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FRIENDS OF GEELONG



BOTANIC GARDENS INC.



Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Inc. Newsletter

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FRIENDS OF
GEELONG
BOTANIC
GARDENS



Stephen Ryan Walk & Talk, Aster in the foreground and Winston Not Far Behind

WITTY GARDEN TOUR WITH OUR 'PLANT & PUN-LOVING' PATRON, STEPHEN RYAN

"Yes, there is a Dahlia named after me - not BY me! Dahlia 'Stephen Ryan' is typecast as - simple, single, virginal white, self-supporting and lightly scented!"

Apart from Dahlias, Stephen seemed to have many other favorite plants as he took a lucky group of us on a stroll around the Geelong Botanic Gardens- what we thought of as very familiar territory. (How surprised were we to be as he pointed out plants we may not have noticed or had known little about?) I later read that, as a collector of rare plants, he always "wants the plant I've not yet met" and later describes himself as a "Horti-cultural Tart!" favouring one type of plant for some time before flitting off to fall for another.

When we initially met Stephen at the main gates of the Geelong Botanic Gardens (GBG) he was accompanied by his corgi, appropriately named "Aster" – another link to the Dahlias which

are part of the family Asteraceae. Little Aster was almost the star of the show, making friends with other participants' dogs, large and small. However, part way through our walk, as we approached the Hansen gates, both Aster AND Stephen were upstaged briefly by a pair of ferrets (in harness) going for a walk with their owner!

We were earlier delighted to hear of Stephen's links with the GBG when, as a child, he and his father propagated rhododendrons at their family nursery in Macedon and donated them to the GBG when George Vafiopoulous was Superintendent of Parks (1959 - 1974). Stephen also knew former GBG Curator, John Arnott (2000 - 2007) back from when he (JA) worked at the Melbourne Zoo and subsequently at the GBG, RMBG (Cranbourne) and more recently, through his *Care for the Rare* project.

During one discussion of the name change of a particular plant (*Carpolepis* - a bright yellow plant from New Caledonia is now called *Metrosideros*), to which he had drawn to our attention, Stephen listed some of the many changes to botanic nomenclature (*Dichroa* now in *Hydrangea* genus, *Michaelia* now in *Magnolias*, *Mahonia* now *Berberis*), and how he used to find this very annoying having to learn new names for plants whose names he knew well. He now takes on the challenge of learning the new names as a form of mental “physical fitness” for his brain - much like others pursue the challenge of completing crosswords or sudoku on a regular basis.

While speaking of botanic names, he also made references to other early plant collectors including: GBG original curator Daniel Bunce (1857 - 1872); Robert Fortune (*Osmnathus fortuneii*) and Leonhart Fuchs (a Father of Botany) for which the colour and the plant *Fuchsia* is named. He also discussed how it was that the monks and clergy were also early collectors in places like China and Japan where no other non-locals would be allowed to travel. The plants that Stephen pointed out to us were certainly not all obvious and well known. For example he admired the Heritage roses and the purple and blue flowers on the *Clematis* in the rose garden but also Cycads, ancient trees like *Araucarias* (*A. bidwillii* - the Bunya Bunya, *A. cunninghamii* - Hoop Pine), the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia Nobilis*), Canary Island plants like the Dragon Blood Tree (*Dracaena dracos*), New Zealand plants (a Smoke Bush with the Māori name *Heketara* or Tree Daisy – *Olearia rani*), the Contorted Hazelnut or Crazy Filbert and, of course, the Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) from ancient China. The places around the world that Stephen enjoys travelling to are reflected in these varied botanic choices: Canary Islands; China; Himalayas; Madagascar; New Caledonia and New Zealand. He also talked of his other favorite plants in the GBG including our very well regarded specialist collections of **Pelargoniums and Salvias**.

The *Pelargoniums* collection originated with Daniel Bunce importing these plants to Geelong as part of the acclimatization process in the colony when the GBG was first established. A special pelargonium collection was donated to the Friends of the GBG by Chris Brown (wife of the late Mike Brown who was a passionate pelargonium breeder and with whom GBG staff regularly consulted because of his extensive knowledge. The donation included 45 spectacular regals and 72 uncommon species, including one endemic to Australia.

Stephen also praised our wonderful collection of *Salvias* and spoke of a woman called Meg Bentley from Gruyere who has one of the only four registered collections of *Salvias* in Australia and is the expert on these wonderfully diverse range of plants. In the Summer of 2019/2020, the GBG hosted a visit from Lyndi Garnett (Coordinator of the Victorian *Salvia* study Group). She met the then new head of the GBG, Ashley Filipovsky and was shown the *Salvia* collection begun by Bill Whitehead with help from Graham and Velda Ellis almost 20 years before. She was very impressed by the embankment at the rear of the Gardens that held huge stock plants of South African and California *salvias*.

Stephen ended his talk with what he cheekily called a bit of self-promotion and asked us if we would check out his You Tube Blog called “the Horti-Culturalists”. (Yes, more punning here!) Of course, as soon as I got home, I tuned into the Horti-Culturalists and saw Stephen playing the role of the haughty expert, accompanied by his amateur gardener friend, Matthew Lucas, who acts as his Q&A tag team member. The blog is thoroughly entertaining and informative, just like the live experience we all enjoyed on this wonderful Walk and Talk with Stephen on our home turf.

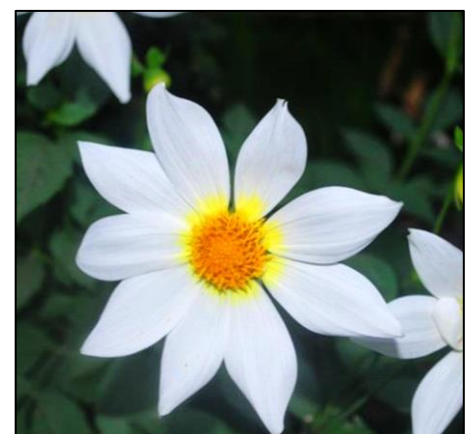
Anthea Williams



One of two ferrets in harness taking a leisurely walk through the Gardens



Spiral Thorn Tree -tall and spiky, covered in leaves which Lemurs like to hide in. Stephen remembers seeing mountain sides covered in Spiral Thorn Trees in Madagascar.



Dahlia excelsa 'Stephen Ryan'

LUCY SMITH FROM KEW GARDENS

How lucky were we, to have acclaimed world-wide botanical artist and illustrator, Lucy T. Smith, run her first Masterclass Workshop in Australia for botanical artists here in Geelong at the Geelong Botanic Gardens on the 24th/25th of January 2025. The workshop was organised by the Geelong School of Botanical Art with the support of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens. An Australian living in the UK, Lucy is an illustrator for the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew and has been teaching at RBG Kew for the past 25 years. Lucy is in great demand world-wide, running workshops in countries such as USA, Switzerland and Transylvania Romania, and now Geelong Australia.

Hear in her own words, Lucy's journey and time with us in Geelong: - "On the 24th and 25th of January this year, I had the pleasure of teaching a workshop to botanical art students at the Friends of the Geelong Botanical Gardens. This was set up thanks to a chance discussion with John Pastoriza-Pinol at the ASBA's annual conference in Pittsburgh last October, when I mentioned I might make a family visit to Melbourne during my two-yearly trip back to Australia. First John, then Pammi and Tracey jumped into action to make a masterclass happen on the theme of making detailed studies of plants in our botanical sketchbooks. Before I knew it, here I was, facing a sea of eager faces in the Friends classroom. We were provided with buckets full of wonderful plant specimens provided from the Gardens. Rather than draw and paint the same thing, students were encouraged to choose their own specimen to fully experience the journey of discovery of how to make detailed plant studies through a combination of observation, drawing and research.

an exploration of male and female flowers. The answers to some of my questions about this were, appropriately, answered only by an illustration of the plant by historic botanical artist Margaret Flockton. This led to a statement by one participant that "botanical illustrations really are useful and important!" which I think perfectly summarised our workshop. The Geelong Botanic Gardens were the perfect setting, and the team perfect hosts. I hope the students were left as inspired by their surroundings as I was, and I thank everyone for having me."
Lucy T. Smith



Class participants deep in concentration

Participants' appreciation of Lucy's teaching, her knowledge of plants, skills and techniques she so generously imparted, was overwhelmingly positive with comments such as – 'I loved every minute of it' – "I have learned to value the importance of understanding plant structure in my preparatory drawings" – "Such a world class workshop" – "I feel privileged to have met Lucy and to have attended the workshop" – "I had an epiphany, Botanical Art is amazing" – "A coup for the school, the Friends, and Geelong Gardens to have secured this wonderfully skilled artist" – "the Talks, Demonstrations, all inspirational." There was also an overwhelming response from participants that they want more workshop to enhance their learning, develop skills further and just as importantly, to have the opportunity to meet fellow/like-minded artists.

The school is listening! And we will do our best to bring more opportunities for artists in the future.

Pammi Pryor, Coordinator, Geelong School of Botanical Art



Lucy Smith demonstrating her techniques

Some faced the challenge of drawing complex Asteraceae inflorescences with their many tiny flowers; others tackled the hair seedpods of *Asclepias* with their intriguing insides. Demonstrating on the flowers of a *Lobelia*, I was faced with the question: "which way up is this supposed to go?" Researching, drawing, dissecting and colouring our subjects over the two-day workshop students learned that it was okay "not to know," and even better to try and find out! I became quite obsessed with the fallen flowers of *Brachychiton discolor* in the gardens, leading to

FRIENDS' SHIP

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens was originally formed to fill a gap in the support for the Gardens. Their aim was to promote and advocate and to remind the public and the City of Greater Geelong Council of their gem residing in Eastern Park.

The group grew as the services they provided increased from a small guiding program based on the Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to establishing, operating and working in the Teahouse for nearly 20 years and the current floriferous perennial border, instigating Botanic Art classes with expert tutors, employing an education officer to teach in an Education Programme for schools, facilitating a number of U3A courses introducing many aspects of the history of the Gardens, and of course, the Friends' Nursery where plants from the Gardens are propagated by volunteers and sold to the public. Volunteers also manage the Heritage Rose Garden and another dedicated team undertake weeding on a weekly basis. Over these almost forty years the Friends have managed to run their incorporated organisation, maintain a database of the membership, establish and operate a Public Ancillary Gift Fund and celebrate their many achievements as a group with a common purpose.



The Heritage Rose Growers Team

Each year during Volunteers Week, Friends were recognised for their service as they joined with staff from the Gardens to enjoy lunch together. They felt nurtured and cherished by the organisation and the Gardens Management. There was lots of interaction between the groups, understanding their particular roles and supporting each other.



Jayne Salmon, the late George Jones, Helena Buxton, over the years

Over almost forty years, Friendship among the volunteers has been a particular joy that made coming to the Gardens regularly not a chore but a real pleasure. Morning teas each week were a time to talk about the work, chat together, celebrate birthdays and support each other through sickness and health. Others met at the Teahouse to do the same, but we were all Friends.



The Weeders Team

Over the years there was rarely a problem getting very capable members to join the Committee of Management and they managed our business competently and professionally. Annual meetings are held and the reports reiterate the work and the administrative capabilities of the organisation. Our constitution is rigorous, and the administration and training of volunteers taken very seriously.



The Growers



The Perennial Border Team

Friends joined for a range of different reasons. Most had retired and were looking for a volunteer role that gave them hands on work in a welcoming environment. Many came from Geelong and surrounds, but others joined, having moved to the area and with a real interest in gardening and wanting to meet like-minded people. Some had very advanced horticultural and botanical skills and these were welcomed and their experiences shared to everyone's advantage.



The Guides

Friendship, as most people know is a wonderful thing and to be treasured. It is based on respect between individuals and involves having a relationship fostered by communication, spending time together, taking care and remembering special occasions. In life most people have friends, some closer than others but nevertheless important in our lives. Sometimes we lose touch for a period but when we get together again it seems as though no time has passed as we pick up where we left off. The friendships I have made as a Friend of Geelong Botanic Gardens are amazing and they have enriched my life in so many ways.

Luanne Thornton

*photos from the Friends' archives.



Allison Martland and Jenny Dean, a picture of Friendship

A SNIPPET FROM STEPHEN RYAN

When I was asked to become patron of the Friends' group I must say I was highly flattered and appreciated the fact that the group thought me a worthy successor to Philip Moore. What the Friends probably didn't appreciate was my longer-term connection with the gardens. Way back when George Vafiopulous was the curator, probably sometime in the early 1970's, he met my father, a young and aspiring nurseryman from Mt. Macedon.

George had been creating an area under the Bunya pines with acidic soil with the idea of a Rhododendron dell and had been blocked by the city as they saw it as inappropriate for Geelong so wouldn't fund the idea. Not to be thwarted he and Dad hatched a plan whereby we would supply young Rhododendrons for free and he would give us access to the garden to get propagation material. I well remember walking the garden with George and Dad collecting cuttings and divisions and I'm sure

some of these specimens propagated by us are still in evidence today.

George also had one of the largest and most productive lemon trees I have ever seen growing at the gardens' residence and he told the recipe he used to create this wonder of the Citrus world. He would measure out 56 grams of Washing Soda (sold as Lectric Soda) per foot in height of the tree in spring and again in early autumn. He would create some holes around the drip line with a crowbar and divide the crystals and cover the holes. I have used this technique over the years and recommended it to others with great results.

So, the gardens and I go back a considerable way, and I am happy this connection is still there.

Stephen Ryan, FGBG Patron

VALE ANN NICOL

Ann Nicol became a member of the Friends, having retired from teaching, in the early 1990's. She was an enthusiastic and active volunteer, co-ordinating the Growers' Nursery with George Young, a retired GBG staff member, who joined the Friends, from 1992. She carried on the work of Lesley Stewart and Heather Mayall. Plants initially offered for sale on the first Wednesday of each month, which was extended to every Wednesday due to demand. She joined the committee and served from 1994 -1997

and again in 1999, continuing her work in the nursery as a Grower and later with the labelling team. She was awarded a Life Membership in 2015. Her son was a pilot with Emirates, stationed in Dubai, so she and Des travelled regularly to many places from his base. She regaled us with their many adventures at morning tea when she returned. A number of Ann's Friends attended her memorial service at East Geelong recently.

THE NEED FOR RELEVANCE

I love volunteering for Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens. What suits me about this group is the volunteers' age range, the differing abilities and the sharing of knowledge and experiences with each other. Within this group there is no judgement, it's ok and acceptable if I am not "fit to work" or not at peak performance. I am made to feel welcome and not forced to compete or to work to the standard of my younger days. Within our current climate, to find happiness, I desperately need to retrieve the excitement and feelings of the past, when retirement and volunteering were a pleasant pastime; to remember why I joined FGBG and to re-immense myself in the wonders of GBG.

But, last year was stressful in many ways. So, unfortunately, during the year, anxiety and negativity slowly inched its way into my being.

What can I do about it? I could go to the doctor and say "I'm tired, I can't fight anymore". He might say, take this pill and in the morning you will have more energy and be able to cope.

But I have a better way of coping: walk around the Geelong Botanic Gardens! This can calmly stimulate the senses. I can get lost in the greenery, relax on the lawns, search for the rare and unusual, and best of all, it's alfresco and free.

The following may help you too:-

LOOK UP! Unfortunately, these days, this activity is rare. As we spend our time pouring over our devices, this seems unnecessary, because all knowledge and living is supposedly in that device. Wrong! We need it, because it is restful and can be so surprising, if given a chance. Looking up, I saw an endless sky of azure blue, so pure and clear, not one cloud. Then I realised there are splashes of delicate tree foliage there to complement the blue. Wonderful! Looking up, I also saw a flock of Sulphur Crested cockatoos fly by, screeching as if they too were stressed. Calm down, I said to them. Calm down, I said to myself.

LOOK ALONG THE PATH from the old entry gate towards the Hitchcock fountain. Can you see the basket weave pattern on the trunks of the palms? They stand majestically along both sides. The bollards of Daniel Bunce and a lady visitor welcome you in. What is the lady hiding behind her back?

WARM UP in the Conservatory. Go to the tropics without the long flight. My favourite is the Fijian Fan Palm swaying in the warm breeze. It protects the exquisite white flowers of the plants under it.

SMELL the roses. These are Heritage roses, old and rare. Not available from a quick trip to a commercial nursery.

INDULGE at the Tea House enjoying your coffee and special treat; there's shelter here and comfy tables and chairs. This building was an innovation of the Friends. Volunteers manned the café for close to 20 years. What dedication!

LOOK OUT across the lawns and relax. Can you see the kaleidoscope of colour as you look around?

FEEL the textured bark of the cork oak, *Quercus suber*. I love trees. Get up close and personal to a tree; which one do you want to hug?

SEARCH for something unusual. I found a bunch of bananas in the *Musa acuminata Plantain*.

HIDE AWAY. Can you find the park bench that is hidden under the Moreton Bay Fig, *Ficus macrophylla*? It's a cool, shady spot. This tree can show you how to stand out from the crowd. The inscription on the seat says: "Donated from the Gift Fund of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens 2011".

But most of all, BREATHE! Make each breath long and deep.

I have a desperate need to feel useful and occupied, valued and relevant.

Our Geelong Botanic Gardens are old and have contemporary relevance. Now that I am old, I also have a need for relevance.

Nadia Zacchigna

EXCURSION TO THE DANDENONG RANGES

A full day out turned out to be a perfectly timed, colourful and informative tour in the beautiful Dandenong Ranges.

We organised for Andrew Rouse from the Australian Rhododendron Society to meet us at our first stop, the Olinda Botanic Gardens. Here we learnt about the Vireya sub genus of the Rhododendron species and of the two native varieties discovered in the cloud forests high up in the Australian tropics where it is cool to cold at night and shrouded in cloud and mist. This discovery inspired and led to the formation of the new Cloud Forest Garden which we were delighted to see.

We moved on to the spectacular Chelsea Garden display which is based on the winning entry at the famous Chelsea Gardens Flower Show in the UK. Submitted by the well-known Australian Landscape designer Phillip Johnson, it has received significant funding to become a beautiful addition the Botanic Gardens in Olinda.

Walking through the gardens we were surrounded by rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias, towering eucalypts, ferns, and views to the mountains beyond. This was the perfect time to visit with everything in abundant flower.

From here we moved to the Woolrich lookout for a picnic lunch, enjoying views across to the Great Dividing Range.

After lunch we visited Cloudehill Gardens and Nursery, part of the Diggers Club group of properties. The manicured and sculptured gardens, bluebell and daffodil meadow, weeping maples and other treasures from a bygone era, terraces, landscaped nooks, forest walk, all filled one with inspiration, nostalgia, and ideas. Jeremy at Cloudehill does an amazing job keeping this 5-hectare garden in pristine condition with few staff.



Floral sculpture at the Chelsea display garden

Our final stop was at Kawarra Native Botanic Garden and nursery in Kallista. This was truly an amazing eye opener with incredible landscaping with native plants showing their diversity and colour. This was the favourite stop for many and their nursery was also a popular opportunity to pick up something to take home.

We headed off home in the hands of our trusty bus driver Paul and arrived back in Geelong just in time to dash home for dinner. A wonderful day out with members and non-members of the Friends.



Manicured hedges at Cloudehill Gardens

The Australian Rhododendron Society welcomes new members and is based at the Olinda Botanic Gardens.

Contact: Email: vicrhodo@gmail.com.

INVITATION TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE

During September Denise Feldman, our immediate past President, received an invitation to attend a reception at Government House Melbourne to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Victorian Historic Register, which includes Eastern Park and Geelong Botanic Gardens.

by the Chair of Heritage Victoria, Professor Phillip Goad. Speakers emphasised the importance of listing historic objects, places and buildings on the register to ensure they are protected in perpetuity. Over 2,000 objects are on the Register including buildings of significance such as the National Gallery of Victoria and objects such as the electric sign at Sailors' Rest Geelong and an Aids quilt. To my surprise my name and the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens was mentioned in one of the speeches.



Tuesday 1st October arrived and at the gate to Government House my ID was checked, and I entered the manicured gardens surrounding the grand 19th century building. Staff were readily available to attend to the needs of guests and every moment was precisely timed.

I did not personally know any attendees. However, I did recognise two ABC home restoration presenters and after meeting the Mayor of Bendigo, Andrea Metcalf, we kept each other company for the evening. Throughout the evening a generous selection of beverages and finger food was provided. For you foodies they included spoons with seared Kingfish, mini rice paper rolls, tiny vol-au-vents, slow cooked lamb on rosti and more.

At 6.00 pm the Governor, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner, entered. She was accompanied

At the end of the evening, I requested a taxi and to my surprise a VIP car arrived to take me to Southern Cross Station.

It was an honour to attend this event on behalf of the Friends. I was pleased that the work of the Friends' has been formally recognised of being of value to the State of Victoria.

Denise Feldman

CELEBRATING THE WOLLEMI PINE 30 YEARS ON

In 2024 Van Berkel Distributors proudly commemorated the landmark 30th anniversary of the rediscovery of the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemi nobilis*), one of the world's oldest and rarest plants. This extraordinary species, dating back to the time of the dinosaurs, was believed extinct until its remarkable rediscovery in 1994 in a secluded rainforest canyon within the Greater Blue Mountains area.

Prior to the tree's public release in 2006, the Council of Head of Australian Botanic Gardens, in essence the major capital Botanic Gardens across Australia, were initially allocated the first Wollemi pine plants on the proviso they planted the trees in cages; sadly however, Geelong was not included.

A donation provided funds for a tree to be acquired for Geelong Botanic Gardens and in December 2005 our Wollemi was ceremoniously planted by George Jones, complete with root anchor to ensure its safety, and making us one of the first regional Botanic Gardens in Australia to have a Wollemi. Twenty years on, our tall and slender specimen is now towering close to adjoining tree canopies and taking on a slight lean while another younger tree has been planted adjacent to our original tree and others have been planted in elsewhere in the Gardens.

Thought to be extinct and only known by fossil records the Wollemi Pine was rediscovered on 10th September 1994 in a remote part of the Wollemi National Park in the Blue Mountains approximately 200km west of Sydney by NSW National Parks Ranger David Noble who stumbled upon the find while abseiling in the Wollemi National Park near Sydney. The Wollemi is one of the world's oldest and rarest plants dating back to the time of the dinosaurs and belonging to the 200-million-year-old *Araucariaceae* family. The Wollemi pine is a relation to the Kauri, Norfolk Island, Hoop, Bunya and Monkey Puzzle pines.

With fewer than 100 adult trees existing in the wild, the Wollemi Pine stands as a symbol of resilience and hope and over the past three decades, extensive research and conservation efforts have been dedicated to safeguarding its survival.

Wollemi Pine seeds and cuttings were collected from the grove so a population could be established outside the canyon as an insurance policy against any disaster. The initial propagation was undertaken by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, until a commercial arrangement was established as Wollemi Australia (a partnership between Queensland's DPI Forestry, and a commercial Nursery) before its initial public release in 2006.

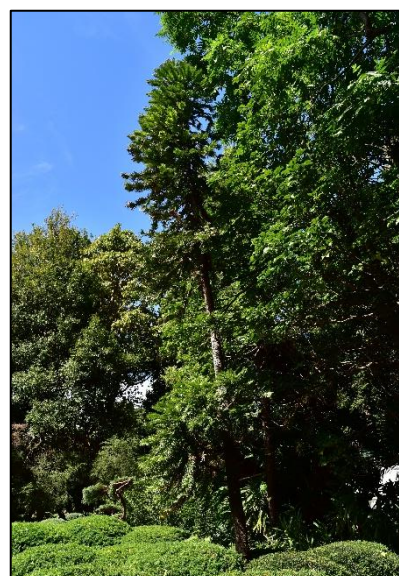
The Wollemi Pine was introduced to the world with a public exhibition held at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, culminating in the international Sotheby's auction of the 'Collector's Edition' trees taking place in October 2006. Several preview events showcasing the Wollemi Pine also took place in London, Frankfurt and Tokyo in the lead up to the Sydney based auction.

This attractive conifer has unusual dark green foliage, bubbly chocolate bark and sprouts multiple trunks. Male and female cones are produced by the same tree on the tips of separate branches. Although precocious Wollemi Pines have developed both cones when approximately 10 years-old, it is generally assumed that a Wollemi Pine will become sexually mature and display both cones between 12 and 15 years of age. It is fast-growing with the largest wild Wollemi Pine in the rainforest gorge being 40m tall with a main trunk of 63cm in width. In optimal conditions a young Wollemi Pine (up to 18 months of age) will grow up to half a metre each year, while a more mature plant may grow around one metre per year to a height of 10 to 15 metres – perhaps reaching a height of twenty metres during its lifetime if conditions are perfect - medium to low light conditions, may cause growth slower growth.

Gail Thomas

George Jones and Ian Rogers planting the Wollemi Pine in 2005.

Photo: Gail Thomas



The Wollemi Pine in 2024.

Photo: Gail Thomas

A BLOOMING MARVELOUS FRIENDSHIP

“Peggy gave me this amazing plant last year when she was about to move to Melbourne. I have been nursing it carefully since then and this is the result early today. (8 January 2025) Both huge blooms came out in an hour and the perfume is incredible. It will only last for a couple of days so if you wish to see it- call around.”

Barrie Satchell’s email message is to his Growing Friends inviting them to come and enjoy the Stanhope Orchid, a gift he received from another Friend of Geelong Botanic Gardens and former Committee member, Peggy Muntz. It is an example of sharing the joy of plants that we experience so often as Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens.



Stanhopea Vanilla Orchid
or Upside-Down Orchid flowers

The Stanhope Orchid is a genus of the orchid family from Central and South America, the abbreviation used in the horticultural trade is Stan. The genus is named for the 4th Earl of Stanhope, president of the Medico-Botanical Society of London and a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1807.

Stanhopea Vanilla Orchid or Upside-Down Orchid flowers only last 3 to 5 days and open in succession as reported by Barrie. They are epiphytic orchids; their most unusual feature is that the flowers grow downwards, and they are also highly prized for their distinctive fragrance. Years ago, when the first Stanhope was grown at Kew, the gardeners wondered why it never flowered. Then one day the pot was accidentally smashed open, and they noticed flower buds at the bottom!

The act of caring for a potted orchid may also be seen as a metaphor for nurturing a relationship. Orchids require attention and proper care to thrive much like any meaningful relationship. By gifting potted orchids, you implicitly acknowledge the recipient’s importance in your life and your willingness to invest time and effort into maintaining that bond.

Orchids, as a gift, can symbolize a variety of meanings, including luxury, love, beauty and strength. They say: “I admire your strength and perseverance!”

Peggy’s gift to Barrie may suggest something along these lines and if so, is very appropriate.

(With thanks to Wikipedia for the botanical description. 16/01/2025)

Anthea Williams

PLANT IN FOCUS

Amorphophallus titanum

The flowering of the Titan Arum, as it also called, attracts great public interest because the ‘flower’ is huge, flowering is infrequent, and it is accompanied by a strong smell that humans find repulsive.

Flower size

This is, by no means, a large flower. The Corpse Flowers are quite small. The largest flower on earth (*Rafflesia arnoldii*), also called a Corpse Flower, has flowers more than 130 times the size of the Titan Arum flower.

The actual *Amorphophallus* flowers are inside the big sheath (called a **spathe**) near the bottom of the yellow column (the **spadix**). There are between 450 and 5,000 separate male and female flowers, each only 2-3 mm across. The other individual corpse flower, below, is 700-1100 mm wide. The Titan Arum flowers are shown on page 2. Its whole display, including all the small flowers is called an **inflorescence**.

This inflorescence is also not particularly large. You have probably seen others and not given them a second thought.

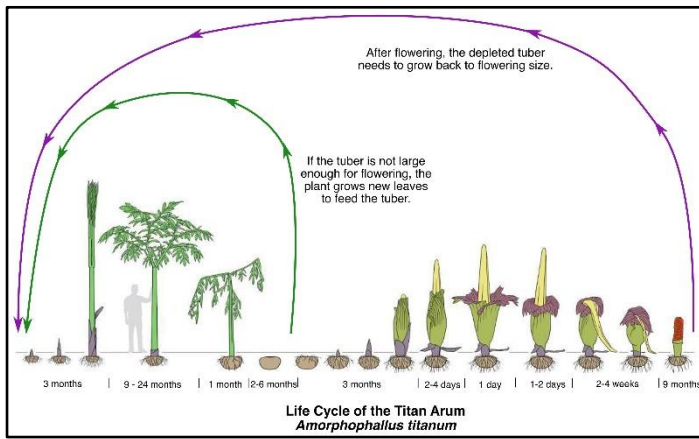
Just outside the windows of the Conservatory, there is palm tree, *Livistona australis*, Cabbage-Tree Palm, which has bigger flowers and just as many. Before it flowers, these are held in a large, stiff, brown sheath that you will often see under a tree in flower.

The plant with the largest inflorescence is the Talipot palm *Corypha umbraculifera*, from southern India and Sri Lanka. This plant dies after setting seed. (**monocarpic**).

This palm’s inflorescence, of up to 24 million flowers, grows up to 9 m long and 12 m wide.

The flowers

If you could see from high above the *Amorphophallus* inflorescence, looking down into the red spathe, you would see rows and rows of white male flowers, with red female flowers below. None have need of petals.



Deciduous Corpse Flower

Like many plants with bulbs and tubers, this plant dies down between growing seasons. Like the Illawarra Flame tree, when it is in flower, it has no leaves. After the fruit has ripened, the Corpse flower plant is just a tuber (like a potato or bulb). Being a tropical plant growing in a heated glass house it does not have a distinct season for shedding its leaves. The sequence is shown in the following diagram.

The tuber is a store of energy-giving starch and other nutrients needed by the plant for growth, flowering and the development of its seed-containing fruit. The huge single leaf captures energy from sunlight, water and carbon dioxide to produce sugar and starch. Flowering takes a lot resources from the tuber. The tuber can lose 20 - 30 kg during flowering, so, some plants don't survive flowering. If grown from seed, it can take more than 10 years for the tuber to reach flowering size.

Flowering

Following the green arrows on the diagram, the tuber grows one huge leaf. For 9 months to 2 years the leaf sends its starch into the tuber and then dies and is shed. After a period of rest, this is repeated until the tuber reaches flowering size. It then proceeds along the right-hand part of the diagram. The pollination occurs over 1 or 2 days. After flowering and fruiting, it takes 3 to 7 years for the tuber to reach flowering size again. The sequence follows the purple arrow once and then the green arrow multiple times to rebuild the tuber. After many years, tubers can reach 180 kg.

The odour and pollination

The flower produces its odour at night to attract the insects that are most effective pollinators. It produces a range of chemicals (shown on the next page). Have you every smelt a dead possum or dead rat? That odour is similar to what this plant smells like for a few hours when its flowers are ready for pollination, ie. its scent smells to us like a rotting animal.

It smells so horrid to us humans because our ancestors developed an acute sense of smell for chemicals called **thiols**. These thiols have a Sulphur atom bonded to a Hydrogen atom, with a place where other collections of atoms can attach to the Sulphur atom. You might have smelt, heard or learned about Rotten Egg gas. This gas has a second Hydrogen atom bonded to the Sulphur, forming Hydrogen Sulphide.

Thiols are produced by rotting flesh, amongst other undesirable foods. If we ate a food with this smell, there is a strong chance of food poisoning and possible death. So, this sense of smell is a lifesaver. Our noses can detect as little as 3 parts in 10 billion of many thiols. So we can detect this smell from some distance away. There are few other plants whose scent seems so strong. (eg. Jasmine).



Amorphophallus titanum (Araceae) Titan Arum
Foto ©W.Barthlott, Bot.Gard. Bonn

Insects that are attracted to the smell of dead animals come to these flowers. In our environment that may be blow flies, but in Sumatra it is often carrion beetles. They fly into the flower and then start walking around searching for the rotting flesh. While the thiols are being produced, either the female flowers are receptive to pollen, or the male flowers are releasing pollen. During female pollination, the spathe closes over the flowers making it difficult for the pollinators to escape. After that stage, the spathe releases the captives, which then crawl out picking up pollen as they leave.

After flowering, the spadix collapses quickly, and the spathe falls away. The pollinated female flowers then continue their development to produce a column of orange fruit, with seeds for the next generation.

Heating the Spadix

To ensure that the smell is spread widely the plant needs to produce a lot of the odour chemicals and to disperse them widely. The amount of these chemicals in the air is increased by heating the chemicals to evaporate them faster. This **thermogenesis** is where the spadix comes into its own.

Many aroids produce heat in the spadix. There is a remarkable aroid that sustains its heat production for days to melt its way through the thawing snow and provide a comfortable habitat for the fertilising insects.



Amorphophallus titanum (Araceae) Titan Arum
Just about to open and after opening

DIARY DATES AT A GLANCE

JUBAEA SUBMISSIONS for the next Edition are due by 6 January 2025.
All articles including high resolution photos (jpeg) can be sent to the FGBG Office



FEBRUARY

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'PERENNIAL & SILVER BORDERS'

Sunday 9 February, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Geelong Botanic Gardens has an impressive display of perennial plants and silver plants in its borders. Come and learn how these plants not only have the ability to conserve water but at the same time offer a colourful addition to our gardens. Gold coin donation appreciated.

WELCOMING SENIORS TO GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS

Thursday 20 & 27 February 2025, 9.30 to 11.30 AM

Free Event including GUIDED WALK & MORNING TEA

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens will host a special guided walk for Geelong Seniors. You will be in the hands of trained Guides offering an introduction to Geelong's garden jewel, Geelong Botanic Gardens. This will be followed by a professionally catered morning tea. Maximum 50 people each date. This event has been supported by a City of Greater Geelong Positive Ageing grant.

CHINESE BRUSH PAINTING WORKSHOP

Saturday-Sunday 22-23 February, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Experienced tutor Stephen Cassettari will introduce you to the exquisite art of Chinese Brush Painting, using a few deft strokes to create works depicting the beauty and simplicity of nature. Learn this traditional art of single brush stroke and double colour loading, to produce the classic subjects of the Four Seasons in a fascinating 2-day workshop. Stephen will also cover the Tradition-History-Philosophy of Chinese Brush Painting. Suitable for all levels from beginners to advanced. Left-handers catered for. Morning tea included. Capped at 12 participants. \$150 members or \$160 non-members.

GARDEN TOUR AND PLANT SALE, EAST GEELONG

Monday 24 February, 10.30 am to 12.30 pm

A late summer garden has been lovingly created by member, who has opened her garden many times but is excited to show us her newly styled garden. Reflecting the need for water conservation and drought proofing our gardens, Helena has been thoughtfully working towards these goals. Join the Friends for morning tea and the popular Friends' member's plant sale that is usually held in Spring, in this wonderful large productive garden. Address and details will be provided after payment. \$25 members or \$35 non-members.

MARCH

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'ECHOS OF THE PAST'

Sunday 9 March, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Explore how the political, social and scientific trends of three centuries affected the development of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Discover how the trends of the times affected the layout and design of sections of the Gardens and how they still speak to us today. Gold coin donation appreciated.

GUEST SPEAKER - STEPHEN RYAN 'THE LEGACY OF ELLIS ROWAN'

Monday 10 March, 6.30 – 8.30 pm

CWA Hall, East Geelong- Free Entry – Bookings Essential

Ellis Rowan was a world-famous Australian artist who will be honoured with a public statue in Mt Macedon where she lived. Mount Macedon and District Horticultural Society has commissioned the life-size bronze sculpture of Ellis Rowan, who explored Australia and remote parts of the world hunting for wildflowers, rare plants, insects and birds to paint. Ellis was a prolific artist from the 1870s to 1922, winning the approval of botanists and the patronage of Queen Victoria.

Join the Friends for supper and to hear our patron Stephen Ryan talk about Ellis's contribution to botany and the art world. You will have the opportunity to donate to the appeal for the statue honouring Ellis's legacy.

ROYAL MELBOURNE BOTANIC GARDENS COACH TRIP

Friday 21 March

Friends of the Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens will host us for an early Autumn one hour tour of the beautiful and historic garden, followed by an opportunity to browse and buy at the Friend's plant nursery. BYO lunch or eat at the lake café, enjoy this beautiful time of year. The coach will drop us at one entrance and pick up from another, it will be a relaxing and not too strenuous day for all to join in. Morning and afternoon tea included.

\$75 members and \$85 non- members

APRIL

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'THE DOSE THAT MAKES THE POISON'

Sunday 20 April, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Our most popular brewed drinks are of course tea and coffee. Why are they so popular? It's because they contain caffeine, an ingredient that makes these drinks so refreshing. But caffeine is a poison. Come for a guided walk in the serene Geelong Botanic Gardens to discover some of the more sinister things growing there - plants that we eat or drink that are in fact poisonous. Gold coin donation appreciated.

FGBG 40th ANNIVERSARY CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH in the Gardens

Friday 4 April

The first event for our celebratory year is a morning reception. The invited guests will include many outside persons who have contributed to the Friends and GBG and will include our current active volunteers. Future events will include all Friends, past and present.

GEELONG CEMETERY WALK AND TALK BY CHRIS HUDGEL

Thursday 24 April, 2.00 – 3.30 pm

Geelong Eastern Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries in Victoria, with scenic grounds overlooking Geelong, Corio Bay and the You Yangs, rich in history. All are welcome to join the Friends and enjoy an informative tour of Geelong Cemetery, led by entertaining guide Chris Hudgel from the Cemeteries Trust. The tour will focus on the stories of "residents" with a link to Geelong Botanic Gardens or the horticulture world of the Geelong area. \$35 members and \$40 non-members.

*Overpage for May events.

MAY

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'TREES & SHRUBS SUITABLE FOR THE HOME GARDEN'

Sunday 11 May, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

The Geelong Botanic Gardens are noted for their majestic trees. There are also many smaller trees and interesting shrubs suitable for the home garden which will be highlighted on this special guided walk. Join your guide, explore the Botanic Gardens landscape and relate it to your own garden. Gold coin donation appreciated.

MACEDON THREE GARDENS AUTUMN - SELF DRIVE TOUR

Tuesday 13 May 10.30am - 3.30pm

Car-pool with friends for a great day out in late Autumn, visiting Friends patron Stephen Ryans' private rambling "Tugurium" garden at Mt Macedon, commencing with a delicious morning tea before the

tour. At 12pm a home-style 2 course lunch at the Macedon Horticultural Society Hall, followed by tours of two more glorious private gardens, will complete a wonderful day for garden lovers. All-inclusive ticket and all welcome. \$60 members and \$70 non-members.

FRIENDS VOLUNTEER WEEK SOUP LUNCH

Wednesday 21 May, 12.30 - 2.30pm

Venue TBC

All our wonderful Friends Volunteers are invited to come together for what has become something of a tradition for the volunteers – a delicious soup lunch crafted by our own catering team. It's a chance to unite and enjoy each other's company for a few hours of friendship and recognition of a job well done at the Friends.

FREE EVENT.

FGBG GIFT FUND

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Gift Fund is registered with the Australian Taxation Office to receive donations, which are tax-deductible. The Gift Fund currently has \$430,659.68. The Fund may only be used to support special projects and programs within, and initiated by, Geelong Botanic Gardens. It may not be used to support the Friends or Friends activities.

To make a donation to the GIFT FUND online
go to the Friends' website www.friendsgbg.org.au

BECOME A FGBG MEMBER

Members have the opportunity to meet Friends with similar interests, from the region to enjoy the many activities associated with the gardens.

- Learn more about the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park
- Join social activities, guest speakers, film nights and tours to other gardens and places of interest
- Use the Botanic Gardens Reference Library and Friends' Lending Library
- Receive the *Members' Update* (monthly) and *Jubaea* Newsletter (3 per year) outlining recent news, what's happening in the Gardens and provides a program of events and activities for the coming month
- Receive discounts from selected local businesses (FGBG membership card required)
- Receive a *Member's Discount* on most Friends' events and activities including the Geelong School of Botanical Art program, merchandise and purchases from the Friends' Nursery (current membership card required).

BECOME A MEMBER ONLINE AT www.friendsgbg.org.au

or pop into the Friends' office at the rear of the gardens. 03 5229 0071 info@friendsgbg.org.au



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Secretary: Luanne Thornton

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