



# Papyrus

No. 74. Winter 2021

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURNLEY GARDENS

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## President's Report



Welcome to another bumper edition of **Papyrus**!

In this edition you'll find another 'Graduate of the Month': media personality Rob Pelletier – what a varied career! There's a fascinating report on Burnley's *Woody Meadows Project*, Michele's story about Peach Flat, and so much more.

What a joy in these rather discouraging times to have had Andrew Smith's regular '**Plant of the Week**' column, appearing with unfailing regularity on our website since early 2020! In searching for

some positive 'spin' for this newsletter, it struck me that this week's selection, the joyously uplifting *Grevillea preissii* subsp. *glabrilimba*, (the Spider Net Grevillea) can surely be seen as a metaphor for these times.

We read that...

*'...it flowers throughout winter, it really grabs your attention with its masses of bright red, well displayed flowers..'*

*'... its ability to be regenerated by hard-pruning, which ensures longevity and keeps it looking compact and healthy ...'*



Of course our Winter gardens are full of hopeful signs of renewal. While we sometimes despairingly 'wait out' Winter in the hope of Spring, are we mindful enough of what Winter itself brings in the garden? A huge number of Australian native plants are actually at their best during Winter. What a joy that we can now get out and about without a distance limit! Time to visit our own special Burnley Gardens again?

A big thank you to all our members for continuing to support FOBG, and to attend in such good numbers the various events – mostly virtual – that we have been able to offer.

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

In April we were treated to a fascinating and well researched talk by Michele Adler & Kirsten Binns-Smith on ***'James Scott & John Dallachy: Founding Fathers of the Burnley Gardens'***. (Kirsten's research even extended to a pilgrimage to Scotland on the quest of the Dallachys!) Clearly there is still a wealth of information awaiting discovery in the history of the Gardens.



Kirsten Binns-Smith

April also brought another small Garden Photography Workshop by that excellent teacher, Paul Kertes.



Dr Chris Williams

In May, Burnley's own Dr. Chris Williams gave a fabulous and inspiring talk to a large, appreciative crowd in the Hall, on his work at the **Collingwood Children's Farm and his Horticultural Outreach Work**.

Then in June we had a very well subscribed Zoom presentation by Michael McCoy on the topic of the moment: ***'Naturalistic Planting Design in Australia: The Opportunities and Challenges'***. We are immensely grateful to Michael for generously squeezing FOBG into his very demanding schedule. He always brings so much wisdom, thought and knowledge to his presentations.



Michael McCoy in his naturalistic garden

We deeply regret that current restrictions have made it difficult to offer some planned events, such as the Winter Pruning Workshop, and sincerely hope that with time, all these events can be restored!



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

Our Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18 August. We look forward to seeing many of you there in person! Following the AGM, our Patron Dr. Greg Moore will speak on '**Connection: the role of connected green space**'. Greg writes:

*Melbourne is Australia's fastest growing city and developed more rapidly to its south and east than to the north and west. This presents planning challenges where differences in the meaning of connectivity have emerged. To the north and west there are demands to subdivide undeveloped land for housing, but there are also demands for connected public open space (POS)...*

As always, I thank the Committee for all the work that continues to be done behind the scenes. We welcome your interest in joining our Committee – please consider this at the AGM!

Enjoy reading this edition of **Papyrus**, and please continue supporting our organisation and the events we offer, because everything we do is ultimately designed to support our very precious Gardens.

**Sandra McMahon**  
President, FOBG.

PS A big thank you to Jill Kellow, who does so much valued work behind the scenes, not only editing these newsletters but also managing the FOBG website.



A little Burnley history: who remembers the front entrance before the ramp?

## **Propagation group report, July 2021, by Glenys Rose, Group Coordinator**



Well, here we are again in lockdown number 5 doing similar things to last year. Heraclitus was right “change is the only constant in life” so we may as well go with the flow. Since the last newsletter the members of the propagation group who have been able to access the nursery have been very busy and organised two sales. These raised more than \$1250, a fantastic effort.

The plant area has been rearranged to provide better and safer access and a more efficient watering system has been installed. Thank you to all involved in this work.

Despite the wet and cold winter there have been some beautiful days to be able to get outside and work on projects. I purchased a small, motorised auger and am now able to dig in my black cracking clay soil. So when I am inspired I am planting trees and shrubs. A slow but very rewarding process.

Best wishes to anyone who was affected by the recent damaging storms. I hope that you have received and accepted help in sorting out shelter and tree issues. Stay safe and see you around the campus or at one of our sales.

## **Social Media Report by Jill Kellow and Jacquie Chirgwin**

Our Social Media presence continues to grow. Our website <http://www.fobg.org.au/blog/> is still the mothership of the group, but as many of you know we also have a presence on Facebook, and Instagram. Both of these are growing steadily: since our last report in Spring 2020 our Facebook membership has grown to 469, of whom Facebook reports that 351 are active members. Not a week goes by without new membership requests, sometimes several in a day. We still attribute much of this increased popularity to Andrew Smith’s “Andrew’s Plant of the Week”, which never fails to draw comments and “likes”. Less frequently, the *Burnley Graduate of the Month*, which is also published in the Newsletter attracts interest, especially when people read about the doings of their old classmates. Please join the conversation.

The FOBG Instagram has been in existence for around 2 ½ years. We have 995 followers and today I will be uploading the 100<sup>th</sup> post. For well over a year now we have posted Andrew Smith’s Plant of The Week from the Gardens, which has proved extremely popular. We also post details of our talks and workshops.



## Membership report, *by Cheryl Andrews, Membership Coordinator*



Since the previous Papyrus Newsletter in Autumn 2021, our membership has increased to 200 members. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the 16 new members who have recently joined our group. Thanks to all our loyal members for their continuing support and involvement in our activities.

Some members have received an email reminding them that their membership is due for renewal, please don't forget to complete the membership form and send in your payments. If you are unsure of when your membership is due for renewal you can email me at: [friends.burnley@gmail.com](mailto:friends.burnley@gmail.com) for more details.

And since Cheryl sent in this contribution, there have been several new requests for Membership. That's great - all our annual subscriptions go to support our Gardens. Keep it up folks. -ed.

## The Twenty Year Club *by Cheryl Andrews, Membership Coordinator*

Cheryl tells us :

I have had a look through the membership and there are two more members for the twenty year club:

**Susan Murphy** who joined in July 2001 and is a Life Member - (Not Honorary Life) and

**Doug Vonier** who joined in October 2001, and he is also a Life Member - (Not Honorary Life)

## Stolen from the web

*"I've started to plant my herbs in alphabetical order. People ask me how I find the time. I tell them "it's next to the sage".*

<https://growingfamily.co.uk/garden-tips/garden-puns-garden-jokes-2/>

## News from the archives *by Jane Wilson*



Jane apologises that she doesn't have any interesting items from the archives for this edition, but she has agreed to share one of her horticulturally based recipes. It sounds delicious.

Jane says: I have a very productive nashi tree and they don't keep for very long so this is how I use some of them up. This chutney does not have onion and is fairly sweet, so use it like you might use a fruit paste with cheese. I haven't got a photo of it to show you as the family have eaten all this year's batch.

### **NASHI (OR PEAR) AND WALNUT CHUTNEY**

1 1/2kg nashis or pears, peeled and cored

400g apples

1 cup white vinegar

3/4 cup lemon juice

1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed

1 cup chopped raisins

1 cup chopped dates

1 cup chopped walnuts

Chop pears and apples, combine with remaining ingredients, except sugar, in large saucepan. Bring to the boil and simmer gently, uncovered, stirring regularly, for 3/4 of an hour. Add sugar, and simmer for 1/2 an hour more stirring more frequently to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the pan. When it is thick pour into hot sterilised jars and seal with hot lids. It will keep for a much longer time if you seal this way.

*Makes about 5 cups.*

You can adapt this to other fruit. I use medlars sometimes, if I can get them before the possums, although it is a bit fiddly getting the stones out.

Adding the sugar later means there is less chance of it sticking to the bottom of the pan.

## From the Gardens *by Andrew Smith*



### Student creativity

If you have visited the Gardens in the past week, you would have noticed several temporary sculptural art installations on the lawns and under trees on the Eastern side of the Main building. These sculptures were done by students under the instruction and inspiration of well-known designer and artist, David Wong. David has been a regular guest presenter for Burnley student classes for many years, and he is renowned for inspiring students to use plant material that has either been cut down as a result of pruning or using plant material that we perceive as being brown and lifeless. David is quick to point out that while we may look upon this plant material as being dead, it still has great structure, beauty and use. Many years ago when I first took David around the Gardens to collect plant material for this student practical, I was intrigued that he had no interest in the flowering or usual floral art suite of plants, instead focusing on fallen or senescing material such as autumn leaves, pine cones, prickly Bunya Bunya brown foliage and the long canes and pruned wood from the willows and fruit trees.

Once sufficiently large quantities of individual materials are gathered, groups of students are assigned an individual material to create an outdoor display. For the student group given a pile of leaves, leaf rakes and an expanse of lawn to spread them on, the art installation is at the mercy of the wind. For the student group given a pile of long willow canes, it doesn't take them long to work out that the pliable stems can be twisted and woven to create shapes.





### **From the Gardens *continued***

Perhaps a greater challenge this year were the oranges and lemons collected from the abundant citrus crop.

David was unsure how their round shape could be used but it didn't take the students long to create a maze, by setting the fruit out in a pattern on the ground. This was a great example of where creativity can take you. After its completion, it was great to see young children drawn to the colourful installation and immediately follow the lines of fruit to find a way through the maze. It won't be long before we collect up the oranges and lemons and give them away to visitors, something we

have been doing regularly in recent years, as it's incredible how prolific Meyer and Washington navels can be in Melbourne's winter.



### **The Gardens Census**

Progress on updating the Burnley plant census has been slow and steady, with 52% of shrubs and 66% of trees now checked and a photo included with the plant in the map database. The advancement in recent years of the ability to incorporate images from phones while walking around the Gardens working on the census database, or attaching saved images from the desktop, is a great step forward in creating a student and visitor learning resource. The last time the plant census was done, five years ago, this wasn't possible, as the plant photo file size was a limitation. The ability to send and store the data 'to the cloud' means that not only is the information accessible via a weblink, but all the images, and the plant record data is immediately uploaded, making it far easier to add new plants to ensure the plant collection is always up to date.

## From the Gardens *continued*

It was pleasing to see how few plants had died since the last census five years ago, with the majority of the plants no longer there being overwhelmed by their bossier neighbours.

### Replanting of fruit trees and roses

Plans are under way to select and re-plant the stone fruit trees in the field station, as well as the rose collection in the Rose Garden. For the stone fruit, the excessive number of trees and timing of when they fruit has necessitated a re-think of which cultivars we should use. In recent years the fruit trees have been difficult to manage, due to the tendency of the fruit to ripen and fall off when no one is at Burnley during the last week of December and the first weeks of January. This is especially important since fruit fly was discovered in Doncaster in the last season. The last thing we want is fruit rotting on the ground during the Christmas shut-down period. Selecting later-fruiting cultivars, halving the number of trees planted, and selecting smaller root stock are all priorities for selecting the new stone fruit.

In the Rose Garden, we have revisited Geoff Olive's design, in which he selected cultivars to illustrate the development of the rose through the ages. This has focused our attention on the choice of roses that we will use in the re-planting. The current situation, where the roses are

overplanted and prone to Black Spot, despite the fortnightly fungicide spray for eight months of the year, isn't sensible, and results in a great deal of effort for little reward. Sascha Andrusiak, from the Burnley Nursery, who is an avid and very knowledgeable rose lover, has undertaken the task of selecting and sourcing the best possible roses to tell the story of how the



Rosa 'Buff Beauty' in the Burnley Gardens

rose developed over the centuries to become the modern roses that we see in nurseries today. Very generously, Lorraine Baker, one of our own members of the Friends, has offered to purchase most, if not all of what will be selected and replanted. Thanks very much indeed Lorraine.



## Behind the Fedge .... The Woody Meadow Project

*Developing novel and resilient urban plantings for Australian future cities* by Dr Claire Farrell



The Woody Meadow Project aims to improve the appearance and function of urban landscapes using Australian shrubland ecosystems as templates. The 4-year Australian Research Council linkage project is led by Dr Claire Farrell, A/Prof John Raynor, Prof. Stefan Arndt and Prof. James Hitchmough (University of Sheffield, UK, formerly Senior Lecturer at Burnley Campus) and brings researchers together with industry and government partners.

Urban greening has wide-ranging benefits but maintaining vegetation is expensive, often resulting in overly simple plantings that have limited visual appeal and resilience to challenging urban conditions. In response to this, we have developed Woody Meadows - naturalistic plantings of shrubs and trees which are managed by coppicing (hard-pruning 10-20 cm above the soil surface) to create dense plantings that exclude weeds, have significant aesthetic appeal with low maintenance.





### *...an occasional series about research at Burnley*

A wide range of Australian species are being trialled, with early studies already indicating the suitability of species such as *Alyogyne huegelii* (Lilac Hibiscus), *Eucalyptus caesia* 'Silver Princess' and many *Callistemon* species. As not all plants may respond well to coppicing, and resprouting may also be reduced after drought stress, we are conducting a number of experiments in the Burnley field station. Our PhD student Lavinia Chu is trialing the response of 80 different tree and shrub species to coppicing to help broaden plant selection. We are also installing a large experiment under polytunnels to see how dry and wet years relate to plant survival after coppicing. This will help us to determine the resilience of woody meadows.



PhD candidate Lavinia happy in her work.



New poly tunnels in the Burnley Field Station

***Continued  
on Page 24***



## *The Woody Meadow Project continued*

With our research partners, we are planting a network of Woody Meadows across a range of sites and contexts to expand our knowledge and experience in designing and growing Woody Meadows. Our research partners include: City of Boroondara, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Whittlesea, Department of Transport (Vic Roads), Greater Western Water, Greening the Pipeline, Hume City Council and Moreland City Council. This information, combined with research at the University's Burnley campus, will be used to develop a framework and guidelines for establishing Woody Meadows. We encourage people to install Woody Meadows and register them to become part of the Woody Meadow network.



[See our website for more details](https://woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au/)

[https://  
woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au/](https://woodymeadow.unimelb.edu.au/)

Contact  
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School of Ecosystem & Forest Sciences  
University of Melbourne

## The Burnley Guides Report *by Judith Scurfield*



The Burnley Guides have only been able to get together a couple of times, and arrange two tours, which happened in May, just before this year's first lockdown.

The first was for the Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Photo Group, who were, of course, happy to take photos of the Gardens in their Autumn colours. The

second, of about 11 people, was for Bayside Probus, who were very enthusiastic. We have at least two more tours planned in the next few weeks, and hope that we can bring these to fruition as COVID restrictions allow. It is most rewarding to show Burnley Gardens to groups of people who enjoy them so much, and we encourage any members who would like to join our Guides to contact us through the website, or me on 0416237464.

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](mailto:judithscurfield@yahoo).



A little Burnley history. Who remembers the Burnley bookshop, *Plants in Print*? Perhaps you might even recognise one or two of the students....



## The Story of Peach Flat and Community Wetlands, Briagolong, Victoria *by Michèle Adler*



More than three decades ago, Michèle Adler and Rod McMillan purchased a block of land in the bush adjoining land where they lived. On close investigation they discovered drainage channels a metre deep that had been dug by past owners to help shed water to the adjoining creek but it was still a very wet paddock. The 'new' land was in need of a lot of work.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we could restore the wetland?" said one.

"Yes, of course, but it will be very expensive," said the other.

*There's nothing more reassuring than waking to the sound of carolling birds.*

*It's the start of a brand new day. This is a good story; it started more than 30 years*

So the idea was shelved, but the dream had been voiced.

A series of fortuitous events coincided to allow the restoration of the wetland to happen. In 2001, Michèle and Rod had been working in the Galápagos Islands, and were inspired by the exceptional conservation efforts there. That year on the way back to Australia, they visited the Barnes wetlands just upstream from central London, where they were inspired by the way that private and public bodies could work together for a great environmental outcome. They could see a pathway for their restoration project at *Peach Flat*.

Back at home, they set about finding partners who could help with the restoration. But first, they needed to do a feasibility study and to document what was there. Plant, bird and animal surveys identified what existed on site and their level of importance.



The site of the proposed 4 ha wetland is outlined in white pen. It was designed to wrap around existing dams, extend along the edge of an old roadway and create a billabong ef-

## Peach Flat, *continued*

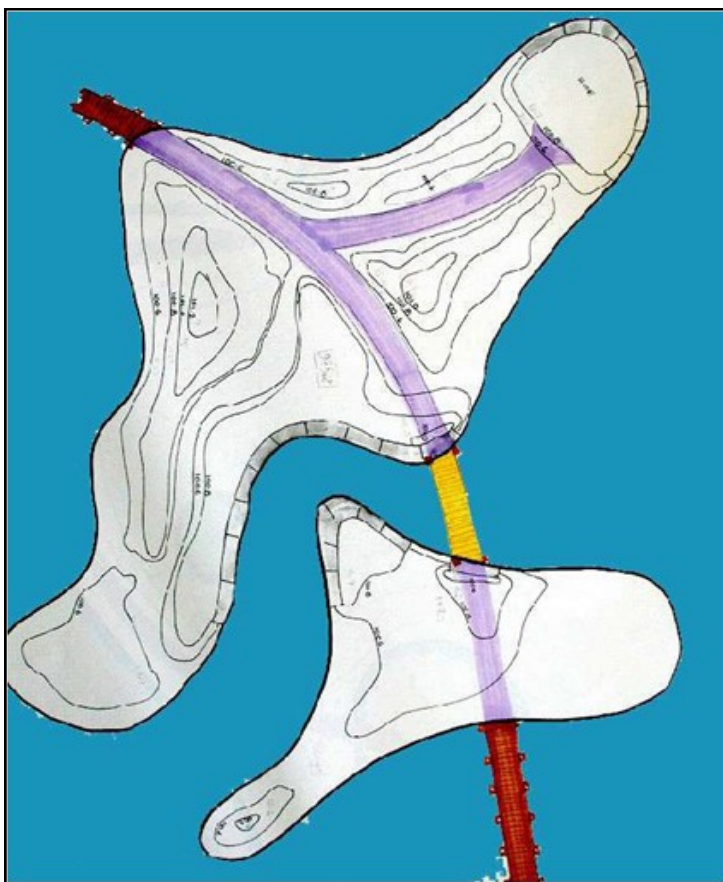
Soil profile tests were conducted, the water table and water quality were assessed and the site surveyed. Then a design was drawn up.

Right: An inspection hole revealed free water at about 1.8m. This determined the final level of the earth works.

Below: The wetland design shows the contour lines of the construction and various islands at different heights to allow for a variety of habitat both below and above water level.



## Peach Flat, *continued*



Two of the island designs in detail, showing board walks (brown), pathways (purple) and the proposed site for a bird hide. The yellow board walk was not constructed in Phase 1. It later became a Japanese style arched bridge.

The local River Authority was consulted to make sure that the proposed wetland was not interfering with any designated water courses. Then, armed with approvals, site analysis and a design, Michèle and Rod developed a project proposal and set about finding some financial partners and broader local support.

With financial support and encouragement from the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority they successfully applied for funding to the National Heritage Trust via the local Landcare Network. Other partners, such as the Wellington Shire came on board with support “in kind”. They also received a grant from the Dyson Foundation through Watermark Inc.” Everyone they spoke to was excited about supporting the wetlands’ redevelopment. It was an ambitious undertaking.

In 2003, they were ready to proceed. Michèle and Rod used their horticultural, design and management skills to propel the project. Rod drew up the design, and both supervised the earthworks and construction.





2003, this is what the wetland site used to look like. It was a drained grazing paddock with wet patches.



Checking levels during construction



**Above:** The wetland under construction in 2004. **Below:** The earthworks took about six weeks and were finished in January 2004.





## Peach Flat, *continued*

Then came the patient wait for rain. Bit by bit rain fell. Six months later, in October 2004, the wetland had filled enough to have an Opening.



The Opening of the wetland in October 2004 by local Member Craig Ingram.

The sign is located near the picnic shelter and helps to introduce passers-by to the project. It took about 3 years for the wetland to fill completely but in June 2007 an east coast low developed, bringing plenty of water.





## Peach Flat, *continued*



The wetland overflowing in 2012. The 4 ha wetland is now an integrated part of the property with the whole being surrounded by stony ridges and dry sclerophyll forest that are a feature of this country.

### **Fast forward to 2021.**

The wetland ebbs and flows – as a wetland should. Some years the water level is low allowing modifications, maintenance and construction; in other years, such as in 2012 and this one (2021), it is full to the brim and overflowing. Birds breed, some with their second and third nestlings, animals feed and the wetland is doing what was intended – providing habitat and safe ground for the critters that live there.

To encourage passers-by Michèle and Rod with support from Wellington Shire built a public car park with a shelter, which doubles as a picnic and observation site. Cars frequently stop to enjoy the view. It also means that wildlife and the water can be seen at any time without people needing to come on site. The wetland adjoins an existing lake and garden as part of their 'Land for Wildlife' property.

What you see today is a tranquil natural looking space. The wetland area was designed to increase water catchment; islands were installed to attract birds and animals, and indigenous plants have been allowed to self-seed. There has been very little extra planting, just judicious choosing to take or leave plants that 'turn up'. Weeds have to be controlled – that's been difficult as the original paddock was very weedy. Water means birds and frogs, snakes, spiders and animals. We regularly see red-bellied black snakes (very shy fortunately) but we also see echidna and goannas. It does mean, however that feral animals can be attracted to the 'smorgasbord'.



A friendly Huntsman spider. They are often found under bark. They also sometimes shelter inside our house. Don't be scared they are really docile as you can see; this one is exploring a hand.

A White Faced Heron and a Spoonbill share perches on a log



The wetlands attract many water birds – wood ducks, lapwings, Pacific and white-faced herons, Pacific black ducks, reed warblers, grebes, swamp hens, dotterels, coots and cormorants as well as the occasional spoonbill.



## Peach Flat, *continued*

With the surrounding area being mainly local plant species, we have our share of land birds such as honey eaters, swallows, pardalotes, cuckoos and more. At least 75 species of bird, 5 species of frog, uncountable numbers of invertebrates, and other 'locals' (wombats, wallabies, kangaroos, emus, echidnas, goannas, etc.) have been recorded.



A friendly visiting echidna thinks it is hiding in the grass. It's not !

As part of giving back to the community, local primary schoolchildren come to the property to be involved in the Bug Blitz programme, learning about art in the environment. They discover bugs, collect plants and create beautiful artwork.

As part of the Bug Blitz programme bugs are collected, photographed and then returned tot their homes. The children learn to investigate the critters with camera and magnifiers.





On another occasion kids from the local primary school helped to make an art installation with local artist Danny Waters. It was to be a water spider. They are all getting wet and muddy. The water spider was raised by pulleys into the trees and remained as a sculpture for some months

From time- to-time we run plant workshops for adults such as grafting days and tea ceremony. More recently there have been some weddings and music festivals. Community groups are welcomed. Internal access to the private land and the wetlands boardwalks and pathways is available by appointment.

*Peach Flat and Community Wetland* is located on a river flat on George Creek, 10 km north-west of Briagolong, in Central Gippsland, Victoria, 3 hours from Melbourne. The wetland is part of an extensive 110 ha bush and landscaped property with many micro-climates, from the riparian environment of the creek to the cliffs of the escarpment, open flats, eucalypt



The wetlands were created to help redress ecological imbalance caused by clearing and draining of land and farming by former owners. They also provide respite for migrating birds making their way to or from the coast or overseas. And I'm sure that you won't be surprised that we don't allow duck shooters!



## Peach Flat, *continued*

The 4 ha wetland is an integrated part of an extensive landscaped property which contains large areas of native grassland (grazed by mobs of Eastern Grey kangaroos), a mixture of ornamental and native plantings, with the whole being surrounded by stony ridges and dry sclerophyll forest that are a feature of that country. Michèle and Rod built a public car park with a shelter, which doubles as a picnic and observation site. The wetland site adjoins an existing lake and garden developed by Michèle and Rod as part of their 'Land for Wildlife' property, in which introduced plants blend harmoniously with indigenous species. The gardens close to the houses are more detailed and formal, with large deciduous trees providing much needed shade in the heat of summer and winter light.



Morning reflections. Many local species, including *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*, *E. bridgesiana* and *E. cypellocarpa*, *Acacia melanoxylon*, and *A. mearnsii*, have been allowed to self-seed. Trees have been selectively kept and integrated into the landscape to demonstrate the original nature of the area, and provide an ecological link with the surrounding dry forest.

Overall, there is a soft blur between the natural bush and the constructed garden. Around the wetland the local, long-lived Blackwood, (*Acacia melanoxylon*) particularly important as habitat, has been allowed to increase, along with the shorter-lived Black Wattle, (*Acacia mearnsii*), an excellent habitat for sugar gliders.

In the wetland, Tall Spike Rush, (*Eleocharis spatheolata*), provides necessary cover for water birds. Around the edges, there are native water lilies (*Nymphoides geminata*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). The development of the wetland has generated lots of community interest, and there are regular visits from birding groups, field naturalists, garden lovers and school groups. Volunteers have also played a role in helping with the recording of various species of birds, frogs, mammals and invertebrates, and in the revegetation of the site. Wildlife can be seen from the roadside shelter at any time without needing to come on site. Internal access to the private land and the wetlands boardwalks and pathways is available by appointment. FOBG members are most welcome to come for a visit. Just give us a call to make a suitable time. Email [michele@adland.com.au](mailto:michele@adland.com.au) or phone 03 5145 5422.

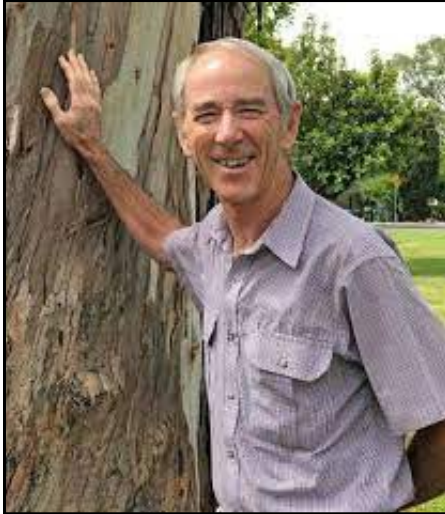
The wetlands are dedicated to our dear friend Sarje. Some of you who were students at Burnley may remember him. He often accompanied us at the café and on Plant ID excursions at night in the Gardens. He rests peacefully on Sarje's Island.  
Michèle



Dedicated to our friend Sarje  
1985 - 2004



## **When a tree comes crashing down** *by Dr Greg Moore, former Head of Burnley Campus, and FOBG Patron*



*Greg wrote this column for us before the violent storm that cut a swathe through several of Victoria's forested areas, including parts of the Dandenong Ranges close to Melbourne, so it is even more relevant than it was when he wrote it.*

When a tree or a major part of a tree comes crashing down on your sheds, roofs and fences, you are probably not in the mood for a detailed analysis of why it happened. However, as a person connected to Burnley, some questions will, or should, pop into your head.

Was it a whole tree that fell in a windthrow event? Was it a codominant stem? Was it a branch or perhaps an epicormic or lignotuberous shoot?



When a whole tree is windthrown it is usually associated with root damage, strong winds and heavy rain, or a combination of all three. If it is an epicormic shoot that falls it is usually because the tree has been damaged or lopped, and an epicormic shoot has been allowed to grow too long and too fast, and so is too heavy for its attachment

Some of these epicormic shoots may be over 10m long and weigh in excess of 5t, and so can be a serious problem should they fail.

Epicormic shoots normally fail close to their point of origin on a large branch or trunk. Lignotuberous shoots will appear to originate below ground level and they rarely fail unless there are lots of them.



When a branch fails it may break some distance out from the trunk or its point of attachment to another larger branch. Often when this occurs, the branch is very long and is pipe-like rather than tapering as healthy branches do. It may have a tuft of foliage on an otherwise nearly foliage-free branch (lion's tail) and often the foliage density is low. The branch may have been declining for some time, but damage to the top (adaxial) side of the branch can precipitate failure at some distance from the point of attachment.



The damage may have been caused by animals or birds or sunscald and may not be evident from a ground inspection. The damage can allow access to the xylem tissue where fungi may cause damage to the tissues that weakens that part of the branch.

Some of you may be wondering about sudden or summer limb drop, but that is another story altogether to which we don't really have clear answers. So when something comes crashing down it is not the sky falling, and if it is tree-related things may not be quite as simple as they first seem. However, a little horticultural and arboricultural knowledge can give a real insight into what has happened and why.

If you wish to read further:

Moore G M (2014) *Windthrown Trees: Storms or Management?* Journal of Arboriculture and Urban Forestry. **40** (1), 53- 69.

Moore G M (2020) *Managing Dormant Buds as Arboricultural Assets: Lignotubers.* Arborist News 29 (3), 16-24.

Moore G M (2015) *Managing Dormant Buds as Assets; Epicormic shoots.* Arborist News 23 (2): 50-53.



## Burnley Graduate of the Month No. 8: Rob Pelletier



**Years at Burnley:** 3 years full time, 1980 - 1982

**Course studied:** Dip App Sci. Amenity Horticulture

**Favourite subject:** Loved 'em all.

**Favourite plant:** Nearly every day I see a towering, ancient, craggy, decrepit euc or a small prostrate acacia, a tree heavy with ripe fruit or a pretty little ground orchid: growing happily in their niche, making the moment. A new favourite for the day. Spoiled for choice.

*It looked to me like heaven on a stick combining my life-long love of gardening with a reasonable academic reach, lots of practical content and fabulous sounding subjects like Horticultural Engineering and Plant Science.*

### **I decided to go to Burnley because:**

Following school there were a couple of years studying Civil Engineering full time, then most of an Economics and Politics degree part-time, all at Monash Uni, a few years in the ATO (which cured me of large organisations and office work forever) and several years in construction, working in my dad's civil engineering construction business.

Finally, wondering where life was taking me, I discovered Burnley Horticultural College.

After a nerve-wracking application interview, I found myself as a mature age student of 28 years, married, with a 4 year old son, fronting up at Burnley on a hot, late January day in 1980 to muck out chicken manure with a bunch of (mostly) teenagers. There were two or three other "oldies" like me and a handful in their early 20s. Still have the Felco #2s that I bought on that first day for \$25.

Rob got off to an early start



Burnley did not disappoint. We benefitted from excellent lecturers and grounds staff. It was such a privilege to study full time after having experienced working life and I made the most of every moment.

I owe my first wife Ili an enormous debt of gratitude for supporting our family while I was at Burnley.

**Since I graduated from Burnley I have:**

Early 1983 was not a good time for horticulture related jobs, or any jobs for that matter. I fancied a job in the nursery sector but much of south-east Australia was in drought, the economy was in recession and before the year had barely begun Ash Wednesday transfixed the nation.

Self-employment beckoned. I began a garden renovation and horticultural maintenance service.

This went well enough and after two or three years I was able to start tendering for commercial landscape construction contracts offered by government departments and projects managed by landscape architecture firms. Having tertiary qualifications in horticulture helped me become accepted at this level.

My business grew in tandem with an extraordinarily vibrant construction industry (the 80s!) leading to larger and more complex projects, some of which included building and civil engineering components.

It was kind of nice to have a booming business, but it came with a very challenging industrial relations component – landscapers had to belong to the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) until it was deregistered and its infamous secretary Norm Gallagher convicted and jailed for corruption. Landscapers were then farmed off to the AWU which did nothing to lessen the constant demarcation complaints by shop stewards from various building trades and their threatened stoppages as we landscapers went about our multi-skilled working days.

My recollection is there was a continuous background level of small, routine corruption throughout the building and construction industry.

It came as something of a relief, as it turned out, when the Keating “recession we had to have” arrived in 1990. It was estimated that commercial landscaping work fell by more than 80%. What remained was so keenly contested that it was near impossible to not lose money on every job.



## Burnley Graduate of the Month No. 8 ..... *continued*

I was able to move into full time media work without too much trouble because of some good fortune a few years earlier. In 1984, through no fault of my own, I had stumbled into appearing on a weekend gardening talk-back radio show, first as an occasional guest landscaper then a weekly guest and by late 1985 a fill-in host. By late 1987 I had landed a regular position at 3AW as the weekend gardening host and later, the weekday environment commentator.



A recent TV shoot

While my landscaping business continued to grow I juggled my part-time radio gigs. It never helped me get landscaping work, but did introduce me to a whole new world of personalities and experts from around Australia and the world and provided an éntre into the media world – a whole new kettle of fish!

As the 1990s progressed I found work presenting gardening on

national television, and radio continued in one form or another and there were a number of writing jobs with magazines and newspapers.

As the year 2000 approached another change of direction emerged. Companies in the gardening industry started seeking marketing and promotional advice and support. As my interest in being the “talent” began to wane a new challenge emerged in combining my business management and media presentation experiences to offer support to industry operators looking to more effectively reach media and gardening audiences.

So began what I came to recognise as my third “career” in horticulture. Like the first two, landscape contractor and media presenter, it was destined to last about a decade. And it was a good one working with clients in both Australia and New Zealand. I got to meet and work with some wonderful people and learnt so much along the way. It was a period when the internet’s functionality and influence was growing at breakneck speed throwing up incredible challenges and opportunities in communication.

My wife Kate Blood and I moved to our farm in Beaufort in 2001. A few years later while looking for some heritage fruit trees for our own orchard we found there were few nurseries growing the older varieties and many of the curated collections held by state agriculture departments were falling out of official favour and disappearing. It seemed like a good idea to propagate and sell heritage fruit trees.



Rob with wife Kate Blood



Production rows—Rob's fourth career,

“It seemed like a good idea to propagate and sell heritage fruit trees.”

Left: Budded stone fruit





## Burnley Graduate of the Month No. 8 ..... *continued*

My fourth career in horticulture, definitely my last, began with the sale of our first crop of trees, propagated on the farm, in 2009. It took me nearly 30 years, but I had finally found a job in the nursery industry.

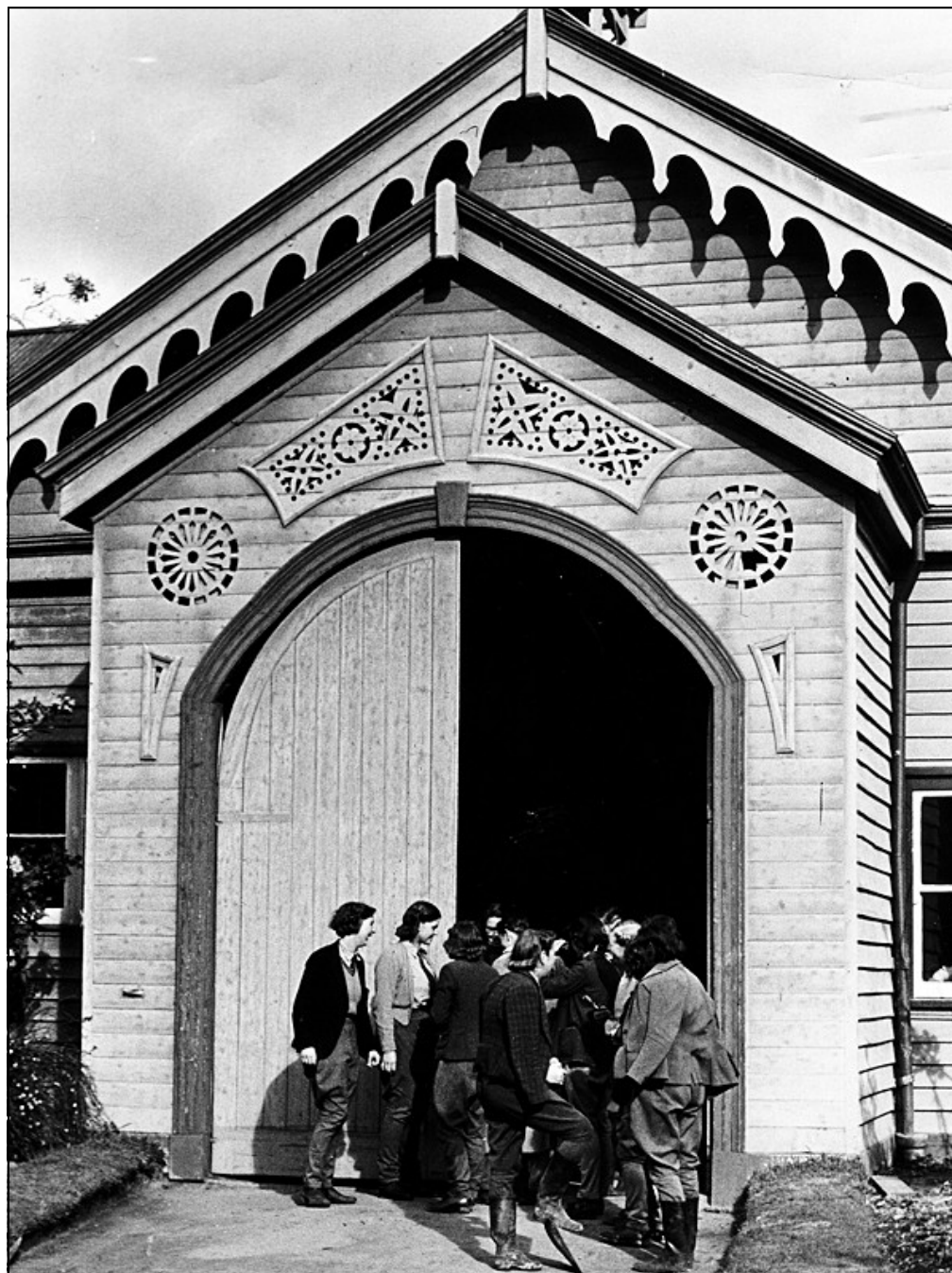
Our products are sold through our website and go to every state and territory in Australia except NT. We propagate and grow much of what we sell on our farm. It is a brilliant lifestyle and I feel privileged every day to share our farm with Kate and live in such wonderful surroundings while making a living growing plants.

I love what I do now more than anything else I have done in horticulture, although it has all been pretty damn good. I have managed to retain, I think, some of the best parts of each career. Our farm is an accommodating canvas for small scale landscape and civil projects, I still regularly appear on radio, something I have done with hardly an interruption for over 35 years, and my marketing experience has helped the success of Heritage Fruit Trees.

Glad I stumbled on Burnley Horticultural College in 1979.

Rob and Kate's back garden





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  
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