



FRIENDS OF THE DARWIN BOTANIC GARDENS Newsletter

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Beautiful and functional Gardens furniture

Over the past couple of years the Friends have been delivering artworks and functional art to different areas of the Gardens.

Works have been created by local artists and artisans and add a different aesthetic to complement the living beauty of the Gardens environment.



These pieces have been designed to encourage visitors either to stay longer in the Gardens or to explore areas previously unknown to them.



Seating by Craig Guerin (above) and Rex Maxwell (below)

Many visitors will have found the new seating a great improvement on the old and rather ugly 'bus stop' benches (above).

Details of wrought iron and ironwood park benches designed and created by Craig Guerin of Creative Iron were featured in the April 2014 issue of this newsletter, but we can now report that these are all installed.

Also installed has been some wonderful organic, comfortable ironwood furniture – functional art – created by Rex Maxwell, whose ironwood sculptures and furniture are well-known in and around the Top End.



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While the Friends have contributed only some of the wonderful works shown here, and the Gardens have squeezed the budget for others, we hope to install more of the picnic table sets before too long.



Picnic sets old (right) and new (above).



The picnic tables and benches down by the lower parking area are particularly suitable for their environment compared to the old style installations, some of which almost seem to be trying to slip away unnoticed.

Seal of approval



Bryan Harty, Acting Director of the Gardens is a great fan of Rex Maxwell's furniture and of all the enhancements to the created environment within the Gardens. He is seen here outside his office, with a friend!

Reptiles galore

In addition to the python (see our newsletter of April 2014) that has weathered the changes in seasons perfectly and continues to bemuse visitors and locals alike, we have taken delivery of two more reptiles from Ewin Wood and Natural History Productions.



Above: The Mertens's water monitor in the Lily Pond.
Below: The frill-necked lizard in the Visitors' Centre.



A Mertens's water monitor (*Varanus mertensi*) sits in the Lily Pond near the children's playground and barbeque area and a frilly stares balefully in the Visitor Centre, though stroking is encouraged.

Crocodiles are a must for attracting the attention of visitors, and we have located a freshie (created by Getrocked at Humpty Doo) in the monsoon forest, looking out over the waterfall



Above: Freshwater crocodile in the monsoon forest.

There will soon be a very large saltie, being constructed by Techy, that will entice visitors to go north as it will be put alongside the stream by the crossing into the African area.



Right: Techy and the outline crocodile sculpture in her studio workshop.



Jill has fun while Minister Price is briefed.

Friends take a ride at Segway launch

At the end of October 2014, Segway tours started up at the Gardens. The initiative was launched by Minister Bess Price, and Friends were invited to come and try. Nursery manager and inspiration Jill is seen enjoying a rare moment of fun and relaxation, as is Peter Knibbs longest-serving Friend and now back on the committee as Secretary – again!



Peter Knibbs enjoying the ride.

Catching up with an old Friend

Late last year Friends Chairperson Harvey Cooper-Preston visited Perth to attend a Cactus and Succulent Get Together and she stayed with Katrina and Andrew Mitchell. Here's Harvey's account of her visit.

The Mitchells used to live in Darwin and, as some of you would know, Andrew was a Friend as well as working with AQIS on weeds. With a passion for plants, Andrew organised bush walks and a trip to Kings Park for my 'spare time'.

One such walk was to Victoria Reservoir, which is on the Darling Scarp near Lesmurdie. The dominant plant was *Xanthorrhoea preissii* which, needless to say, was very impressive. Wildflowers added colour along the walk as did many trees and shrubs, including *Calothamnus*, *Grevillea* and *Eucalyptus*. Along the ground were many sundews (*Drosera*) and trigger plants (*Stylidium*s). The whole area was quite lush, especially compared with Darwin.



Abundant wildflowers and *Drosera* (sundew) on a WA bush walk.



(Above) Grass trees and (below) *Stylidium*s in flower on the Zig Zag walk in the Gooseberry Hill National Park.



Also along the Darling Scarp is the Zig Zag within the Gooseberry Hill National Park. This 3 kilometre stretch of narrow road was originally a section of railway line laid in 1903 to transport timber down the steep gradient using a series of switchbacks. Despite the rubbish, it was a pleasant walk. Once again *Xanthorrhoea preissii* dominated the landscape. *Dryandras* were the main shrub with *Stylidium*s and resurrection plants (*Boryas*) in flower on the ground.

In 1898, over 6,500 acres (>2,500 hectares) of land was set aside for conservation and recreation on the edge of the Darling Scarp. This became WA's first national park, John Forrest National Park.

We took only a small walk within the park which has been severely damaged by bushfires and dieback, with weeds becoming increasingly established. There were



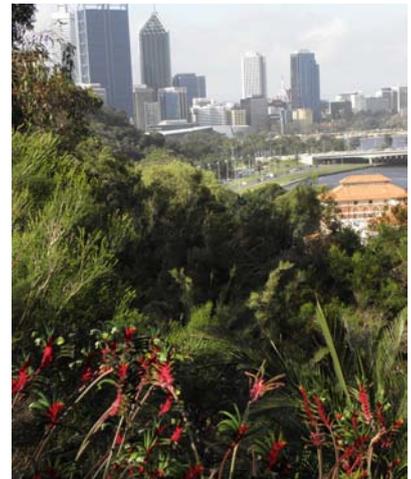
Andrew Mitchell admires the impressive *Xanthorrhoea preissii* (grass trees) at Victoria Reservoir in WA.



some lovely areas with large granite boulders and, of course, *Xanthorrhoea preissii*. *Grevillea bipinnatifida* provided interesting foliage and *Daviesia horrida* provided lots of prickles for me. Toward the end of the walk we were joined by some locals.



Above: In John Forrest National Park we found some *Daviesia horrida* and a few friendly locals.



View from Kings Park Botanic Gardens.

The Botanic Garden is located in Kings Park along the Swan River. The Park has over 260 hectares of natural bush with more than 300 species of native plants. Unfortunately I only got a chance to see the Botanic Garden. The majority of plants there were native, with many kangaroo paws adding colour. The plantings were geographically arranged, either Western Australia or Eastern Australia. The famous boab that was transported

at great expense to make room for a wider road up north was in a position of prominence. However, it is slowly dying (see picture at left).



It was lovely to catch up with a former Friend. Thanks to Andrew and Katrina, I was able to get a good feel of the natural bush around Perth which is truly spectacular.

Friends' Nursery renovations

From Treasurer Fiona Douglas

For many years Jill has been in despair for much of the 'Dry' as the 'Potting Friends' arrive on Thursdays to discover that many of the pots with plants and cuttings that they worked so hard on the previous week have been knocked over, dug up and otherwise destroyed by Darwin gardeners' pet hate – the wonderful Orange-footed Scrubfowl.

Personally I love these charismatic megapodes; I love their noise at night, their quirky appearance and their efficiency as mulch recyclers. But their place is not in a plant nursery, however tempting it may be for them as a food source.

So renovations to the nursery to make it Scrubfowl-proof were essential. This is a joint project by Friends and the Gardens – we buy the materials and they do the work.



Above: Our new FODBGN gate sign. Below: Taut shadecloth freshly erected over the nursery – just waiting for lots of plants!

The end is in sight after four months' hard labour, not least by recent recruit Michael the metalworker, without whose skills the construction would have been more difficult (and costly).

The major outlay was for the new shade-cloth, custom made and installed by Gardens staff, which is now trim, taut and terrific, and so



Friends of the Darwin Botanic Gardens

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Friends committee elected in May 2015

Patron:	The Hon. Austin Asche AC QC	
Chairperson:	Harvey Cooper-Preston 0478 198 151	
Vice Chairperson:	Jill Metcalfe	8927 1461
Secretary:	Peter Knibbs	0478 418 587
Treasurer:	Fiona Douglas	8985 4179
Newsletter Editor:	Sue Dibbs	8981 4589
Editor email:	sue.dibbs@bigpond.com	
GBDBG Liaison:	Bryan Harty (bh)	8999 4418
Gardens Administration and Visitor Information	8999 4418	



Above: Installing the pot-wash bath. Right: Luxury! New sink, running water and handwashing liquid.



much better than the previous elderly, saggy, motley, holey version.

There have been other significant gains apart from Scrubfowl exclusion: a pot-washing sink (Bryan's old bath: how did he ever fit into it, one Friend wondered last week?!), a double sink for hand-washing and dishes (what a luxury!) and, constructed and soon to be installed, some raised benches to save the backs of those Friends who are aging rather faster than they wish.



Above: Jill and Bill – working at the potting bench. Below: Brenda at a Saturday working bee.



The appearance of our nursery has improved, as well as the function, and we hope that the plant sale in November will recoup our outlay, so that we can resume funding projects for our Gardens, the real passion for all the Friends.

Friends Regular Activities

Every Thursday

Time: 8.30 am

Activity: Potting up and nursery maintenance

Where: Geranium St nursery

Ring to confirm: Jill 8927 1461

Second Saturday of every month

Time: 8.45am

Activity: Nursery activities and/or group meeting

Where: Geranium St nursery or administration building

Ring to confirm: Peter 0478 418 587