being in Garfield North, has been part of the Melbourne lockdown area. In addition to that, Cardinia Shire Council which owns the reserve, did not allow public entry until even later than the lifting of restrictions and for the Friends group it was even later again as we had to have our CoVid19 plan officially passed by Council before we could work in the reserve.

We had been concerned about getting this year's plants into the ground during the spring season. We contacted Council's rangers early on and they kindly offered to put them in for us, in spring, as we were at that stage not allowed into the reserve. The two

photographs were taken fairly soon after the planting. Our botanist had advised us that he did not want the plants to have guards or mats so we followed his wishes. What this has meant is we had funds left over after the purchase of this year's tube stock to order and pay for another lot of "missing" plants for next season. The stock for these plants will all be of local origin. Some of the rarer plants and more slowly growing plants may not be able to be planted next year as it may be difficult to collect much seed/cuttings or they are slow growing. We want to make sure they are large enough to survive and to get their numbers in large enough quantity so that it will be more likely that some of the "missing" plants survive.

In the photos you will see that we have planted into an area that had previously been treated to remove environmental weeds. Hopefully, with less competition, it will give them a better survival rate. Metal frames have been scattered about the two planting sites to deter kangaroos and the plants were also treated with browse repellent, though I suspect the very dense regeneration will stop the roos from gaining access.

If members of your group wish to see the planting site please let me know, we would be delighted to show you around though you would need to be mindful of the fact that walking off track is extremely difficult at present.

Kind regards to you and all your members for providing funds to get these important plants back to Mt Cannibal.



Mt Cannibal replanting.



Mt Cannibal Planting looking up hill.

Golden Showers

Michael Cook

Viminaria juncea is a fast-growing, establishment plant. Being a pea plant, it fixes nitrogen into the soil. It looks spectacular in summer as the golden flowers sway in the wind.

We have it planted on our north facing back garden where it forms a good windbreak while still allowing penetration of winter sun. It also formed a great visual screen, yet it remains open in habit when pruned regularly to prevent it shooting skywards.



Michael Cook

King Parrots

Sue Guymer

Our King Parrots returned in November (presumably the same couple that adopted our birdbath a couple of years earlier).

We had no idea that they are so indifferent to humans being close to them! During late November they spent a lot of time in a *Dodonaea viscosa* that is growing right on the edge of our driveway. The car pretty much brushes through the plant as the birds wave us on (sort of).

Bill photographed the male enjoying the fruits on the *dodonaea*.



Bill Aitchison

Native Gardens in the News

Nicky Zanen alerted us to a short video on the internet which features APS Albury-Wodonga member Glenda Datson talking about the habitat garden which she and husband Bernie have created.

This is one of the gardens shown as part of the Sustainable Living 2020 Festival organised by Albury-Wodonga Shire in November 2020.

You can find it at: alburywodonga.gov.au/slf

Eva Kowal and Ray Turner

Nicky Zanen

Eva & Ray Garden Ambassadors at RBGC



We are touched by the magic of our fellow APS Maroondah members. I reflected on this while preparing an item on one of our couples, Ray Turner and Eva Kowal.

At our monthly meetings Ray and Eva normally sit in front, on the left side, having driven in from Cranbourne South. Otherwise you might bump into them at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne where they love interacting with visitors in their role as Garden Ambassadors.

Ray was born and grew up in Brighton. His interest in native plants was sparked by his mother who was inspired by the writings of Edna Walling. Childhood camping holidays on the Murray and regular visits to "Adgingbong Station" in Cunnamulla, Queensland instilled in him a love of the bush. Ray is a big fan of "a gumtree and a rock".

Eva migrated with her family, leaving a job in the laboratories in Kew Gardens, London. She was born and educated in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and studied botany and genetics at university. She has vivid childhood memories of the nature table in the hallway where discoveries of any outings were displayed, such as leaves, seed pods and shells. Her father awakened in his daughters an appreciation of nature as they grew up. The bluebells and daffodils of her childhood were in contrast to those funny looking plants in Australia like banksias and kangaroo paws.

Soon after arrival in Sydney Eva worked in the University of NSW Botany Department. Instead of a digital camera on a microscope, there was a projection device on top and the image was projected on paper alongside, i.e. a camera lucida. Next followed a move to Trangie, between Dubbo and Bourke, where Eva worked

studying fleece rot and blow fly survival in Merino sheep. With this experience behind her Eva worked in the Mineral Chemistry Dept, CSIRO at Fisherman's Bend as Divisional Photographer, and this was followed by a spell of 21 years working at DSTO on metal fatigue and air crashes. Eva told me that she worked on a very secret project involving fine inscription, and it was only at the end she discovered this was for the new plastic \$10 note. Unfortunately there were no free samples.

Ray worked at "The Age" newspaper as a distribution rep for many years, dealing with newsagents and customer complaints. With the changes made at "The Age" by the new owner Conrad Black, Ray left "The Age" in 1993 to take on all manner of different jobs including working for a funeral parlour for ten years, and doing the early mornings for Hampton newsagency. He also worked part-time for a window winder manufacturer and commented that the window winders in the Visitors Centre at Cranbourne were probably assembled by him.

Eva, the Geordie lass, and Ray, the Brighton lad, met through a mutual friend, exactly 25 years on the day I interviewed them. The following day was Melbourne Cup and Eva popped round to visit Ray and "ate him out of house and home".

How did they get involved with APS? They went to the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, chatted to the plant society representatives and picked up a Kurunga voucher. Ray was already keen to grow native plants and had grown two *Melia azedarach* from seed obtained from a tree at "Adgingbong Station" in Cunnamulla. He also had some eucalypts on his fenceline in McKinnon. They joined the South Eastern group, and through John Thompson also joined APS Maroondah.

In 2004 they joined the Friends of Cranbourne and went on the Friends' first organised tour of Western Australia where, in the middle of nowhere, Eva bumped into an old colleague, Dr Barbara Briggs, who was down on her hands and knees studying restionaceae.

Approaching retirement, they wanted to move out of the suburbs and unlike most sensible retirees they decided to upsize to acreage. However, it took a year and over 75 property visits to eventually find what they wanted. It happened on a cold and wet winter's day, they pulled up at a prospective property to wait for the estate agent. Ray turned to see Eva was crying, an emotional reaction to the property she had fallen in love with. It had beautiful trees and they had finally found their home. Better still, no need for renovations, plenty of bush and a large



Ray, Eva and George Emu.

Sue Betheras

garden. All it needed was a shed to house Ray's collection of cars: a 1956 Imperial Crown coupe, a 1971 Corvette Stingray and a 1986 Corvette convertible.

One of the main challenges for them is the rabbits, as the young plants definitely have to be guarded for protection. Another challenge is keeping up the watering in the sandy soil which dries out very rapidly. Like the Cranbourne Gardens close by, their street was once used for sand mining.

Their favourite plants are grevilleas, darwinias and verticordias. Like most gardeners, Eva loves late winter and the beginning of spring when the wattles and tea trees are in their full glory. Ray also loves the weird, unusual and hard to grow plants such as *Bossiaea walkeri*, *Davesia pachyphylla* and *Daviesia horrida*.

Before we leave Eva and Ray, a quick question about their music tastes. Eva is a classically trained violinist and played in orchestras at school and at university. She now

plays violin in a string quartet. I remember seeing her play at Maranoa Garden once, and she often plays at special occasions and weddings.

Ray was a drummer in the Brighton Municipal Brass Band and took part in the early Moomba marches as well as playing for community events. His taste of music is eclectic, he grew up listening to Australian hillbilly music, then 50's rock 'n' roll and moved on to include American roots music and world traditional folk music.

Earlier in the day of our interview they had been to Cranbourne Gardens to help out with Growing Friends. With CoVid19, the return to Friends activities has been slow, but the carpark that day was full of people with CoVid restrictions being reduced.

What was Ray's highlight – meeting Eva and moving to Cranbourne South. For Eva, everyday is a highlight ! I so enjoyed conducting this interview and believe we are very lucky to have these two delightful people as our members.

More pictures from Ray and Eva's garden



Muellerina eucalyptoides



Two mistletoes on one tree.



Amyema pendula



Stylidium sp Palgarup flowers



Persoonia chamaepitys



Grevillea crowleyae



Grevillea leucopterys



Blue tongue lizard.



Grevillea exelsior

From the Past ...

Ten years ago

Ray and Eva had moved into their Cranbourne South home in early 2009 and APS Maroondah was invited to celebrate our end of year garden visit there. The garden was already mainly planted with natives (which is a significant reason for Ray and Eva choosing it!), but the range of Australian plants has been greatly enhanced over the last 10 years. Well done guys!

Another massive congratulations goes to the valiant people who spent 30 years putting together the nine volumes of the "Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants Suitable for Cultivation". The final volume was released in early 2010. Authors are Rodger Elliot and David Jones, and Trevor Blake provided the line drawings. Rodger and

Trevor are members of APS Maroondah, and David is a past member. They all acknowledged the wonderful support of their wives – Gwen Elliot, Barbara Jones and Beryl Blake – and other family members.

Four years ago

2016 was a highly significant year for APS Maroondah – we turned 50 years old! There was a great range of special speakers and garden visits during the year, culminating in our 50th Anniversary Celebration Lunch. A 50-year history book was also produced to document the life of our group up to that time. It was a wonderful year, and we caught up with many members including some we hadn't seen for some years.

Hardenbergia violacea

Bill Altchison

Because APS Maroondah is organising the 2022 FJC Rogers Seminar on Fabulous Peas, I have been taking special note of the peas that we have in our garden. One of the species that we are growing is *Hardenbergia violacea*, and one of our plants in particular flowered superbly for a few months during spring and then developed many seed pods.

I noticed that a lot of these seed pods had small pin-size holes in them, and upon looking further found that there were small caterpillars inside, chewing on the seeds (see photo).

This then prompted the question as to what these caterpillars were. My first reference point was the highly recommended book, "Caterpillars, Moths and their Plants of Southern Australia" (published by Butterfly Conservation South Australia Inc.). I then showed the photo to Cathy Powers, and Cathy thought that the caterpillar was in fact included in the book, a species

called *Etiella behrii*, but she was not 100% sure of this identification.

Because Sue and I sell the Butterfly Conservation SA book (as part of APS Victoria book sales), we have got to know the people involved in producing it, and so I forwarded our photo to them, asking them if they could help with the identification. I then received a reply from Dr Peter McQuillan, who is the lead author of the book, and he confirmed the identification as follows:

"This is Lucerne Seed Web Moth *Etiella behrii* (Pyralidae, Phycitinae) which is widespread in Australia and best known as a pest of lucerne and some other Fabaceae. Almost all foodplant records I know of involve introduced Fabaceae so a native record is good to see. *Hardenbergia violacea* is widely planted in gardens now, so it could partly explain why *Etiella behrii* is increasingly common in urban situations."



Hardenbergia violacea

Graeme Nicholls



Lucerne Seed Web Moth.

Bill Altchison

The Colour Purple

Sue Guymer

We have tried to grow *Alyogyne hakeifolia* several times over many years. We have tried different spots in the garden (and different colour forms in case some are tougher than others), but without success.

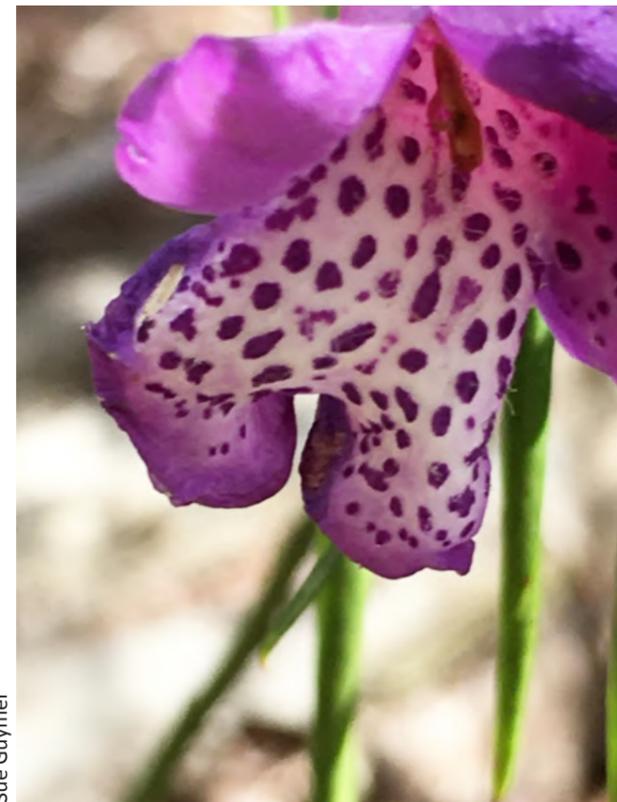
At last, we now have a healthy looking plant and it is flowering! This is the colour form sold under the cultivar name 'Shelby Ann'. We just hope it stays with us.

... and purple seems to be a dominant colour in our garden in December. *Lythrum salicaria* is starring around the billabong. Other purple is being contributed from wahlenbergias, ajuga, brachyscomes, veronicas, mazus and *Coopernookia georgei*.

We also have a few purple-flowered eremophilas putting on a great display, including *Eremophila* 'Meringur Ray' which is a hybrid of *E. bignoniiflora* x *E. purpurascens*.

We also have plants which may all be *Eremophila* 'Meringur Isaac' or *Eremophila* 'Meringur Midnight' or some of each! These both have beautiful large, deep purple flowers and linear leaves. Some of our plants have finer leaves than others, but we are not sure whether this is an identifying factor. References suggest that the flowers on 'Isaac' have a white lower petal with deep purple spots, while 'Midnight' flowers are pure purple. Unfortunately, all of ours plants have the white petal with purple spots – albeit some were bought under the name *Eremophila* 'Meringur Midnight'!

Can anyone help with this identification?



Sue Guymer

Eremophila 'Meringur Isaac' or *Eremophila* 'Meringur Midnight'?



Sue Guymer

Alyogyne hakeifolia



Lythrum salicaria

Sue Guymer



Sue Guymer

Eremophila 'Meringur Ray'

Misunderstood Mistletoes

Notes from an article published in *ABC Everyday*, 20th Dec 2019, by Jane Canaway.

Compiled by Graeme Nicholls

Mistletoes are parasites, but this humble little plant might be an unsung hero when it comes to attracting wildlife. Mistletoes are semi-parasitic canopy-dwellers; they photosynthesise to produce their own food but rely upon their host for water and support. David Watson, a plant biologist from Charles Sturt University, said "They flower and fruit when most other stuff doesn't, so they are often the only source of tucker for insects and animals during hard times.

Dr Watson is about halfway through a 25-year study based in native woodland around Albury, NSW. "Essentially, we removed naturally occurring mistletoe from every tree across half of our study sites and left them at the other half." Preliminary results were quite startling: the areas without mistletoe lost a third of their previous bird diversity.

Dr Watson is also researching the fact that mistletoes drop their leaves more than gum trees and those leaves contain more nutrients, so mistletoes feed the soil under the host tree and keep it moist. Importantly for wildlife, this leaf litter drives more microbes in the soil, more insects, and hence more food for birds.

Melbourne City Council has planted 800 mistletoe seeds in perfectly healthy street trees around the inner city and CBD. Now there are hundreds of young plants slowly growing on the most typical of city street trees, the London plane tree (*Platanus x acerifolius*, an uncertain hybrid). Plane by name and plain by nature, some ecologists say. "They might as well be made of concrete in biodiversity terms. Adding mistletoe turns a species that is virtually useless into a wildlife sanctuary."

Dr Watson says many birds prefer to nest in mistletoe because it provides dense shade and cover "which is important in a setting like Melbourne where many of the large urban trees are deciduous". Mistletoe species are generally associated with a specific host tree, often mimicking the foliage of the host. But in Melbourne, the council team chose creeping mistletoe, *Muellerina eucalyptoides*, which grows happily on a range of non-native trees.

Mistletoes produce nutritious fruit, which is eaten by birds, koalas, sugar gliders and possums. Most of the

seed-spreading is done by the mistletoe bird, which passes the seed of the fruit just 15-20 minutes after eating the fruit. Because it is so sticky, the bird literally wipes its bum on the branch to dislodge it. "That's what the team did, heading up into the crowns of trees in cherry pickers, squeezing the seeds out of the fruits and wiping them onto the branch!" Seeds were placed on the underside of the branches where the dew collects. Most of the 800 seeds installed on 28 trees germinated, and it is expected that about 10 per cent of them will survive.

While it's too early to tell what the long-term impact on biodiversity might be, lorikeets have been active in flowering mistletoe within the city, which is a great start.

Did you know?

- Mistletoe are over 30 million years old and fossil records suggest they originate from the part of Australia that was attached to Gondwana.
- As mistletoe seed germinates, it puts out a tendril that secretes a cocktail of enzymes on the branch, making a hole into which the tendril attaches.
- Many trees regenerate after fire but mistletoes don't.
- Mistletoe can become vulnerable if their preferred host plants become more widely spaced. If there's not enough fruit to attract mistletoe birds, even a healthy plant cannot reproduce.
- The leaves of nearly every Victorian mistletoe are the preferred food of caterpillars of at least one type of butterfly.
- Golden Mistletoe (*Notothixos subaureus*) grows only on another mistletoe, *Dendrothoe vittelina*, which in turn is parasitic on the relatively uncommon tree Rough-barked Apple (*Angophora floribunda*).

Australian Plants Society Maroondah Inc.

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Newsletter contributions:

Contributions for the February 2021 Newsletter should be sent to Sue Guymer at aitchguy@gmail.com.au no later than

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australianplantssoc.wix.com/maroondah

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