



Australian Plants Society (Wangaratta Inc)

March 2021 Newsletter

Visit the APS Vic website at <https://apsvic.org.au/>

Facebook Groups site: **Australian Plants Society Wangaratta Inc.**

Next Meetings:

7pm Thursday 25th March.

Guest speaker: Chris Finlay, on native grasslands (See page 5).

7pm Thursday 22 April.

Guest speaker: Philip Vaughan of Vaughan's Native Plant Nursery. Philip is bringing plants to sell.

Event: Off-grid Living Festival—Going off Grid - **10th and 11th April**, Eldorado. We will be running a plant/information/publicity stall. We are looking for volunteers to man the stall for perhaps an hour or so each or to help to set up or pack up. So at the next meeting Therese Graham will put together a list of volunteers to be given to the festival organising committee so that registration of helpers can be completed as a group.

NOTE: This event is to be held under CovidSafe conditions. This means that numbers are limited and you will need to REGISTER IN ADVANCE to attend. It is not possible to decide on the day ("walk-ups").

Tickets available on line only (none at the gate), numbers limited, selling fast!

There are fantastic workshops and demonstrations being held over this weekend. For further information, go to www.offgridlivingfestival.com.au

Outings:

Sunday 28 March: The outing to Running Creek Castle has been cancelled. At our meeting on 25th March we will ask members for suggestions. It doesn't need to be an established garden full of flowers. For example, works in progress are great to learn from and different soil types, microclimates, orientation to the sun, etc. are all relevant. No-one should be worried about weeds, we can see past them.

Sunday 2 May: McKinnon garden, Eurobin, and Buffalo Creek Nursery.

Beyond 2021 Members are encouraged to attend these very enjoyable and informative events.

Sunday 11th – Friday 16th September 2022

ANPSA Conference, hosted by APS NSW at Kiama. (NOTE: Deferred from 2021 due to CoVid19 restrictons).

Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th October 2022

14th FJC Rogers Seminar on "Fabulous Peas", hosted by APS Maroondah at Mt Evelyn.



Xanthorrhoea woodland

President's Annual Report for 2019/2020

The past year has been most unusual in that we were not able to meet from March 2020 onwards due to Covid19 restrictions and lockdowns. Our last meeting in 2020 was in February. Therefore this annual report details our activities from Aug 2019 to March 2020.

Our monthly meetings in 2019 hosted the following guest-speakers:

August : Miriam Ford presented an overview of the forthcoming FJCRogers 2020 Seminar on the Lamiaceae family. (The Seminar to be held in Eltham in Oct.2020 was postponed due to Covid19.)

September: We had our annual spring spectacular display table with Jan Hall as the presenter.

October: Bill Aitchison and Sue Guymer presented the topic Acacias.

November: Robyn and Les McLean presented a magnificent plant photo display of their travels around Australia.

December: We had a well-attended Christmas Party at Michael and Carol O'Sullivan's in Tarrawingie.

2020

February 2020: Jan Hall presented an overview of the National ANPSA Conference in Perth she had attended the previous year.

Outings and field trips

In August 2019, ecologist Ian Davidson took us to Mullinmar Billabong which is on land owned by Galen College adjoining the Ovens River. In September Michael O'Sullivan led us around the Everton Nature Reserve. In October we visited Barbara Buchanan's garden in Benalla. Our last outing in 2020 before the lockdown was a visit to Joan and Arthur Meyers' retirement village in Beechworth.

Significant and well-attended were the two propagating events at Park Lane Nursery in Nov. 2019 and Feb. 2020.

Our membership stood at 61 in February 2020.

Neutrog Bush Tucker offered a decent discount on a large order of native plant fertilizer. Our group ordered 50 bags (20kg each) again, as we had done in 2018, which were all sold to our members. A thank you to Alan Gibb for storage on his farm and to Geoff Barrow for assisting.

At State level, we have been represented by Helen van Riet as our branch rep and Enquiries Officer, by Linda Huzzey as Lone Member Officer, and by Barbara Buchanan as Research Officer.

Our home base continued to be Park Lane Nursery Meeting Room. We are indebted to Maria Wadley and staff for their hospitality in allowing us to use the facility for our meetings and propagating days. (Due to Covid19 restrictions we have had to leave Park Lane nursery and are now meeting at Masonic Lodge Hall in Appin Street.)

Finally, thank you to all Committee members for your attendance at Committee meetings (quarterly) and your input to the planning of our programme and to the Supper Roster people who provide us all with that vital cuppa. We thank Jan Hall for her detailed knowledge and presentation of Australian plants at the plant table and we also thank others who helped in some way to make our year such a successful one. A special thank you to our secretary Alison Earp, treasurer Arthur Meyers, and newsletter editor Gillian Anderson, for keeping us informed and up to date.

We look forward to another inspiring year.

John van Riet, President, August 2020

Report of FIRST meeting in 2021

John van Riet

Exactly a year since we last met, our first meeting on 21st February 2021 and the first since the Covid19 lockdowns were lifted, was a delight. Helen Wrigley had generously agreed to provide nibbles as we arrived, so for the first half hour everyone enjoyed her delicious mix of nuts, grapes, small biscuits and tasty hot small sausage rolls, while catching up with each other. A big thank you to Helen!

The other delight was the new surrounding for our meeting, the hall of the Masonic Lodge building in Appin Street (formerly Appin Street Uniting Church). It is smaller than the Park Lane Nursery meeting room, but adequate, and we have the use of the kitchen, toilets, and there is storage space for our equipment.

In welcoming all, president John warmly welcomed Kirsty Traill to her first meeting. She had responded to the notice about our meeting in the Wangaratta Chronicle. Apologies were received from Rosemary Buchanan, Jan Hall, John and Joyce Podubinski, Barb Griffiths, Joanne Diver, Mike Burston, Glenda and Bernie Datson, Judy Homes, Joy and Jim Park, Neil Blair, Paul Derezyckj and Linda Huzzey.

We conducted the postponed AGM from last August next, re-electing all those in office for another year, John van Riet as president, Alison Earp as secretary, Arthur Meyers as treasurer, and as committee members Joan Cochrane, Helen Wrigley, Jenny Davidson, Gillian Anderson, Joanne Diver, Alan Gibb, Therese Graham, Michael O'Sullivan and Helen van Riet. Glenda Datson joined the Committee to become Newsletter Editor. Gillian Anderson became Membership Officer, taking over from Linda Huzzey who had resigned. Joan Cochrane agreed to be Supper Roster manager. Helen van Riet continues being our representative to APS (Vic) Management Committee meetings. Therese Graham agreed to become the plant specimen table overseer, replacing Jan Hall who is ailing. We all hope for Jan's recovery and wish her well.

The annual report was presented by the President (see elsewhere in this newsletter), as was the Treasurer's report and our APS (Vic) rep's report.

In our notice for this meeting we had asked members to be prepared to bring some news about their garden and there was an enthusiastic response by eleven members. Janice Jones was first off the mark and showed us a magnificent sculptural arrangement in a vase, of dried Xanthorrhoea macronema flower stalks. In her Wangaratta garden, the plant had first flowered after 3-4 years, then every year. Richard Jerome told us of the many millipedes and ear wigs he had noticed around his home near Chiltern N.P. Jenny Davidson shared the story of a new garden bed with a large pond, established on their property near Rutherglen in 2006. There had been highs and lows with some plants doing well, others not so. An important lesson was that imported soils need to be tested to ensure their reliability. Michael O'Sullivan had noted unusual seasons over the last year allowing several growth periods. The January rainfall this year was too much for some of his plants, as he lost several Correa pulchellas. His skinks were decimated by cats. We are all needing to adapt to climate change and Malcolm McKinnon noted how climate change effected his Waratahs with a shorter growing season yet, because of a mild winter, they had been able to pick some 4500 heads. Helen van Riet told the fascinating story of the native fern called 'Azolla', covering their garden pond. This plant played a key role, apparently, in a climate change event some 50 million years ago. In China it is used as a fertilizer and it is also very nutritious. Peter Dewez on his property in the Warbys had quietly observed how dragon lizards caught insects sitting on his flowering Baeckea virgata. He had also noted how amazing the native orchids were last late winter and spring. Helen Wrigley on her property on Colson Drive, Wangaratta South, had noted lots of insects on her budding Baeckea in the heat of summer, which are now flowering. Alan Gibb told the story of an exploratory trip with the State botanist Neville Walsh into the high country near Dinner Plain, looking for an Acacia of which a specimen from the 1980s existed in the herbarium (now known as Acacia urenei). On their way in to the suspected spot they didn't see any, but on their way back they saw and noted a group of 20 plants that had come up off the original tree, burned down in the 2006 bushfire. Deer had damaged them somewhat. A later visit was able to extract seeds from a few of the new plants. Gillian Anderson told the story of some heavy pruning on a Grevillea peaches & cream and a Callistemon in their garden in Hamilton Park and their great response in flowering after a few months. Barbara Buchanan concurred with Helen Wrigley and Peter Dewez about the prolific flowering of her Baeckea virgata dwarf with fresh green leaves and brilliant white flowers. To all those storytellers many thanks for your insightful observations!

General Business

- It was agreed that we purchase another lot of 50 bags of Bush Tucker. All those wanting one or more bags were asked to notify the treasurer.
- The Committee asked how many would be interested in an afternoon meeting. Not enough interest was shown to support this.
- Propagating days: Sunday 28 Feb. at van Riet's, 475 Shanley Street, from 10am onwards.
- The pre-meeting dinners at Martini's will no longer be happening as our meetings now start at 7pm. The earlier meeting time will allow members to leave for home earlier.
- Display table: It was agreed that Therese Graham would organise this as Jan Hall is no longer available. Members are asked to talk briefly on one plant they bring.
- Supper Roster: Joan Cochrane is to manage it. Please volunteer to be on it.

The meeting finished at 9.30pm.

Propagating day

Carole O'Sullivan

On Sunday the 1st March, a social working Bee was held at John & Helen Van Riet's, another propagating exercise to raise funds during the year, using attendees brains and plant matter.

This was a perfect setting in their large garden under shade trees, with tables, chairs, umbrellas, potting mix and small pots all provided by our hosts.



Plenty of propagating material



Helen demonstrating the home made apparatus used to make smoked water to increase the germination percentage of seeds of those species which have evolved with fire



Next Meeting's Guest Speaker

Director of Flora Victoria, Chris Findlay has a passion for re-creating inspiring indigenous landscapes and is an advocate for grassland restoration.

Chris works with a dedicated team direct-seeding grassland projects in urban areas for developers and municipalities as well as the odd art installation now and then.

Chris will be speaking about native grasslands, his experience, his business and the future of native grasslands at the Wangaratta APS meeting on Thursday, 25th of March.

Spyridium phlebophyllum Dusty Miller (0.3-0.7m x 0.3-1m)



Some of you may have selected the cutting material of this plant at our recent propagating day.

This is a spectacular looking plant in flower, with eye-catching, large, showy, white bracts.

Spyridium is a genus of plants in the family Rhamnaceae. It includes about 30 species found in southern Australia. *S. phlebophyllum* inhabits mainly rocky soils in the Eastern and Flinders Ranges Districts of South Australia. Suited to temperate and semi-arid regions, plants require freely draining acidic soils and they adapt to sunny or semi-shaded sites. Not usually very compact, but tip-pruning from an early stage can promote more branching. They tolerate moderate frosts and can be propagated from cuttings of barely firm young growth.

It flowers for most of the year.



Swainsona formosa –
Sturt's Desert Pea

If you happened to wander in Helen and John's garden during the propagation day you may have discovered the clumps of this plant in a stunning array. Lots of ooohs and aahs were heard emanating from the patch.

Get to know your Committee

We have decided to run a segment each newsletter on one of our committee which tells a bit about their life and how they came to be attracted to Australian plants. This newsletter portrays Helen Wrigley's involvement.

"Hi! Helen Wrigley here. I began gardening whilst living with my parents, growing herbs in the vege garden at our house in Melbourne. I studied agriculture at La Trobe university. Having worked on many farms during the holidays and being a keen horse owner I was destined to live in the country. Fortunately I met my late husband Roger who worked at Dookie College and was a keen bushwalker and skier.

We lived on the large campus near Dookie. As much as possible we got out in the bush in the land rover and our 3 children have grown up with a love of the bush. We moved to our own house in Benalla not long before the flood of 1993. Our youngest, Bronwyn was still crawling and we had 6 inches of water through the house. Gardening was limited as the block was fairly small, but we joined Broken Creek Field Naturalists and had many bush outings. I learned a lot about our local native plants from these outings.

We moved to our 5 acre block between the Warby Ranges and Wangaratta over 20 years ago and I immediately had a large garden with a lot of native plants and some exotics around the house. This is when I became interested in growing native plants and I think I must have joined our group about twenty years ago. It has been invaluable in expanding my knowledge. In the early years, which were very dry, I struggled to keep the garden alive. We only had town water and limited time and money with a young family.

The soil here is a very uninspiring clay. There is a slight fall towards Wangaratta and the view towards the low hills of the Warbies is lovely especially at sunset. The garden was planted about 40 years ago with a lot of gum trees which form the backbone of the garden which spreads over 2 acres with a lot of open space. I love open space so I am not tempted to fill it up with too many plants which is just as well because it is very hard to keep the water up to them. I love the garden because, with so many tall trees, it becomes part of the larger landscape and the boundaries are blurred.

Currently I am working on maintaining and expanding the understorey, largely for the birds, but also for privacy and my own enjoyment. I have a lot of melaleucas, bottle



brushes and wattles and I am trying to grow more peas. I encourage the native grasses and let them go to seed.

I get very angry when I see water being used wastefully. Too much water is being taken from the rivers and being prevented from getting into the rivers. Treated water is spayed around in Wangaratta on 40 degree days and groundwater bores should just be banned. It seems people do not understand evaporation. I now have a large water tank and in a normal year, if there is such a thing, I should be able to water the garden solely from this. The only way I can achieve this is by using bubble drippers and mulch. I have never watered grass but I may now be able to water a very small area outside the back door.

My favourite plants are wattles and bottlebrushes, many of which are capable of responding to summer rain with a burst of flowers, which is one of the characteristics of native plants which is very underrated. You don't know how good they are until you grow them! I try to grow compact plants and I get very excited about plants that grow wider than high, but to keep natives looking good and living a long time usually means a lot of pruning. Hit the wattles as soon as possible after flowering because they bud up very early.

Flowering in March in my garden is a *Callistemon sieberi* which I keep pruned because it is close to the house. How gorgeous is this flower? I have found a grey leaved form which I will plant soon.



The *Callistemon citrinus*, which is one of the old stalwarts, also loved the rain 3 weeks ago.



Can anyone identify this wattle which hardly ever stops flowering? It is upright and 3 metres tall.

Our APS group has been an important part of my life for the past twenty years and what I have learnt from members and publications has been invaluable. The people in our group and the field naturalists are the nicest people I know."

Editor's Note: Thank you Helen for your beaut article. Can I have another volunteer from the Committee for an article for the next newsletter please?

Newsletter Contributions

Just a reminder to please keep the contributions coming for the newsletter. Content should be sent to Glenda Datson at gdatson@bigpond.net.au, with photos sent separately in the highest resolution (at least around 1MB) so that they will reproduce clearly.

The deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday 9th April**.

Your Committee:

President : John van Riet Ph: 5725 7207 email: helenvanriet@bigpond.com

Secretary: Alison Earp Ph: 5729 7518 email: kalisetptyltd@gmail.com

Treasurer: Arthur Meyers Ph: 5728 1654 email: pianoman@netc.net.au

Membership Officer: Gillian Anderson Ph: 5766 2397 email: pdga280@bigpond.com

Newsletter: Glenda Datson Ph: (02) 6020 8104 email: gdatson@bigpond.net.au

APS Vic Representative: Helen van Riet Ph: 5725 7207

Non Official Roles:

Joan Cochrane, *Supper roster*, Ph: 5728 1654 Alan Gibb Ph: 5727 3362

Joanne Diver Ph: 0412 985501

Jenny Davidson Ph: (02) 6032 8442

Michael O'Sullivan Ph: 5725 1784

Helen Wrigley Ph: 5722 2824

APS Victoria Events

13th – 14th March. APS Warrnambool hosting APS Victoria

June. APS Shepparton

Plant Sales. Check your Quarterly Growing Australian for details of various group sales events.

Beyond 2021

ANPSA Conference

Sunday 11th-Friday 16th September 2022, hosted by APS NSW at Kiama. (*NOTE: Deferred from 2021 due to CoVid19 restrictons*)

14th FJC Rogers Seminar "Fabulous Peas"

Saturday 15th-Sunday 16th October 2022, hosted by APS Maroondah at Mt Evelyn



Picture making. Eremophilas: Left - *E. hygrophana*, Top - *E. nivea*, Middle - *E. delisseri*, Right - *E. 'Beryl's Gem'*, with *Rhodanthe chlorocephala rosea*