

# Bowral Garden Club Inc.

(Established in 1963)

Affiliated with Garden Clubs of Australia Inc

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*Friendship through Gardening*

## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2013

### The Anniversary Year

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Club. Your committee is planning a special anniversary lunch at Milton Park in April and a Garden Party at the home of Jan and Steve Scott in November. It is also with pleasure that we announce that Charlotte and Chris Webb have agreed to be our patrons and it is fitting that they are the first and last speakers at the February and November club meetings. The program for 2013 is full of interesting talks and activities so we hope you will enjoy being a member and continue to participate as much as possible.



*Dahlia 'Juliette'*

### What's on in February

**4 February (Monday) 1.30 pm:** Club Meeting at Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley Street, Bowral: Charlotte and Chris Webb: *Anglo-Italian Gardens: Florence.* (The minutes of the last Club Meeting - November - were in the December newsletter.)

**6 February (Wednesday) 10.30 am:** Berry picking at Montrose (if the berries are still available)

**11 February (Monday) 10.30 am:** Potting morning at Marilyn Gleeson's shed

**18 February (Monday) 10.30 am:** Coffee and Garden visit to Al and Barbara McKay, 'Eastdene', 38-40 Church St, Bundanoon, NSW 2578

Theme for the month: Dahlia

### What's on in March

**4 March (Monday) 1.30 pm:** Club Meeting at Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley Street, Bowral: Dr Holly Kerr Forsyth: *Travels with my camera: it's not all wine and roses*

**11 March (Monday) 10.30 am:** Morning tea and garden visit to be arranged

**18 March (Monday) 10.30 am:** Garden visit to 'Chinoiserie', Webb Street, Mittagong

Theme for the month: Sedums

### Potting Morning 11 February:

**Don't forget that we need plant material for the potting morning so if you aren't able to come that day, please bring your cuttings or plants to the Club meeting on 4 February and give them to Marilyn Gleeson.**

### Bulb Catalogues

When the bulb catalogues come through the mail or arrive on the computer it's as though the world of plants is at one's fingertips. For me they bring back memories of my father poring over catalogues when the weather outside was so unspeakably dreadful that the only way to garden was by the fireside with catalogues, pen and paper, jotting down the names of all those plants that we could imagine filling in the corners of an already crowded garden.

There is nothing like the frisson of excitement during the perusal of catalogues, slightly dampened, perhaps, by the cost per bulb! When the packages arrive it is equally exciting—all the small parcels neatly labelled with instructions on when and where to plant.

The two catalogues that caught my eye this year are from Lambley Nursery in Victoria and Hill View Rare Plants Nursery in Tasmania. The photographs and descriptions are inspiring—imagine this corner, this border, this area of the garden transformed in autumn, winter and spring. Imagine the various colours sweeping down the pathways; imagine the changes to the garden brought about by the stunning blooms.

We didn't grow very many spring bulbs in Melbourne but since moving here we have planted hundreds. There were many early flowering jonquils already in the front garden but now we have bulbs flowering from winter through to summer—and there is still plenty of room for more.

On November 10<sup>th</sup> we joined the community digging up the tulip bulbs in Corbett gardens and came home with three bags full. They are carefully stored away and we hope they will be firm and healthy at the time of planting.

If you haven't the contact details of Lambley and Hill View nurseries, see below. They don't only have bulbs for sale so their catalogues at other times of the year are also worth reading. Happy planning and planting!

**Lambley:** 'Burnside', Lesters Road, ASCOT, Victoria 3364 (phone: 03 5343 4303)

**Hill View Rare Plants:** 400 Huon Road, South Hobart, Tasmania 7000 (phone: 03 6224 0770; Email: [hillview400@hotmail.com](mailto:hillview400@hotmail.com))

## Agapanthus

The headline on the Letters (page 14) in the *Sydney Morning Herald* January 5-6, 2013, boldly stated, "Ditch aggies and allow imagination to bloom"! The writer implored gardeners to 'be creative. There must be at least a thousand other flower varieties suitable to plant other than agapanthus. Just because the latest television gardening guru decrees that aggies are "in", it's automatically out with everything else? So I implore you all, down with aggies and in with . . . well, just use your imaginations and surprise me.'

The problem for many of us is that although we might like to replace agapanthus with other plants, the cost to fill the borders and edges with a multitude of lovely plants would be prohibitive. Although they are easy-going, drought- and heat-tolerant, the agapanthus pinch water meant for other plants—their root systems are outrageous! But their dramatic 'mop heads' of blue, purple and white do look stunning over summer. And through the hot weather in January they were the only flowers that bravely kept going without a worry.

You may agree with the writer of the letter that aggies can look *drack* (Australian slang for 'unattractive', dressed in a slovenly manner, referring especially to women – perhaps from Dracula's Daughter – I had to look that word up in *The Macquarie Dictionary*) when they start to droop but generally they remain bright and green when not in flower and lovely when their stately flower heads beam above the rest of the garden beds. **Don't forget to deadhead these plants as they are considered an environmental weed.**

## Alternative to Agapanthus



*Tulbaghia violacea* (photos from the Internet)

A very pretty pale purple alternative plant is the *Tulbaghia violacea*—a monocotyledonous genus of herbaceous perennial bulbs native to Africa belonging to the family Amaryllidaceae. Called the 'Society Garlic'

because of the scent of its leaves, it grows to about 30-40cm high, flowers in summer and autumn, and spreads in clumps. (The genus was named for Ryk Tulbagh (1699-1771), one time governor of The Cape of Good Hope). It survives in the garden with very little attention though it does benefit from a slow release fertilizer in spring.

## Christmas party (photos from Lorraine Stott)



*Susan-May Notley, Margaret Woodcock, Lolita Godsell and Anne Stegman enjoying the carols at Centennial Winery, 3 December 2012*



*Kathy Watson entertaining us with her superb voice*



*The new Honorary members receiving their certificates: Margaret Woodcock, Shonagh and Frank Moore (Diana Squires, the fourth new honorary member, was unfortunately not able to attend)*

**A PERFECT SUMMER DAY IS WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING,  
THE BREEZE IS BLOWING, THE BIRDS ARE SINGING, AND  
THE LAWN MOWER IS BROKEN.**

**JAMES DENT (1928 - 1992)**

## Garden Tips

**Flowers:** The routine jobs continue as before—deadheading, weeding, watering and staking the taller growing plants. If you intend planting in autumn, start planning new beds and preparing the soil.

Disbud **chrysanthemums** and cut back the early flowering herbaceous plants.

Layer **dianthus** by taking non-flowering shoots and slitting these through a joint, which you then peg down in sandy soil. Water when necessary and in six weeks or so these should have rooted and can be severed from the parent.

**Dahlias:** Try to keep the area where the dahlias are growing as weed free as possible, though it is difficult crouching under and around the staked plants. Any broken or damaged foliage and the lower leaves should also be removed when the plant has grown, to increase air circulation, which in turn helps to prevent powdery mildew. Snails love dahlias so be watchful—either handpick the critters and remove, or use pet-safe bait.

**Hydrangeas:** Some people like to prune their hydrangeas in February but if you have the room to enjoy their autumn colours, the hydrangeas can be left until July. It is a good idea to cut blooms for the house during summer—that gives the plant a gentle prune.

**Fertilize:** keep annual and perennial flowers blooming by sprinkling with liquid fertilizer every two weeks. Pot plants also benefit from this treatment too. The nutrients in liquid fertilisers are almost immediately available to be absorbed through the roots or leaves, thus correcting nutrient deficiencies quickly and giving plants a general boost through the growing season.

**Lawns:** A number of different fungi cause the symptoms described as dollar spot (look for the characteristic cobwebby brown patches). For an organic/non-chemical control, apply nitrogenous fertiliser or poultry manure. A chemical solution is to spray with triadimefon (Bayleton®) at the rate of 60g in 5 litres of water over 100 square metres of turf **if the disease is actually present**. Use only 30g/100m<sup>2</sup> for prevention.

**Pelargoniums:** Prune pelargoniums and pot up 15cm cuttings from the prunings.

**Roses:** Check roses for powdery mildew and black spot.

**Prune and take cuttings:** All the flowering shrubs, such as buddleia, abelia, philadelphus, can be pruned. Combine the pruning activity with taking softwood cuttings. Choose tips of tender green stems (without flowers) or cut the prunings into 5-8 cm lengths. Remove all but a few leaves at the top. Dip base into hormone powder, honey or methylated spirits. Press cuttings, two-thirds buried, into damp mix and firm well. Water well and put in a shady spot. Check in two weeks time to see if the roots have developed.

**Weeds:** One of the most persistent weeds in Australian gardens is the *Euphorbia helioscopia* or Sun Spurge. It thrives under the herbaceous plants and then spreads about all over the garden. It has many other names—some of them quite unpleasant—cat's milk, madwoman's milk, sun euphorbia, umbrella milkweed, wart spurge, wart weed, wartgrass. It's widely naturalized in the southern parts of Australia and classified as an environmental weed in Western Australia. Whichever name it goes under in your garden, it needs to be kept under control. Poisonous to humans,

pets and livestock, its milky sap can cause dermatitis and eye irritation. Most common as a weed of cultivated areas, it has also invaded natural habitats and occasionally even conservation areas. Wear gloves while weeding!



*Euphorbia helioscopia*

## Canberra: Celebrating its Centenary: By Margaret Buckland

A visit to Canberra is an absolute must—so many gardens to visit and things to do. On 13 March 2013 Canberra will officially be 100 years old. There are great events planned for the Centenary Celebrations. The opening of the **National Arboretum** on 13 March 2013 is the culmination of 10 years' hard work after the devastating bushfires of January 2003. The only trees left standing were those at Dairy Farmers Hill—now a fabulous lookout surveying the lake, the city and the beautiful blue hills surrounding Canberra—and the stand of Cork trees—now incorporating a picnic area at the Himalayan Cedars Forest.

The Arboretum is on a 250-hectare site at the western end of Lake Burley Griffin—a concept of Walter Burley Griffin and his wife, Marion. The present design incorporates 100 forests of 100 rare and endangered species worldwide, or that have ethno-botanic symbolic values. Originally locals were against the vast expense involved. Now they are full of praise.

There is a Visitors Centre with plenty of parking and a permanent home for the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection. In the future it will provide an education and research facility, a centre of horticultural excellence and an important venue for planting events by national and foreign dignitaries. One can drive all over the site after the grand opening—for easier access to all areas. A visit is a MUST whenever you are in Canberra. For information: [www.nationalarboretum.acy.gov.au](http://www.nationalarboretum.acy.gov.au).

On another occasion we visited **Yarralumla**—only open to the public twice a year, but accessible by ferry on Tuesdays at 9am from the Southern Cross Yacht Club (phone: 02 6273 1784) at Lotus Bay, Yarralumla. We motored round to the Governor's residence to visit her gardens. This was a conducted tour given by a local guide. The house is white—simple and unpretentious but sited at the most spectacular position overlooking the lake with wonderful Canberra views. The garden spreads out with lawns and wonderful large trees. Many original eucalypts have died since the 1930s and have been replaced. There are rhododendrons, azaleas, hellebores, forsythias, prunus, Manchurian pears, flowering cherries—with under-plantings. We visited in spring and the gardens looked vibrant and fresh.

**The Botanic Gardens** is always a must and a great spot for a casual lunch under the eucalypts and xanthorrhoea.

In spring, the wattles are a glorious golden colour—and lifting the green. The magpies carolled to us during lunch—and I thought what a great spot for overseas visitors. We loved the rainforest gully on approach to the café, with its tree fern canopy—the stag horns and banksias. After lunch, and a walk along a path, the winged wattle acacia *alata* and many grevilleas were in flower and attracting the bids.

In November we visited the **Rose Garden**, on the western side of Old Parliament House, permanently open to the public and manned and maintained by volunteers. There are many, many varieties of roses and it is a stunning, colourful garden when they are in bloom, with the most wonderful perfumes emanating from the flowers. The roses have been donated by Service Clubs and Garden Clubs and individuals from all over Australia.

Whilst in Canberra there is always the Art Gallery and the Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec Exhibition is open until 2 April (but one has to book). Canberra is an interesting and exciting city!

Margaret Buckland



Nest III, created by Richard Moffatt, situated on Dairy Farmers Hill

### Muriel's Musings

To all my Garden Club friends, New Year Greetings—even though it hasn't begun the way we were wishing for. We are always sorry when something catastrophic happens, but the hurt goes deeper when it happens to people you know, and that is how I have been touched by the plight of the graziers in the Yass area. Neil came from Yass and we lived on a property, and later built a home in town and spent twenty-two idyllic years there before returning to Bowral.

I've shed so many tears for my friends and the stock that they have lost—and listening to the ABC's Sunday morning show, they have just played the saddest song ever written—Eric Bogle singing *As If He Knows*. It's about the Australian Light Horses, tethered to the lines waiting to be put down by their riders to save them from a worse fate. Truly, if anything more sets me to tears again I will surely come down with 'Lachrymose dehydration'.

So I will finish with something to raise a smile—A gran was minding her four-year-old granddaughter and took her along with her while she delivered the Meals-on-Wheels. The very bright little one was intrigued by the appliances of old age—the walking stick, walker and wheelchair. Finally her eyes lit up when she saw a set of dentures in a glass of water. On the way out of the room the gran was on edge, as she just knew the little one was

bursting to say something—and she did—she looked at the dentures in the glass and whispered, "The Tooth Fairy's not going to believe this."

Muriel Stuart

### Book review: Conservation and the 'Rambunctious Garden'

Summer reading had us enthralled by a fascinating book by Emma Marris, *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World* (Bloomsbury, New York, 2011). With all the latest theories of innovative conservation approaches, she introduces the reader to leading scientists and environmentalists from all over the world (including Australia), who are overturning the old idea that our environmental goal should be to preserve nature in its pristine, pre-human state. Humans have altered almost every square inch of the planet since prehistory, and climate change means that even the remotest places now 'bear the fingerprints of humanity'. Her argument is convincing: it is time to look forward and create the 'rambunctious garden,' a hybrid of wild nature and human management.

The book contains masses of information about the current activities of scientists, environmentalists (and governments) to assist biodiversity. And it also provides ideas for how we as individuals can assist conservation. "For habitat and for minimising polluting fertilizers and thirsty watering regimes, almost anything is better than a well-tended lawn." But even lawns can be justified when they give children a place to play. Manicured, sterile nature strips and reserves are another matter.

In the discussion on native gardens Marris quotes Stephen Hopper, Director of Kew Gardens. "Clearly we can't grow entirely native plants if you want to grow vegetables. But if every gardener put in one native tree, we could get the benefits of supporting the animals that rely on them for the various stages of their life cycle." Hopkins admits that natives are often less glamorous-looking than the "large showy sterile hybrids" that so many gardeners enjoy. He recommends embedding such showstoppers in a matrix of native foliage to get the best of both worlds." (p. 148).

It's an optimistic and uplifting book as she shows the way forward through the work of the modern scientists. The message that clearly comes forward is that there should be a little wildness in all our gardens—places that aren't tended—to allow insects, birds and animals to have space throughout the towns and cities. (*The Editor*)

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