

2.

FEBRUARY MEETING **DANDENONG WETLANDS**

Speaker: Phoenix Wolfe

A terrific presentation – a guest speaker with amazing enthusiasm and a lot of knowledge of the environment made for a very interesting night.

Phoenix started with an Acknowledgment of Country but made several references during his talk to the environmental knowledge of the indigenous people of the area.

Plants are the centre of his career and his work particularly concentrates on the Lower Dandenong Creek and the Biodiversity Connection project.

Dandenong Creek starts on Mount Dandenong and winds its way through the countryside to end at Port Phillip Bay. It is one of the most significant waterways in Melbourne, an important passageway for animals and for conservation of indigenous plants. A 1954 photograph showed how the creek winds past Police Paddocks, past some agricultural areas and through a factory area. This is of high value for its vegetation so close to high density development - one of the best in Australia.

The creek has been realigned in many sections over time. It has currently low floristic diversity, but consists of mixed remnant vegetation as well as colonising revegetated indigenous and non indigenous natives. There is considerable pressure on such linear reservations.

Melbourne Water is aiming to remove all concrete sections to allow better fish movement, to return to the original vegetation and creation of natural habitats for native animals.

Phoenix showed us two photos of panels (Volcanic Dreaming) showing high diversity in Western Victoria and he is working to recreate such pockets of diversity, but this is dependent on what nurseries can produce. Mike Wicks gave a brief comment on the work done at Greenlink Sandbelt Indigenous Nursery in this regard.

[The images are copyright but can be accessed through the following link:

<https://www.volcanodreaming.com.au/panels 1-4.html>

From there you can access all 12 panels].

Caring for Country involves the possibility of burns (bushfire training needed) and trying to manage at a natural level – some replanting of red gums has produced one tree every 2 or 3 metres, whereas natural growth allows for 7 trees per hectare. Obviously, thinning is needed though some thinning will occur naturally. 80% of animals in the Greater City of Dandenong rely on hollows so older trees must be protected. The Greater Dandenong Conservation Team is working with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation.

The Council hosts approximately thirty environmental engagements per year. iNaturalist is used in identification and location of plants found at special environment days. Council is collaborating with both the Yarra Ranges and Mornington Councils as they work to see what is out there. Over 30,000 observations were made by 2000 people, a community of people valuing their natural habitat. The State government is trying to get as many people as possible engaging with nature through the Biodiversity Connection Project.

Groups such as the 'Peri Urban Weed Management Partnership', 'Our Catchments Our Communities' and 'Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways' are involved. During the height of COVID, some council employees were redirected to conservation and planting, helping to keep their regular jobs.

3.

Gardens for Wildlife supports residents and businesses in attracting and supporting wildlife with indigenous plants and wildlife gardening practices. Trained garden guides assist in this endeavour.

New ways need to be found to create new habitats eg fallen logs revamped by hollowing and capping then suspended from trees. It is surprising how many animals visit such logs.

In future, municipal boundaries should mean nothing so different councils need to work together; native pollinators need more encouragement eg wasps, bees to suit indigenous plants.

Questions were asked about

- restoring grasslands – it is difficult to get seed for large scale revegetation – site preparation is essential and agricultural equipment is needed for harvesting and threshing seed. Seed from hotter areas has to be sourced too eg Dubbo.
- Matching EVCs. Workers use Flora of Melbourne and keep within reasonable limits but flexibility is important.

Phoenix's talk raised some important issues regarding connections between working groups, including aboriginal involvement. His final comment was "the more he is out in nature, the more endangered species he sees". That is sad in some ways.

A visit from the APS Vic President

Miriam Ford was a guest at our February meeting. She spoke to us after Phoenix Wolfe's presentation about the National Conference of ANPSA which APS Vic is to host in 2024.

The theme is "Gardens for Life" which encompasses many nuanced meanings eg Gardens for Wildlife, Gardens for Health, Care for the Rare", How to improve our urban landscape for animals and conservation in general, future proofing, connections with indigenous people etc.

Miriam was asking us to participate where we can and to volunteer assistance in running the conference.

NEXT MEETING

Supper: Mick Connolly (please bring some milk)

Write-up: John Thompson

4.

FEBRUARY SPECIMEN TABLE



Lambertia orbifolia, *Trachymene coerulea*,
Alyogyne hakeifolia, *Grevillea globosa*,
Olearia passerinoides, *Rubus probus*
Grevillea "Peaches and Cream", *Calocephalus lacteus*, *Scaevola nitida*.

Despite not much being in flower in most gardens, our specimen table still had some interesting plants.

Mandy started us off with *Lambertia orbifolia* and *L. ericifolia*, both with orange flowers and flowering throughout the summer. Flowers only last one day though. *Eucalyptus formanii* was unusual, having very fine leaves and many feathery flowers. It will grow to 8 – 10m though Mandy chops it down every few years (it is a mallee). It takes one year to form the flower buds but then flowers again about 2 – 3 years after cutting. Bees and wasps love it. The blue of *Trachymene coerulea* attracted a lot of attention. It is an annual but seeds readily. Mandy's lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) is in full flower as is *Acacia sertiformis*. This last is 2m high with golden flowers which appear for most of the year. It is related to *Acacia uncinata* which is one of a group of seven plants with similar leaves and habit.

Marj showed *Alyogyne hakeifolia* which, although untidy for most of the year, is now flowering beautifully. *Calocephalus lacteus* is an interesting ground cover. It can grow with its roots fully submerged, but Marj has it in a narrow bed with sandy soil and which is only watered spasmodically. Whether it will survive without the rains of La Nina has to be seen. She also brought in some seeds of *Xerochrysum bracteatum* (the annual everlasting daisy) and reminded people growing it at home how to collect the seed.

John also had a *Lambertia* – *L. uniflora* - from WA. He noted that most *lambertias* flower in groups of 4 or 7 but this one has its flowers in ones. Also orange and also in summer. *Grevillea globosa*, from WA, has attractive spherical flowers but these turn black as they age, so are not suitable for floral decoration. His plant is grafted. *Olearia passerinoides* has fine foliage, strikes readily from cuttings and has white flowers – the whole plant is quite dainty-looking. *Eucryphia wilkii* of the leatherwood family has quite large white flowers, is endangered in the wild, but proving to be quite hardy in John's garden. Finally, *Rubus probus*, or Atherton raspberry grows well in Melbourne but don't let it escape! as it can be quite rampant. The fruit is sweet (as those who checked it out can attest) but there are thorns.

Pick of the Bunch - February 2023

Trachymene coerulea ssp. *coerulea* Graham Blue Lace-flower, Rottnest Island Daisy

Specimen grown by Amanda Loudon

Trachymene coerulea ssp. *coerulea* is an erect annual herb growing up to one metre high by up to 80cm wide. It is widespread throughout the Southwest of western Australia from Dongara to Augusta growing on coastal limestone and dunes extending inland into forest and woodland areas and also to off-shore islands particularly Rottnest Island where it is locally abundant and as such has acquired the common name, Rottnest Island daisy.



It produces a conspicuous display of pale to deep blue flower heads, each made up of many small flowers. Each plant can have twenty or more flower heads. Flowering is from October to February.

In cultivation it grows well in most well drained soils. A full or part sun aspect is preferred. Young plants require adequate moisture to achieve good growth for flowering. After flowering seed may be collected and scattered throughout the garden for next years display. It can be grown in containers as well as in the garden. Heavy frosts will damage the plants.

Trachymene coerulea ssp. *leucopetala* is a white flowering form of similar habit and cultivation requirements it is, however, not as commonly distributed, being limited to the Geraldton Sandplains and Central West Coast regions.

6.

Trachymene is a member of the **Araliaceae** family. A family of c.1150 species in c.80 genera with c.160 species occurring in Australia. It includes such genera as *Hydrocotyle* and *Polyscias*.

The genus *Trachymene* consists of c.55 species from Australia, Melanesia, New Caledonia and Fiji with c.46 species in Australia (38 endemic).

The name *Trachymene* is derived from the Greek, *tracheas*; rough and *mene*; moon. The reference is obscure. The specific name, *coerulea*, is from the Latin, meaning deep sky blue, a reference to the flower colour.

EVENTS DIARY

March 7th Speaker: Geoff Lay – “Wilson’s Promontory”

April 4th “The Tree Project”

May John Thompson

June Silo Art, Part 2

August AGM and members’ slides

September Speaker: Chris Larkin – “Hakeas”

APS Victoria

March 25, 26 Cranbourne Friends Autumn plant sale 10 – 4

March 29 to April 2 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

April 1 APS Geelong plant sale. Wirrawilla, lovely Banks, 8:30 – 4:00

April 22 APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, Eltham 10 – 4

April 29 APS Mornington Peninsula Plant Sale, The Briars, Mt. Martha 10 - 3

September 23,24 COMM hosted by APS Grampians. Week long activities followed by Pomonal Native Flower Show on Sept 30 and Oct 1, Pomonal Hall.

PHOTO GALLERY

Corymbia ficifolia planted by Norm in 1981.



7.

From Gillian's wanderings:

1. *Brachychiton bidwillii* – Gillian's garden, first flowering



2. *Corymbia ficifolia* in Ruth's garden



3. *Banksia marginata* from Monash University, Clayton campus



4. *Swainsona formosa* (Sturt's Desert pea) – nursery, Cranbourne



8.

PROMOTIONS



Australian Native

Plant Sale



Saturday 29th April 2023

10am to 3.30pm

The Briars Nepean Hwy Mt Martha

Professional advice available from the growers

**FREE
ENTRY**

*Free talks on
Pruning & maintenance
Propagating plants*

*Book
Sales
.....
Kids
Corner*

Australian Plants Society Mornington Peninsula
For further details 0428 284 974
