



# KUNZEA

the newsletter of the  
Australian Plants Society  
Maroondah Group

*Preservation by Cultivation*



## January 2016

### Why is the Australian Garden Changing?

talk by Angus Stewart

Angus Stewart and A.B. Bishop have a number of reasons why they think Aussie gardens are evolving. They feel it is important to talk about this and put it out there for people to discuss, as we are all contributing to the evolving Australian style and, therefore, to history.

Their new book *The Australian Native Garden* is an authoritative and practical book – written in an approachable and accessible style. The book discusses the challenge of incorporating indigenous plants and cultivars into the Australian garden.

After the meeting there will be an opportunity to buy a signed book. Unfortunately A.B. is unable to be at this meeting because of a prior family engagement.



**Angus** has been involved in many facets of the horticulture of Australian plants as a grower, breeder, marketer within Australia and overseas, writer and broadcaster in radio and television, especially via the ABC's Gardening Australia program.

**A.B.** is also widely experienced in cultivating Australian plants as a resident of the groundbreaking Bend of Islands Co-op east of Melbourne. She is a researcher for the ABC's *Gardening Australia* and is currently a freelance writer, as well as a presenter on the Community Radio 3CR gardening program.

A special copy of their book, signed by Angus, AB, and all Maroondah Group members mentioned in the book, will be raffled at this meeting.



## February 2016

We are very privileged to have as our guest speaker on Friday 19 February one of Melbourne's best known landscape designers, Phillip Johnson. Phillip achieved world recognition with his award winning design at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2013.

His designs typically include some kind of water feature, and he will speak to us about using water in garden designs.



Picture from the Phillip Johnson Landscapes website

The Garden Visit in February will be to Phillip's own garden in the Dandenongs. Because numbers must be strictly limited to a maximum of 30 people, there will need to be prior registration for this event. Those who are particularly keen to visit Phillip's garden must contact the secretary, Brenda Moore (phone 9725 8278), and have your name put on the list. It will be on a 'first come, first served' basis. Once there are 30 people registered, the list will be closed.

Details of how to get there will be supplied later to those attending.

# Rhododendron what?

Is it *Rhododendron lochiaie*, *R. notiale* or *R. viriosum*? Or are they all the same?

by Gwen Elliot

**A** POINT OF DISCUSSION AT OUR NOVEMBER specimen table, was the identification features of the Australian Rhododendron, or Rhododendrons.

*Rhododendron lochiaie* was named by Ferdinand von Mueller in 1887, from a specimen collected on Mt. Bellenden Ker in northern Queensland. Other Rhododendron plants were subsequently found on a small number of other mountain peaks in Qld, and were introduced into cultivation. They were grown by Australian plant enthusiasts and also by members of the Rhododendron Society around the world. It was found that they hybridised fairly readily with other closely-related non-Australian species in the vireya group from south-east Asia and Papua New Guinea and numerous cultivars were developed.

In the 1990s botanist Lyn Craven and Bob Withers were studying *Rhododendron lochiaie*, and found some distinct differences from the species originally described by Mueller.

The flowers of the original type specimen had a curved, pinkish-red corolla tube, with the stamens all at the top, designed to achieve effective bird pollination.



The true *Rhododendron lochiaie* has a curved corolla tube with the stamens all at the top.



Although this was designed to be a stabilising action, it was not supported by the committees responsible for the nomenclature of flowering plants. The name of *R. notiale* was declared to be invalid, and in 2002 the plants widely cultivated, and with the straight floral tube, were given the official name of *Rhododendron viriosum*.



*Rhododendron viriosum* has a straight corolla tube and stamens that continue right around the tube.



Thus, according to an article by Lyn Craven in the *Journal of The Australian Rhododendron Society*, Vol. 43, 2003, "People are going to have to get used to thinking *viriosum* for pre-1996-2002 mention of *lochiae* and having to nut out what is meant by *lochiae* in the post 1996-2002 literature (ie. does it mean *lochiae* or *viriosum*?) There will be no quick fix. Rather than becoming vengeful, we should recall the words 'forgive them, for they know not what they do'."

But the saga does not end here. The most recent edition of 'The Australian Plant Census' now recognises only one Australian species of Rhododendron – ie. *R. lochiaie*, with both *R. notiale* and *R. viriosum* currently regarded simply as synonyms of *R. lochiaie*.

This has undoubtedly been done in an effort to solve the confusion previously caused, but the fact still remains that the majority of the Australian Rhododendron plants in cultivation differ significantly from the original plant of *R. lochiaie* as named by Baron von Mueller.

Being a Botanist is not always easy. Botanical studies will continue, and who knows how the next generation of botanists will decide to treat the Australian Rhododendron species (singular) or species (plural).

Now that this matter has been clarified, you can all make up your own mind!

— photographs by Graeme Nicholls



# Snippets from the Specimen Table

As the various plant specimens are displayed and discussed at our Specimen Tables, interesting and helpful comments are often made by the presenters, or a member, which shed extra light on the species or its genus. Here are a few from last November's meeting, hosted by Gwen Elliot and Trevor Edwards

From Gwen Elliot: the smaller cultivar forms of Kangaroo Paw need more water than the larger species, and are often better suited to pot culture.

From Trevor Edwards: grow tall plants like *Eremophila calorhabdos* in large clumps or groups rather than as single plants. The effect of a swathe of tall colour waving in the breeze is really great.

From Gwen Elliot: *Verticordia plumosa* is the easiest of all the verticordias to grow in Melbourne. It is also the rootstock for most of the grafted Western Australian verticordias.

From Trevor Edwards: Spyridiums like a bit of extra lime. A rare species is *S. coactifolium* (meaning *felted leaves*), which is narrowly distributed east of the Eyre Peninsular, SA. It is easy to grow. *S. halmaturium* is endemic to King Island and has a narrow distribution. Trevor thinks that *S. plebophyllum* is the best of the genus, and the Anglesea form of *S. parvifolium* has huge bracts.

From Gwen Elliot: Australia has the largest endemic collection of blue-flowered plants in the world, including dampiera, wahlenbergia, veronica, halgania, lechenaultia.

From Gwen Elliot: Croweas are great for autumn flowering, but *C. 'Festival'* was flowering in November. In general, the fine leaved forms of *C. exalata* are hardier than broader leaved forms such as *C. saligna*.

From the audience: *Commersonia corylifolia* has been growing for 20 years on the south side of a fence in total shade for 9 months of the year. It has small white 5-petal flowers in spring, followed by fantastic seed pods.

From Gwen Elliot: *Kunzea pulchella* grown from seed will take years to flower, but a cutting taken from a seed-grown plant will flower before its parent plant – very strange! There are a number of beautiful small red kunzeas available, but make sure that they are cutting-grown.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

### Water where it's wanted

Lindy Harris has a huge garden to look after at Karwarra Garden, at Kalorama. Much of it survives and thrives without much extra watering. But those plants which do need supplementary water are watered by a very cunning technique which Lindy has developed.

She started with a metal watering wand which had a spray head on the end and a trigger in the handle. She cut off the spray head, leaving an open metal tube about 40 cm long.

When watering, she turns on the water and thrusts the tube into the soil about 20 cm deep around the dripline of the plant, doing this a number of times around the circumference. This gets the water deep into the soil where the roots are, rather than just wetting the soil surface where it will evaporate quickly and do no good.

Lindy started doing this a year or so ago, concentrating on a number of plants which had been stubbornly refusing to grow. Within a week or two they were all up and away. The improvement was astonishing.

Great tip for a long hot summer.



### Keeping better records

from Elspeth Jacobs

If I were just starting out in the world of Australian plants, I would keep much better records of everything I did. For example, where the seed came from, date of sowing, germination time, date of re-potting, date of planting, fertiliser used etc.

Maybe each plant needs its own label that can have its history added with each new step. It is so frustrating when 'tidying' up pots to find that like species get separated from each other, and then there is the guessing game of which group a plant belongs to.

The same system would apply to cuttings.

Also, each plant in the garden would be listed, and include source, date of planting, time of flowering etc.

There are so many things we think we will remember, but this information can so quickly be lost!

### Westringia or Prostanthera?

The flowers often look much the same. But a simple and reliable way to tell the difference is to look closely at the calyx growing just behind the petals.

Prostantheras have a two-lobed calyx while Westringias have a calyx with five lobes – sharply pointed so that they look a bit like a double-WW. That's how Eleanor Hodges remembers which is which: the WW calyx belongs to WWestringias.

**Many of you will have some great tips or tricks for better gardening. Please send them in so that we can all learn and be better gardeners.**

# Callistemons or Melaleucas?

by Gwen Elliot

HERE WERE A COUPLE OF PLANTS AT OUR November Grand Specimen Table meeting which highlighted for us the challenges we face in regard to plant names. We like to put things neatly into boxes, but nature is not always “black and white”. There are various shades of grey, and this is particularly so with plants.

We had on our tables a branch of *Melaleuca hypericifolia*, which is excellent for illustrating the staminal arrangement of Melaleucas, and the difference between this and the bottlebrush flowers of Callistemons. The illustration below is by Rodger, from the book *Australian Plants Identified* published in 1990.

Callistemons were the brushes with free stamens. Flowers with united or bundled stamens were included in Melaleuca, and those in the other major genus of Calothamnus had a staminal claw, as illustrated.

While this classification has been accepted for many years, it has always posed problems for botanists, and the feeling is now that, while Callistemons do seem to be fairly clearly defined, they should either be included in Melaleuca, or Melaleuca needs to be divided up into a number of genera to cope with the variations that exist within that genus. Thus botanists are often divided into “splitters” and “lumpers”.

You may be familiar with the large 415 page book published in 2013 entitled *Melaleucas* which includes Callistemons as part of the genus Melaleuca, along with some *Metrosideros*, a *Regelia*, and other plants which don't quite fit where they were originally placed. There is still some ongoing discussion regarding the classification of these and other plants in the Myrtaceae family, with no really easy solution to the issue.

For the home gardener, it is very helpful to be aware of the situation, but there's no need to be overly frustrated by the complexities of nature. We are still extremely fortunate to have some lovely plants which we can include in our gardens.



*Melaleuca hypericifolia* – bundled stamens



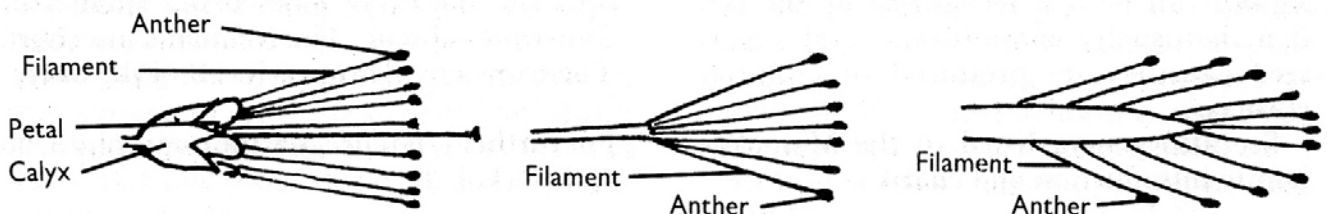
*Calothamnus quadrifidus* – staminal claws

Brian Walters



*Callistemon pallisus* – free stamens

Russell Best via Natureshare



Stamens free (left), stamens united or bundled (centre) and staminal claw (right).



## What does this name mean?

Plant species are sometimes named after a person (occasionally the person who first found or identified it), the place where it was found, or often some distinctive characteristic of the leaf or flower or growth habit.

Often the species name gives a clue to something about the plant itself. Here are few examples.

<i>albida</i>	white	<i>integrifolia</i>	entire, undivided leaves
<i>alpestris</i>	from mountains	<i>lepto-</i>	slender
<i>angustifolia</i>	narrow leaved	<i>longiflora</i>	with long flowers
<i>arenaria</i>	from sandy places	<i>longifolia</i>	with long leaves
<i>argentina</i>	silvery	<i>lutea</i>	yellow
<i>aspera</i>	rough	<i>macrocarpa</i>	large-fruited
<i>aurea</i>	golden	<i>maculata</i>	spotted
<i>axillaris</i>	flowers borne in leaf axils	<i>marginata</i>	bordered
<i>biloba</i>	two-lobed	<i>microphylla</i>	with small leaves
<i>brevifolia</i>	short leaves	<i>mirabilis</i>	wonderful
<i>calycina</i>	distinctive calyx	<i>nitens</i>	shining
<i>chrysantha</i>	golden flowers	<i>notabilis</i>	noteworthy
<i>ciliata</i>	fringed with small hairs	<i>odorata</i>	perfumed
<i>coccinea</i>	red	<i>paludosa</i>	boggy, marshy
<i>cognata</i>	related	<i>pauciflora</i>	with few flowers
<i>confertifolia</i>	crowded leaves	<i>pendula</i>	hanging
<i>coriacea</i>	leathery leaves	<i>pilosa</i>	with soft long hairs
<i>cuneatus</i>	wedge-shaped leaves	<i>pinnata</i>	with pinnate leaves
<i>erythro-</i>	red	<i>pinifolia</i>	pine-like leaves
<i>fasciculata</i>	in clusters or bundles	<i>platy-</i>	flat, broad
<i>ficifolia</i>	like a fig leaf	<i>plebeia</i>	common
<i>flexuosa</i>	bending, curving	<i>praemorsa</i>	blunt-ended leaves
<i>fililoba</i>	fine leaf lobes	<i>procumbens</i>	creeping
<i>floribunda</i>	many flowers	<i>pulchella</i>	small and beautiful
<i>foliosa</i>	leafy	<i>pumila</i>	small
<i>formosa</i>	beautiful	<i>purpurea</i>	deep pink
<i>fruticosa</i>	shrubby	<i>pygmaea</i>	small
<i>gracilis</i>	slender	<i>retusa</i>	notched apex
<i>grandiflora</i>	large flowered	<i>rosea</i>	red
<i>glabra</i>	smooth	<i>scandens</i>	climbing
<i>glauca</i>	bluish-grey or green	<i>setigera</i>	bearing thistles
<i>hetero-</i>	diverse	<i>speciosissima</i>	extra beautiful
<i>humilis</i>	low, small	<i>spinosa</i>	spiny
<i>imbricata</i>	overlapping, referring to perianth segments	<i>tenuifolia</i>	slender leaves
<i>incana</i>	grey	<i>tomentosa</i>	covered with hairs
		<i>viscosa</i>	sticky

## Karwarra Garden needs you!

**K**ARWARRA GARDEN IS one of Melbourne's

finest public native plant gardens. Located in Kalorama, Mt. Dandenong, it is open every week Tuesday to Friday, from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

It is also open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm. That is, if there are volunteers who will spend three hours there to supervise the weekend openings.

Since weekends are often the most popular time for casual visitors, it is really good to have the Garden open. But more volunteers are needed to help with this. It is not difficult to do. No special plant knowledge is needed. Lindy Harris, the person in charge, will train you on all the duties.



There are only a few public native plant gardens around Melbourne. These public gardens will survive a lot longer than any of our private gardens. So why not contribute something to their upkeep and display? This is a great showcase of our native Australian plants. Please help to promote the aims of APS by assisting at Karwarra. Contact Lindy on 9728 4256.

## JEAN GALLIOTT AND ROSEMARY DAVIDSON

**Jean Galllott** died peacefully in her sleep on 24 November, aged 92.

Jean has always had a love of gardening and plants – particularly Australian plants, and the environment. She joined the Maroondah group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants in the early 1960s, one of the earliest members, and many of the friendships made then have continued right through to today.

Maroondah Group held many flower shows over the years, and Jean, with her floristry experience, was a major part of these displays, showing us all how to transform native flowers into attractive bouquets and floral arrangements, which were then sold to further the work of the Society.

Jean has volunteered regularly at the Karwarra Native Plant Garden at Kalorama, and at the local CRISP Indigenous Plants nursery in Ringwood. She has for many years been a member of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club. She was one of the early volunteers for the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater group, and helped at the Healesville Sanctuary to observe the behaviour of birds that had been brought in from the wild, when very little was known about them.

For over 20 years she has worked every week with the Friends of the FJC Rogers Reserve in Heathmont, helping to care for this rare native bushland reserve.

She loved to travel, within Victoria, interstate in Australia, and overseas to places as far afield as China.

Jean has worked at both Austraflo Nursery and Kuranga Native Nursery, so was able to keep up with all the developments and new introductions of Australian plants and their cultivars. She gave wonderful advice to many customers at both places.

She was a much-loved member of the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. On the Wednesday of her last week with us, she was at the Growing Friends working bee, busily putting in cuttings, and just a day or so before she died she was at the Maroondah break-up at Maranoa Gardens, giving advice on the names of plants.

We all feel privileged to have known Jean, and our lives are very much richer for the times we have been able to share together.

*– notes from the tribute given by Gwen Elliot at Jean's service*



*Beauty and happiness are free. It's everywhere if you have eyes to see it: another sunrise, a flower from the garden, or a tree in the garden.*

*– Jean Galllott*

**Rosemary Davidson** died last November after a long illness, which she bore stoically. She led a very active life right up to the time she went to hospital for her last few days.

Rosie was a microbiologist, and has been a member of APS Maroondah since the late 1970s. She was a keen gardener and lover of Australian plants, with a special spot in her heart for banksias. She was a great helper on the book stall and the annual Wildflower shows throughout the many years the show was held.

Rosie was a member of the "Ilukans" – a group of 18 families who owned property at Yanakie, a camping ground providing easy access to Wilsons Prom. During this time, Rosie and her husband Alistair, with two other Maroondah families, bought land next to Iluka and called it Iluka Heights. Many Maroondah group members spent holidays at the Davidson house, with its magnificent views over Corner Inlet, and will remember the dinner parties. Many 'birdos' will also remember her for hosting many bird-watching groups. Her generosity and friendship was boundless.

Rosie's greater active involvement was really with birds, as a member of BirdLife Australia, and particularly the Victorian Wader Study Group, of which she was both secretary and treasurer for over 20 years. She was passionate about studying the habits of birds and their migratory patterns, and of course travelled a great deal helping to catch and band them.

She was a regular walker with a group from Canberra which explored beautiful natural areas, and quite a number of Maroondah Group members were also involved in these. The interest in the flora was high on the agenda.

Rosie will be sadly missed for her help and assistance to people, her friendliness and boundless energy, her endless dinners and unsurpassed generosity, and by the birds and flowers in her garden.

*– notes from John Armstrong*



*Every month without fail Jean would bring to the Specimen Table a flower from her Grevillea 'Superb'.*

# Going Potty

by Sue Guymer

Rodger Elliot presented a talk to our group earlier this year on growing Australian plants in pots.

I like to use pots for plants which we would struggle to grow in our heavy clay.

One of these is *Kennedia coccinea*, which Bill and I saw growing in the wild in Western Australia. For the last couple of years I have direct-seeded this pea into a container (originally a basket, but now moved to a pot), and this is how it looked in spring!



## A jig to assist in propagation of hard-coated seeds

by Ross McDonald, Ferntree Gully, Vic

Reprinted by permission from the Acacia Study Group Newsletter No. 130, September 2015

**O**VER MANY YEARS I HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH many different ideas to break through the hard outer shell of Acacia and pea-flowered seeds. I have tried holding a seed between two fingers whilst using a triangular file to cut a groove, and a wire-stripper to nick a piece from the cotyledon end of the seed, both of which required a fairly large seed, and resulted in many seeds going into orbit.

I then made a jig from a piece of scrap timber by drilling a 51 mm diameter hole using a hole saw, and using the same saw to make a round plug. A handle was added, and 80 or 100 grit abrasive paper was bonded to the bottom of the hole, and to the face of the plug. The problem with this setup was that there was a significant radial gap as the hole was 51 mm diameter but the plug was only 48 mm.

The latest jig addressed this concern and is shown below. It was made using a 48 mm forstner bit for the hole, and a 51 mm hole saw for the plug to make the two parts fit more closely. A hole-saw uses a 6 mm pilot drill, so a dowel and a larger 'handle' were fitted.



The bases of the plugs were sanded smooth, then an abrasive disc was glued on each one. I decided on twin jigs, one using 80 grit paper for larger seeds, the other using 120 grit which seems better for small seeds.

As can be seen in the photos, the abrasive paper at the bottom of the holes is held in place by screwing on another piece of scrap timber. As these papers wear, they are easily replaced – the discs on the plugs can be peeled off, or another disc glued straight on the worn one.

In use, it is a case of trial and error – give the plug a few turns, with appropriate pressure, then open up to see the result. Remove any seeds that have a patch of white showing, then try again.



I then put the seeds in a small bottle (herb and spice bottles I find a good size) then add smoke water (cold) and wait. After 12–24 hours, any seeds that have not swollen can be dried with a paper towel, and returned to the jig.

I have found that low pressure is safest – too much pressure gives you a nice pinch of powdered acacia seed!





# Diary for 2016

## Friday Meetings

- 22 January**  
Speaker: Angus Stewart :  
*Why is the Australian garden changing?*
- 19 February**  
Speaker: Phillip Johnson:  
*Water Gardens*
- 18 March**  
Speaker: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Members' Night  
*(short presentations by several members)*  
Anniversary Cake
- 15 April**  
Speaker: TBA
- 20 May**  
Speaker: TBA
- 17 June**  
Speaker: Robert King:  
*Australia's First national Park*

## Garden Visits

- 16–17 January** weekend trip to Falls Creek
- 21 February** Philip Johson garden  
*Note: strictly limited numbers, so booking essential*
- 20 March** Royal Childrens Hospital children's garden
- 17 April** Rankin garden, North Warrandyte
- 22 May** Barling garden, Warranwood

## Committee

Michael Cook	President	0417 539 740
Bill Aitchison	Vice President	9872 3583
Brenda Moore	Secretary	9725 8278
Joe Wilson	Treasurer	9812 0209
Sue Guyer	Minute Secretary	9872 3583
Jan Nicholls	Membership Secretary	9893 4422
Graeme Nicholls	Newsletter Editor	9893 4422
Bev Hanson		9844 3906
John Hanson		9844 3906
Peter Rogers		9801 6946
Debbie Jerkovic		9885 7276
Tony Moore		9725 8278
Bruce Schroder		9728 1342

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Newsletter contributions:

Contributions for the February 2016 Newsletter should be sent to Graeme Nicholls no later than

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## A picture is worth a thousand words



As part of our celebration year, Peter Rogers is planning a small 5 or 6 minute segment at some Friday meetings during this year on past events, such as garden visits, outings and meanders, and wildflower shows.

To help with this he needs to borrow and scan old slides or pictures from members. Many long-time Maroondah members will have old pictures of these past events.

Would you have a look in your boxes of old memorabilia and dig out any old slides or pictures and pass them to Peter for scanning? Give them to Peter at a Friday meeting in an envelope clearly marked with your name and phone number, and they will be returned as soon as possible.

## as it happened . . .

—glimpses of the past

### MEANDERS AND CAMPS for 1998

#### MEANDERS

FEBRUARY 22	Harvest Festival	John Armstrong
MARCH 29	Emerald Region	David Barkley
APRIL 26	Healseville Sanctuary	Jean Galliot
MAY 31	Big Pats Creek	Helen Morrow
JUNE 28	Blackburn Streetscape	Karen Russell
JULY 26	Breakfast at 9.00am	Flora Anderson
AUGUST 30	Langwarrin/Moorooduc Quarry	Ian & Enid Haskins
SEPTEMBER 27	Kinglake and District	Gretna Weste
OCTOBER 25	Labertouche	Geoff Russell
NOVEMBER 29	Coastal/Point Nepean	Tim Morrow

#### CAMPS

AUSTRALIA DAY WEEKEND	Falls Creek (with RGB Cranbourne Friends)
MELBOURNE CUP WEEKEND	Wilson's Promontory