



# Papyrus

No. 71. Winter 2020

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURNLEY GARDENS

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## President's Report

Dear Members,



As I sit down to write something on this grey and cold Winter Solstice Sunday, my mind feels as soggy as the air outside. What to say that hasn't already been blogged, tweeted, opined or insta'd innumerable times during this lockdown?! Can it already be three months since my last President's report back in March? The fears of shortages back then have not materialised, yet we still face considerable uncertainty - and seasonal bleakness means that we just have to work harder and be more creative to keep our spirits up.

So, not feeling enticed by a walk around the local block (not the most exciting local landscapes out here where I live!) I jumped in the car and drove down to Burnley this afternoon. How uplifting it was to be in our precious Gardens! Hardly a soul around, yet such a feast of colour and interest in the plantings. And not merely the colour of Autumnal change either...

Back in Summer Megan Backhouse did an article in *The Age* on the Colour Spectrum plantings which I designed along Swan Street and on the rock terraces below. I recall feeling rather disappointed by the accompanying photos. . . **Now** is when this area should have been photographed!



What a rich and colourful display Mother Nature turns on at this time of year if we know what to plant! Through the entire colour spectrum from purple through the warm colours of red, orange, and yellow, back to green and blue- there are so very many beautiful flowering and foliage plants performing their socks off right now. How fortunate we are in this temperate climate zone, that we have this opportunity for year-round colour and interest!

## President's Report *continued*

I heartily congratulate Andrew Smith and his team on the way everything is looking at present: for the maintenance, general health and grooming of the Gardens.



It always amazes me that the Gardens remain such a well-kept secret among Melbourne's wider citizenry. We possibly need to spread the word at least a little wider - while we don't want the Gardens overrun, we will always welcome more members to FOBG. While walking around, my attention was frequently captured by reminders of

different elements in the gardens that have been funded by the Friends of Burnley Gardens. The results of our fund-raising are there for us all to see and appreciate. So please spread the word! It would be great see a few more than 3 or 4 people enjoying the Gardens on a Sunday afternoon!

It has of course been a challenge to run the sort of programme which we normally would. We have tried to think creatively, and probably the venture which bore most fruit was the inspiring Suburban Birding event back in May. Thanks to the generous efforts of Alan Crawford and Megan Griffith from Birdlife Australia, ably assisted by Andrew, the event was very successfully translated to being online, and was 'attended' by over 50 people on Zoom. The enthusiasm was palpable. In particular Sonja Ross's superb film was hugely appreciated. We thank all three presenters most sincerely, and look forward to inviting them back to Burnley. You can find links both to the talk and to this film on our website. (Please note: if you tried previously without success, do try again - we believe we have ironed out the glitches.)



Of course the success of this virtual event has encouraged us to investigate other options. Not all speakers whom we had lined up for this year's programme feel comfortable presenting on Zoom, but we do hope to have news soon of other virtual events. Our *Winter Pruning Workshop* will hopefully proceed on Saturday 1 August. More information soon

***Continued on page 5***

## Gardens report—managing the Gardens by Andrew Smith



With the Campus essentially closed down, the building component of my combined responsibility for gardens and buildings maintenance has dramatically slowed. No more requests to fix a blocked toilet, replace a broken air con or blown light tube. This has enabled me to concentrate on updating the garden maintenance document for Burnley. While I rather pretentiously refer to it personally as the 'Burnley Bible' of maintenance, it nonetheless will be a valuable reference for future management of the Gardens.

With a rather unruly 38 pages, this bed by bed and at times, plant by plant document, is a way to detail when and how plants and tasks should be managed in the Gardens. With nearly 2000 individual different plants, (taxa) many unusual, the challenge is to describe how each of them should be maintained so they look and grow at their best.

Given the lack of hands-on training for the whole industry, let alone Burnley graduates, of complex plant pruning and care, the Burnley maintenance schedule will provide a month by month schedule of when tasks should occur, and how they should be done.

GARDEN BED, PLANT NAME	Required Tasks	date task completed	Frequency	correct name on label, plant census	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
SWAN ST								
Blue tier								
Dianella 'Cassa Blue'	Dianella 'Cassa Blue'. Early summer flowering. remove finished flowering stems to base in January. Cut down damaged old leaves annually or every 2 yrs as req in early spring. Some burnt foliage removal may be needed in March.		January. March. September.	yes, both				
Dianella revoluta Prestige 'REV101'	Dianella revoluta Prestige 'REV101'. Early summer flowering. remove finished flowering stems to base in January after berry fruit fall. Cut down to just above ground level damaged old leaves annually or every 2 yrs as req in early spring. Some burnt foliage removal may be needed in March.		January. March. September.	yes, both				
Festua glauca 'Elijah's Blue'	Festua glauca 'Elijah's Blue'. Minimal maintenance required. Pull out of lower dead foliage as needed in autumn. Replant every 3-5 years in early spring when the plants become unsightly.		April. September.	yes, both				
Salvia 'Mystic Spires'	Salvia 'Mystic Spires' Flowers all year. Shorten side lateral growth of stems to stop crowding out of neighbouring plants. Prune to maintain an upright habit all year and to remove finished flowering stems, down to leaf growth on stem. In late winter, remove 3 yr old flowering stems to base to rejuvenate and also in August, prune 1-2 yr old stems to 3-5 nodes from stem base, where new leaf growth is developing.		August	yes, both				

Describing the manner in which some plants are pruned or maintained has highlighted some precarious terminology. What does dead head mean? Cutting back to where: the third node, an upward facing bud, or to ground level? For some plants this is self-evident, for example an herbaceous perennial: it is easy to see where to cut down the dead top growth to the point where the new foliage is emerging out of the ground. Not so for many others: describing how to prune *Garrya elliptica* or *Lochroma australe* is difficult, and often web-based help is either hard to find or non-existent, especially with unusual plants.



### When to prune *Clematis* species and cultivars

### Pruning Group 2: Prune in February and after the first flush of flowers in early summer

It's not surprising I guess that the RHS is so good with this sort of thing, as horticulture is so entrenched into everyday life in England.

[illegible]

These two milestones, a map census database and a maintenance schedule for the Gardens are perhaps two of the most important resources the Gardens need, and another example of how technology has made it possible.

*Enough of this...I had better get back to it!*

### **President's Report *continued***

In an effort to encourage our members to re-subscribe we have proposed a one-off reduction in subscription rates. Even if at present we can't quite offer our normally diverse and full programme, rest assured, at least, that your paid-up subscription will, as always, benefit our precious Gardens.

Finally I would like to offer my most sincere thanks to our very dedicated and hard-working FOBG Committee, to our Propagation Group and Guides, who despite the present limitations, continue to do all they can to offer their normal services.

Do stay safe and well, and we look forward to seeing many of you as soon as circumstances permit!

**Sandra McMahon,**  
President FOBG.

### **Membership Report *by Cheryl Andrews - Membership Coordinator***

Since the previous Newsletter, (in March 2020) our membership has stabilised at 216 members. We have 3 new members, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to them. I also thank all our loyal members for their continuing support and commitment to the Friends group even though most of our activities have been suspended due to COVID-19. Personally I am very keen to get back to the Propagation Group, and growing some new plants

Many members were due to renew their membership on 1 July 2020 and have received emailed information on renewals via Ruth Kennedy and Mailchimp. If you are unsure about your membership details please email me at: friends.burnley@gmail.com

### **Propagation Group Report *by Glenys Rose***

I hope that this finds you all well and happy, and continuing to garden in whatever manner you can. The University is closed, so we have not been able to access the Nursery and plants. We are fortunate that University staff are keeping an eye on everything for us. When we can, we will arrange for sales via our web site with contactless EFT payments, and pick up from outside the Nursery. Lets hope that the latest spike in cases subsides soon, and we are all able to travel again.

### **Social Media Report *by Jill Kellow***

The Friends are keeping up with the times! Our long standing website, <http://www.fobg.org.au/>, is now in its third iteration, having been updated by Kirsten's son Sebastian. Our website is the "mother ship", where announcements are made, but which also contains much more to explore. Our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsBurnleyGardens>, initiated by former President Michèle Adler in November 2013, has 291 members. Lastly our Instagram site, administered by Jacquie Chirgwin, and Jill Kellow, has 385 followers. That is a good number of people who care about our Gardens, and more are joining every day!

## Burnley Book - progress report by Michéle Adler



Some of you may remember that I have been working on updating the early Burnley Gardens history, to be published by the end of this year, 2020.

Things slowed down because of Corona Virus, the various shutdowns of public spaces like the State Library, Museum Victoria, the Public Records office and our own Burnley Archives.

However something that came to light during this cloistered time was some interviews recorded by honours student, Linda Hipwell in 1999 for her thesis, titled *The Burnley Gardens conservation plan 1939-1999*. Linda

interviewed a number of former staff members including Geoff Olive and Phil Tulk, some former principals including Brian Pell and Greg Moore and also some of the women who had lived on campus, including Dorothy Jessep (wife of Principal Alexander Jessep, tenure 1926 – 1941). Mrs Jessep was 105 years old when Linda interviewed her. She was accompanied by Julie Ann Webster (her niece and FOBG member).

Here are Dorothy Jessep's memories of Burnley Gardens in 1926, when she first came to live there as a bride 72 years earlier.

*"I thought it was a gem ...you went in off the highway before the bridge and there was a gate that was falling to pieces and the cows were grazing in the hollow...There was the remains of an old orchard facing the road ...it had dead or dying fruit...No-one would come to see me because there were cows wandering around; there were no fences...*

*three or four men worked there and the students, mostly girls, one or two men only. The girls were all dressed up in their uniforms. They had gaiters and a blue shirt.*

*I was very happy with it; the gardens were perfect. Of course it's all been re-landscaped since."*

Those interviews by Hipwell were 'gold'. They highlighted the importance of keeping records, both written and oral. Likewise, the gardens-going-ons regularly reported in our FOBG newsletters have been a great source of information over the last 20 + years.

In 1998 the FOBG invited Mrs Jessep for morning tea in the Burnley Gardens. A table was set up in the area of her old house (demolished in 1980). She was the centre of attention, regaling us with stories from her time at the Gardens. The event appeared on Channel 9 news.

**Michéle Adler**  
**June 2020**



1998 - Mrs Jessep's morning tea

L to R Julie Ann Webster, Michèle Adler, Dorothy Jessep, Dr. Greg Moore, Sandi Pullman

### ***Vale Peter Sheppard***



Staff, students and friends of Burnley will be saddened to learn of the death of former lecturer Peter Sheppard. Peter was a good friend of the students and staff, the campus and the Gardens, and loved by all who knew him. He was a gentle, deeply intelligent and philosophical man, who liked nothing better than a long conversation on the meaning of life, but was also very witty and funny. Those who were there will never forget the hilarious speech he made at the retirement party of his dear friend Geoff Olive. If you were on Peter's Christmas card list, you would find your card signed with one of his little self portraits.

In his youth Peter served in the medical corps in Vietnam, and quite frequently mentioned his time there; his army comrades remained life-long friends. One of them remarked that Peter was one of the few who took an interest in the Vietnamese people, and tried to learn their language, though he made fun of his ability to make himself understood in Vietnamese. Peter retired to his beloved Tasmania, where he grew splendid vegetables, took up Irish dancing, and played bowls. He will be very much missed.





## The Burnley Guides Report *by Judith Scurfield and Jane Wilson*



Judith Scurfield

Would you like to learn more about the history and development of our beautiful heritage-listed Burnley Gardens, and then pass on your insights to visitors? If so, you might like to join our small bunch of friendly Guides, who take tours of the Gardens for small or large groups.

Informal training is given with more experienced Guides, and we meet regularly to discuss future programmes and new things we have been learning about Burnley Gardens. We also make occasional visits ourselves to notable gardens.

If you are interested, please contact Judith Scurfield on 0416237464 or email [judithscurfield@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judithscurfield@yahoo.com.au)

Unfortunately, we have been unable to conduct tours of the Gardens over recent months which was disappointing as we had quite a large number of bookings for Autumn. However, the Guides have still managed to meet regularly by Zoom and yesterday we even managed to combine a meeting at Burnley outside the Student Amenity Building with four Guides and the remainder joining us using Zoom. Sue Hay, who has been a member of the Friends for some time, has joined the Guides and some of us will be taking her around the Gardens next week for her first informal training session. Hopefully we will be able to start the tours again in the Spring.

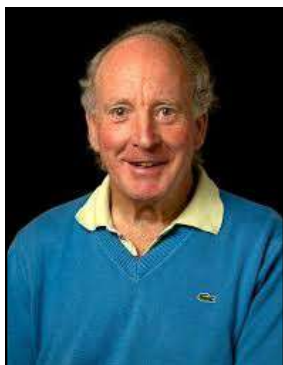
Jane Wilson, 23.06.20



Burnley's trees are among the oldest elements of the Gardens



## Vale Bruce Draper



The Friends of Burnley Gardens are saddened to note the passing of life member Bruce Draper. Bruce joined the Friends in 2011.

Bruce's on-line obituary\* states " Had he lived in a previous era he may have been a seafaring explorer, delighting in adventures and having the skills and temperament to accomplish them.

A capable sailor, mountain bushman, navigator, sportsman and historian, he was a likeable, generous, and self-effacing leader who looked after all in his care. Bruce George Draper, known for his quiet commitment to helping others and serving the community, died on May 29, 2020. He was a loving father, principled and

good-humoured, overcoming obstacles and leading a fulfilling life through service to his country in the Navy, fair-minded leadership in Industrial Relations, international and local youth mentoring and sponsorship, environmental conservation, and uncovering and documenting the past for the benefit of our shared sense of history and heritage."

Bruce's interest in horticulture may have stemmed from the fact he was the great grandson of orchardist Charles Draper at Arthurs Creek. His name is synonymous with the history of Arthur's Creek, which he documented in his book "Up the Creek". Visit the Up the Creek website to read more.

\*<https://www.upthecreekvictoria.com.au/vale-bruce-draper-from-boxing-to-books-a-lifetime-of-community-service/>

## Sleive Donard Nursery

Those of you who admired Andrew Smith's Plant of the Week *Iris 'Kilbrony Marble'* on Facebook and Instagram, as well as the FoBG website, might be interested in the nursery "Sleive Donard" from which it emerged. The nursery is named after the highest mountain in Northern Island, and was established in 1904 by Thomas James Ryan. It was taken over in 1912 by James Coey, who is said to have had a keen interest in



daffodils, and who employed William Slinger, a skilled rose grower, who eventually took over the Nursery in 1922. Slinger and his nephew and son ran the nursery for nearly 25 years. When William retired in 1946, Leslie Slinger took over from his father. Leslie Slinger had a particular interest in the genus *Dierama*, raising hybrids named after characters from Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer's Night Dream'.

During its 70 year history, Slieve Donard raised, introduced or named more than 250 plants, and was famous for its illustrious clientele, and for the camaraderie among customers and nurserymen. Many Slieve Donard plants remain popular, and although the nursery closed in 1975, it lives on in the reputation of its garden worthy plants, and the in names of around 20 cultivars of familiar genera. Notes from [History of Newcastle, Co. Down](#) This website illustrates a number of beautiful Slieve Donard cultivars.

## ***A New Garden - Ruskin Road, Glen Iris* by Kirsten Binns Smith, FoBG Treasurer**



Moving to our new abode in December 2014 gave us the opportunity to make a new garden on what was surprisingly (for Glen Iris) “green fields”. It was green fields - triangular, steep and terraced, but with an overgrown street front border, a few old trees and a row of Shiraz grape vines. It was an open invitation to make something wonderful of the site in a new way, with no heritage overlay or protected trees. The great visual opportunity was the borrowed green outlook.



We are situated on a south-east facing slope close to Back Creek, downstream of Toorak Road. Back Creek is a tributary of Gardiners Creek. Our block is on part of a steep and naturally moist hillside leading to the flood basin. Thus the site has leant itself ideally to some sort of water retention and natural flow garden. Back Creek Reserve provides the borrowed scenery - old willows and younger River Red Gums and indigenous bushland. Our triangular block offers the chance to lead the interested wanderer through a circular route of ever changing garden rooms and vistas. The bird life I counted in 20 minutes last year during the Backyard Bird Count in and around the property numbered 18 species.



Vines on the lower terrace adjacent to Reserve



Back Creek after rain

In my thinking and development of exactly what to do with the site I became inspired by Phillip Johnson, who is a Burnley graduate. Phillip gave a presentation for the Australian Garden History Society on the connection between us and the natural environment, and how this can be achieved in the urban setting by using water-saving, recycling, providing habitat and beautiful gardens. I bought his book "Connected" and invited him around to our property with a view to engaging him to enhance our site along these lines. Phillip Johnson Landscaping provided us with a scheme involving billabongs, waterfalls, rocks, and gravel pathways - and an all encompassing creek bed flowing from top to bottom, enabled by installation of tanks, water harvesting and recycling.



Productive and indigenous garden development.

The house from the Reserve after rain

We could not proceed for many years with his plan. We had to tackle the project we had taken on in stages - I was gradually rejuvenating and converting parts of the large garden to accommodate all the plants I had brought with me from my previous garden, to start a productive garden and to incorporate indigenous plants. The long retaining wall to the park needed replacing and the dilapidated house needed renovating. We could not afford to engage the PJJ plan for the whole garden, and so we reduced the brief to the high or 'front' garden.

Geoff, my handy husband (HH), who enjoys doing most of the projects around our house, built our first billabong on the low side after the retaining wall to the park was rebuilt professionally in 2016. He developed this billabong using Phillip's expertise gleaned during his one visit! Frogs moved in promptly; the billabong has only ever been naturally fed by rain captured from our roof. Outfall is to the park. This outfall has caused me to cease all use of herbicides on the property in case of runoff to the creek. I now cover, hand pull, hoe or flame the weeds.



### *A new garden continued*



A view from the deck of lower billabong: development,

In early 2020 this 'lower' billabong, now surrounded by an established indigenous and native garden, was connected by a creek bed between the house and the garage to the new 'upper' billabong, which was finally built for us by PJJ. This was made possible by the construction in 2019 of a large garage separated from the house by a new deck with level street access, from architect Geoff Pearson's plans. The slope was utilised by installing water tanks underneath the garage floor, with 16,000 litres storage capacity fed from our roofs and reticulated to 4 taps around the garden. The 'upper' billabong and waterfall has its own water supply from the roof, which is recirculated when the waterfall pump is on. When it rains and the billabong overflows naturally, the water flows down the creek bed between the two buildings through my newly planted fern gully and under a rustic timber bridge built by HH to the 'lower' billabong.



"Before"



### *A new garden continued*



PJL left the project with great soil and thick bush mulch into which I've planted my own choice and design. I refer to it as my Covid19 Garden - as all the development was achieved in the long autumn of 2020 during lockdown. I sourced the plants from many different origins - including propagating and bringing on many myself. The newly hard-scaped front garden I have designed for colour and flowers, with indigenous and native plants. Prickly and protective shrubs and trees for small birds are planted along the northern fence line. HH, now working from home, built the bush stick fence every night after work during March and April, finally erecting our bespoke wrought iron gum leaf gate after being in storage for many years.



PJL at work in the bushfire smoke.



PJL....bringing nature closer to the inside!

*A new garden continued*



HH's stick fence



Planting a Snow Gum.



*A new garden continued*



The creek bed flows when it rains



The fern gully



A view from the “high” side.



### *A new garden continued*

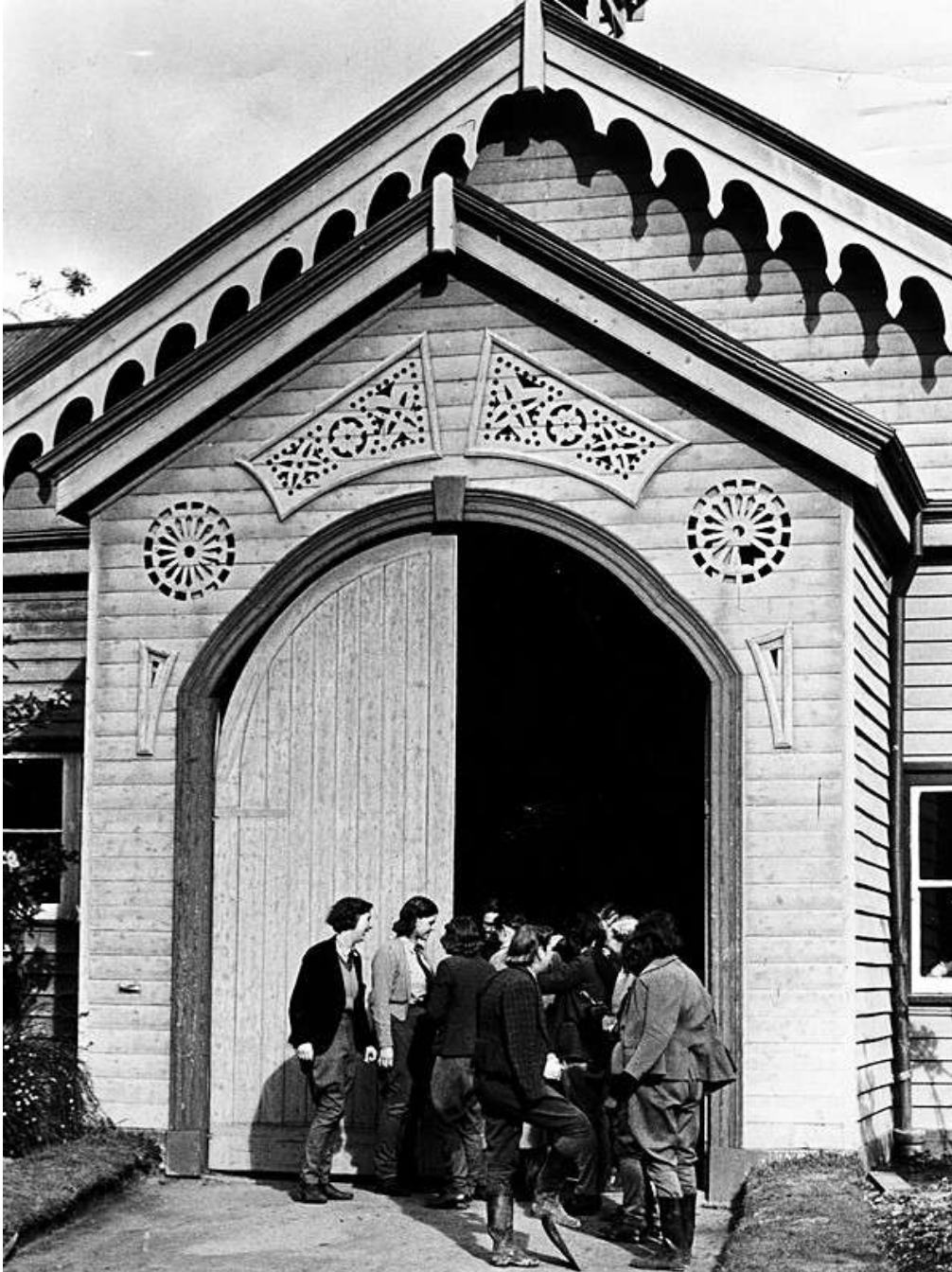


The ornamental gate is finally installed

The garden has many lovely pockets of interest - shade and sun, fruit trees old and young, laying hens, a European section with hellebore, hydrangea, clivia and peony, and, in a prominent position, a large spherical dog spike sculpture. Available for visitors to reference is a full plant list *a la* Andrew Smith's inspiring Burnley Gardens 'year on year plant husbandry' list. Already there are at least 100 species throughout my whole garden. So if and when the new front PJJ inspired landscape grows and provides something more than rocks and mulch to view you will all be welcome!



The Border to the Reserve



The Pavilion (nick-named “The Elephant House”) - Burnley before the Main Building was built. Thanks to Jane Wilson for this image from the archives.

***NEWSLETTER  
OF THE  
FRIENDS OF  
BURNLEY  
GARDENS***

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