

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER- NOVEMBER 2020

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Website: <https://apsvic.org.au/fjc-rogers-seminar-2020/>



Logo Image: *Prostanthera galbraithiae* Tamara Leitch

Welcome to Country -

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and learn, the Wurindjeri Woi Wurrung people, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present & future.

In this age there is need for relaxation from the ever increasing strain of work and therefore good reason to select and pursue some hobby. The study of plants can never lose its appeal to man because it is one of those basic instincts he has inherited from his ancestors who were concerned with the suitability of plants for food, medicine, clothing or shelter.

FJC Rogers, 1986 (Preface -A Field Guide to Victorian Wattles)

I thought this quote very apt for our time, for this final FJC Rogers Seminar newsletter for 2020 and to accompany the Welcome to Country wherein such a wealth of knowledge resides of our native plants. Gardening has been

our soul food during COVID and has played a key role in ameliorating the extra stressors the pandemic has brought into our lives. For Melburnians, of which I am one, this has been intensified and prolonged with Stage 4 restrictions coming on top of our Stage 3. We now seem to be emerging, slowly but surely into a more connected & optimistic existence. Zoom has been great for many of us as a means of connecting during this time. Your 13th FJC Rogers Committee has been adjusting and adapting its approach for over 6 months now. We have a series of online webinars throughout October and you will find the abstracts of our speakers' presentations here for your information. Being a Minty Tragic from wayback I am really looking forward to being your host for the webinars and to learning more about this wonderful group of plants. **Miriam Ford**

THE OCTOBER WEBINAR SERIES - Abstracts from our Speakers

1. October 8. Intimate relationships revealed! What we have learned from kinships of quirky Australian mints
Trevor Wilson.

The genus *Prostanthera* is found only in Australia. A member of the mint family (Lamiaceae), *Prostanthera* is related to familiar plants such as *Mentha* and *Westringia*. Lamiaceae comprise hundreds of species adapted to remarkably different habitats in Australia, from rainforests to desert dunes. Variation in form (e.g. leaf shape or hairiness of the stem) for the members of this family suits the diversity of environmental extremes in Australia, but it also challenges our classification and understanding of relationships. For classifying Australian mints, flower characteristics have been preferentially used since they can be easily compared and provide a neat and tidy organisation of genus and species. But the shape and form of an organism is a product of so much more than what can be immediately observed, and concealed selective forces may also leave their trace on plant structure. In this presentation I discuss the diversity of the



Prostanthera lasianthos. Miriam Ford

mint family in Australia and provide a reinterpretation of relationships with the help of molecular data. As a result, pitfalls in scientific classification and the fascinating trends associated with Australia's flora are revealed.

2. October 8. Pollinators and pollen flow in Prostanthera
Michael Whitehead and Trevor Wilson

One of the things that attracts people most to Australia's mint-bushes are the masses of flowers they put on every season. But *Prostanthera* haven't evolved flowers for our benefit. Flowers are there for reproduction, which they achieve by persuading animal pollinators to deposit and export pollen. The floral diversity of *Prostanthera* can be divided into three broad classes of floral forms, each apparently specializing on a particular group of pollinators. For example, there are species which are adapted for pollination by birds, and others suited to native bees. In this presentation, I will describe what we know about *Prostanthera*'s pollinating animals, as well as how we can use *Prostanthera* to understand Australian plant-pollinator interactions more generally.

3. October 15. Systematic study of Prostanthera is resolving mayhem in the mint bushes, with important consequences for conservation and cultivation

Ian R.H. Telford & Jeremy J. Bruhl

Plant taxonomy and systematics aim to describe plant diversity (name the species) and resolve evolutionary relationships (phylogeny), which is summarised in classifications. Plant names, classifications and identification tools underpin agriculture, horticulture, natural pharmacology, and diverse research (biochemistry, ecology, plant genetics, plant physiology, etc.). Correct application of names to species is essential. We present case studies of confusion and misapplication of names including overlooked species in *Prostanthera lasianthos*, *P. ovalifolia* and *P. rotundifolia*. Each represents a species complex or even an assemblage of disparate entities that have or will prove to be many distinct species. Description of new species is not a trivial pursuit. Clear, robust, corroborated evidence is needed. We present an example involving the threatened species, *P. cineolifera*. Similar problems of unresolved assemblages and the misapplication of names occurs widely across plant genera and we draw attention to examples. Vouchers (plant specimens lodged with a recognised herbarium) with sound location data are critical to underpinning sound taxonomic study. We outline what constitutes an ideal collection, and suggest what might be a minimal but useful collection that plant enthusiasts and professional horticulturists should make.

4. October 22. Propagation and Cultivation of Prostanthera & Westringia

Maria Hitchcock

Prostanthera and *Westringia* form a large group of favoured garden plants. Come October, *Prostanthera*s colour the garden in many shades from white to pink to mauve to deep purple and they usually put on a spectacular show. *Westringia*s follow in summer with their greyish green foliage and white to mauve flowers which are soon covered by butterflies. Both species are relatively easy to propagate by the home gardener. They are grown from cuttings which are best taken in September and October. The process is fairly simple and Maria will take you through in a step by step process to ensure success.

Prostanthera are now sought after by large companies for their anti-bacterial essential oils which are extracted and sold on to the cosmetics, pharmaceutical, garden chemicals and cleaning products industries. Some *Prostanthera*s have also entered the emerging and fast growing bush food area. There is so much still to learn about the potential of these two genera. Maria hopes to inspire you to grow more of these wonderful plants.

5. October 22. Propagation and Cultivation of the Allied Genera, the Kings Park Experience

Amanda Shade

I will begin with a brief overview of Kings Park to provide a bit of context, then explain the nursery's role in the agency



and how we go about propagating a wide range of Western Australian species. I've chosen some case studies on allied mint bush flora to highlight some of our propagation techniques, and will talk about some of our challenges with not just propagation, but bringing some of these unusual and interesting plants into cultivation outside of their natural range. There will also be some strong conservation messages (unfortunately quite a few species in some of these genera are threatened flora)

GARDEN VISITS: November 28 & 29

Our weekend of Garden Visits accompanied with plant sales has been pushed back to late November 28 & 29 when we expect to be able to have suitable numbers in private gardens. please wear a name tag to the garden visit. Remember garden visits will be self-catering. BYO EVERYTHING. Mask, sanitizer, snacks, lunch, drinks. We will allow extra time between gardens to find a cafe for morning/ afternoon tea and lunch. Eltham has numerous cafes, and outdoor sitting areas and parks. Maps and garden visit schedule for each person will be emailed once we have all registrations in and know the number restrictions (hopefully 21-22nd November). The Garden visit registration form is attached here. Due date is 8th November. Four of our five gardens (one has been withdrawn) were described in our previous news. See page 4 for the 5th and final garden - the Cooper Garden, Mill Park.

PLANT SALES: November 14 onwards

The plant sale list will go up online 2 weeks prior to the Garden Visit weekend so that we can take and fill orders. There are some 120 species of *Prostanthera* & Allied Genera available. Phil Vaughan will be providing a number of species of grafted plants which include *Prostanthera*, *Hemiandra*, *Hemigenia* and a few others. The completed orders will be available for pickup at the Barfield Garden over the weekend. They will be paid for by contactless credit card facilities onsite.

Those who won't be at the garden visits to collect, will be able to collect plants on the weekend following - 5th-6th December from Eltham or by arrangement. Details will be on the online Plant Sales form, and again Credit/Debit card only.

RAFFLE:

There are a number of great raffle prizes. We thank our various sponsors (see below) for their generosity. These will be on display with tickets for sale at the Barfield Garden. The prizes will be drawn on Sunday afternoon. If pickup is not possible then delivery will be arranged. See page 4 for an interesting story regarding the background behind some of the raffle items.



Prostanthera aspathoides, Lake Marmal form. Image: MF

Eltham Village Centre Management
The Yarra Store theyarrastore.com.au
Shaws Road Vineyard and Winery shawsroad.com.au
Mary Lou Pittard, Australian Artist www.pittards.com.au
Bulleen Art & Garden www.baag.com.au/



FRED ROGERS, MY PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER:

Elizabeth Doig

Ed: Elizabeth was going to present this piece in our introduction to the seminar series on the Saturday morning.

When Lyhn first approached me, after having found out my connection with Fred Rogers, to ask me if I would be happy to give this talk, I was initially hesitant, as I felt that there must be many people more significantly connected to this man than my experience from 50-odd years ago. But as I thought about it more, and the influence that this particular individual had on my life, I realised that there are not many opportunities that we have in life to acknowledge debts and express gratitude to those who shaped us, and I would like to take this opportunity to do just that tonight/today.

Fred Rogers (or Mr. Rogers as I called him), was my fifth grade teacher at Ringwood State School in 1967. Mr. Rogers initiated the Nature Club, a small but enthusiastic band of nature devotees who met, I think it was weekly, to stroll down Greenwood Avenue to Jubilee Park, at that time a small patch of remnant bushland some five minutes' walk from the school. We would head down during lunchtime, and spend a delightful hour investigating the treasures of the bush. Things were fairly casual in Ringwood in the 1960s. I doubt whether our parents ever had to sign permission slips for us to leave the school grounds. While there, we were taught to observe carefully, to make comparisons, to speculate about causes (what do you think made the skeleton leaf this way?) and above all to respect the bush. We were trained to watch where we were treading in order not to squash anything precious. We could pick a sprig of wattle or gum, but never the wildflowers. Ringwood at that time was a hotspot for terrestrial orchids, and Jubilee Park had its share of greenhood orchids, spider orchids, bearded orchids and Diuris species such as leopard orchids and donkeys' ears, as well as abundant chocolate lilies, bulbine

lilies, vanilla lilies, Wahlenbergia, early nancies, everlasting daisies, rice flowers and many more.

Mr. Rogers was a gentle, patient teacher and a passionate advocate of bushland vegetation. Most of the details of those walks have escaped me, but I can clearly remember him hitching up his trousers and squatting down to point out to us the mismatched leaf ends of a messmate stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*). We didn't know much at the time about his wider involvement in the Australian plant-growing community, although we all took vicarious pride in the fact that he was a published author of a slim tome on acacias, a copy of which adorned the bedroom bookshelf of my childhood home for many years. And his family home, just around the corner from mine, was instantly recognisable (and noticeably different from the camellia, magnolia and deciduous tree studded gardens around it) by its bushy mass of native plants and shrubs. It had no lawn! And you could hardly see the house from the street, so densely planted was the garden.

A highlight of my primary school years was a school trip in Grade 6 to Deniliquin. This was organised by Mr. Rogers for our Nature Club, and any other students who wished to go. At that point Mr. Rogers was no longer my class teacher, but the lunchtime Nature Club rambles still continued. I can't remember whether we got the train from Ringwood to Spencer Street, or whether a bus was organised, but the trip on the country train (an old red rattler) I can still vividly recall. At that time Deniliquin, although in NSW, was part of the VR

network, so we didn't have to change trains at the border. We were billeted out with local families, and I was terribly homesick that first night; in fact sobbed myself to sleep. But the following day more than made up for it. It had been a wet spring, and the paddocks were ablaze with yellow and white paper daisies, and purple Swainsonia. It was my first experience of semi-arid Riverina country and I was hooked. Mr. Rogers gave us some roneoed pages of questions to fill out about the vegetation we were seeing, and I immersed myself in these unfamiliar ecosystems of river red gums in the watercourses, black box a little higher, and Callitris and buloke on the dry dunes. We were allowed to pick samples of the flowers and shrubs for our projects, and I later stuck these with sticky-tape into my project book, along with careful annotations about their names, habits and locations. The purple Swanson pea flowers soon turned brown, but the paper daisies, grasses and saltbush retained their colour long afterwards. For years afterwards I just had to open that project book and smell those dried paper daisies to be transported back to those magical inland paddocks awash with colour. I ended up winning equal first prize for my project, announced at assembly one morning, although the glory was a little dimmed when we found out we two prize-winners were the only ones who had actually completed the project.

I consider myself to have been extremely fortunate to have been a student of Fred Rogers. He instilled in me a love of the environment that has lasted to this day. Such teachers are rare, but needed

now more than ever, in a world where an affinity with the natural world is vital to the future of our planet. If, in the words of Gerrard Winstanley, we agree that the *state of the earth and the state of humanity are bound together, in service to each other*, we first need to get to know, love and respect this beautiful planet of ours. Thank you, Fred, for teaching me to do this.



School Photo from Elizabeth - Grade 5 Ringwood State School 1967 with Mr. Rogers. Elizabeth is third from the left in the second row.

THE GREAT TREE PROJECT Lyhn Barfield

Allwood House in Hurstbridge has been home to a group of women who over the past two years have been regularly meeting to craft by eco-dyeing a life size *Eucalyptus regnans* tree. We are part of a larger campaign to raise awareness of the ongoing loss of habitat through logging by Vic Forests in the Central Highland forests. This logging is still taking out old growth trees and alarmingly encroaching on habitat for many species but in particular threatening Leadbeaters Possum and the Greater Glider.

During lockdown we have been working on crafting many items which will be up for sale shortly online. The fundraising will support activists in the forests and multiple court actions against the logging which have recently seen some major wins.

We have made some marvelous tote bags, hot water bottle covers, vests, cushion covers and the cutest little critters, all eco dyed using rescued woolen blankets. Hopefully, some of these could be on sale at my Open Garden for the Fred Rogers Seminar, or at least we will have them displayed.

Eco-dyeing for those who have not attempted it is enormously satisfying and fun. The process we generally use is to take our piece of material and soak it in an iron mordant which helps the uptake of colour. I prefer to use Alum Sulphate. Suitable leaves we have found that provide good colouring are from Red Box, Ironbark, Angophora, Grevillea robusta, Eucalyptus cinerea and Allocasuarina trees to name a few. Go to the facebook page below to check it out. There will be a display of items at the Barfield garden over the weekend.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/The-Great-Tree-Project-744793575710019/>

THE COOPER GARDEN Carmen Cooper

This garden has been evolving for over forty years and has given the owners years of pleasure and frustration (weeds and failed plants). It is an average old suburban block with the garden spread out across the front with a smaller plot out the back.

The front consists of raised garden beds filled with Acacia, Banksia, Bossiaea, Brachyscome multifida, Isotoma axillaris, Chrysocephalum apiculatum, and other indigenous plants, Cassinia, Chamelaucium, Chorizema, Correa, Darwinia, Diploleana, Eremophila, Eucalyptus macrocarpa and others, ferns, Grevillea, Hakea, Homoranthus, Kunzea, Leionema, Leptospermum, Myoporum bateae, Persoonia, Pimelea, Verticordia and many others.

Narrow trails wind between the garden beds with ground covering plants and lower shrubs helping to keep the roots cool. A pond surrounded by ferns and Viola hederacea nestles under the car port and various hanging baskets are dotted along under the verandah which ends in a small fernery with tree ferns.

As you come through the gate to the back there is another pond with Prostanthera variegata, Eremophila



Various leaves and twigs used for eco-dyeing on fabric, Fabric rolled up and ready to dye, a finished piece of fabric with embroidery. Images Gordon Barfield.

glabra and Thryptomene saxicola around three sides with a Pandorea pandorana, Correa eburnea and Grevillea nivea providing a backdrop. Opposite the pond, on the other side of the path is a collection of low ground covers including Scaevola aemula, more Brachyscome and other indigenous plants along with Epacris impressa, Glycine tabacina. Alyogyne huegelii and a Westringia run along the fence. Further along the path is a shaded place with various Prostanthera under a few Callistemon 'Kings Park Special'. The path leads around past Philotheca myoporoides, more Correa, Epacris and Eremophila. Further along a rock garden has been taken over by a Dendrobium speciosum orchid. One path will take you to a shade house, the other to more hanging baskets, pot plants and two more garden beds.



A view of the back garden with an Acacia in the foreground and Grevillea nivea at the back.

Your 13th FJC Rogers 2020 Seminar Committee:



Jill Lulham: Jill has always had an interest in plants, having lived in Brisbane in her teenage years on her parents' small farm, of which half was natural bush. After moving to Canberra for study and work, she was introduced to a SGAP Canberra meeting in the late 1970's by a work colleague. Enthused by having access to so many native plants, she enjoyed creating a native garden there when first married.

On moving to WA with her husband Neil for 2 years in the 1980s, she joined the local group of the

Wildflower Society of WA, where she enjoyed some local walks in the bush around Lesmurdie and Kalamunda.

In 1995 on moving from Canberra to Melbourne, she was pleased to find the local SGAP Yarra Yarra Group meeting in her own suburb of Eltham. It wasn't long before she was co-opted onto the committee. She was the Group's Leader from 2009 to 2012, and for many years produced the newsletter. She also helps organise the Expo's, plant sales, and advertising. In 2011 she established our Group's new Facebook page, our website in 2015, and also contributes to the APS Vic Facebook page. Apart from enjoying growing and learning about our native flora, she enjoys travelling to see the wonderful country gardens on APS Vic COM weekends, and biennial FJC Rogers Seminars. This year has been a great year for travel and inspiration too – vicariously through the great native plant pages on the web!

Miriam Ford: Miriam was born and raised in country Queensland, along with 4 other siblings who remain there. She went to University in the 70s in Brisbane, the St Lucia campus, where she did a Bachelor of Science followed by a Ph.D in Cellular Biology. She then, as you do, went overseas and spent 3.5 years as a postdoctoral fellow in London, UK where she added Molecular Biology to her portfolio of research skills. She developed a taste for Europe and things European while there and returned to Melbourne, a research hub at the time, in the early 80s where she has remained. After a further 20 years in research she left, trained as a Primary School Teacher, married her second husband Michael and together they decided to establish a private psychology practice at our home with Michael as psychologist and Miriam as practice manager.



Miriam has always loved gardening and recalls dividing & planting gerberas in the Clermont heat as a small child with her mother. She joined APS Yarra Yarra in 1995, and served on committee for many years. She has led APS YY from 2018 until 2020, developed the APS YY Growers and in 2019 also became an APS Vic VP. Since Jill, she has been the newsletter editor for APS YY and more recently the 13th FJC Rogers Seminar news. Miriam has always enjoyed attending the APS Vic COM meetings & quarterly gatherings of the APS community, where she got to know people in the different district groups many of whom have become close friends.

Since she began attending the FJC Rogers Seminars and the ANPSA biennial conferences her knowledge & enjoyment of our Australian plants and the community of people dedicated to their preservation and cultivation has expanded enormously. It is a deep and abiding passion.

As Chair, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the committee for their hard work over the last 2 years in preparing this seminar, for their dedication, resilience & creativity in the face of the many challenges and especially, the COVID pandemic.

Thank you Sue Guymier for your help with registrations.



Nicky Zanen: Nicky joined the Society for Growing Australian plants when she first settled in Melbourne in the early 1980s in an attempt to learn how to attract birds into her garden, and is still passionate about growing for wildlife.

She has taken various roles on the APS Victorian committee as well as APS Foothills and the national body, ANPSA.

This involvement has enabled her to travel

broadly, reinforcing her love of Country, particularly Victoria. She was a late comer onto the FJC Rogers 2020 committee but has found the planning ride interesting and challenging, and is full of admiration for the work done by the other committee members.



Lyhn Barfield: Lyhn grew up on a dairy farm in Gippsland surrounded by nature with natural bush, creeks, exotic and veggie gardens. She moved to Melbourne when she was 13 and began working life at 17 to become a registered nurse and midwife. After some experience in ICU at the Alfred Lyhn spent a year in the Foothills University Hospital of Calgary, Canada. Following some interesting travels in Europe including

Finland and Russia she lived 100 metres from the Colosseum in Rome for a year and worked in a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit for open heart surgery. Italian language was not required initially but the dictionary was always close at hand.

Back in Melbourne Lyhn worked in research in The Repatriation and Austin Hospitals. Then later she ventured into holistic health care as a naturopath and masseuse. During all this time she regularly did agency work across most Melbourne Hospitals. Combined with her interest in all things crafty, cooking, singing, bird watching, ongoing Italian language and travels with her husband Gordon in the caravan to far flung places, Lyhn has always enjoyed some sort of a garden in all the places she lived but it wasn't until they moved to Research 20 years ago the idea of a native garden appeared on the radar. Her garden was described in the previous FJC 2020 news. Being a member of the Yarra Yarra APS has been an important source of native gardening knowledge and community. Her garden was in the Open Gardens Victoria 3 years ago and Lyhn is enormously proud to share it again for the FJC Rogers 2020 Seminar.



Sandy Birch: Childhood was full of day trips throughout Victoria - always with a railway line and a bush walk or two thrown in.

Leaving at 7am and returning after midnight was the norm. The cry 'Trigger Plant!' is a very early memory and required stopping the car so all could admire the wonder. In 1970, Mum Beryl joined SGAP to learn more about natives so she could revegetate areas

at Puffing Billy (another passion). Sandy became known as the one who had the 'mad' mother but she was the teenager who could roll botanical names off her tongue even if she had no idea what she was talking about! She moved from Melbourne to Bendigo in 1983 and her career in the Police Force also allowed time to enjoy the bush flowers when travelling to and from jobs. Sandy also sings in two choirs. It took until 2011 for Sandy to join APS although her passion for natives was always there. Now Secretary and Newsletter editor for Bendigo she can put a lot of botanical faces to botanical names. She joined the FJC committee as a person who had previous experience in hosting an FJC Rogers Seminar and has now taken a 'back seat' as the committee hones the final details.