



Papyrus

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**NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FRIENDS OF
BURNLEY
GARDENS**

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President's Report



Well, finally Spring in all its glory has rolled in, and with it the hope that very soon we will be spared the worst of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Surely one of the toughest of these has been the five-kilometre radius. As someone living well beyond that distance from Melbourne's most special gardens - the *Royal Botanic Gardens* and our very own *Burnley Gardens* - I have chafed against the inherent unfairness of this. How dare some people live so close to these pieces of paradise?! But then again, how very sweet will be the rewards when we can all ultimately access

such places again!

Much has already been said and written about the unlikely positive outcomes from the Covid 19 lockdown. It can certainly be argued that the community's interest in home gardening has received a great fillip. Such has been the reinvigorated interest in home vegetable gardening that it became virtually impossible for a while there to purchase seedlings, and surely the ratings of *Gardening Australia* have gone through the roof in recent months.

Time will tell how enduring this interest will prove, but one thing I'm sure that gardeners can attest to is the therapeutic power of getting one's hands into the soil. Now with Spring upon us, and after good Winter and early Spring rains, we can hopefully sit back and bask a little in the glory of our own humble patches.

Of course the lockdown has posed obvious challenges for countless organisations such as FOBG. On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank our members for the way in which you have loyally supported our numerous virtual events. Attendance numbers have been significantly higher than for many 'live' events in the past!

I would particularly like to acknowledge a very special Covid innovation on the FOBG website: Andrew's *Plant of the Week*. For many of us this has been a really informative highlight during all the tough, cold times of our

lockdown. Thank you Andrew and Jill for sharing the benefit of your great knowledge of the treasures of Burnley Gardens! You can find all the past 'Plants of the Week' by following the link on our home page. Well worth doing!

Thank you also to our Past President Michele Adler for all that she is doing to promote Burnley via our FOBG Facebook page. The number of 'members' seems to be increasing exponentially!

The 2020 AGM was held via Zoom on 19 August and was well attended. Whilst we regret the departure (for now) of Cheryl Andrews from the Committee, we greatly appreciate her willingness to continue as Membership Secretary, and look forward to eventually welcoming her back to the committee. Glenys Rose, who has, along with Fran, been the backbone of the Propagation Group, has also found it necessary to step down from the Committee until it becomes easier for her to commute from Colac.

At the AGM we were delighted to welcome our new Committee member Kerin Tulloch. Kerin is a local resident and Life Member of FOBG. It's great to have her on board!

The AGM was followed by a very stimulating Zoom presentation by member **Helen Page** on 'Garden Cemeteries', attended by over 60 people. Helen has a long history of involvement in historic gardens in Victoria, having been a long-serving President of the Victorian Branch of the *Australian Garden History Society*. She was the driving force behind the restoration of the historic gardens at Bishops Court in East Melbourne, and in recent years has devoted enormous energy to the restoration of the Boroondara Cemetery, and the quest to restore it to the 'garden cemetery' it was originally planned to be. Her beautifully illustrated Zoom presentation took us to garden cemeteries on three continents. Thank you again Helen!



Our September 'meeting' took the form of another zoom presentation, this time by passionate gardener and designer **Su Laird**. Su explored the origins of '*The New Naturalism*', commencing with William Robinson's 'wild garden'. We were transported through the ranks of early exponents of the Natural Movement in Europe: Karl Foerster, Pagels, Ruys, to the celebrated work of more modern exponents van Sweden, Lloyd, Chatto, Trainor, Oudolf, Stuart-Smith and the Schmidts of Hermannshof. Enthusiastic discussion continued for some time afterwards!

President's Report *continued....*

And on this subject, many of you would be interested to know that the Committee is investigating the possibility in 2021 of rescreening *'Five Seasons'*, the ravishing film on the work of Piet Oudolf.

The recent Zoom presentation by respected plant scientist Dr. David Beardsell proved to be quite a gem! So much fascinating information, all presented with good humour, and possibly enlivened by that occasionally-glimpsed glass of red! The Zoom-audience numbers were very pleasing – if you missed it, there should be a link soon on the website to the recording which was made of his talk.

It had been hoped that David would be able to follow up soon with a Grafting Workshop. At present, given the Covid situation, this workshop, as well as the proposed Summer Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop, and another on Techniques of Garden Photography, have been postponed until next year. We'll keep you advised.

As always, my sincere thanks go to the Committee for all that they do behind the scenes to ensure that FOBG remains viable and relevant in these times. Looking forward to lots of 'real' events in the near future! Stay well and enjoy our lengthening days and all that they herald in our Gardens!

Sandra McMahon

Propagation Group Report *by Glenys Rose - coordinator*

In early February it became apparent that this virus thing was something to take seriously. Margi Petzke and I both live in the country and were perfect vectors for conveying COVID 19 to and from our communities and Melbourne so we decided to stop travelling. Shortly afterward the University and Melbourne were closed and only a skeleton staff has had access to the Nursery since then. We are very fortunate that our plants have been cared for during this time.

When we are able we will compile a list of plants that we can sell. This will be published on the FOBG website with an invitation to place an order. We will then arrange for electronic payment and a member of the Propagation Group will ensure a contact-free transfer outside the Nursery.



Propagation Group stalwarts Fran Mason (rear, now retired) and Glenys Rose (front)

We look forward to hearing from you all and in the New Year actually seeing you at COVID-safe sales.

In the meantime I hope that you are all able to get to some green space or work in your own gardens. Stay safe and strong and the whole State will be able to meet once again.

Membership Report *by Cheryl Andrews - Membership Coordinator*

Since the previous Papyrus Newsletter in Winter, our membership has increased to 173 members. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the 4 new members who have recently joined our group. I thank all our loyal members for their continuing support and commitment to the Friends activities especially during this time when our activities have been curtailed or deferred due to COVID -19, but we have been conducting some of the talks via Zoom.

Luckily I live close enough to the Burnley Gardens to be able to walk around the gardens and enjoy discovering what plants are flowering, the majestic trees and walking along the small winding paths. The gardens are always open and are a lovely place to walk and relax in, especially at the moment. Thanks to Andrew Smith for ensuring the gardens are looking so beautiful.

Social Media Report *by Jill Kellow and Jacquie Chirgwin*

Our Social Media presence goes from strength to strength. Our website <http://www.fobg.org.au/blog/> received a freshen up with a new banner to coordinate with our Facebook page. The image is a sunny welcoming one, instantly recognisable as Burnley Gardens, and shows a little family group setting off to explore the Gardens, something many have been doing during Covid lockdown.



The website is still the mothership of the group, but as many of you will know we have a presence on Facebook, and Instagram also; both of these are growing exponentially. Since our last report in Winter 2020 our Facebook membership has grown from 291 to 387, of whom Facebook reports that 333 are active members, which sounds remarkable. Not a week goes by without new membership requests. We attribute much of this increased popularity to Andrew Smith's "Andrew's Plant of the Week", which never fails to draw comments and "likes".

The FOBG Instagram site is less than two years old, and is still defining itself. Initially we started it mainly as another method to advertise our events and workshops, with the occasional pictures of whatever was looking good at the time. However, in recent months we have been posting Andrew Smith's plant of the week which has been extremely popular. These posts include pictures from the gardens that Andrew has taken during the week, together with fascinating history, stories and horticultural facts about the plants. Our following has grown enormously courtesy of these regular and engaging posts. As a result we are well on our way to 1000 followers! We hope that our IG site will bring the beauty of the gardens to more and more people, and as a result support for the FOBG and their fundraising efforts for the gardens will grow.

From the Gardens *by Andrew Smith*



A recent comment to one of my POTWs (Plants-of-the-Week), that I was torturing plants by hard pruning them, has reinforced my view that there are mixed feelings and some apprehension from some on how and why plants are maintained and pruned. It's not un-common, even within the same household, for two people to disagree on how plants should be pruned. Here in the Gardens, we do tend to prune in all sorts of ways, some different to what others do, some the same. I have a prunus at home that I never cut down to the ground as we have traditionally done at Burnley, for no reason apart from task priorities; it still flowers, but not to its greatest potential. Mixed amongst other plants, it isn't of great concern.

An ornamental garden however is something entirely different: available space is limited, and sometimes ruthless decisions need to be made. To grow a plant that doesn't meet our highest expectations and fulfill its potential, is a wasted opportunity. There is also the understanding that to do nothing, not to intervene at some point, will be detrimental to the plant's health and longevity, we don't refer to 'rejuvenation pruning' without reason. Of course, I'm referring to shrubs; trees are a whole different story. For a tree, you invest time and effort in early formative training of its structure, and then let it get on with it, knowing that unless something subsequently intervenes after the first few years of formative pruning, the tree can be allowed to develop on its own.

Shrubs vary widely, that's part of their appeal and versatility, but for some shrubs, doing nothing can lead to decline through disease and senescence. It's amazing to see a shrub that has shown no sign of developing new stem growth from the base, suddenly have multiple stems develop after the older stems have been cut off. Knowing which shrubs have the capability for basal or below ground regeneration is of course critical to its success; not all plants have the ability to re-grow from dormant buds, either on lower stems or hidden under the soil.

The reason I mention hard pruning is to let you know what is occurring this season in the Gardens. Far more shrubs than usual have been heavily pruned this Spring and I thought I'd share my reasons and thoughts to let you know why. As in most pruning decisions, timing is probably one of the biggest factors determining success. Bitter experience has led me to avoid pruning heavily in late autumn, when soil moisture is low and extended colder conditions will take place. You'd think that avoiding mid-summer heavy pruning would be desirable as well, and in all but a few cases you'd be correct. My only exception is coppicing eucalypts, that thrive on a mid-summer prune, in comparison to pruning in spring, when they have died or languished as a result.

This Spring, my decision to heavily prune several shrubs was based on the wetter than average year, and the long term prognosis that a wetter La Niña event will take place. The knowledge that good soil moisture is available and is likely to continue through the summer period, with lower than average extreme hot weather events predicted, gives me an opportunity to hard prune and take advantage of this climate outlook.

Once the timing and climate outlook have been taken into consideration, plant structural, aesthetic or practicality issues can be addressed. If the shrub is flowering well below expectations, the height and density are too high to manage, or the branch structure begins to open up, then the opportunity to re-start the shrub should not be missed.

Much of this pruning has taken place around the main building, which is a high profile area to undertake such a thing. Nevertheless, when you next visit, you'll likely see the previously clipped forms of *Osmanthus heterophyllus* and *Luma*



Hard pruned *Osmanthus heterophyllus* and *Luma apiculata*, October 2020

apiculata on the east side, regenerating from a hip-height branch framework, the third time this has taken place since they were planted in the mid 1990s (which is about every 8-10 years).

The *Lagerstroemia* ground-cover cultivar planted earlier this decade has been disappointing in its flowering over the last few years. Where previously the long new Spring growth was fully covered in flowers in mid-summer, the flowering now is sparse, as the spring growth that the flowers develop on is shorter, thus reducing its flowering potential.

From the Gardens *continued*

I have now pollarded the ground-covering *Lagerstroemia* cultivars as was previously done to the taller cultivars in the gardens, which were pollarded each year in winter, to stimulate long new growth that then flowers in summer.

Finally, a picture of the Wisteria Walk Arbor. It has come as a surprise that several of the specimens, planted in 2017 and flowering for the first time this year, are pink, rather than the long dark purple that they were sold as (*Wisteria floribunda* 'Royal Purple'). I'm not too disappointed, the colour matches well and flowers open slightly later than the purple, which will give a good additional display for the walkway.



Purple flowering wisteria, with pink form at the rear.



Lagerstoemia 'New Orleans', a groundcover cultivar, new growth after hard pruning.



The old wisteria arbor had a different species at the far end. What do readers think?

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The Burnley Guides Report *by 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

Our small group of Burnley Guides has been disappointed, of course, like everyone else, that we have not been able to get out and about over the past several months beyond our own gardens and perhaps local parks. A few of us who live fairly close have visited Burnley, and seen that the Gardens are being kept in beautiful order, with Spring growth, new green leaves and blossoms making them look a picture.

Thanks to Jane Wilson's expertise, we have held four meetings on Zoom, and in June, before the strict lockdown took place, managed a walk to see what was in flower or berry, and to introduce our newest member, Sue Hay, to the Gardens and to ourselves. We welcome Sue to our group, and look forward to taking her on further walks and training sessions in preparation for when our tours can start again.

We took three tours in March, but after that had to cancel several groups due to the pandemic. We hope that they will want to schedule them for late this year or early next - we know at least one Probus group is very keen. As soon as we know what may be permitted, we will try to promote these activities again, and will ask you to help us with promotion to groups such as garden clubs, Probus, U3A, retirement villages or just garden-loving friends. Meanwhile, we are planning a visit of our own to the garden in Ringwood East of the late Kath Derry, who designed a large part of the native garden at Burnley. Her daughter has kindly agreed to lead us on a walk through Kath's garden.

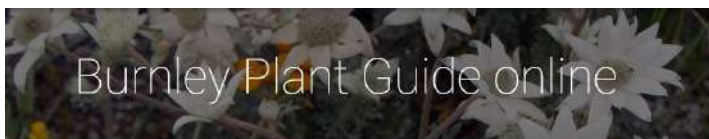
From the archives *by Jane Wilson*

At the beginning of the first lockdown I took some archival work home that I had been putting off for a long time. It involved transferring slides into archival safe holders and cataloguing them and there were a lot of them – about 3,000. They are interesting slides as many of them were from the days when Arboriculture was taught at Burnley and they demonstrated the rigour and thoroughness of the teaching. Others were the slides used for everyday teaching dating back to the 1950's, just like Power-Point is used today. I filled 20 archival boxes and went back for more work.



Andrew Smith loaded me up with 4 large boxes of slides – about 7,000 this time. They proved to be the photographs that Jill Kellow and Stuart Miller took when they were developing the first Burnley Plant Guide for students on CD (now on line). Again, they needed to be transferred to archival sleeves as they had become sticky and would deteriorate if not attended to. They are a fantastic record and the photography is excellent so are well worth preserving. I would require another lifetime to digitise them all but individual slides can easily be digitised on request. However, they require a large number of sleeves and I am not sure if I can get any more. The Burnley Archive Collection is one of The University of Melbourne's nearly 40 museums and collections but there is no funding provided for it, and it is managed by volunteers. The cost of enough archival sleeves will probably be too much to beg from the Burnley Campus administration which is a shame and it isn't easy to get funding from outside sources for stationery.

The good news is that I am hoping to have the archive catalogues on line for the general public by the end of the year. Melbourne University Archives had promised to do it but lost interest. However the Creswick Campus archivist put me on to the idea of using Museums Victoria which they use as do many other museums and historical societies. It is free and they do an upload for you to get you started. There will still be a lot of work to do as the photographs will have to be attached. Anyone who is interested in helping next year can contact me jane.wilson1@unimelb.edu.au



A snip from The Burnley Plant Guide, a product of Burnley Campus - an aid to student learning.