

Wellingtonia

NEWSLETTER Summer 2024

ABN 32 346 573 092 ACN 3465 • PP Number 100020008

From the President's Desk . . .



This is the last time for me to write the President's piece for our newsletter. My 3 years tenure as President has floated by so quickly. Fortunately, we weathered any downs in that time because of the good will and commitment within the organisation. Mostly it has been ups and it was a rewarding experience and privilege to contribute to our organisation. Our

very full spring program of events and activities were all well attended and there was plenty of very encouraging feedback. I never tire of walking into BBG and appreciating what it does to one's spirits. Our gardeners are responsible for the high maintenance standards and the creativity in displays and new plantings. Our congratulations to Donna, Adam and the Gardening team. They have a very busy program over the summer settling the new Fernery into the landscape, preparing the gardens for the Begonia Festival celebrations as well as work on the updated irrigation system. More shared conversations are occurring between staff and FBBG and this is welcomed by us all.

For most of the time as President I did not have a Vice- President and I want to acknowledge the support and advice Robert Selkirk and Kim Nolan gave me at times. On a broader level, our patron, Tim Entwisle, in his range of communications provided guiding ideas for the renaissance of regional Botanic Gardens. Make the gardens more accessible to all. Quoting Tim "not just for those who like chamber music and white-bread chicken sandwiches" and provide experiences so visitors leave "happier, healthier and wiser". Over time we can appreciate the evolving functions within BBG. Greater emphasis is now on our collections and the new native gardens bed and care for the rare, show more movement on the

conservation role. Expanding our plant knowledge, appreciating fine gardens and garden heritage will continue to be a focus for the Friends but we need to provide other experiences and messages to attract and retain relevance. Connection needs to be made to the challenging environmental issues that society faces and try different engagement strategies. Selection of the speakers selected for our quarterly meetings, the contents of our newsletter, the new interest groups that have formed, the expanding Botanikids program, the messages conveyed in our tours, the stronger involvement in community events are all transitional ways we are progressing FBBG.

Activation by the Friends does require funding. FBBG are very fortunate that we don't have the financial grind that many small organisations face. The Growers run an excellent business and contribute significantly to our healthy financial position. As President I have encouraged an active program of events. I believe that it provides benefits for members and attracts members and maintains our profile in the community as an active

professional organisation. What we are confronting now as an organisation is that to sustain this level of activity, we need new active members contributing. We can't just rely on the stalwarts of FBBG to keep the show on the road. Attracting members is not a problem. Our membership has grown to the mid 400's. We have made small changes to better connect with new members but need to do more. More welcoming and mentoring strategies are needed to encourage building relationships and involvement. Some of our interest groups do it better than others. We are not alone among volunteer organisations in addressing the need to attract more active involvement by members.



Please note: In this publication some abbreviations are used for simplicity sake:

BBG = Ballarat Botanical Gardens;

FBBG = Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens;

COB = City of Ballarat;

RCHC = Robert Clark Horticultural Centre;

GLB = George Longley Building



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From the President's Desk . . .

There is exciting potential in these gardens. The Friends have the vision and are aware of the possibilities. The new Masterplan is an opportunity to articulate this vision and make it known to our Ballarat City Council. The draft document circulated in this newsletter is inviting your involvement in the message we spread about how these gardens can continue to develop into the future. The discussion needs to extend beyond infrastructure and management. We need forward thinking, discussion on new directions for a central Botanic Garden in a changing Ballarat and a changing society. How do we adapt to these changes?

We are very fortunate that David Harland the newly appointed Director of RVBG has agreed to be our speaker for the AGM. He will share his ideas on the future roles of Botanic Gardens and so very relevant to our Masterplan discussions. Keep the date free for what promises to be a most interesting address. Tim Entwisle, our patron will also be attending.

We have a very professionally run Office. A big thank you to Kim and Ann. Convenors are always full of compliments about the support given to them. Apart from Kim's general office management role and Treasurer role she is an enormous help planning and coordinating all the tasks that our events and activities require. The annual FBBG report in February will cover convenor leadership and their groups contribution. There was good news recently when Karen McLean, a general member of

the 2023 FBBG committee stepped forward to be Membership Officer. Karen's data management and computer skills will be well used in this role, and we are very appreciative of this significant contribution to the FBBG organisation.

FBBG are very dependent for their success on our committee and convenors. Julie Bradby will take on the President's role in 2024. Julie Bradby is well known to us all through the Gatekeeper's Cottage and Botanikids and has been responsible for developing an important new hub in the Gardens. Julie's commitment and creative energy and networking will be important assets to keep FBBG flourishing and connecting with our community. I wish Julie well in this role.

After 12 years contributing to committee discussions and 3 years trying to keep juggling all the balls as President and make our organisation efficient, relevant, and welcoming, I look forward to the change of pace. Being President has been a rewarding role in many ways and I thank those who supported and encouraged me in the last three years. I will continue to contribute through the FBBG interest groups to this amazing 42 year old organisation.

*Thank you
Terry O'Brien*



SUMMER EVENTS 2024

NEW MEMBERS FUNCTION - 7 FEBRUARY AT 5PM.

A twilight get together to welcome new members of FBBG is planned for early February.

Attendees can learn about the role of the Friends and the Convener groups and meet some of the Friends Committee and other new members.

This informal meeting will be held in the Robert Clarke Horticultural Centre (RCHC) with drinks and nibbles on offer.

Details will be sent to new members nearer the time.

AUSTRALIA DAY ON LAKE WENDOUREE - FRIDAY 26 JANUARY

The Friends are participating in this fun community day with a guided tour of the Prime Ministers' Avenue in the Gardens. Run by the FBBG Guides, the tour is free and is a good chance for Friends to learn more about the Prime Ministers in office over our history, and enjoy a leisurely walk in our beautiful Gardens.

Meet at the start of the Avenue under the shade of the Turkey Oak at 2pm. No bookings required!

The Friends are once again pleased to support this community event organised by the Paddlesteamer Society.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FBBG - THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY AT 10AM IN THE RCHC.

We are so pleased to announce that our guest speaker for this meeting will be the new Director and Chief Executive of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Victoria, David Harland.

David has named his talk:

'Hey Everyone! What's the point of a botanic gardens in 2024!'

A controversial and fun talk, not to be missed.

Tim Entwisle, our Patron and former Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Victoria is also attending and it will be great to catch up with him since his retirement.

BALLARAT BEGONIA FESTIVAL - SATURDAY 9 TO MONDAY 11 MARCH

The Friends Nursery will be open on the 3 days over the Festival and will offer a Plant Creche in the Gardens for those buying plants from various outlets, to leave while they take in the rest of the events.

Following feedback the Creche for next year will be in a more convenient spot, both closer to the FBBG Nursery as well as other plant stalls.

The Gate Keepers Cottage will be open on the Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 5pm with a Fern display to compliment the opening of the new Fernery. More details to follow.

With all these events, volunteers are needed over this very busy and exciting long weekend.



THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF GARDENS

"Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful: they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul." - Luther Burbank, American Horticulturist and Botanist

In writing this article, I discuss the health benefits of gardens, types of which includes home, community and public gardens, and the additional benefits of "gardening" defined as "an activity in which people grow, cultivate, and take care of plants (flowers and vegetables) for non-commercial use". I base my article on some science-based evidence but also opinion from experiences in my medical and personal life. I also point out that whilst we live in a world requiring "evidence based" recommendations, it has to be acknowledged that sometimes research to derive evidence is just impossible, too narrow to apply generally, not yet performed or not economically justified and thus opinion must still in part be relied upon in reaching recommendations.

In a very simple 1980s study with only a small number of patients recuperating post operatively, those who could only see hospital walls from their beds had more pain and longer hospital stays than patients who could see trees from their bed! I don't actually think this a very good scientific study but nonetheless it is often quoted and is a tantalising result.

Today we live in a society dominated by computers and other screen devices which are introduced early to the young and which are the antithesis of Gardens: they keep you inside buildings out of sunlight, keep you inactive physically, affect your sleep patterns, and paradoxically what you read can personally isolate and "threaten". It is no wonder there is an urban epidemic of Diabetes, Obesity, High Blood Pressure, and Anxiety and Depression. The ageing population also leads to an increased incidence of Osteoporosis.

So, how can gardens help us counteract this trend?:

Firstly, by promoting exposure to bright light (sunlight). Bright light regulates the Circadian rhythm and leads to better quality sleep which itself promotes health. Sleep disturbance is associated with anxiety and depression. Bright light exposure also treats Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a condition affecting up to 3% of the population, and even more people with depression and bipolar disorder. It is seen especially when there are long periods of dull light, such as in winter in Ballarat, producing sad mood and low energy. Exposure to sunlight significantly helps. Sunlight, even 30 minutes a day, leads to vitamin D production which helps prevent osteopenia and osteoporosis and can increase bone mineral density all of which helps to prevent bone fracture from falls.

Gardens promote exercise and we know that exercise is important for cardiovascular and bone health. Once drawn outside to a garden of any type, one usually walks. The additional bend-

ing, stooping, digging and pulling of gardening itself exercises and strengthens muscles and increases flexibility. The activity aids balance and equilibrium, again helping to prevent falls and fracture.

Gardens can also stimulate an interest in food and food quality. Involvement in a Home or Community vegetable garden often leads to increased fresh food intake (and hopefully fewer takeaways!) with less obesity, lower cholesterol and a diet with increased roughage. All aiding better health.

Then there are the results of a garden and gardening hard to measure: that surge of satisfaction from a beautiful result of one's labour, the happiness resulting as in the above quotation, the sense of connection to Nature and the sense of community and belonging coming from working in a community garden. All antidotes to depression and anxiety.

A garden at home can be one's creation, making something for oneself. A community garden provides a way for those in flats or with little land to garden. A public garden, like the Ballarat

Botanical Gardens, is a great, always changing, treasure of a resource for all the community to walk in, admire the results of the dedicated staff, and just bask in the pleasure of the open space, structure and colour. Inspiration for a creation at home can be a bonus.

And we must not forget Climate change issues that can be helped by gardens. A garden can be a cooling "device" around a home, reducing the energy use of air conditioners. Plants and trees take up CO₂.

In these days we see the house takes up most of a block of land, with the eaves almost overlapping the house boundary and the ¼ acre block with a garden is a distant memory. Why cannot Councils mandate that all house blocks must set aside say 20% of the land of a block for a garden and permeable area? A society which professes to want to be healthy and to fight climate change, particularly the young who make up most of the new purchasers, should have no issue with this idea.

There remains much research to be done and evidence to be collected about gardens and health. Even an analysis of a "dose-response" of gardening itself. i.e. How long, how often, how intense what type of gardening leads to the greatest health benefit? Lots to be done to increase the evidence and thereby increase government and public investment in the idea of the benefit of gardens.

Wayne Spring MB BS, BA, DipL (Melb), FRACP, FRCP.

Wayne Spring is a board member of Ballarat Botanical Gardens Foundation



VALERIE'S VIEWS

Valerie's Views: After 8 years as Convenor of the Botanic Art Group.

The Friends Botanic Art Group has been running for over a decade. Initiated by Elizabeth Gilfillan, Valerie Richards has been Convenor for the past 8 years. She is standing down, giving an opportunity to reflect on the development of the group, her own practice and the importance of art.

When Valerie became Convenor she had no real idea of the role or clear aims, other than the importance of keeping the group meeting, increasing its members and its exposure to the Friends and general community. She also sought to widen the experience of the group, through use of various materials and workshops, excursions, exhibitions and collaborations. The group began with 6-7 members and has now doubled in size and has a range of materials to assist and inspire artists, such as lamps, work boards, light boxes, botanical illustration books and other art accessories. Workshops have included illustrating Insects, botanical watercolour, coloured pencil, liquid graphite, acrylic paint, pen and ink. Specialist tutors not only teach skills, but inspire the group to achieve better results.

For Valerie, the nurturing of new artists and seeing their progress and confidence in their growing ability is immensely rewarding. Members are all interested in botanical illustration but no previous experience is necessary, just the wish to learn or continue to learn about botanical illustration. An initial information and guidance pack is provided and members continue to help or demonstrate to any who wish it. In working together weekly, the group shares ideas, techniques and experiences. They often work on the same subject or theme, sharing the challenges and increasing the great sense of togetherness.

The group has held several exhibitions, a highlight being Rare and Endangered plants of Ballarat area (RCHC). Donna Thomas (Curator Ballarat Botanical Gardens) was involved in a Victoria wide program, collecting and regrowing endangered species. She encouraged the group to photograph any plants in the collection and an excursion to a native nursery outside Bendigo was organized, to source other plants. The entire group was involved in decision making and worked to organise and set-up the exhibition.

"We were very proud of the outcome. The exhibition looked wonderful and we had a great many visitors to it."

After the successful collaboration with the History Group on Elms of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, the group is currently working on an exhibition of selected Pine trees, again for Heritage Week. They are also painting begonias from the Ballarat collection, to exhibit these works as part of the 2024 Begonia Festival.

Valerie's own practice began in her mid-teens, painting in oils, and she has been painting and drawing ever since. She developed her work through art classes, but mostly from illustrating whatever was in front of or around her. She spent 12 years studying botanical art under Mali Moir at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. She has also enjoyed studying insect illustration with Kate Nolan and coloured pencil with Wendy Matthews. Valerie works in a wide range of mediums, watercolour, graphite, oil paint, acrylic, scraper board, coloured pencil, pastel and pen and ink. Her subjects are mainly botanical and natural history subjects, including birds, pets and still-life but she also does portraits and landscapes. She enjoys the form or nature of each, but particularly, intricate detail.

Valerie has exhibited with the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, at Methodist Ladies College and at the Art Gallery of Ballarat. The Beckler Botanical exhibition, was the highlight, and was the culmination of nearly 10 years of artist's and botanist's visits to Menindee in NSW, to collect and illustrate the plants collected by Dr. Hermann Beckler, on the Burke and Wills expedition in 1860.

Asked, "Why is art important to you?" Valerie responded "I enjoy the challenge and concentration that comes with each work, but mainly it is something that I just have to do." She plans to continue with the many varieties of style, subject, and mediums and her big dream is a solo exhibition.

Susan Pilbeam



NEW BBG MASTERPLAN COMING

The COB has yet to communicate the guidelines for a new Masterplan for BBG but a process to establish it is underway and FBBG needs to be ready to contribute in 2024. The following draft has been prepared by a small task group of the FBBG Committee to encourage FBBG member involvement in a FBBG response.

Our current BBG Masterplan was prepared by John Patrick in 1995 and supplemented in 2014 by the Visionary Plan for BBG by Mark Richardson. This latter plan addressed how BBG was to meet its role as a botanic garden in the 21st century.

Our understandings of opportunities around this have been augmented by input from our Gardens Patron, Professor Tim Entwistle who has reflected on what a contemporary Botanic Garden might be, noting that “A contemporary Botanic Garden has the opportunity to respond to, reflect and project the culture, community, history, heritage and environment of its location and broader regional context. This provides us with a definition and purpose for the future”.

We believe that a masterplan (and its production) should be dynamic, inclusive, visionary and ambitious in serving these purposes. This is the discussion we are opening with in this draft - using a set of guiding principles. Tasks to be undertaken can then be aligned with the principles. We want your responses - additions, deletions and comments. Please email your feedback to info@fbbg.org.au with the subject heading Masterplan.

Guiding Principles

The BBG have started the 21st century with significant changes and we acknowledge these achievements. The following principles are the priorities that FBBG consider important to continue progressive development of BBG into the future.

1. **Interpretive environmental infrastructure**
2. **Enrich the Garden's story through narrative**
3. **Consolidate FBBG in the Gardens through the Masterplan**
4. **Arts and Culture**
5. **Education**
6. **Civic value**
7. **Community well-being and interaction**
8. **Tourism**
9. **Outreach**
10. **Gardens Precinct**
11. **Spaces**

1. **Interpretive environmental infrastructure**
 - Expand and curate the collection/s to ensure that plant selection is climatically appropriate for Ballarat (cool climate) and responsive to a warming environment
 - Ensure responsible and sustainable resource allocation in planting schemes
 - Pursue opportunities to demonstrate hydrological systems and the ways these interact with plants, animals and society including visibility of connections to Lake Wendouree through wetlands
 - Develop mobile infrastructure with ability respond to seasonal and event calendars (e.g. moving activity hub)
 - Broaden and further develop the material palette of the Gardens to reflect contemporary opportunities (e.g. recycled and upcycled material, life-cycle consideration of fallen trees, habitat etc, 'let a little more 'mess' in')
 - Continue to provide a safe conservation place in relation to issues associated with climate change - e.g. bio-diversity loss, threatened species, water shortages
2. **Enrich the Garden's story through multiple narratives including trails and linkages**
 - The story is integral to the Victorian Botanic Garden - the landscape lineage/s of the gardenesque and the picturesque are vital to the story of BBG.
 - Emphasise the position of the BBG in this lineage (state, national, international)
 - Pursue opportunities to include the voices of the First Nations people of the region in the story of the Gardens precinct
 - Expand and curate the plant collection/s as above.
 - Provide a celebration of the art and practice of gardening
 - Diversity and forward thinking of collections is vital to the status of botanic gardens.
 - Adopt clear and accessible narratives to encourage community engagement

NEW BBG MASTERPLAN COMING

3. **Consolidate the FBBG in the Gardens through the Masterplan**
 - Friends to remain integral to the Gardens i.e. part of the machinery of the Gardens and broader City discussions (including visitor experience etc)
 - Resolve physical location and accommodation of expansion (of FBBG membership, services and linkages) to be undertaken urgently
 - The FBBG should remain integral to ensuring that the gardens are welcoming, provide interpretation, facilitate visitor awareness raising and contribute to funding
 - The Friends continue to seek a reciprocal and respectful relationship with Gardens management and curation.
 - Expand and provide greater inclusivity and diversity within the Friends group
4. **Arts and culture**
 - Improve and strengthen relationships to contemporary arts and culture through existing heritage and environmental elements - opportunities should be pursued
 - Facilitate arts and cultural activities and events to support the above
 - The gardens should be considered an arts-based community infrastructure
5. **Education**
 - Pursue Federation Uni collaboration and support
 - Pursue secondary, primary and pre-school collaborations, relationships and support for same.
 - Encourage multiple stories to be told through evolutionary, reconciliation, climate change, biodiversity themes
 - Offer insight into change over time - including in relation to dynamics of climate change
 - Provide best-practice exemplar opportunities for domestic and commercial landscaping
6. **Civic value**
 - Masterplan to reflect civic value and Visionary Plan - i.e. the value of the Gardens to Ballarat and the region
 - Continue to build Botanic Gardens generally as valuable providers of public open space - this is especially true of BBG and has been exemplified through recent pandemic conditions
 - Ensure proposed redevelopments contribute to the amenity of the Gardens and the Lake Wendouree precinct for the benefit of all Ballarat residents
7. **Community well-being and interaction**
 - Consider the Gardens as a piece of inclusive community infrastructure with cultural, social and economic benefits to a wider range of user groups
 - Gardens continue to offer sanctuary in increasingly hot and dry summers
 - Demonstrate what is achievable to home gardeners in relation to off-setting suburban heat island effects
 - Ensure BBG remains an inclusive public space providing access to open space for all
 - Public open space has documented benefits for human well-being and the Gardens should continue to offer an opportunity to reconnect people with nature and natural spaces as community gathering spaces
 - Pursue opportunities to include the voices of the First Nations people of the region in the story of the gardens precinct through relationship building and collaborative partnerships
8. **Tourism**
 - Provide dynamic interest in a seasonal calendar
 - Boost reasons for visitors to stay longer in Ballarat
 - Expand collection to benefit regional tourism and international tourism
9. **Outreach**
 - Friends should be more integral to outreach and awareness raising beyond the boundary of the gardens
 - Provide a mobile infrastructure (trailer or van) for promotion of gardens at events within and outside the gardens
 - Increase the visibility of Gardens at train and bus stations
 - Conduct excursions and incursions for schools, community groups and businesses
10. **Gardens Precinct**
 - Strengthen connections (physical, visual and conceptual) between the Hatchery and POW Memorial and Wetlands to promote a singular entity or precinct including North and South gardens
 - Ensure the Friends have a distinct presence in this precinct
11. **Spaces**
 - Develop spaces to support a variety of interactions, events and activities within the Gardens including a range of social and cultural interpretations

BOTANIKIDS

Growth at generations' garden event

PRETTY posies were hand-gathered by early learners at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens this week to be shared with some special friends at an end-of-year picnic. The little participants of BotaniKIDS presented the flowers to vocational major students from Loreto College, who they got to know as part of a partnership between the nature program and the school.

The Loreto students baked snacks and planned games for the picnic, and played with the pre-school-aged kids as their parents and carers watched on. BotaniKIDS convenor Julie Bradby said the program has brought together an intergenerational village.

"It's become a community all about wellbeing and being outside," she said. "It's about enjoying the beauty and the open space of the gardens, and using the gardens as a source of quality learning for under-fives." "We've become friends with the young mums, and we've got a whole lot of grandparents in our group." Every second Tuesday, the Loreto students have been part of BotaniKIDS, supporting the children in their environmental learning, and helping the volunteers.

Some of these students are planning to pursue careers in the childcare, hospitality, agriculture, and horticulture industries. "Whatever food and craft activities they prepare for us are in their stream," Ms Bradby said. "The hospitality girls do the cooking, the ag girls do the planting, seeds and make soil... It's helping the students as well.

Penny Commons has been taking her grandchildren to BotaniKIDS each week and said the program hasn't just benefited the little people. "It's really wonderful for the young mums as well," she said. "As a grandmother, it's lovely for me to get to meet them, and to see the little ones interacting.

"Some of the young mums have little babies, and the Loreto girls will nurse them to give the mums a bit of a break. "The children have grown to really trust the Loreto girls well. It's lovely seeing the generations together." Loreto College vocational major teacher, Anne Mader, said the partnership has encouraged the girls to boost their interpersonal skills. "They're dealing with different age groups; parents, carers, grandparents and young children," she said. "They love it. It's very interactive, and it's getting them ready for the workforce."

Reprint of article in 24 November 2023 edition of Ballarat Times.

With kind agreement from journalist Edwina Williams.
www.timesnewsgroup.com.au



FOUNDATION UPDATE



As we near the end of 2023, it is time to start thinking about our plans for the next 1-3 years. To help us develop our next strategic plan, we have invited (and they have accepted), the Mayor, Cr Des Hudson, representatives from Gardens Management, including Donna Thomas, Luke Ives and David Keighrey and Friends representatives, Julie Bradby and Jock Gilbert to participate and contribute to our planning workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to obtain input from multiple sources to inform our decision-making process and the establishment of our goals and strategies for the next three years. We see 2024 as the time when the Foundation moves to take a more active role in identifying priority projects and then undertaking various initiatives to raise funds to support those projects. The Board is very much looking forward to this planning phase and then implementing strategies to achieve our goals to enhance the value and presentation of our Botanical Gardens.

The new year also sees a change in our Board membership. As Terry O'Brien completes his tenure as President of the Friends and is replaced by Julie Bradby, so too is this change reflected in the Board membership of the Foundation. We thank Terry for his valued contribution to the governance of the Foundation and welcome Julie to our Board in early 2024. Whilst we undertake planning for the next stage of the growth of the Foundation, we remind members of our community that donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. We are available to discuss all general and specific matters relating to bequests and specific donations.

We wish all our stakeholders and especially members of the Friends a merry Christmas and a happy new year. We look forward to growing the contribution of the Foundation in 2024 and beyond.

Mark Schultz, Chairman



INTRODUCING ADAM BEGGS, TEAM LEADER PARKS AND NURSERY.

After 11 years working in Concrete Construction, I needed a change. I thought deeply about what I enjoyed and knew that the next decision would change my life forever. It changed my life for the better in ways I thought were not possible. I have always loved the outdoors and spending time in nature. I thought of a job that could help me continue to do this as well as give myself a challenge. Shortly after I booked into Fed Uni to study Horticulture. I completed Certificate 3 in Parks and Gardens after 4 years of study and work with the City of Ballarat.

I am now 33 years old and really enjoy what I do. I am currently Team Leading a group of people who I could easily call my friends. We have a great relationship with each other, and I can see the passion in all of them. I didn't realise working in Horticulture would get me to where I am now in life, and I am very grateful.

I like living a simple life and Ballarat is the perfect place for me to call home. I currently live close to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens and love my close community around me. I feel working here at the Gardens has shown me how important a place so beautiful can impact our community in a positive manner.

“INSPIRED BY BEGONIAS”

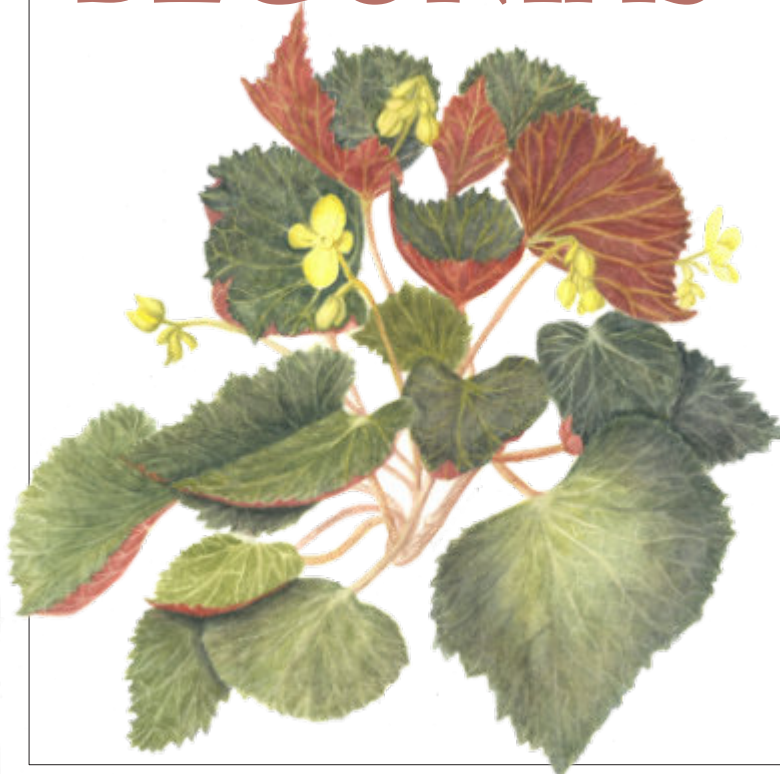
Botanical Art Begonia Exhibition on 23 and 24th March 2024

The botanical artists have been working all year towards an exhibition of their paintings depicting tuberous and non-tuberous begonias from last year's Ballarat Begonia Festival. The exhibition of around 30 will include paintings of the begonias T.B.Toop, Connie Boswell and Jennifer Wilson to name just a few.

An invitation to the opening on 22 March, Friday afternoon, will be extended to the Friends. We do hope that you will be able to attend to view some of these amazing artworks.

Ro Bancroft, Convenor, Ballarat Botanical Art Group

INSPIRED BY **BEGONIAS**



A Botanical Art Exhibition
Presented by the Ballarat Botanical Art Group
At the Robert Clark Horticultural Centre
Ballarat Botanical Gardens

Exhibition opening - Fri. 22nd March 4pm

For FBBG Members Only
Refreshments provided



Sat. 23rd & Sun 24th March 10am - 4pm

Open to General Public - Gold coin donation
FBBG Members free

BOTANICAL ART WORKSHOP WITH LINDA WEIL

During the year, the Ballarat Botanical Art Group engage botanical illustrators for one or two-day workshops. In September, Linda Weil gave a one-day workshop on the use of ink in botanical drawings. Exploring with black ink, participants moved further into various colour ink mediums, developing confidence and trying different ways to create art.

The artists had an enjoyable day, creating art with mediums they would sometimes not normally use, such as watercolours and/or colour pencils. This was a new technique for most of them and they were excited and challenged by this new concept of illustrating.

With over 40 years of experience as a professional artist specializing in all forms of drawing medium, but particularly graphite, Linda Weil is known for her engaging and detailed drawings of wildlife, nature studies and found objects. In the past decade Linda has returned to her love of imaginative science fiction and fantastical works.

Ro Bancroft, Botanical Art Group Convenor.



GROWING FRIENDS, KEEP GROWING...

In 1982 a meeting was held suggesting a Guides group for the Gardens. Their research and activities led to a public meeting about forming a Friends Association (1992). Bruce Holland attended, becoming one of the initial 60 members. An early fundraising suggestion was to propagate and sell plants and the Growing Friends, led by Judith Bailey, was one of the first three sub-groups. Bruce, who had been a teacher of Biology and Botany and run his own nursery, became part of this small and dedicated team. He is still passing on his knowledge and skills to generations of growers.

The Botanical Gardens staff was supportive of the new group, enabling use of their facilities, including a bench in their glass house, supplying potting mix, surplus plants and assisting with advice. Recycled pots were cleaned and used to propagate plants from members' gardens. Many of these bulbs, herbs and old varieties were well suited to Ballarat's climate, but are rarely seen for sale nowadays.

When Bill Miles (Ballarat Orchid Society) donated a small glasshouse, protected propagation could take place and it is still a vital facility. Bruce was particularly skilled with propagation of species Begonias, which were displayed and sold at the Begonia Festival and in the seasonal plant sales. The Growing Friends were soon making a significant contribution to the FBBG income and continue to do so.

Jane Barret (second convener), instigated on-site weekly sales and broadened the range of plants, propagating natives and planting up stock from registered nurseries. She was followed briefly by Heather Laidlaw, whose professional experience in horticulture, garden design and display added other aspects to the nursery. At this stage propagation and sales were situated next to the Gillies St. fence, with a lean-to shed and pots on gravel.

The construction of the Robert Clarke Horticultural Centre and Conservatory (1995) increased visitor numbers, particularly for the ten day Begonia Festival. It also meant changes to BBG work/



Bruce Holland



Rea Shearer and Yvonne Curbach

storage areas. The FBBG was also growing, with new sub-groups, more members and events. Lorraine Powell was convener over this next decade of change, which included the first plant trolley and a small tin shed with a concrete floor (now used for storage). Somehow the half dozen members squeezed in to enjoy a cuppa and share homemade afternoon tea, beginning this friendly tradition.

The Robert Clarke Horticultural Centre was increasingly used for formal and informal meetings, information sharing etc. Sue Rhook, was the CoB Nursery Manager and Quarantine officer. She is fondly remembered for her generous collaboration with the Growing Friends, particularly in the development of the Western Beds and for her high level training of members in various techniques. For the Begonia Festival, more hands and expertise meant the propagation of thousands of 'Non-stop Begonias', from excess (BBG) seed, raising tens of thousands of dollars.

Over twenty years ago, the nursery site was flooded, when 10cm of rain fell in 20 minutes. Pot plants were found in the fernery and near the lake. This was the catalyst for raising pots, initially onto bread crates. Afterwards, the nursery continued to expand 'across the road', to its present area.

The George Longley Building (2008) was constructed while Caroline Pinkowski was convener. It supported all sub-groups, but particularly benefitted the Growing Friends, giving them a warm and dry space for themselves, their

customers and their needs. It also enabled on-site labeling, computer records, phone access and later, EFTPOS. Work tables built by the Ballarat East Men's Shed made a significant difference to the health and care of the team and the plants.

GROWING FRIENDS, KEEP GROWING...

When the Gardens gained Heritage Listing (2010), Curator Peter Marquand instituted broad changes regarding process, access and bio-security. Recycled pots could no longer be used and plant material had to come from accredited growers. Later the electric security gate was installed and team members must now wear high visibility clothing, register with the City of Ballarat and observe health and safety requirements. The covered potting bench is part of these initiatives.

Yvonne Curbach, became convener during this period and now works with Curator Donna Thomas. All plants propagated by the Growing Friends are chosen from catalogues by Yvonne, Bruce and Susan Rattray (who retired from Lambley Nursery, Ascot). Their focus is plants suitable for the Ballarat area, which may not be available at larger nurseries. Tube stock is given a loving start and then hardened off outside. Thus, it is well adapted to the climate and has a greater chance of success when planted out. Preparations for Begonia Festival and SpringFest involve potting up and nurturing thousands of plants and raises tens of thousands of dollars for the Friends. The Plant Trolley, at the Conservatory, with cash and electronic pay points, enables daily sales.

The Growing Friends come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience, but all enjoy learning about plants and growing techniques, the friendly fun and the afternoon teas. The regulars are there rain, hail or shine, others prefer the warmer days. At major annual events, such as Begonia Festival, FBBG members are asked to help support the team with sales, plant crèche etc. The Growing Friends output is large, but their working area is small, limiting the size of the group. Recently installed tiered metal display stands have maximized the space and there is now room for a bench, for workers or customers to sit. The Friends' Nursery keeps growing and there has been talk of moving it to a larger site, nearer the Gatekeeper's Cottage, on Wendouree Parade, where it would be more visible and accessible, as it is a vital part of FBBG fundraising.

Susan Pilbeam



COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR JOHN GRAY OAM

Recognised as an outstanding contributor to Canberra's beautiful treescapes and natural environments over many years, Dr John Gray, recently passed away leaving a legacy of "aesthetic and environmental benefits that we get from great tree planting programs".

In a moving tribute by Max Bourke, AM, (Australian Garden

History Society Website, 2023), Dr Gray is remembered as "a remarkable - man of the trees" with many exemplary achievements including running Canberra's seed laboratory, landscaping work for the future Lake Burley Griffin and tree plantings across many areas of Canberra, "especially, in the Parliamentary Triangle as well as new suburbs in Woden and Belconnen". Described as "a gentle and reflective man", Dr Gray spent a lifetime working to enhance the natural ecosystems and environments of our National Capital.

AUSTRALIAN ARID LANDS BOTANIC GARDEN

Towards the end of a recent small group tour of the Flinders Ranges, we visited the AUSTRALIAN ARID LANDS BOTANIC GARDEN (AALBG).

The AALBG is located in Port Augusta, and was established in 1993, opening in 1996.

Its purpose is to research, conserve and promote the wider appreciation of Australia's arid zone flora. Located on the shores of Upper Spencer Gulf with spectacular views to the Flinders Ranges, the Garden showcases a diverse collection of arid zone plant in a picturesque setting of more than 250 hectares.

The term "Arid" refers to areas of average rainfall of 300mm per year (or less). The garden's plant collection is formed around this average rainfall maximum.

The plants include over 200 Eremophilas, commonly known by a variety of different names such as Emu Bush and Native Fuschia. You won't see as wide a range of these plants anywhere else!

The gardens offer a range of self-guided walking tours of varying lengths.

The eastern boundary of the gardens actually extends into the Spencer Gulf and includes many mangroves, an important part of the fragile marine environment.

Oh – something that the Ballarat BG doesn't have -- a really nice cafe, modern restroom facilities and a well-stocked shop. All in all, well worth a visit if you happen to be in the area.

*by Michael Bird, FBBG Member and
previous editor of Wellingtonia*



NEW MEMBERS

The Friends welcome the following new members:

Lorraine Gigliotti
Tracy Slater
David Luck
Bonnie Gelman
Elizabeth Leslie
Susie Cochrane
Wendy Flens
Jeni Mitchell
Lynette Cooke
Helen Metcalf
Denise Purdey
Martin and Glenda Byrne
Kristen Murray

Our Membership is standing at 448 members with 35 mini members

Membership Renewal

If you've received a renewal form in the post please remember to pay promptly. Discounts for 2 year or 5 year renewal.

Our preference is Direct Debit (Please note 'name', 'subs', 'year length')

eg P Symons, Sub 2yr.

BSB 633 000 Acc No. 125 334 615

Please send/email your form back to the office to help with processing.

IN THE KNOW

A Call to Friends to get involved.

Why not consider getting involved with one or more of the Friends Groups as listed on the back page of this edition. There are many ways to participate, whether volunteering to help run events, helping out the little ones at Botanikids, jobs in the Office or joining the Nursery volunteers help nurture our plants for sale.

If you are keen, contact the Friends at info@fbbg.org.au or leave a message on (03)5342 9354.

Springfest

Despite the inclement weather Springfest raised over \$1,000. The FBBG market plant stall was set up next to the Gatekeepers Cottage, and with a prominent position sold many plants and attracted some potential new customers to the Nursery. Thanks to all those who volunteered.

Memberships buoyant.

We now have over 450 Friends, a new Photographic Group and more events were supported and enjoyed in 2023.

We welcome the new FBBG members over the last quarter. A new members morning tea is planned for early 2024.

Events Feedback for Spring.

The Speakers Luncheon held on 17 November in the Gardens was a great success with over 80 attending to hear 2 renowned speakers and enjoy lunch by our new caterer, Tickety Boo!

The Biodiversity Day "Wilding Your Garden" on 14 October attracted a good crowd to the Robert Clarke Centre and coinciding with the Wardian Case Exhibition in the Gatekeepers Cottage and Farmers Market meant that the place was a buzz with people.

Friends Open Gardens on 25 and 26 November drew many Friends and their families.

An Excerpt from feedback by one of our Friends, Jenny Haynes as follows:

"I have just had the loveliest of weekends, wandering around five diverse and beautiful gardens."

From the small but riotously colourful, to the expansive and serene, there was something special about each of them.

Although very different the common thread running through all of the gardens, was that they had been lavished with love, thought and care, showing time and again that although gardens mean different things to different people, they are an incredibly important part of our lives.

To the owners of the gardens that so generously opened up their private spaces and to those involved in organising and presenting them, I would like to say a very big thank you! The weekend is always one of the highlights on my calendar."

Gardens Staff / Friends get together.

Around 12 Gardens Staff, with President Terry O'Brien and the BBG Curator, Donna Thomas plus a number of committee members, had an informative and happy morning meeting on 29 November. With a look at some of our History resources and a talk from Terry on the Prime Ministers' Avenue, they then enjoyed a very tasty morning tea catered by our Catering group in the Gatekeepers Cottage. 'A most exquisite morning tea' was how Donna Thomas described it!

(A meeting highlight was the showing of part of an interview with George Seddon, a BGG gardener when he was a worker following the First World War. He was quite a character!)



This event was a good chance to meet and get to know garden staff better and for them to understand what the Friends do and what resources we have.

Wendy Taylor



AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS (AAFBG)

The AAFBG's tour of the Gardens of the Southern Highlands of NSW in late October was most enjoyable, successfully bringing together Management Committee members, FBBG members and Friends of other botanic gardens. We were based in Bowral and travelled each day to visit a variety of fascinating gardens, the historic town of Berrima including the beautifully restored garden at Harper's Mansion and other attractions. Some of the highlights were Camden Park House, home of the pioneering Macarthur family where we also toured the historic gardens; a guided walk and morning tea with the intrepid volunteers at Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens; Oldbury Farm with its distinctive Georgian style homestead, traditional layered Hawthorn hedges and extensive tree planting; and the impressive facilities at the Herbarium and PlantBank at Australian Botanic Garden Mt Annan where the Friends have their own propagating garden. Recently the Management Committee has had two exciting presentations from the organizers of the next AAFBG Biennial Conference at Queensland's Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens from August 23-25, 2024. There has already been a callout for presenters in the November E-news and from now on the website www.friendsbotanicgardens.org will be regularly updated with conference information. The conference theme 'The Challenge of Change: Relationships, Volunteering, Climate and

Technology' reflects the major concerns of most botanic gardens. There will be many opportunities for delegates to participate. The annual Handbury Awards acknowledge the contributions made by individuals or Friends groups and can generate significant publicity for their botanic gardens. The Ballarat Friends are preparing two nominations for the 2024 awards. The successful applicants will be announced by our Patron at the official opening of the Biennial Conference. It has been a pleasure to represent the FBBG on the AAFBG Management Committee – thank you.

Merrill Shulkes



Prittwell Garden

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS (AAFBG)



Highdown Cottage



Camden Park House



PlantBank at Australian Botanic Gardens Mt Annan

Oldbury Farm



SPEAKERS SPRING LUNCHEON - 17 NOVEMBER

Helen Todd welcomed the usual full house to the Friends 16th Speakers' Luncheon. The sun shone and between morning tea, lunch, raffles and socializing, were the guest speakers.

Alison Douglas has worked on many garden renovations and listed what was on most 'wish lists', regardless of the size of the garden. She suggested some questions to ask and considerations of sustainability that are useful, prior to developing a design. Alison has a multi-disciplinary background and won a MIFA award for her industrially influenced Pipe Dreams. She illustrated her talk with some very clever ideas for small spaces and for recycling and repurposing materials.

Alison Douglas and Helen Todd



Martin Semken
(one of the speakers)

Martin Semken gave us his behind the scenes insights into designing and building 'show' gardens over several decades, in Australia and overseas. He explained how these gardens are to be perfect for a brief time and though some ideas and effects are easily transferable to permanent home gardens, others are not. He revealed some of the tricks of the trade, the hard and intense work, logistical nightmares and huge budgets involved in creating an award winning garden, such as at the Chelsea Flower Show. He also showed some inspiring home and public gardens, including Cranbourne, created by his team.

Susan Pilbeam



A TRIP TO COLAC BOTANIC GARDENS - 18 NOVEMBER

November's well planned self-drive trip to Colac went off without a hitch, despite the potholes along the way. It was a cool, slightly misty start to the day.

Arriving at the Colac Botanic Gardens at the appointed time, we were all issued with maps and then two guides tag-teamed and guided us through the Colac Botanic Gardens from the old Curator's House (now a Café) to the Children's playground. These Gardens are a bit younger than either the Ballarat Botanical or Buninyong Botanic Gardens, but every bit as mature, with avenues of Quercus robur and well-developed specimens of Agonis flexuosa. Our Guides described them as a Gardens of 'long views and short vistas'. For some reason they also include the CFA training ground.

Colac is also part of the RBGV 'Care for the Rare' program and we heard a little about their efforts in that regard, as well as some of the challenges of being a regional Botanic Garden with only one full-time staff member.

Our first destination was nearly half a century in the making and was settling into its space nicely. Owners and plantspeople,



the Hopkins had filled their large space with treasures rarely seen. It featured a private fern gully, and views of the Otway Ranges were to be glimpsed peeping through the clearing mist. Lunch was enjoyed on the lawn, thoughtfully decked out with seating and tables. The Hopkins had also laid temptation out for we visitors in the form of pots of plants we had just been introduced to. I don't think many resisted.

Our second garden was very different – a relaxed country garden full of roses and hospitality (a gorgeous Devonshire tea was provided so we could sit and enjoy the views), and the third was a complete contrast again with many rooms, many ideas, and probably the best raised veggie garden ever. Each host was very generous with their time and gave personal insights into their garden, as well as answering questions.

It was lovely to see Ballarat and Buninyong Friends, and friends of Friends relaxing together as they enjoyed the day.

Lorraine Powell

A WRAP UP OF FRIENDS EVENTS DURING SPRING 2023

Wilding your garden- Friends and Biodiversity 14 October

A wide range of groups and people came together to find out more about how we can all support Biodiversity and the local resources that are here to help. The day also celebrated recent changes to our Nursery, particularly the new tiered steel display benches, which increase capacity, safety and access. It was a sunny day, and with the Farmer's Market on as well, a steady stream attended. This informal event held at the RCHC, attracted and catered to members of all ages. BotaniKids activities included making an insect hotel and wetland images from the new Photo Friends group were projected.

The City of Ballarat and Sustainable Environment Ballarat were promoting their Biodiversity Conversation Kit and giving away packets of native and herb seeds. The Australian Plants Society of Victoria had information about plants, local groups and events and free plants were given away by Federation University's Indigenous Plants for Ballarat Gardens program. Other groups focused

on gardens for wildlife, such as Birdlife Ballarat, the Aussie Bird Count, Ballarat and Regional Beekeepers and Ballarat Gardens for Wildlife and Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation. Information was also available about protecting the environment from the adverse effects of lighting at night. All exhibitors enjoyed the experience of meeting with other groups and interested individuals. A positive and interesting initiative from the Friends new Biodiversity Group.

More information:

City of Ballarat: Sustainability Initiatives

aspsvic.org.au

federation.edu.au/ipbg

birdlife.org.au/groups/birdlife-ballarat

aussiebirdcount.org.au

brb.org.au

gardensforwildlifeballarat.com

bwrac.org.au

darksky.org

Susan Pilbeam

Artist in Residence at the Gatekeeper's Cottage 14 - 22 October

Those attending The Wardian Case exhibition were additionally delighted to see artist Georgina Gould-Hardwick at work. She set up her 'studio', fascinating all ages with her drawings, paintings and lino-cuts of plants and insects. Georgina was extremely thankful for the opportunity provided by the Friends to explore the gardens, inspire young people and create new works.

Each day of her residency Georgina walked in the gardens, taking photographs, the first stage of her process. Through these she examines minute details and develops colour studies, which are finally transformed into drawings, paintings, prints and finally finished pieces. Her particular interest is insects, arthropods and arachnids, so working from photos also means she does not have the challenge of changing light or a disappearing or deteriorating subject.

Georgina spent some time with the Botanical Art Group and was particularly impressed by their skills in watercolour

and pencil. She comes from a family of artists, photographers, gardeners and naturalists and has been drawing since childhood. She studied Art at Federation University and then Environmental

Science. These passions combined during

COVID, when she began making and selling her work. She has been interested in printmaking since high school and her own press, for printing on paper and fabric.

Georgina found being an Artist in Residence a wonderful learning experience and responses by children and adults to her work very encouraging. She loves to go bushwalking and looking for plants and insects, so she also found it inspiring to share the Cottage with the exhibition and its stories of plant hunters and explorers.

www.gould-hardwickart.com.au



Friends Open Gardens - 25 & 26 November

Part of the joy of the Friends Open Gardens weekend is its exclusivity. It is delightful to explore gardens without crowds and to be able to chat informally to the owners and designers. Each host is a true garden lover and keen to share. This year saw five very different gardens, in size, style, site, age and design. The garden of Yvonne Curbach (Co-ordinator of the Growing Friends), was an inspiration to those with small flat gardens, full of variety and interest. It was a privilege to wander the established peaceful gardens of Loreto, with its statues, sweeping lawns and massed flowers. The other three gardens were built on slopes, with interesting ideas for access, use of levels, hardy plantings and various vistas to be enjoyed. Thanks to those members who shared their spaces with us.

Susan Pilbeam

Yvonne Curbach's Garden

FRIENDS GROUPS CONVENORS

Admin: Office Manager Kim Nolan
Ambassadors: Trish Twaits
Biodiversity group: Terry O'Brien
Botanical Artists: Ro Bancroft
Botanikids / Education: Julie Bradby
Catering: Heather Boyd
Events: Carole Haines
Fotofriends: Ro Bancroft
Guiding: Julie Chandler
Growers/Nursery: Yvonne Curbach
History: Natalie Radomski
Exhibitions/Library: Contact Lorraine Powell
Plant Trolley: Manager Sue Rattray
Wellingtonia Liaison & Publicity for Major Events: Wendy Taylor
Wellingtonia Designer: Andrew Thomas

Involvement in our groups brings rewarding social benefits and support for our organisation. Please contact Ann in the office if you would like more information about becoming involved: 03 5342 9354
 Most groups meet in the George Longley Building.

COMMITTEE 2023

President: Terry O'Brien
Vice President: Julie Bradby
Treasurer: Kim Nolan
Minute Secretary: Natalie Radomski
General Committee: Jock Gilbert, Geoff Notman, Karen McLean

Nominated Committee Positions:

Immediate Past President: Robert Selkirk
Growing Friends: Yvonne Curbach
BotaniKids/Education: Julie Bradby
Exhibitions/Library: Lorraine Powell
Guides: Julie Chandler
History: Natalie Radomski
Hospitality/Ambassadors: Heather Boyd
Events: Carole Haines
Membership: Karen Mclean
AAFBG Rep Merrill Shulkes
Botanical Art: Ro Bancroft
BBG Foundation Rep. Terry O'Brien



The Friends are proud to recognise our Corporate Members for 2023-24



This Newsletter is distributed with the financial assistance of the City of Ballarat.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by Ballarat MailWorks, 521 Dowling Street, Wendouree



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Contributions for the Autumn Wellingtonia 2024 are due by Friday 15 March.