

Corymbia maculata Spotted Gum and
Macrozamia communis Burrawang

Australian Plants Society South East NSW Group

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Next Meeting SATURDAY 7th February 2015

Yes, it is already time to plan activities for the new year ahead, and the committee have chosen to start with a nice easy social day.

We will meet at the usual time, 10.30am at the picnic area at Bodalla Park, a forested area situated off the Princes Highway, about 6km north of Narooma.

Travelling south, the turnoff is on the left, just past the Brou Lake turnoff. From Narooma, the park is on your right, about 2km past the Dalmeny turnoff.

After morning tea we will take a walk around Mummaga Lake, observing the different plants and forest types, then return to the picnic area for lunch.

Following lunch we will drive to the Box Cutting rainforest walk, where we will stroll among the shady gullies, learning more about plants which inhabit the rainforest.

Bodalla Park has just recently re-opened after some maintenance work, but you might do well to bring along a chair and even a small picnic table just in case.

Please bring morning tea and lunch. Also comfortable walking shoes, hat and whatever else you might need to ensure you enjoy the day. A reminder newsletter will arrive in January.

In the mean time enjoy Christmas, and we look forward to seeing you all in the new year.



Committee news.

Members will be aware that our group faced a difficult future, and with no nominations for committee positions for the next year, Past President John Knight circulated to all members, a letter asking everyone for their opinion on how the group should proceed.

Prior to the Annual General Meeting, held at Michael Anlezark's property on Saturday 1st November, those in attendance were offered the opportunity to be involved in open discussion, and put forward their views. At this forum John Knight opened discussion by stating that he hoped the group would be able to form a committee that would then spend the next 12 months deliberating on the stated views of the membership about the best options for the future.

Secretary Mog Bremner clarified some points in the letter which had been circulated:

- All members present at this meeting can vote. Richard Bomford, on behalf of the Committee, had studied the Rules under the Constitution of APS NSW, and advised that proxy votes were not admissible.
- There is still an option of affiliation with ANPS Canberra Region that some on the current committee feel may have advantages.
- The current committee had voted at their August meeting to put to the members that, in the event of the group folding due to a lack of a new committee, the assets of the group be donated to the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens.

The discussion opened to the floor and an informal request for expressions of interest in becoming part of a new committee resulted in 6 possible committee members, and so the group would be able to continue.

Several members expressed concern about any future management of funds in the event the group had to close.

A motion was proposed by current Treasurer Sue Sullivan, seconded by Mog Bremner:

***“in the event of the APS SE NSW Group folding now or at any time in the future-
That its financial assets at their current value, as per the 2013-2014 audit, together with its current physical assets, be donated to the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, and
That any proposal to rescind this motion in the future is to be advertised in a timely manner to all members by email or mail, and made at a General Meeting of the members”.***

There was some discussion about the motion, which was defeated by a vote of 12 against, 8 for. Michael Anlezark declared a conflict of interest and abstained, as did one other member.

Some at the meeting felt that as there was sufficient interest from members present to form a new committee, that the discussion about the assets being distributed as proposed by the motion, was a discussion that need not have occurred. In the event that the group does fold at some future date, the committee at that time would put to the membership their recommendations, for decision by members present.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22 members attended the AGM at Moruya on November 1st, with 13 apologies recorded.

Following acceptance of the minutes from the previous AGM, the reports of the President and Treasurer were presented. See elsewhere in this newsletter for these reports.

Returning Officer Richard Bomford then declared all committee positions vacant, and called for volunteers to nominate for the 2014-2015 committee, as to date no nominations had been received. 6 members put up their hand to be part of the committee, and were duly elected unopposed. Those elected were Jenny Johns, Membership Secretary, John Knight Treasurer, Margaret Lynch, Amanda Marsh, Jillian Peck and Michele Pymble, who were elected as committee members.

Margaret Lynch, on behalf of the new committee, thanked the outgoing committee and welcomed the new. She also thanked the members for coming, particularly those who had travelled some distance to attend, and finally Michael and Lynne Anlezark for hosting the group.

A joint meeting of old and new committee members was held recently to hand over, and discuss those issues still on the agenda of the past committee.

Meet your Committee members 2014 – 2015

The new committee members were asked to pen a few words of introduction, so that members could recognize who they were, and gain insight into their reasons for standing, and their thoughts on where they feel the group should be heading.



President, Margaret Lynch

A love of the bush and other natural environments led to my interest in Australian plants. These were the obvious choice when I began creating my own gardens. After becoming involved with the Australian National Botanic Gardens in 1993 as a Friend, volunteer guide and casual employee my appreciation of the Australian flora increased. I then joined the Society for Growing Australian Plants (as it was then known) Canberra Region to continue learning about growing plants and where they occurred naturally. I particularly enjoyed weekly rambles in and around Canberra where the group would identify and list plants seen. On relocating to the coast I was keen to continue involvement in both the Australian Plant Society and botanic gardens through volunteering at ERBG. A whole new set of plants and growing conditions presented in the creation of a new garden.

It was important to me that the group survive as I would like to continue learning about Australian plants. I hope this committee can maintain member interest through guest speakers as opportunities present, and by sharing experiences in our own gardens. I also think it important to offer the opportunity to explore the forests and parks of the region to see and identify our very diverse local flora and the conditions in which they thrive.

Through our gardens and activities we can be the best ambassadors for increasing the appreciation of Australian plants.

Any suggestions or areas of interest you would like to share with the group, contact any of the committee.



Secretary, Michele Pymble

I joined APS twenty years ago, soon after we bought our land at Bingie. Prior to that the only native plant in my Sydney garden was a rather sad Grevillea Robyn Gordon, the rest were exotics.

I didn't want to introduce plants into our garden at Bingie which might invade our environmentally sensitive area, so I embarked on a crash course in finding suitable Australian native plants which led me to join the APS North Shore Group. I found it quite difficult to fit in to the group and learn the basics, as they were so much more knowledgeable, but I then joined the Garden Design Study Group where I found like minded people who just wanted to make a garden and plant it with Australian native plants.

I also joined the APS South East Group in 1996 and enjoyed the camaraderie of members keen to learn more about Australian plants.

I hope our new committee can encourage other people like myself who don't have a horticultural background not to be intimidated, but to join our Group and enjoy growing our native plants and create a beautiful garden that they can share with the birds and other wildlife.



Membership Officer, Jenny John

Peter and I joined APS (then SGAP) ACT Region in 1986 soon after arriving in Australia from N Ireland. Attracted by the cover picture of a gardening magazine depicting a honeyeater on a Grevillea flower I found the application form for SGAP and signed us up. We made our Canberra garden grass-free and entirely native and have extended the existing garden at Narooma to include beds of native shrubs.

Australian plants are endlessly fascinating and we remain members so that we can learn as much as possible about how they grow and how we can grow them to their fullest potential. I nominated as membership officer a couple of years ago when the shrinking group was being supported by a very few officers doing multiple roles and the future of the group looked threatened.

We would like to see the group persevering with the simple activities of garden visits, talks on all aspects of Australian plants; their identification, propagation and use in garden design



Minute Secretary, Amanda Marsh

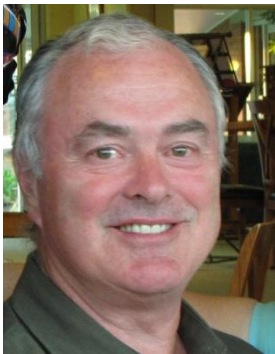
The first encounter I had with APS (then SGAP) was in Bairnsdale, Victoria. Along with members of the local Field Naturalist Society, we explored the SE Gippsland area and were delighted in the discoveries we made. One of the main interests, for some of us, was beauty and diversity of native grasses. It took me back to the delight I felt in the Nature Study classes at Primary School, then my favourites were 'egg & bacon' and 'milkmaids'. Over the years, the intrigue hasn't diminished and I hope to be able to keep exploring and learning through my involvement with APS.

Publicity Officer, Jillian Peck



I arrived in Moruya just a year ago. One of the reasons I chose Moruya was that there was an Australian Plant Society group here so imagine my disappointment when I found that it only met 4 times a year and, having to miss the first one, it was 6 months before I could attend and meet everyone. By the time the AGM arrived and it appeared that the group might close, it seemed only reasonable to put up my hand and have a go. My mother instilled in me a love of the Australian bush as she was a landscape artist and I grew up surrounded by her beautiful paintings. I later married a botanist who specialised in Australian flora and so the exposure to native plants continued. Many years later, after spending a few years in Cairns and volunteering at the botanic gardens there, I returned to the northern beaches of Sydney in 2008 and joined the local APS group situated in the Stony Range Botanic Garden at Dee Why. One of the joys for me of being in this group is to be able to look at plants both in their natural surroundings and in other people's gardens and so I hope to do more of that. I have been elected Publicity Officer and my contact details are 4474 0886 and jcpeck88@gmail.com. We are particularly keen to hear suggestions for excursions/bushwalks and if you know of anyone who would like to give a talk on their related area of interest, we would love to hear from you.

Treasurer, John Knight



My involvement with APS goes back over 40 years, having joined Maroondah Group in Victoria in 1972. Initially I was introduced to Australian plants through meeting *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* and *Eucalyptus nicholli* in my Mum's garden, and noted that they were busily attended by both birds and insects. This stimulated an interest which has never waned, and I would like to see members of our group enthused to want to learn about, and grow as many Australian plants as their conditions allow. I feel it is important to grow plants which perform well, and we can all learn from other members by visiting gardens and our forested areas to build on our knowledge. I also believe that knowing why a plant is named, how to identify its features, and appreciating why it grows in certain situations, makes gardening more pleasurable. I have been fortunate in gaining experience and knowledge from some of Australia's foremost horticulturists, and feel a duty to pass this knowledge to those who seek it.

Your committee also welcomes **Mark Noake** on board as our Group's Information Technology consultant. Mark will be undertaking a review of our website, and will make recommendations to the committee.

Further to this, the committee has been advised that the current arrangement whereby we access our website through thebegavalley.org is to discontinue in April 2015. The committee has agreed that it makes sense to have our site access through APS NSW Region. We believe this will strengthen our partnership with the Region, and provide a logical path when seeking information about Australian plants. Further details will be advised in the new year.

The committee is also seeking assistance from our members in the Bega Valley Shire area.

If the group is to function satisfactorily for all members, we need some liaison with members from the south. We are calling for one or two members to consult with the committee from time to time in arranging activities which would benefit all members. Please consider whether you might assist the group in this way. Any support would be welcome. See the committee contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Annual Report, Australian Plants Society South East NSW Group

Your Committee organised a varied and informative range of activities through the year.

Four general meetings were held. The first, following on from last year's AGM, was a discussion about landscaping and maintaining a large, semi-formal garden at Horse Island, owned by member Christina Kennedy. Head gardener Nathan, also an APS Member, explained the vagaries of the site, relating to soil management and plant management. Of particular interest was the depth of discussion on Myrtle Rust, and its effect on certain species. Nathan has introduced an effective program to curtail this problem.

General discussion related to the Genus *Thomasia* and its cultivation.

The new year saw the group venture inland from Cobargo to the nursery of David Charlton. David is particularly interested in the use grasses and grass-like plants in amenity and broad landscapes, and treated the 27 members who attended to a challenging discussion on propagation of *Lomandra* and such plants. Following, the group spent some time walking through the extensive nursery area, as David answered questions on all and sundry aspects of the plants he has grown.

General discussion centered on the Genus *Cryptandra*, and recent changes within the grouping of these with *Spyridium*. Sue Sullivan shared her success in growing *Themeda* (Kangaroo Grass) and also had some rather vigorous plants to share with members.

Our winter meeting, held at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, was broadly titled the "In's and out's of plants", and the full house was bombarded with plant specimens and a slide show illustrating why a particular plant was so named. The response from attendees was very positive, and we ran out of time before all specimens could be examined. There is ample evidence to show that members are interested in basic botany concepts.

With the arrival of spring, members were treated to a fascinating discussion on the activities of SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture & Gardening, Eurobodalla). SAGE members demonstrate the practical ways of producing fresh food, and it was a worthwhile journey for the members who attended. Many great practical ideas were offered, which could be easily transferred to a small home garden. SAGE sells its produce locally in Moruya, but you need to get in early as the vegetables usually sell out quickly.

Following the demonstrations by SAGE members, we continued with a discussion on *Thomasia*, to see what success members have achieved with propagation and growing of these attractive small plants.

Besides our meeting events, members of the group are involved in other activities which support and raise the profile of APS and Australian Plants generally. In particular the efforts at Bega Park, in replacing weed species with local plants, has resulted in a much improved landscape. The group owes much to Jan Robilliard for her persistence in achieving such a successful result. Jan also maintains the native plantings at the entrance to Bega Shire Offices, a sometimes difficult task due to conflicting ideas between council staff.

Without a committee, the group would not be able to function. No doubt our unsung hero is Secretary Mog Bremner, who is so far on top of her portfolio that we come to rely on her for keeping us moving forward. An efficient secretary makes all our jobs easier.

Supporting the Secretary, and equally important is our long suffering Treasurer Sue Sullivan. Keeping track of finances for a small group might seem an easy task, but until you have filled these shoes, just say thanks that Sue did the job tirelessly.

Keeping tabs on the members is the role of Jenny John, without whose assistance we would probably find ourselves unfinancial.

Members of the group have profited from the information offered in articles in our newsletter. Both Jennifer Liney and Leigh Murray contribute regularly to our store of knowledge. Our newsletter editor Jan Robilliard produces quality issues, and is to be applauded for her work over a number of years.

Other committee members, Michael Anlezark, Bernadette O'Leary, Jean Pengilly, Malcolm Pengilly, and Cliff Wallis have contributed positively in their support of the group, and I thank them for efforts.

In reflecting on our year's activities, I believe members have been offered an attractive range of events, covering a broad spectrum of topics. With such a diverse group, spread over large geographical distances, it is pleasing to note that the meetings were generally well attended.

However, geography is also our Achilles heel so to speak. Not all members are prepared to travel to far flung places, so the group misses out on their input, but equally, they miss out on the social aspects of being a member.

To overcome the distance barrier is a pressing need, one which a future committee may need to address if the group is to prosper.

I thank everyone who has contributed to our group over the past year, and look forward to an even stronger contribution from all our members into the future, in celebrating the benefits of growing Australian plants.

John Knight,
President

APS South East NSW 1st November 2014

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY SE NSW GROUP

TREASURER'S REPORT – AGM NOVEMBER 2014

The reconciled balance of our accounts with the Horizon Credit Union is currently \$1514.25 (\$1403.97 in 2013) and is made up from: \$939.96 (\$840.73 in 2013) in an S1 Redisavings Account and \$574.29 (\$563.24 in 2013) in an I2 Term Investment, invested for 4 months @ 1.95%. Interest on these accounts has amounted to \$11.17 since 1st November 2013. In addition, our Petty Cash balance is \$100.

The depreciated value of our physical assets (which are a data projector, laptop computer and mouse, storage bag, screen and two hard drives) is \$77.48 (\$455.79 in 2013).

Income from our share of subscriptions to APS NSW amounted to \$448.50 this year (\$520 in 2013). The membership subscription for John Knight, as a Life Member of our Group, was again paid for by the Group. Our only other income was \$20 from the sale of plants by me at our General Meeting at Wandella in March.

Our administrative costs were only \$12.90 for postage.

Meeting expenses were \$10 for the hire of the Community Hall at Bermagui for committee meetings in February and August.

Our commitment to the regional agricultural Shows in Bega and Moruya, for displays of Australian native flowers continued in 2014, with prizemonies of \$27.50 (including GST) for the Show in Bega and \$25 for the Moruya Show and in 2015, for displays of Australian native flowers and foliage, with prizemonies of \$30 for each of these two Shows. In addition, we made a donation of \$300 to the Friends of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, as a contribution to the cost of producing their calendar for 2015.

I would like to thank John Knight for facilitating the annual auditing of our finances, as required for APS NSW in 2013, Lawrie Ball for signing off on the audit and Jenny John for her assistance with the processing of membership subscriptions. Once again, thank you also to all the other members of the committee for their assistance and support, including their financial support with the costs to them of paper and computer inks and travel expenses, none of which expenses have been claimed this year.

Lastly, and noteworthy for this year, there has been a good uptake of direct deposits to our Horizon CU account, with subscriptions for seventeen of our memberships, using internet banking. This saves on postage costs from our Membership Officer to me, and also saves us both the time and effort of going to town - for Jenny to deliver these payments and then for me to deposit them at the Credit Union.

Sue Sullivan
Treasurer, APS SE NSW Group
31 October 2014.

The Practical Pages

Sorghum leiocladum: a stunning grass

To find a population of the grass *Sorghum leiocladum* within our coastal region, a person would have to be very lucky or very knowledgeable. Once an important component of native grasslands, its occurrence has been significantly depleted by grazing stock, pasture improvement and land clearing. Today it occurs mainly on the remnant woodland verges of little-used roads, often accompanied by *Themeda australis* (Kangaroo Grass); once these back roads are improved and/or widened, it will mean that this beautiful grass species will almost certainly disappear from public access lands, and probably from privately owned farmlands and pastures as well.



Commonly called Wild Sorghum, this grass belongs to the same genus as the cultivated grain crop Sorghum. Wild Sorghum is a tufted warm season perennial (it has its main growing and flowering periods in the warmer months) with flowering stems to one metre high. A unique and charming feature is the row of white hairs to 0.5mm long around each node of the flowering stem, exactly like an upside down ballerina's tutu.



The spikelets – that is, the flowering parts that contain anthers and styles, and therefore the subsequent grain – are on branches in a loose spiral around the top of the stem. The spikelets are a stunning bronze colour that gleams and shines in sunlight; this colour is a dead giveaway to the presence of the grass.

Sorghum leiocladum was first named *Andropogon australis* subspecies *leiocladus* by an Austrian botanist named Eduard Hackel in 1889. The next name was *Sarga leioclada*, bestowed by an American botanist R. E. Sprangler. However, an early 20th century botanist, Charles Edward Hubbard, eventually placed it in the genus *Sorghum*, retaining the species name *leiocladum*, and that is where it remains today. The generic name *Sorghum* was taken from the Northern Hemisphere grass of the same name (the derivation is obscure); *leiocladum* is a combination of two Greek words – *leio* meaning smooth, and *clados*, meaning a growing shoot – referring to the smooth stems.

Wild Sorghum has enjoyed a good growing and flowering season this spring, but all known sites are on road verges and thus in danger of being bulldozed in the name of road ‘improvements’. An old population near the Moruya cemetery has expanded, another site was recently noticed along Dwyers Creek Road, again in Moruya, and a third near the cattle yards on the Congo Road just after it leaves the Princes Highway at Bergalia. I hope that there are other sites just waiting to be discovered.

The tufts and the grain are only of moderate quality for grazing stock. Young growth is palatable, but deteriorates at maturity, while mature plants have hard stems high in silica. However, because the storage organs and growing points are located above ground, it is readily overgrazed in a native pasture. Nevertheless, Wild Sorghum is part of the biodiversity of our temperate grasslands, and as such should be cherished. We grass people admire it for its beauty.

Jenny Liney

Report on our last meeting

At our November meeting, Tom Dexter, an environment officer with Eurobodalla Shire Council, spoke about Endangered Ecological Communities, with particular reference to Lowland Grassy Woodland. Our meeting venue at Moruya, the property of Michael and Lynne Anlezark, contains remnants of Lowland Grassy Woodland, and Tom was able to use examples of the flora on the block to illustrate his message.

An ecological community is a unique and naturally occurring assemblage of plants and animals. The presence of an ecological community can be determined by factors such as soil type, position in the landscape, climate and water availability, all of which influence species composition.

An endangered ecological community (EEC) is an ecological community listed under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* as being at risk of extinction unless threats affecting these areas are managed and reduced.

What is Lowland Grassy Woodland?

Lowland Grassy Woodland is an open forest or woodland often with a layer of scattered small trees, an open shrub layer and a mostly continuous grassy ground layer. Some examples may reach a height of 40 m, but many regrowth stands may only be 10 m tall. It is associated with rainshadow areas of the south coast and hinterland of New South Wales which receive less rainfall than the more elevated surrounding areas. It typically occurs in undulating terrain up to 500 m elevation on granitic substrates (e.g. adamellites, granites, granodiorites, gabbros, etc.) but may also occur on locally steep sites and on acid volcanic, alluvial and fine-grained sedimentary substrates. Lowland Grassy Woodland may usually be distinguished by the current or former dominance of forest red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*).

Tom discussed the effects of various practices in enhancing species ability to regenerate, and although not necessarily ideal for management of smaller areas, suggested that burning in autumn achieved the best outcomes. He also noted that burning in August, as practiced by indigenous people for generations, is best for pastures of native grasses which regenerate quickly and grow strongly through the warmer months. Mowing tended to encourage proliferation of weed species to the detriment of natural herbs and grasses. Planting many trees, or allowing regenerating trees to become dominant undermines the ability of the continuous grassy layer to compete, which over time will alter the community.

Following this brief introduction Tom then led the group in looking at the range of species still found on the block. In a relatively short time we were shown an extensive suite of plants, some of which are listed below.

Angophora floribunda Rough-barked apple
Eucalyptus tereticornis Forest red gum
Acacia irrorata Green wattle
Bursaria spinosa Blackthorn
Exocarpos cupressiformis Native cherry
Persoonia linearis Narrow leaved Geebung

Grasses

Austrodanthonia racemosa Wallaby grass
Echinopogon ovatus Forest hedgehog grass
Microlaena stipoides Weeping grass
Themeda australis Kangaroo grass

Herbs/ferns

Cheilanthes sieberi Poison rock fern
Dichondra repens Kidney weed
Glycine clandestina Lovers Twine
Hydrocotyle laxiflora Stinking pennywort
Lomandra longifolia Spiny-headed mat-rush

Eucalyptus bosistoana Coast grey box
Allocasuarina littoralis Black she-oak
Acacia implexa Hickory wattle
Cassinia spp. Cassinia; dogwood
Ozothamnus diosmifolius Riceflower

Dichelachne micrantha Shorthair plumegrass
Eragrostis leptostachya Paddock lovegrass
Poa labillardierei var. *labillardierei* Tussock

Desmodium varians Slender tick-trefoil
Geranium solanderi Native geranium
Glycine tabacina Vanilla Glycine
Hypericum gramineum Small St John's wort
Zornia dyctiocarpa Zornia

This is but a small number of the species we were shown, but I think most went home happy if they could remember how to recognize a few of the tiny herbs pointed out.

The meeting ended with Michael thanking Tom for imparting his knowledge enthusiastically, despite suffering from toothache, and having an imminent appointment with the dentist.

Tom was presented with a "hot off the press" Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens 2015 calendar in appreciation.

PRUNING

Maintenance of Australian plants should be seen as being no different from that accorded plants from other parts of the world. All plants need soil, moisture and nutrients in the correct amounts to grow their best. Some are more demanding than others, but the myth that Australian plants will survive without any attention, is just that, a myth.

Pruning of Australian plants is just as important as it is for roses. Knowing what to do and when, is sometimes a challenge. Plants that are not pruned will probably never reach their full potential as garden plants. Plants in the bush have a certain appeal in their natural habitat, but as horticulture specimens we expect our plants to look "better", so we water when needed, and sometimes we even add fertiliser and mulch to help the plants thrive.

The mechanics of pruning is not a science, and everyone is capable of doing a relatively expert job. The main concern is when to prune. **For herbaceous plants** such as *Brachycome*, *Chrysocephalum*, *Dampiera*, *Rhodanthe*, *Scaevola* and *Wahlenbergia*, I find that heavy cutting back prior to the spring growth, produces a flush of new growth and a more compact plant full of flowers. For my conditions this is done in late August, but it would be wise to delay this if in your area you experience frosts, as the regrowth might be burned.

As for **woody plants**, the best time to cut them back is during, or just after flowering. If you like the idea of having a vase of fresh flowers, pruning whilst flowering achieves two aims, lovely fresh flowers, and plant already pruned and ready to grow away as a more compact plant. There is a range of Australian plants which benefit from this treatment. It is wise to cut more length than you might need for the vase, and then trim to the required length. Plants which benefit from this early pruning include *Adenanthos*, particularly the grey foliated forms, *Alyogyne*, *Bauera*, *Boronia*, *Correa*, *Crocea*, *Dracophyllum*, *Epacris*, *Eriostemon*, *Geleznowia*, *Guichenotia*, *Isopogon*, *Lechenaultia biloba*, *Micromyrtus*, *Olearia*, *Ozothamnus*, *Petrophile*, *Pimelea*, *Prostanthera* and *Tetratheca*. As a guide, removing up to one third of the growth is ideal, and should result in the plant growing away strongly before the heat of summer.

With the **smaller woody MYRTACEAE**, such as *Actinodium*, *Astartea*, *Baeckea*, *Beaufortia*, *Chamelaucium* and *Darwinia*, plants respond to harder pruning provided they are growing vigorously. Of course we have all noticed that **larger MYRTACEAE** such as *Callistemon*, *Leptospermum* and *Melaleuca* will grow away readily when pruned into old wood, if such drastic action is necessary to rejuvenate old, neglected plants. Many **heath plants**, such as *Epacris*, *Leucopogon* and *Sprengelia*, can be pruned quite hard, back into old wood, but it is important that the plants are growing well. If the weather has been dry for some time, watering a day or two before pruning will also assist the plants recover.

The picture shows that other plants also respond well to severe pruning. This plant is *Ceratopetalum gummiferum*, NSW Christmas Bush, which had grown into an 8m tree, and was cut back to a stump.

The same response is noted for *Eleocharis reticulatus*, Blue Berry Ash.



Pea plants present a challenge, as they are usually quick growing and can get bigger than expected. It is recommended that the plants are pruned from their first year, and after flowering but before the seed matures, they can be

pruned back about one third, but be advised that some do not respond well to being cut back into wood which has no foliage. Plants such as *Bossiaea*, *Daviesia*, *Dillwynia*, *Eutaxia*, *Goodia*, *Hovea*, *Mirbelia*, and *Pultenaea* do better if pruned only as far as growing wood. Others such as *Aotus*, *Hardenbergia* and *Kennedia* can be cut severely and respond positively. *Indigofera* is best if the old stems are pruned right to ground level, allowing the young suckers to develop. *Jacksonia* and *Viminaria* can be spoiled by pruning, losing their natural weeping habit, so this needs to be considered if these plants need to be reduced in size. It might be better to remove some branches to open the plants up, so allowing light to other plants in the vicinity.

With all pruning, I feel the plants benefit from a deep watering after pruning to encourage new growth.

Fertilising is best left for some time after pruning, but a dose of seaweed concentrate watered around the root system will also be appreciated.

Christmas is nearly here, so it might be worthwhile purchasing yourself, or hinting that a nice new pair of secateurs would be an ideal present. These need to be good quality so that the job of pruning does not become too tiring. Really, it should be a pleasant pastime, using your time to get the best from your plants. Cheap secateurs are not really a good investment. There are a number of FELCO lookalikes on the market, but nothing beats the real thing. I prefer Felco 2 as a general purpose pruning tool. They are easy to keep sharp and the cutting edge is replaceable.

We can all learn from each other, so with this in mind, I would appreciate members relating their own story on pruning, success and not so happy results. Anything on this topic would be useful education for all members.

To keep the topic relevant to members, I would also like members to send in their own questions on pruning Australian plants, be they specific or general. All questions will be answered in a subsequent newsletter. Send your questions to me by email, to johnonvista49@outlook.com

Future meetings

The committee has set an ambitious program for next year, and will judge by the response from members whether they have the correct mix of activities.

At each “plant” meeting, there will be a talk on a particular group of plants, either by a guest speaker, or one of our own members. We are conscious of the expressed wishes of members that more garden visits would be welcomed, and we are keen to pursue this. We hope also to expand on the show and tell section, and would encourage all members to bring along some plant specimens to brag about. When time permits, there will be some activities such as propagation, or botanic explanations.

On alternate months, a walk will be arranged to interesting areas where we can all learn more about what grows where. A suggestion whereby we record the species seen on the walks will be taken up, and when space is available, these lists will be included in the newsletter.

With such an ambitious program, the committee needs input from members to ensure our activities are relevant. We would be seeking assistance from everyone to come up with ideas they feel would benefit the group. In particular, as noted previously, we need a southern member or two as liaison consultants to give us the best opportunities in the south of our region.

The committee can only do its best with its own resources, and any input would go a long way to our group being successful into the future.

It is as yet too early to outline the full program, but already we have a definite talk booked for May, and a tentative one for March.

The walks are a little easier as we don't necessarily need an outside person to influence our choices.

The next newsletter will give the confirmed itinerary for the first 6 months, but it is never too late to put out a suggestion for an activity you would be keen to see on the program.

Any on the committee would be happy to discuss your proposals.

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Website can accessed by searching the APS NSW website, and access the South East NSW Group. You are then redirected to our website host thebegavalley.org.

Once work is complete on the new site, access will be simply through APS NSW, where a direct link takes you to our pages. Members are encouraged to have a look at our current page, and make suggestions to the committee on what they think might be done to improve the site. These suggestions will be passed to Mark for consideration.

Merry Christmas and a Happy, successful New Year. See you in 2015