

S P R I N G 2 0 1 1

Papyrus

Newsletter of the Friends of Burnley Gardens Inc.

No. 52, October 2011



FOBG Activities

See our website for
upcoming events for 2012
<http://www.fobg.org.au/>



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Membership Secretary
(cfERG3@bigpond.com) or
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6861) if you would like to
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communications from us.

From the editors

Welcome to our second edition for 2011: we hope you enjoy our spring offerings! We're very happy to receive feedback and suggestions for future editions (smmurphy@unimelb.edu.au). We've just held an informative AGM, and enjoyed the Grand Specimen Table run by Jenny Bear, Jill Kellow and Fran Mason.

(Photo credits for this edition belong to Jan Chamberlain, Mary-Jane Gething, Sue Murphy, Andrew Smith and John Fordham.

Save the Date!

**Saturday 12th
November**

End of Year Gathering

Join us for dinner in
the gardens with a
game of boules

5 pm onwards

**Saturday 10th
December**

Summer Fruit Tree Pruning workshop

Chris England
Merrywood Plants

10 am – 1 pm

**Tuesday 14th
February**

Valentine's Day Celebration

FOBG's year begins with
our traditional dinner in
the Pear Tree Courtyard

7 pm onwards

From the Chair

John Fordham

With a successful open day behind us, (patronage up along with receipts) we look forward to our AGM in October. Our membership tally continues to seesaw up and down, but the trend line is mostly upward. This is most gratifying and we hope we are engaging all of you (perhaps not all the time, but most of it).

A very large thank you to all our Committee and the volunteers who helped on Open Day: what we achieved was truly amazing, and it certainly makes for a much more enjoyable day when the load is spread amongst many instead of a few. Please remember, we are always in need of more volunteers! A list of our Open Day helpers is on page 5.

We had a wonderful night when our last speaker Noel Fitzpatrick talked on the truffle industry in Australia. With French truffles selling for \$3,000 a kilo and the Italian varieties up to \$7,000 I'm starting to wonder if I'm in the right industry! We were treated to a little hunting display within the confines of the lecture theatre, complete with truffle dog (the pig was unavailable). Most impressive!

Those of you who have been wandering around the Native Garden area will have noticed that the mud brick hut is now complete, with FOBG providing funds for its restoration of both the rendered walls (in 2010) and the shingle roof (this year). It's now in good shape for many years to come. Currently, the Committee is looking at designs for a set of gates for the main entrance into the field station. Those of you



The newly shingled mud brick hut in the native garden

who came on the tree trip may recall us stopping briefly for a photo at a wrought iron company at Daylesford: we've begun discussions with this craftsman, and look forward to seeing his interpretation of our ideas. We're keen to incorporate fruit motifs into the design, as befits the former experimental orchard.

I will lead a sub-committee down to Geelong and environs before this year is out, to investigate the next instalment of our study of Victoria's significant trees. This event will run on Sunday 15 April 2011 and, if the response this year is anything to go by, will be well subscribed. We will include Werribee Mansion and Geelong Botanic Gardens on the itinerary, as well as visiting the largest Moreton Bay Fig in Victoria. If possible we will include a visit to a native plant nursery, for

a spot of retail therapy.

Let's hope that the coming summer is kind to our gardens. I believe the jury is still out on a wet or dry season, so we'll wait and see.

Best wishes to you all.

In the Gardens

Andrew Smith

I write today (9 September) during one of the final wintry blasts for 2011, although I wouldn't count on it! Melbourne's weather is too unpredictable to be sure of anything.

A great deal has been achieved in the Gardens during the winter season and the Friends have played an important role in these activities. You will have seen the photo in John's Chair Report, of the mud brick hut in the Native Garden, sporting its new shingle roof. The roof restoration was made possible by the



The questionable combination of pink *Prunus* with red *Chaenomeles*

funds donated by the Friends, and is the finishing touch to the previous re-rendering work, undertaken and paid for by the Friends in 2010. The wonderful smell of the Canadian western red cedar shingles permeates the whole area and according to the shingle installer, a fine Yorkshireman, it will still be looking good in 40 years' time. (Do I hear you say we won't be here to see it? I won't be either!)

Many of the granitic sand paths in the Native Garden have been re-topped, and with the eucalyptus mulch on the beds, the whole area looks well tended. The spring display of the flowering grassland species is just about to start, so make sure you make a visit in the next few weeks.

The late winter display of the flowering quince, with the border of flowering *Prunus* underneath, on the eastern side of the main building, was far better than recent years. The previous wet year has produced a superior floral display for this and other shrubs in the Gardens. The colour combination of pale pink *Prunus* and the orange-tangerine red of the quince has always raised some mixed responses. Jill Kellow was always one not to be convinced of its compatibility but I have a soft spot for them due to its invigorating quality: it livens me up for Spring!

From the Membership Secretary's Desk *Carol Ferguson*

New members

Below is a list of people who recently joined the FOBG. We thank you for your memberships, which add to the ongoing support and improvement of the Burnley Gardens.

Malcolm Deveson, Marie Kehoe, Bruce Draper, Jean De Campo, Julian Simpson, Andrea Hamer, Jane McKee, Joanne Gaffy, Rae Jones-Evans, Jennifer Bear, Jane Elliott, Gail Willingham, Virginia Harris, Mirini Lang, Lena Smarrelli, Brigid Robertson, Catherine Alexander, Christopher Norquay & Dawn King, Andrea & Andrew Bendrups, Janet O'Hehir & Garry Moorfield, Helen Benoy & family, Carey Hawker and Niki Vergados.

"Old" members

Congratulations to three members who reached a 10-year membership milestone: Susan Murphy, Fran Mason and Doug Vonier, who joined FOBG in July and October 2001. Sue, Fran and Doug are still active within the group and we thank them for their continued support.

Membership renewals

In June of each year Membership Renewal Accounts are sent to members who choose to pay annually. At 30th June 2011 membership was at 179 - our best ever. Thanks to those members who renewed promptly: this makes the Membership Secretary's job so much easier.

Thirty members decided not to renew for the 2011/2012 year. This big drop in numbers in one hit was most disappointing, however with the Burnley Gardens Open Day in July, our August guest speaker (Noel Fitzpatrick talking on truffles), and a number of Burnley students joining up, we have almost caught up. At the time of publication of this edition of the Newsletter, membership stands at 172.

Joining the FOBG and the FOBG Committee

If any member knows of someone who would like to join the FOBG please encourage him or her to do so. Our upcoming program of events is interesting and varied: thanks to John, Michèle and the Committee for keeping the activities coming. Membership application forms can be accessed via the FOBG web page www.fobg.org.com or pick up a form at Burnley Campus Reception. My aim is to reach 200 members in 2012!

Although this edition of the newsletter was not published prior to the AGM, the Committee is able to co-opt members onto the committee at any time so if you are interested in joining us, it's never too late! Committee meetings are held monthly, usually at 5pm just prior to the Guest Speaker event which starts at 7pm: it all happens conveniently in one evening.

Please contact Andrew Smith (a.smith@unimelb.edu.au or 9250 6861) or email me cferg3@bigpond.com if you are interested in joining the FOBG Committee.

Friends With Benefits

As a member you will receive

- * Papyrus newsletter 3 times a year featuring our events and activities and current projects in the Gardens
- * Discounts for most Friends' activities including guest speakers, garden visits, and botanical illustration classes
- * Opportunities to purchase plants and FOBG merchandise at member meetings

Your membership also provides opportunities to support the historic Burnley Gardens by

- * Joining the Friendly Guides, conducting garden tours
- * Helping with the Cultural Collection
- * Working in the Gardens
- * Engraving plant labels
- * Growing plants with the propagation group

You may also

- * Attend the Burnley seminar series
- * Use the Burnley library during business hours (but not borrow books)



Open Day Thanks!

Thanks to all our volunteers on Open Day. This was a record number of helpers, with 25% of our membership offering their assistance with our activities. We hope we've included everyone who was there on the list below, and that you can all come back next year! As a thank you, our helpers' names were put into a hat at the AGM for a draw for a pair of Felco secateurs, a \$50 Green Hip clothing voucher, and a FOBG hat: congratulations to winners Judith Scurfield, Sue Bendel and Maggie Power, respectively.

Alison Thom, Andrea Hamer, Andrew Smith, Anna Wilkinson, Anne Bishop, Anne Peterson, Bill Cameron, Carol Ferguson, Caroline Brandt, Catherine Knight, Cheryl Andrews, Christine Sampson, Clare Carlson, Dianne Cranston, Domenica Leone, Fran Mason, Geoffrey Kneebone, Glenys Rose, Jan Chamberlain, Jane McKee, Jane Wilson, Jean Corbett, John Fordham, Judith Scurfield, Julian Simpson, Kay Hirst, Kerry Share, Kristin Phillips, Liz Cooper, Maggie Power, Margaret Donald, Maria Kayak, Melanie Conomikes, Michèle Adler, Muriel Mathers, Rod McMillan, Rosta Buc, Sandi Pullman, Sang Min Lee, Sue Bendel, Sue Murphy, Susie Hall, Mangappan Subramaniam and Doncaster Garden Club members Elsie Carter, Elisabeth Bresky and Karl Bresky. Thanks also to all the Burnley/MSLE staff who made the event such a success!

Friends of Burnley Gardens Committee 2011/2012

Chair John Fordham

Deputy Chair Michèle Adler

Treasurer Jane Wilson

Secretary Mary-Jane Gething

Membership Carol Ferguson

Member Dianne Cranston

Co-opted Member Susan Murphy

Gardens Representative Andrew Smith*

Publicity Geoffrey Kneebone*

(* non-committee positions)

Contacts for activities: Michèle Adler 5145 5422 michele@adland.com.au
Andrew Smith 9250 6861 a.smith@unimelb.edu.au

Colour Workshop

Kerry Share

The recent colour workshop organised by the Friends, and conducted by Dr Meryl Waugh (also known as Dr Magenta, an artist, scientist and teacher) was thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. Participants came from varying backgrounds and experiences in using colour, including



The workshopers with their colour wheel coasters

design, gardening, and botanical art and painting. The workshop was run over four consecutive weeks, and provided a practical introduction to colour and colour vision and just how colours work. Meryl covered true primary and complementary colours and showed us how to identify and mix colours, experiment with soap bubbles, rainbows and paints, analyse colour wheels and make colour maps.

Participants also learned how to mix colours for painting and computer printing, how to create colour harmonies and how to mix tints and shades. They experienced making colours they had always been told couldn't be mixed, including Melbourne's favourite black. Meryl's approach to teaching is one of experimentation, discovery and fun. At the conclusion of our four weeks of instruction and practice, participants left feeling greater confidence and renewed enthusiasm in using colour for future creative projects. If you have an opportunity to participate in one of Meryl's workshops in the future, I highly recommend it!

Propagation Group & Plant Sales

Glenys Rose

The Burnley Open Day was a major success for the FOBG Propagation Group with members and volunteers busy all day. We were fortunate to receive a generous donation of jam, marmalade and bare-rooted trees that both sold exceedingly well along with our own plants and hand picked lemons from the Burnley orchard.

Sue and Glenys were busy with University work from late July to August so Fran and Kerry picked up the load of taking cuttings, sowing seed, potting up, weeding, watering and any other tasks that were required.

We held a plant sale on the night of the exceedingly well-attended Truffle Lecture: the plants looked fabulous but unfortunately sales were low. After an inspiring visit to the BudaFest by ¾ of the Propagation Group, we were highly motivated for the end of August sale. The weather was cold and blowy but sales were on target. Our recent October sale was a record for a weekday: must be all that spring weather bringing people out to start growing again!



Lucky Jan was there to keep that tree upright until we sold it...



Jane McKee discusses the finer points of *Euphorbia milii* to an interested customer

We thank John Delpratt and Sue Murphy for sharing the propagation material prepared by students from various classes. Having a supply of large numbers of cuttings of more common lines allows us to focus on more specialist species. We also thank Nick and Sascha from the Nursery for their continued support. The \$500 donation made by the Friends to the Nursery (flagged in the previous edition of the newsletter) has been spent on a brand new medium sized trolley, that everyone can enjoy using! We really appreciate the allocation to the Propagation Group of a dedicated section of the nursery and look forward to moving the stock soon. Our thanks also go to Andrew Smith for his advice and assistance and access to propagation material.

Lastly we would like to acknowledge our wonderful customers with whom we have great conversations about gardening. Without them we could not continue to contribute funding to the Burnley Gardens.

FOBG Events 2011

Mary-Jane Gething

Organic Pest Control

Our May speaker was Helen Tuton (a.k.a. the Barefoot Gardener), an environmentalist, horticulturist, gardening writer, adult educator and public speaker. She has a double degree in Wilderness, Reserves and Wildlife and Agronomy from the University of Queensland, and is currently completing a Bachelor of Science (Horticulture) at Burnley. Before returning to study, Helen worked for five years at Sustainable Gardening Australia as an adult educator and writer. Recently Helen starred in and co-wrote a series of short films 'Footprint Flicks' for SGA, with

support from the Victorian Government Sustainability Fund.

Helen began her extremely entertaining and informative talk on 'Organic Pest Control' by telling us that it is important to remember that no garden should be completely without pests. A couple of aphids, a couple of holes in your sugar beet: these sorts of pest levels are OK. We need to repel or deter pests rather than try to exterminate them.

In the case of **possums**, we are only allowed only to move them a limited distance (500 m to 1 km). Alas, possums are incredibly territorial, with ranges of up to 5 km, so they simply come straight back to their usual haunts. Therefore deterrence is required. Brushtail possums cause the biggest problems in gardens, but we need to repel ringtail

possums as well. The deterrent needs to be smell not taste, and the best is blood and bone, which to a possum smells like 'dead possum'. Helen told us to fill old stockings (or cheap new ones), put enough blood and bone in the toes to make golf ball sized dumplings and hang them in bushes or trees (e.g. camellias), emptying and refilling the dumplings each week. Persistence is required to break the possums' feeding habits.

Another approach takes advantage of the fact that possums use the same highways and runways every night, so a noxious smelling brew sprayed on their pathways can be very effective. Lapsang Souchong tea is an excellent deterrent. She advised making a normal brew of Lapsang Souchong (she prefers to do it outside in a billy), straining off the leaves and spraying the liquid on fences and tree trunks, repeating the treatment weekly or after rain. The brew can also be sprayed onto



Fat, juicy aphids on a David Austin 'Evelyn' rose



Portuguese millipede
(*Ommatoiulus moreleti*)

plants. Helen noted that the approach of using deterrents that ‘smell like a dead version of the pest’ works for many pests. For example, ‘millipede tea’ effectively deters **Portuguese millipedes**, which are herbivores that can increase to plague proportions and destroy seedlings and fruit and vegetable crops. They also invade houses infesting carpets and bedding and contaminating food. Wearing gloves, shake the millipedes into a bottle of boiling hot water, allow the ‘tea’ to cool, then filter it and spray around affected plants and house entry points. The

same approach can be used for other insect pests such as **shield bugs**, **harlequin bugs** and **spitfire caterpillars on eucalypts** if they are present in high numbers or clusters.

For **aphids**, Helen advises squashing them on the plant with your thumb; the smell of ‘squished bug’ being an excellent deterrent to other aphids. If you have more than a few aphids you can take advantage of the fact that they are very attracted to the colour yellow but can’t swim. Add water into upturned vegemite lids and the aphids will be attracted and drown. However, Helen noted that if you see lots of aphids as well as ants moving up and down the plant, it is an indicator that something is wrong. Frequently, ants ‘farm’ aphids, gathering and storing aphid eggs in their nests over winter and carrying newly-hatched aphids up to the top of the plants in spring, where the aphids exude honeydew that feeds the ants. Without ants, the aphids can’t get a foothold because they also protect the aphids from predators.

Ants can’t build nests in wet soil, so the first approach to getting rid of ants is to water your garden. Hydrophobic potting mix is heaven for ants, so dig compost into the soil to make it hydrophilic again. Another approach is the use of companion plants that repel ants, such as tansy, which smells a bit like strong chamomile or aniseed. Helen grows several plants (they grow to 40-50 cm high and wide) and takes cuttings to mix through mulch and also to place near house entry points.

According to Helen the stupidest pest in the garden is the **cabbage white butterfly**, which is responsible for ‘lovely, fat, delicious green caterpillars’ that deposit greeny-black cubes of poo on leaves. The best way to repel the butterflies is to mimic the presence of other cabbage whites: pieces of egg shell, white bows made of strips of plastic bag tied to bamboo stakes or white pansies grown in the garden patch will persuade the butterfly that the patch is already occupied. Heavily aromatic plants such as sage or dill will also function as repellents. If caterpillars are spotted, squash them onto the leaves to provide the dead caterpillar smell.

Bug tea doesn’t work for **pear and cherry slugs** because the larvae of the sawfly over-winter in the soil. It is worth removing debris from under the tree, spreading a little wood ash and then

mulching heavily. Banding the tree trunk with wide sticky tape with the sticky side out will prevent the slugs climbing up to chew on the leaves.

The cause of **peach leaf curl** is a fungus that 'hangs out' in the bud union and on the trunk. Helen told us that this is another case where it is important to remove debris from under the tree, but the best antidote is do a winter spray with copper oxychloride or lime spray following leaf fall. Repeat after 7-14 days or after rain, and again later in winter. Treatment at bud swell or after bud burst is too late. Seasol can also be used as a drench because it has an antifungal action.

Another approach is to use a milk spray: 3 parts full cream milk to 10 parts water. This solution supports a fungus that out-competes other fungi without eradicating them. This treatment can also be used to treat **powdery mildew**, **downy mildew** and **rose black spot**.

Deter **codling moth** by companion planting with trailing nasturtiums. Tansy, dill and sage protect many types of fruit trees from insect pests: Helen moves pots of these herbs around as needed.

Rue repels **bird lice**, so is a great companion plant for chooks. This herb also deters **cats** as it 'smells like cat urine' and can protect sandpits from being used as a cat loo when pots are placed at the four corners of the pit.

If the leaves of your favourite plants have been scalloped overnight and you can't see any snail trails then the culprit is the **European earwig**. The solution is to clean a plastic take-away food container and add 2-5 ml of pure (not distilled) linseed oil, which can be found in the wood section of your hardware store. Punch a few holes in the lid big enough for the earwigs to enter through, and bury the container with the lid level with the top of the mulch. The next morning the container will be 'chock full' of dead earwigs, which can be disposed of in your compost bin. This treatment will not attract or affect the smaller native earwig.

Finally, **woolly aphid** infestations require treatment of soil around the root system with a Confidor drench. Although not an organic treatment, Confidor is a systemic product and is quite targeted.

References

Sustainable Gardening Australia online (<http://www.sgaonline.org.au>)

Pests and the Rest: a spiral-bound, water- and dirt-proof book published by and available from SGA

Pest Repellent Plants by Penny Woodward (published by Hyland House, Carlton, info@hylandhouse.com.au): a 'must have' Australian book, according to Helen

Chemical Free Pest Control by Robin Stewart: another Australian book (published by Black Ink Books, Collingwood, enquiries@blackinkbooks.com)

Take the Time to Truffle

On the evening of Wednesday 2nd August we had our largest audience ever (94 people) for Noel Fitzpatrick's talk on the history, mystery and cultivation of truffles. Noel is a Burnley graduate, ISS Institute Fellow, and Vice-President of the Australian Truffle Growers Association. He brought with him Sue Brimacomb, one of two qualified truffle hunters in Australia, and Spice the truffle dog.



Speaker Noel Fitzpatrick with John Fordham

Noel told us that the first evidence of truffles, which are the highly aromatic subterranean fruiting bodies of particular fungi, comes from 2000 years ago, though the sand truffles found in Morocco, Arabia and the Middle East, although prolific, were not as aromatic or tasty as today's truffles. At some point truffles moved from being peasants' food to King's fare in Europe, when someone noticed wild boars digging up "black potatoes". In medieval times the Church banned the use of truffles but they re-emerged during the Renaissance. Catherine de Medici introduced the truffle to France following her marriage to the future King Henry II in 1533.

The truffles that are prized today occur naturally in France and Italy, growing amongst the roots of oak, poplar, willow and hazel trees in natural woodlands. Unfortunately yields have been decreasing over the past 100 years due to world wars, urbanization, climate change and pollution, and also because the undergrowth in the remaining woodlands is no longer cleared out by sheep grazing and collection of fallen limbs and trees for firewood. This allows the expansion of competing fungi in the soil, hindering re-cultivation of truffles in their original sites.



The record crowd, with truffle hunter Sue Brimacomb (in red at the front)

Italian white truffles have a subtle flavour and silky texture, and are the most expensive (\$6000-\$9000 per kilo). They cannot be grown in cultivation, and occur naturally only in Italy and small areas of France. French black truffles (~\$2000 per kilo) have a more pungent and earthy fragrance. They can be cultivated (with difficulty) and predominantly come from France, Italy and parts of western Spain. In Europe truffles are sold at traditional

markets, which have remained the same since their inception during the Renaissance. The Italian White season lasts from October to December, while the French Black season is from December until February. The market is very regulated and it is prohibited to hunt (or try to sell) truffles out of season, or after dark at any time. Individual truffles are graded on the basis of aroma, colour, size, shape and firmness, and their quality is checked before sale by cutting a small wedge out of the truffle.

As the natural harvests in Europe dramatically decreased, cultivation of truffles in plantations (done by painting minced truffle extract onto the root systems of very young trees) began around 40 years ago. The first attempts to cultivate truffles in our region began about 25 and 20 years ago in New Zealand and Australia, respectively. In 1993 there were about 20 truffle plantations in Australia; currently there are over 200. Most of these are small operations, 70% being 1-2 hectares and 20% 2-5 hectares in size. There are a few managed investment scheme operations of approximately 70 hectares in Western Australia, mostly in the Manjimup area, and in Tasmania. Times from planting to production appear to be significantly shorter in Australia than in Europe (4-6 years vs. 10-12 years). The world's smallest and most productive 'truffiere' is at Whakatane in New Zealand, where 24 trees produce 15 kilos of truffles per year, which sell for \$3,500 per kilo.

Noel told us that the French initially had a very hard time accepting our truffles, but now agree

that Australian truffles are as good as those from Europe. Chefs worldwide are keen to use them. However, although Australian truffles produced in our winter months (WA May to August, eastern states late June to early September) have no market competition, our truffle growers have not cleaned up in Europe because Europeans do not wish to eat truffles outside their normal season. There is a market in high tourist areas such as Paris and Monte Carlo, but the major scope for development of markets for Australian



Rosemary O'Brien buys a raffle ticket from Mary-Jane Gething: the prize was a hazelnut tree inoculated with truffle spores



Truffles ready to eat

truffles is in Asia and the USA, and possibly the United Arab Republic.

Noel warned us that the study of truffle cultivation is still in its infancy and so much remains unknown. He described a number of keys to success concerning site selection, climate, soil characteristics, use of certified inoculated tree stock, planting geometry, pruning, irrigation and maintenance. Aspiring truffle growers should consult the advice available on the website of the Australian Truffle Growers Association at <http://www.trufflegrowers.com.au>. Noel also described to us the process he has followed to develop his own truffiere at Korumburra, where his first harvest is imminent.

Cooking with truffles is not difficult, according to Noel, with best results when they are used in simple dishes involving pasta, risotto, eggs, potatoes, fish or meats, and of course, chocolate. Lots of recipes can be found on the internet (see <http://www.truffleharvest.com.au>, where truffles can be purchased on-line with orders starting from as little as 50 g, but not until next May when our truffle season begins again). Even though truffles are expensive, a little goes a very long way. Most main dishes use 8-10 g per person – at ~\$2000 per kilo that would cost only \$20. Note that truffles have a very short shelf life of no more than 2-3 weeks from harvest.

When Noel had finished his talk, Sue Brimacombe described the work of a qualified truffle hunter, one of only two in Australia. Dogs have replaced pigs as truffle hunters, and can find truffles up to 600 mm underground. Sue trains her own truffle dogs (including Spice, an Australian Shepherd who behaved with exceptional patience and good humour throughout the evening, and delighted us with a successful hunt for a truffle-scented toy mouse hidden in the audience). Sue told us that dogs from any of the major working dog lines should be suitable because of their good work ethic. Spice and her littermates were trained by playing games with truffle-infused toys. Sue found that the girls performed the best, with Spice being the star pupil.

This wonderful evening was topped off by a truffle tasting, a hotly-contested sale of the unused portion of the truffle that Noel had brought as a sample, and the raffle draw for a hazelnut tree inoculated with truffle spores.



Spice, the truffle hound

Open Day: the proof of the pudding

Jan Chamberlain



Chris Williams demonstrates how easy it is to dig a big hole for yourself in the veggie gardening workshop



Pick the volunteer...they're the ones wearing the yellow scarves! Geoffrey Kneebone with Karl and Elisabeth Bresky (from the Doncaster Garden Club)



From little things, big things grow... construction of a living willow house, led by John Rayner



Lynn Rudd, Judy Scurfield and Randall McKillop



...and just out of shot, someone is hastily weaving a lockable door for this house...



Some of our happy volunteers at the end of a busy Open Day (L to R): Nick Osborne, Andrew Smith, Rod McMillan and Sophie Piggott

From the Archives

Jane Wilson

Recently, a past student of Burnley College contacted the Guides to arrange a tour of the Gardens for a group she runs called Arts for Rights. She said that she had been a student at the College in 1945-46 and that she would like to visit the Gardens before the group came, to re-familiarise herself with the place. It was arranged that she would come to the Gardens, meet some of the Guides and talk about some of her memories. Oral history is an important part of collecting information for the Archives.



The highly coveted job of pruning the boxthorn hedge

Her mother had suggested that she should do the Burnley course as she had been sickly as a child and it was thought that outside work would be good for her. She had very happy memories of her two years at Burnley. She fondly remembered the names of the Staff and which areas of the Gardens they were responsible for. They were rostered for a week with each member of staff and pruning the Boxthorn hedge (left) was one of the duties they dreaded.

When we were walking with her around the Gardens she seemed lost without the sight of the Principal's House and this made us aware of how important the house had been as a focal point for the Gardens. She felt that the Gardens had lost some of the simplicity and charm of that era but she was very impressed with how the Gardens look today and she accepted that time has to move on.

In 1946 the boys came back as students (under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme) and she said it was much more exciting then. She recalled the Graduation Ceremony that was held on the lawns by the Ponds. The students put on a performance and at the end she was thrown in the pond. T. H. Kneen had just taken over as Principal and he recalls this incident in an article he wrote for the School Magazine at the 75th Anniversary of the College.

After she left Burnley, Alma and another Graduate, Judy Meakin, lived and worked for two years at the Manifold's weekend property, "Redlands", at Macedon. It was a 100 acre property with 20

acres of garden and their job was to restore the run-down garden. Edna Walling did some work on the garden and when she finished an electric fence was erected to keep the cattle out but, sure enough, the cattle got in the next day!

The girls had lots of fun, they had their own cottage to live in and when the Manifolds came up they were treated like family. Judy married the farmer who lived next door and Alma married Geoffrey Hexter, an agrostologist, who she had met at Burnley.



Alma Hexter in the Burnley Gardens Cafe

They spent much of their married life living in

the country but Alma is best known now for starting up Biala in 1977 as a place where mothers of children with disabilities could leave them for a few hours. It is now an early childhood intervention service with several locations, specifically for infants and children with developmental delays or disorders.

Postcard from Chelsea

Jan Chamberlain

Chelsea. What gardener has not wanted to go along and marvel at the show gardens and displays? Well, this year with a prime position on Main Avenue the Australian Garden (inspired by the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens) was my incentive to book a ticket OS. To fit in with the rest of my trip I wanted to go on the first day of the show. To be able to do that I had to go on a member's day so joined the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for the small sum of £49. Another £50 secured an all day ticket on Tuesday 24 May 2011. Unfortunately they don't send out a program to overseas members so we bought one on the day. This doesn't



The Australian Garden display. This gold medal-winning show garden was designed by Jim Fogarty, to promote the stage 2 development of the Australian Garden at RBG Cranbourne which will open early in 2012. It describes the journey of water from the arid outback to the coast, with a stop off at an inland gorge. The plants sure look pretty lush!



The shade pavilion in the Australian Garden display



The coastal planting zone of the Australian Garden

allow any time for planning, unlike other members who had their program full of sticky notes labelling their 'must see' exhibits. We should have tuned into the BBC as they broadcast an amazing amount of television coverage. You really can see the show before you go.

We arrived just after the gates opened and were some of the first Australians to see how a gold medal can make faces smile. We learned that the Queen had visited the site the previous day and that Princess Beatrice (she of the reindeer hat) enjoyed sitting on the cushions in the garden shelter. With a sparkling blue boomerang billabong, striking red sand and plants that were nowhere else in the show the garden looked fantastic (although I am a little biased as I adore Australian plants). The weather was also great which always helps.

We had visited the RHS garden at Rosemoor a few days before the show and were given a few tips by staff. One was to go back to the show gardens at different times of the day to experience them in a different light. Another tip was to sample a Pimms and lemonade. Well we did both of those but didn't partake of the Pimms until later in the day even though we saw Chelsea visitors eating fish and chips and sampling Pimms at 10am!

I had been told that the site of the Chelsea Show was small - it certainly didn't seem it as we walked from one side to the other and back again to try and take in everything and absorb the atmosphere. The Floral Marquee held amazing displays of flower arrangements, bonsai, educational exhibits, orchids and more. We lunched on a nice patch of lawn but the air was awash with the blossom of the London plane trees that surround the site.

Insect homes were a common theme among the show gardens. Very pristine until you get a bunch of spiders taking up residence I thought! Vertical walls were installed on a few sites. Even a

garden in the sky, where a pink pod covered in plants was raised and lowered by crane. This 'Irish Sky Garden' won the RHS People's Choice Award.

It is amazing to think that after 3 weeks of setting up and then 5 days of viewing it is all dismantled and reverts to an open space of lawn until the next year. Luckily, the Australian Garden will live again as a display garden at Capel Manor College, north of London.



Diarmuid Gavin Designs put together the Irish Sky Garden. Just the thing, if you happen to have a large crane to lift this hanging garden up and down...



...and some flowering pretties (peonies and roses) from Interflora's display to finish off the show from Chelsea (and from the FOBG).



Houses for insects were big at Chelsea this year. If they didn't like the insect hotel in the B&Q sustainable garden, they could move into these low-rise, succulent-roofed apartments

See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/chelsea/>
<http://theaustraliangarden.wordpress.com> and
<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Shows-Events/RHS-Chelsea-Flower-Show/2011/Awards>
 for videos and articles on this year's Chelsea Flower Show