

Who is our Patron?

I thought as the new kid on the block that some of you might like to know a bit more about the person you have asked to be the patron of the "Friends", but before I do I feel the need to thank the group for the honour of being the titular head!

I also found it quite amusing when I told a close friend that this had happened and he said "Oh you have got to that age then!" It might well seem that I have as a couple of years ago I was also installed as the patron of the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria.

So who am I and what is my background in horticulture?

One could almost say I was born to horticulture or at least took it in by osmosis living as I do at Mt. Macedon a true Mecca for all plant lovers.

My father started a plant nursery when I was 10 and I was in up to my neck immediately, serving customers, potting, weeding and propagating. As soon as I could I studied horticulture to obtain some papers and legitimacy and have spent the rest of my life from 1980 running my own specialist nursery Dicksonia Rare Plants.

I joined the Mt. Macedon Horticultural Society as a ten year old and by the age of nineteen was president and still am!

My media career started as an eighteen year old when I started a weekly column for a local newspaper and morphed into writing for several journals including that of the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria. Things didn't stop there however as my dad being the perpetual entrepreneur got us a gig doing a gardening TV program with BTV 6 in Ballarat called "I've got Gardenitis" which was syndicated and lasted for about two years.

I have also written three books of my own as well as doing entries for two huge tomes, Botanica and Flora.

The lecture circuit also became a major part of what I did and there can't be many horticultural societies and garden clubs that I haven't spoken for in the state and I've even spoken interstate and the Pacific North West in America where I did four talks.

Radio beckoned and for quite some time I did Thursday afternoon with Derrick Guille which came about due to my long involvement with 3CR community radio that has now spanned over thirty years. I now do Saturday mornings on ABC Melbourne with Mat Preston every second week. I also followed Peter Cundall as host of Gardening Australia for three years.

My mother once said "if you want something done then ask a busy person to do it" and I live by that adage so apart from all of the above my partner Craig and I also lead garden tours for Australians Studying Abroad and Next year will be Madeira and the Azores and 2025 will be Normandy and Brittany.

Well I hope this has given you all an insight into my background and may I do the "Friends" proud during my tenure as patron.

Stephen Ryan