FRIENDS OF BURNLEY GARDENS INC

# Papyrus
# Summer Edition Part 2

No. 64-Summer 2016

## FEATURES

### SPRING IN THE GARDEN — ANDREW SMITH

Every year at this time I walk around the Gardens and can't wait to tell anyone who's interested how good Burnley looks in spring. No matter where you turn, the flowers and foliage are looking at their best. This year is even better than usual, with the last few months of rainfall providing excellent soil conditions for the spring flush of growth.

One area that always improves with spring rainfall is the grassland in the native garden. These non-irrigated beds vary greatly in how they look, depending on the time of year and rainfall that has occurred during the cooler months. For those of you unfamiliar with this grassland area, let's just say it hasn't been easy to achieve the desired outcome of James Hitchmough's original 1991 design. In a nutshell, the Burnley soil was too fertile and the weed seed bank in the top layer of soil far too prevalent to ever have a garden bed that could be sustainably maintained. It looked good with high labour inputs, high rainfall and annual replanting of the flowering grassland species but without those three conditions, it never reached the potential Hitchmough had envisioned.

*The grassland in the native garden after rain*

As mentioned in other articles in this newsletter, the passing of Geoff Olive in late September, although not unexpected, was a great personal loss to myself, as well as the Gardens. Geoff was my mentor and a constant source of knowledge on all things Burnley and plants in general. His more than 30 year legacy to Burnley will long be remembered. No one in Burnley's past history, apart from Luffmann, has created and influenced so much of what we see in the Burnley Gardens today. Not only the creation of individual garden areas such as the herb, sunken, rose gardens but also redefining spaces such as the Azalea lawn, shady walk and the walls on the main building. His choice of plants, flower colour and student learning outcomes has set the standard for Burnley, now and into the fuure. Thanks Geoff.

*The garden in spring toward oak lawn*

## IAN PENROSE - Where is he now? MICHELE ADLER

Some of you may remember Yarra River Keeper Ian Penrose who came to talk to us and also attended our FOBG Open Days, promoting the health of the Yarra. He has been in touch.

To trigger your memory, here is a picture of Mickey…sorry Ian in relaxed mood on Rabida in the Galapagos

Just in case you didn't know, the Yarra River Association "advocates for the River: for green spaces, for water quality, for biodiversity, for the birds, animals, insects and reptiles along the River, for good planning decisions, for the tributaries, for the parklands, for appropriate recreation; and for an understanding of our river and its role in the life of the city of Melbourne. They lobby governments and educate the community. They tell the story of the River." http://yarrariver.org.au/who-we-are/

Back in 2012, Ian took a couple of FOBG members out in his Keeper's boat to look at what was going on from a fish-eye view of our water way that has such an important part to play at our Burnley Gardens site. Below are a couple of pics from that excursion.

*Ian pulls a trolley from the River*.

*FOBG members Michèle Adler (L) and Liz Cooper (R) explore the Yarra from the water (2012).*

Now Ian reports: "After nine years as the Yarra River Keeper I retired two years ago and handed the role over to a great guy, Andrew Kelly. My time is now occupied as a student - back at the University of Melbourne studying in a Master of Environment course – focussing mainly on the broad questions of sustainability, consumerism, economic growth and environmental philosophy. My minor thesis next year will be about how the news media frame the debate about Australia's population – a topic of long standing interest to me. It's all very challenging for my old brain, but very rewarding. Learning is a fun part of living".
We look forward to hearing from Ian again, perhaps after his thesis is submitted.
All the best Ian.

## SANDRA MCMAHON

Sandra McMahon designed the terraces at the Swan St entrance to Burnley Gardens. Sandra is the new Vice President of the FOBG and owner of Gardenscape Design.

## *A*NIGOZANTHOS 'Gold Velvet' SANDRA MCMAHON

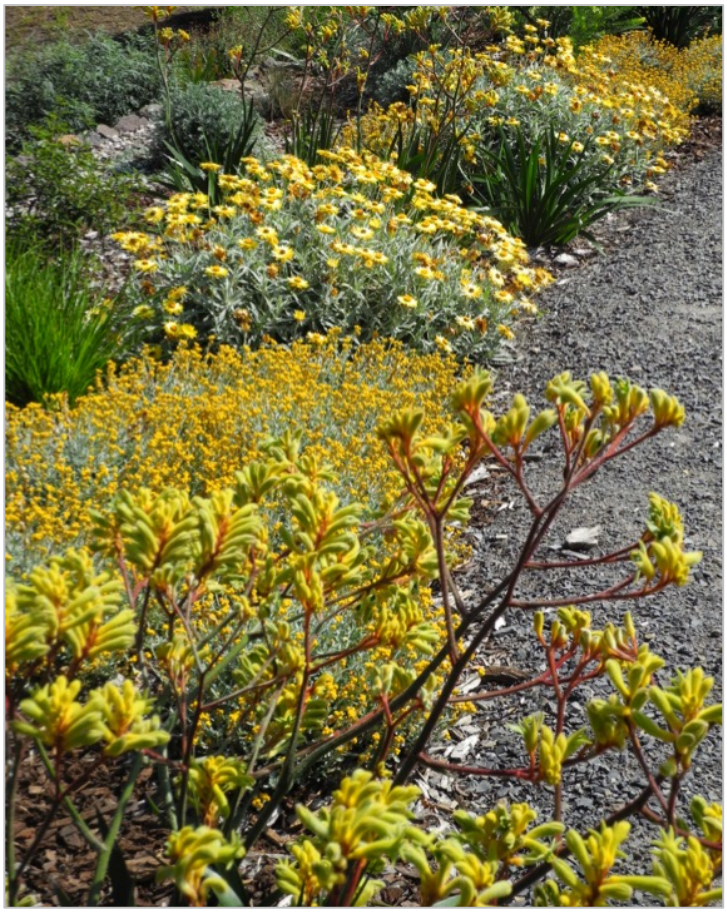
This impressive hybrid Kangaroo Paw was bred for toughness and general landscape conditions. It has performed amazingly in the new section of native garden along the Swan Street frontage of the Burnley Campus.

It is very low maintenance and has very clean, dense foliage with magnificent yellow flowers that reach 1metre tall and are on display for most of the year - so far at Burnley it hasn't stopped flowering in the thirteen months since planted!

Its foliage gets to 50-60 centimetres.

Compared to other kangaroo paws it has very high frost and drought tolerance, and is more resistant to black spot, which has always been a problem with kangaroo paws in the eastern states.

An all-round fabulous plant!



***Anigozanthos 'Gold Velvet' pictured here in the foreground with Chrysocephalem 'Desert Flame' and Xerochrysum 'Dargan Hill Monarch'***

## *ELLIS STONES AND BEV HANSEN*

**MICHELE ADLER**

Did you know that Burnley has an area that was designed by the famous Ellis Stones?
The Ellis Stones rock outcrop at Burnley is outside the Nursery North west of the Tear Drop lawn.

**Who was Ellis Stones?**

He was a builder "discovered" by Edna Walling. She was so enchanted with his internal rock work that she persuaded him to do her outside rock landscaping. What a find she made and what a master he became.

Ellis' ability to make a garden with large landscaping rocks is now 'set in stone' (so to speak). Recently we had a visit from former Burnley graduate Bev Hanson who worked with Ellis Stones after she graduated from Burnley. Bev came to help the Friends find out more about the Ellis Stones rock garden in the grounds. It was actually Bev who drew up the planting plan for Ellis. Sandi Pullman, our historical sleuth came across the plan in the State Library.

On a sunny autumn day Bev came to Burnley and explained how Ellis liked to lay his rocks – large ones – partly buried with only the top ¾ emerging. She told us that Ellis didn't use landscaping machinery and everything was manipulated by hand. The rocks were placed to make them look as if they had always been there. To augment the beautiful rocks Ellis planted a lot of groundcovers, using the same species multiple times to 'echo' the plants in the landscape. Australian plants were difficult to get in the '60's because no-one was using them in gardens. However, there were a few nurseries about that had some.

The desired plantings were often substituted because they were simply not available. Ellis regularly used *Dietes grandiflora* (Wild Iris) from Africa for example. Such was the case at Burnley and even though we had a planting list the eventual planting was much restricted.
Bev kindly spent much of the afternoon with us, taking care to point out that some of the plants in the adjacent garden had become too big and needed pruning back. Andrew Smith took note.

The Ellis Stones restoration was an early project of The Friends and now with new-found information, Andrew Smith (our Burnley Gardens Manager) will continue to follow Ellis Stones vision through Bev Hansen's interpretation.

As a little treat we later took Bev to the new Green Roof Garden to have a cuppa and a chance to see Burnley's innovative approach to greening the city. And Bev kindly invited The Friendly Guides to come and visit her garden in Warrandyte which we did in late August 2016 just as all the wildflowers were coming into flower. (article about the visit follows).

**Bev Hansen's Garden**

It was a windy, cold, winter day with intermittent showers, sunshine and hail. We skipped between the rain and ice drops and had a delightful tour of Bev's garden on the top of a ridge in Warrandyte.

Bev explained that she and her husband John had built their house in the '70's. The site that they chose for the house was flat in the middle of a eucalypt forest. As you can imagine the ground was stony, well drained and nutrient free. In other words, it was the perfect site for a native garden.

Bev set to work digging holes for ponds and with the stony spoil raising the ground adjacent for planting, creating height and depth. She transformed a flat uninteresting site into a garden with 3 dimensions and loads of character. Of course the now trade mark Ellis Stones large landscape rocks featured strongly. Nearly 40 years later the rocks are covered with moss and plants spill over them. Low areas contain frog ponds and there is a delightful view from every window, often in two directions.

*Moss covered rocks at Bev Hansen's property*

Over morning tea we mused about the ephemeral nature of gardens; even those of very famous landscape designers such as Edna Walling and Ellis Stones are hard to find these days. Bev noted that a number of her original chosen plants need to be renewed after 40 years.

One of the enduring things about Ellis Stones and Bev Hansen's gardens are the huge landscape rocks. They often remain when plants have gone. We laughed. "They are hard to move" said Bev.

*Bev Hansen with Ellis Stones memorabilia and plant catalogues*

*Friendly guides visit Bev's lovely Warrandyte home*

*From L = Jill Kellow, Jane Wilson, Robin Calabresi, Chris Morrissey, Bev Hansen (owner), Barb Brookes. Michèle Adler is taking the photo*

## PLANT CONTAINERS – A POTTED HISTORY BEV HANSEN

### …How they have changed!

When I started at Burnley Horticulture College in 1959 plants in the nursery were always grown in Terracotta pots of various sizes. We were taught drainage was important. Broken pots were used to cover the hole at the bottom and coarse aggregate added before the soil and plant. These pots were bulky to store would break easily and with only one hole could block, causing drainage problems.

Soon after, all kinds of recycled tins were used as containers; from the small dog/cat food/beer can to the larger 7lb jam/pineapple/beetroot tins, and on up to kerosene tins etc. The great disadvantage was it required a can opener to make drainage holes and the difficulty removing the plant often requiring tinsnips. Some purpose made tin containers also came on the market round this time. Tin, however, invariably rusted out if there for any length of time.

In 1972/3 straight sided 3inch plastic tubes were introduced on the market. These were hard to remove and would not stack one inside the other. 2inch plastic tubes appeared about the same time. None were UV resistant so broke down rapidly.

Soon the plastic pots, of all sizes, we are now familiar with, appeared; UV-tolerant, tapered, to stack and remove the plant easily. Plastic bags were also used.

The forestry tube was originally wooden veneered. These came to nurserymen as a flatpack which had to be shaped around a mould and held together with a staple or rubber band. They had to be stacked in a box to keep upright before adding potting mix. These were the forerunners of the current, much less labour intensive, UV- tolerant PVC tapered forestry tubes used successfully today.

There have been other types and colours of containers introduced; but the current popular black tapered containers, I think, will be here for a long time.

## SUGAR GLIDERS OR SHORT HEADED ROPE DANCERS? MICHELE ADLER

*Petaurus breviceps,* otherwise commonly known as a Sugar Glider is a curious little marsupial.

It sleeps during the day in a hollow nesting spot in an old tree and comes out at night to feed on: yes, sugary nectar from eucalypt and other flowers or pollen or acacia seeds but they also eat insects, fruit and veges – So it may be sugar gliders eating your fruit at night, not just possums. And it may be sugar gliders pollinating your banksias.

In the winter in particular gliders will feed on acacia gum, eucalyptus sap and manna. They can strip the bark off trees or you may notice bore holes in a trunk where the sugar gliders have used their teeth to access stored liquid gum. They may also eat lizards, lerp, bird eggs or even small birds. I never knew that such mayhem was going on at night.

The length from the nose to the tip of the tail is about 24 to 30 cm, and males are a little heavier than females weighing in at 140 grams and 115 grams respectively. They have soft bluish-grey fur and stripy heads. A membrane connects their forelegs and hind legs to their body and it is this membrane that allows them to glide from tree to tree. It's also of use when they need to escape from a predator.

In the wild they can breed on average twice per year and they live in family groups. I was surprised to read that in Victoria, South Australia and the NT, sugar gliders can be kept as pets, but not in the other states. As they are social animals they may get lonely if kept as a single pet. I think it may be better that they are left to be wild in the bush or your garden. – but there's another reason to keep your cat in at night.

Do you have sugar gliders in your garden? Do you ever go out at night to look for critters with a torch? You could be surprised at what you may find.

*Petaurus breviceps*, translates from Latin as "short-headed rope-dancer", a reference to their aerobatics in the trees – I rather like the image that conjures up.

***Sugar Glider waking up in a nesting box lined with leaves and bark in Bev Hansen's Warrandyte garden. This one is having a rest from "rope dancing".***

## GHOSTBUSTING IN THE GARDENS JILL KELLOW

The appearance in the gardens of a woman who seems to be equipped for a part in the latest Ghost Busters movie has aroused quite a few questions from staff and students lately.

**WHO YA GOING TO CALL?**
**JILL KELLOW**

No, the Gardens are not haunted – this apparition is the result of the latest initiative by Gardens Manager Andrew Smith. Some years ago, Andrew had employed Jill Kellow to conduct a census of the Gardens. The Trees had already been mapped by Arborist Steve Fitzgerald, using GPS equipment and his own mapping program. When Andrew asked Jill to "do the shrubs", it was decided that the available GPS system wasn't accurate enough for such fine scale work, so the survey of all the other plants (not just the shrubs) was done by hand and eye.

For one reason or another, the project was not completed at the time, though a substantial amount was done. Over the following years there have been numerous changes in the Gardens. Trees have died (e.g. the *Erythrina caffra*) or had to be removed (e.g. the Sugar Gum), and there have been several redevelopments (such as the Swan Street Entrance) and new plantings, such as the Rain Garden, not to mention quite a few changes to plant names. Andrew realised that the existing Census was in need of an update, and he was successful in obtaining funding from the Grounds department of the University.

This time Jill Kellow and PhD candidate Gregor Sanders were employed; Gregor to design the software and handle the IT, and Jill to record the plants. There have been a few hiccups as we sorted out the new system, but by now, the end of October, things are going along relatively smoothly. Jill is delighted with the GPS equipment, which "takes the guesswork out of it" – that is except when the position marker jumps about, leaving her to wonder which is the true position! Over all though it is a great improvement, and when finished, the census should prove a useful tool for Gardens staff and students.

***Fellow plant recorder Gregor Sanders (aka Spengler)***

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew report **The State of the World's Plants**, reveals that

- There are currently 390,900 species of known plants.
- One in five of the world's plant species is threatened with extinction, putting supplies of food and medicines at risk.
- But the report also found that 2,000 new species of plant are discovered every year, raising hopes of new sources of food that are resilient to disease and climate change. New finds in 2015 included a giant insect-eating plant, *Drosera magnifica*, first spotted on Facebook by a plant specialist reviewing postings from an orchid hunter.

## BOTANIC GARDEN HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY JANE WILSON

“Just 10 minutes on foot from Sapporo station, a ‘green oasis’ sits among the high buildings. Once you step inside, you are in another world, of birdsong, rich and gentle terrain, abundant water and great elm trees. A precious landscape that has survived the development of Sapporo. This is the Botanic Garden, which as part of Hokkaido University, fulfils a vital role as a place of education, research and systematic collection. Around 4,000 taxa of plants native to Hokkaido can be found here in the 13.3 hectare garden.”

Doesn’t that description from the brochure remind you of our Burnley Gardens?

My long-suffering husband, John, knows that the first thing we will do when we visit a new town or city is visit their Botanic Garden. You can learn so much about a place – it’s history and culture – from their Botanic Garden or parks.

Sapporo was the first place we stayed on a 2½ week trip to Hokkaido and Northern Honshu in September/October this year. This part of Japan does not have the famous gardens found further south but there are plenty of smaller and more intimate gardens to see with a variety of styles.

“The Botanic Garden is located on the plain of the Toyohiro River. Until the 1920’s this was a fertile and abundant area with many natural springs. As well as the remains of pit dwellings over 1000 years old, the Botanic Garden includes vestiges of the virgin broadleaved forest that was here before the garden was established (species include *Ulmus davidiana* var. *japonica, Acer pictum* subsp. *mono, Quercus crispula, Alnus japonica* and *Populus suaveolens*).

In 1877 Dr. William Clark, then Vice-principal of the Sapporo Agricultural College (founded in 1886, now Hokkaido University), recommended that a garden be established for the study of botany. In 1886, following the designs of Dr.Miyabe Kingo, the Botanic Garden was

opened.  It was the first modern style botanic garden in Japan.  Also like Burnley Gardens, the garden was a focus for the study and distribution of foreign timber species.”.

Within the garden there are a Rose garden, Herbaceous Plants Garden, Northern People’s Ethnobotanical Garden, Lilac Avenue (the flower of Sapporo), Greenhouses, Alpine Plants Rock Garden, a Canadian Rock Garden (established to commemorate the partnership with the University of British Columbia) and many other interesting things to see.

*Ulmus davidiana var. japonica (Japanese Elm)*

*One of the 40 Lilacs*

# FOBG TALKS

## BREEDING AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS — JAN CHAMBERLAIN

Jeanne Dunn spoke to us about Australian native orchids in October

She has been a member of the Australian Native Orchid Society for over 30 years and breeds orchids as a hobby. She has a large shade house that faces east west. Inside are neatly arranged pots containing orchids that Jeanne has bred. Her shade house is meticulously clean which keeps pests and diseases to a minimum. If any plants require treatment for disease she will take the plants outside to treat them as there are frogs living in the shade house. The floor covering is scoria which helps keep the humidity up. Jeanne uses Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) as a humidity indicator in her shade house. Breeding orchids also requires excellent record keeping and her shade house resembles a graveyard as each of the pots has a white label detailing the breeding history in it.

(http://www.anos.org.au/)

Orchid flowers have 3 sepals and 3 petals with the third petal being very different. It's called the labellum. Epiphytic orchids are 'air plants' as they don't have roots in the soil and these are Jeanne's passion. Orchids that grow on rocks are called lithophytes.

*Dendrobium* (sometimes called *Dockrillia*) are the largest group of epiphytes in the world with over 1400 species. There are 60 species in Australia mainly in Queensland and New South Wales. There are 5 species of epiphytes in Victoria and 3 cymbidiums in Australia. There are a number of species in Papua New Guinea and these have some colour in the flowers

Jeanne has a special potting mix where she uses three parts of bark, one part of perlite, one part scoria and one part of a Wayne Turville mix (it contains bark, scoria and charcoal). She always sifts it to get rid of the fines (they go onto the veggie garden). A fertilizer made from horse poo in water and diluted to look like weak tea and then strained is used on the orchids.

Jeanne brought along a few specimens for sale and some people helped demonstrate how to tie an orchid to a rock and put it in a pot. She also had some possum hats for sale.

Some very happy Friends wandered away with orchids and hats.


*Baby dendrobiums for sale*

*Dendrobium (syn. Dockrillia) bred by Jeanne Dunn*

## BLIMEY! WOMEN GARDENERS — SANDI PULLMAN

In August Sandi presented her thoroughly researched and interesting talk on Luffman's ground breaking but, perhaps for the Board, unwanted introduction of women into Burnley.. This enabled many women to learn about horticulture and created a tradition of the college producing many fine female gardeners and landscapers.

Ultimately however, it may have been the reason that he was dismissed from his position by the Board who were shocked by the introduction of women into a male domain. The reason given by the board was his poor gardening techniques. We have a lot to thank Luffman for, and for Sandi for sharing her passion for and research into the subject.

## TERRARIUM WORKSHOP JENNENE ARNEL

On Saturday 8 October around 15 people attended a Terrarium Workshop led by Sascha Andrusiak (left) After showing us the many beautiful terrariums she has made, Sascha supplied each of us with a glass jar, charcoal, sand, potting mix, moss, pebbles and a selection of plants and gave us step by step instructions for making our own 'magic' terrarium.

There was lots of chatter as we created our unique terrarium, each with its own style. It was a very interesting and satisfying workshop which concluded with each participant proudly taking home a completed terrarium.

## PETER DYER'S BACKYARD HONEY

*Peter Dyer at work on a hive*

Everyone was buzzing at apiarist Peter Dyer's talk on how to cultivate their own hive. Peter told attendees of his innovative apiary service which enabled local city dwellers with the skills and equipment necessary to host bee hives and obtain pure local honey from their own backyards. "Our own" Burnley honey was in popular demand.

Peter's talk was quite informal. He took questions from the floor and answered them as they came. This meant that Peter really addressed the needs of the audience. We learned that suburban bees in managed hives are good since they yield pollination to internal gardens and there is a reduction in illness as they are not constantly being changed from one stand to another.

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He also gave some basics on tending bees, such as, placing the hive under a deciduous tree, so that the bees get shelter from the cold/frost in winter and later in the heat of the Melbourne summer, they are also sheltered. Otherwise bees expend a lot of energy in keeping the hive warm (winter) or cool (summer). The more energy the bees use up, the less honey is available for them and you.

Peter suggested that during winter and early spring most hives need some supplementary feeding with sugar water. Even though sugar is not a good food for the bees (Peter compared sugar to Fast Food), it's better than nothing when nectar supply is low.

He told us that bees are attracted to white, yellow and blue hued flowers such as: cosmos, digitalis, hellebores, sedum and thrift/sea pink. He also said that pollen makes bees thirsty, so it is essential to give them water. You should soak the sand, rocks or pebbles at the base of the plants to provide them with water and a perch while they drink.

Peter also offered participants the opportunity to "kit up" and tend the Burnley hives with him, at a mutually convenient later date.

Everyone was enthused and went away with a lot of knowledge.

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WISH EVERYONE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE BEST FOR 2017.

THANKS ESPECIALLY TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE. YOU HAVE BEEN VERY HELPFUL AND COURTEOUS IN ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS, SOMETIMES DAFT, AND IN PROVIDING ME WITH EXCELLENT COPY AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

I COULD NOT HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT YOU.
Chris Harrison