



# Australian Plants Society

## South East NSW Group

Newsletter 115

February 2016

*Corymbia maculata* Spotted Gum and  
*Macrozamia communis* Burrawang

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### Next Meeting

10.00am SATURDAY 5th March 2016

Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens

Plant Adaptations

a walk and talk with a difference

After a morning cuppa at the Friends shelter in the picnic area Margaret Lynch will lead an easy walk along the limited mobility track taking in the variety of display gardens including the sensory, rainforest and sandstone gardens. This is an ideal area to look closely at the diversity of characteristics in our regional plants. Variations in things such as form, texture, colour and smell of leaves, flowers and fruits often give a clue as to how plants grow and survive in different and often challenging environments. Come and join the discussion of what grows where and why and maybe discover what may do well at home for you.

Following the walk there will be an opportunity to visit the propagation and nursery area for a behind the scenes look. Gardens manager, Michael Anlezark will outline the current workings of the area and the exciting future directions proposed for the Gardens.

Lunch can either be the usual BYO picnic style or purchased at the Gardens café. The afternoon will be free to either stroll to the arboretum or browse the range of plants available for purchase from the plant sales area.

As usual sensible footwear, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and water are advisable.

## Presidents Message,



A wonderful start to the APS year with a good crowd present at the February meeting to hear Angus Stewart.

The wonderful array of native flowers brought by members also demonstrated what we all know; there is always something flowering in a native garden!

At this time of year however I must sing the praises of daisies; the herbaceous variety in particular. Various *Brachyscomes* flower profusely in summer adding a splash of mauve, pink or white throughout my garden.

Others include *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* & *C.semipapposum*, *Coronidium rutiodolepis* and *Pycnosorus globosus* with their cheery yellow flowers. The paper daisies *Xerochrysum bracteatum* and

*Ammobium alatum* self-seed readily adding a further scatter of colour in summer with their long lasting flowers. Useful plants indeed and mostly local too.

### Margaret Lynch

Over the years our daisies have undergone a few name changes. *Chrysocephalum* and *Xerochrysum* we knew as *Helichrysum*, which worldwide has some 500 species. *Helichrysum* is now considered to be a mostly African and Asian genus, and all Australian plants were transferred to other genera.

*Helichrysum bracteanthum* went to *Bracteantha bracteata* and now *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, and is described from the stiff floral bracts which surround the compound flowers. Xeros means dry or parched, in reference to the stiff dry feel of the bracts, and chrysum refers to the gold colour of the bracts.

Similarly, *Chrysocephalum* refers to the gold colour of the flower heads, chrysos, gold and cephalum a head.

*Coronidium* was established as a new Genus by Paul G. Wilson, WA Herbarium, in 2008, and is derived from korone, a crown, and the diminutive idiom, referring to the short pappus (tuft of hairs) crown that remains on the cypsela (fruit or seed of daisy plants) after the bristles have broken away. You need a good lens to discern this.

*Pycnosorus* might also be new name for some, as it was previously included with *Craspedia*. It differs in that the flower heads are sessile within the compound heads, and the bracts and pappus hairs are yellow. *Pycnosorus* is derived from pycne, thick or dense, and sorus, heap, and refers to the dense flowerheads, and the common name is Billybuttons, which some might know and can now recognise that these have dense flowerheads.

By the way, any plant with brachy as part of its name refers to something small, and in the case of *Brachyscome*, the small bit is the come (head of hair or bristles) which are small hairs atop the cypsela.

We might as well finish off this discussion by including *Ammobium*, the name of which refers to growing on sand, from ammos, sand and bios, life. This is a genus of just 1 species, and most likely the original collection might have been from a sandy environment, but locally the plant grows on rocky hillsides !

## How Australian Gardens are changing



**Special guest, well known Television personality, horticulturist Angus Stewart.**

With the benefit of broad and effective promotion by our publicity manager Jillian Peck, our February meeting attracted almost 90 attendees, almost half of whom were visitors. It helped of course that our guest speaker has such a high public profile.

Angus spoke with conviction, noting that when the first Europeans came to Australia to live, they brought with them plants they knew and which were familiar. These were used to replace the existing natural flora in their new gardens 'down under', and included of course food plants, but also roses camellias, perennials and of course cottagey flowers. This style of gardening predominated over the next 100 years and more, and as Angus pointed out, their garden style included the ubiquitous Hills Hoist and of course needed a Victa lawn mower to control the introduced lawn grasses.

A rise in the awareness of Australian plants began mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the belief that 'no maintenance' gardening was possible, some people beginning to introduce Callistemons, Melaleucas, Acacias and even some inappropriate Eucalypts. (I remember *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* and *Eucalyptus nicholli* adorning our home garden in the 1960's. JK) Mostly, those who grew such plants were considered odd, and the plants regarded with a cultural cringe, especially as many of these first plantings of the 'wrong' plants grew too large, became woody and straggly, and did little to impress other gardeners that Australian plants were viable. Of course, in these early days very little knowledge or information was available, and the native plant growers, pioneers of the soon to be established Australian Plants Society, undertook much trial and error planting, with more error than wins. These days however, there is much research being done on which plants will become the new Australian plant heroes, and with all the books available, and the plethora of information easily accessed on the WWW, almost anything can be found to help growers get the right plants. A quick look at <http://www.gardeningwithangus.com.au> will show just how much information is becoming available.



*Were you there ?*

That said, there is still no better opportunity to increase knowledge than to be an active member of the APS, and learn from other growers just what does well, and how some plants respond to differing situations.

**So, just where is the Australian garden heading ?**

The most prominent driver is climate change, and it seems everyone from the government to your local nurseryman has a theory on just where





*Maybe in this one*

we are heading, and are planning appropriately. Climate change is now influencing design and plant choices.

Also, bushfire is an increasing hazard in many areas, and there is some push to find plants which are better adapted to slow fire progress, and even plants which can be defined as fire-retardant, although these are few in number, and not likely to be included commonly in most backyard landscapes.

Another factor to consider that gardens are becoming much smaller.

The traditional quarter acre block is no longer available in new suburban developments, and these gardens now feature small courtyards with few plants. Importantly, trees are no longer grown, and even medium to large shrubs are rarely planted. Angus lamented 'the backyard is fast becoming an endangered species'.

The focus of the talk now moved to early cultivars of Australian plants, in particular the benefit of *Grevillea* "Robyn Gordon", which was enthusiastically grown by gardeners of all persuasions. The benefits of being adaptable to all but poorly drained soils, and flowering for most of the year, this proved a game changer for the appreciation of Australian plants, and was a forerunner for a number of cultivars in following years. These days there are many, many more *Grevillea* cultivars with large showy flowers, and everyone can be persuaded to grow these new plants without realizing that they are Australian plants.

From discussing the move to the new style of plants, the focus moved to fertilisers, and the development of specialised roots in many Australian genera. In particular, Angus noted the proteoid roots of *Banksia* and *Grevillea*, and their susceptibility to phosphorous in varied plant foods. The importance of iron, manganese and other micro-nutrients was discussed, and by the questions asked, is an area where many growers find difficulty.

Much has been done in improving the quality of potting mixes for Australian plants, and also developing particular fertiliser preparations to give plants their best chance of performing to their potential.

In conjunction with soil scientist Simon Leake, Angus has produced a formulation which he believes will suit the widest range of Australian plants. Known as "Bush Tucker", this is a chicken manure based



*mmmm that's a hard one*

product which has been widely trialled by both nurseries and home gardeners, and has proven very suitable for any plants, including those in the Proteaceae family. Angus pointed to Waratahs, also in the Proteaceae family, as being very partial to a good feed, in Autumn to promote the flowering and again in late spring to push new growth after a hard prune. This advice was noted by all, and it now only awaits time to see if any member was brave enough to give it a go.

In discussing new plants coming onto the market, Angus praised the trials done over many years by growers of Kangaroo Paws, *Anigosanthos* spp., and how these have been accepted as garden plants by most people. Whilst there have been some disappointing results with early releases, the newer cultivars based on *Anigosanthos flavidus* are proving very reliable, flowering strongly for many months, and adapting to a wide range of garden conditions. Angus has for years been trialling some newer varieties, and has released a range of yellow, green, pink, lilac and mauve forms. Each of these is based on older taller forms, and are very hardy and long lived. These cultivars, he says, are guaranteed to grow well, unless sprayed with roundup.

Other plants he has been working developing include a range of smaller *Callistemons* and *Acacias*. He pointed to the advantages of these newer, smaller forms, being able to be grown in smaller gardens, and also, if a small cultivar is grown successfully, gardeners may be encouraged to grow more natives.

Some of his recently released plants include *Telopea* 'Cranberry Gem', which he says is much hardier than *Telopea speciosissima*, and a prolifically flowering low shrubby form of *Goodenia ovata*, which has large yellow flowers for much of the year, and maintains a compact shape. (Mark and Carolyn have some plants of this in their Moruya garden, planted over a year ago, and now about 50cm high and a metre wide, growing very happy as undershrubs, forming a bright green hedge.)

*Acacias* include *A. fimbriata* 'Crimson Blush' which has most attractive reddish new growth, *A. cognata* 'Zest', which adds another form to the myriad of cultivars already available, *Agonis flexuosa* 'Copper Wave' with as the name suggests, coppery growth, *Banksia* 'Bush Candles', *Callistemon* 'Green Envy', *C. 'Little Jet'*, which grows with a narrow vertical habit, and *C. 'All Aglow'* with very red new growth which can be maintained all year with regular pruning. *Casuarina* 'Shagpile' which is similar to other prostrate forms of *Casuarina glauca*, which can spread quite a distance but maintain a prostrate habit. One of the nicest looking new plants is *Tristaniopsis* 'Burgundy Blush' with bright new growth similar to that seen on the ubiquitous *Photinea* hedges which seem to be everywhere.

Pruning is something we will have to get more used to if we are to grow these plants to their best advantage, as it is the new growth which gives them their stunning appearance.

In finishing, Angus said we must just get into our gardens and experiment.

After a quick question session, in which Angus discussed the advantages of deep stem planting, and talked more about fertilisers, the meeting adjourned for a sumptuous morning tea, provided by some members of the committee. During this time, Angus was badgered with more questions, and sold some of his latest book "The Australian Native Garden, A Practical Guide", whilst others spent the time profitably at the plant stall.



## Plant Sale

Summer has been fairly kind to us this year, with some rain and not too much heat, so many were ready to plant.

Angus had brought down some of his Kangaroo Paws, in 6 different colour forms. These were very popular after he had spent some time expounding their benefits. He also brought along a red foliated form of Native Ginger, *Alpinia caerulea*.

Grafted plants from Phil Trickett were also popular, and Mark and John had some smaller plants to encourage everyone to add some different plants to their gardens.



*Bees to a honeypot, as plants go on sale*

## Raffle



*All above board, as Angus draws the first ticket*



*Sue, surprised by her luck, receives her gift from Angus*

Next, when everyone was settled, the special effort prizes were drawn.

There was quite a stir when Sue Knight, who had control of selling the tickets, won first prize, a signed copy of Angus's book, but the meeting was assured by Angus, who drew the ticket that there was nothing untoward.

Those who won the Kangaroo Paws were very happy, and altogether there were 10 winners, all going home happy. The last prize was a punnet of "Bush Tucker" fertilizer, drawn after Angus managed to give the product a good sales pitch.

## Show and Tell

To finish off, Angus and John spent quite some time talking about the many plants members had brought along for the 'Show and Tell' specimen table. All were quite impressed with the many plants members have growing in the gardens, and flowering so well this time of the year.



*Angus displays some of Catriona's out of season Waratah flowers*

*John shows the diversity of the many Grevillea flowers members are growing*

It was the perfect opportunity to showcase the value of Australian plants to a wider audience, and Membership Officer Jenny reported that she gave out quite a number of membership applications, and already a new member has joined. Let's hope for more.

This meeting proved to be an inspiration to all attending, and the committee would like to see the group host one each year. Obviously a well known speaker able to attract broad interest is an advantage, and we would like to hear from any member who has a contact with such a high profile person.

There is a fair amount of work in arranging such events, but this one proved to be financially beneficial for the group, with over \$100 raised from donations at the door and a similar amount from the sale of tickets for our special prize draw.

The Committee thanks Mark Noake for arranging for Angus to visit, and for him and Carolyn providing accommodation for Angus during his stay.

We thank all involved in making this day so successful. Thanks to Amanda Marsh for the photos.

## Committee news

Your committee has almost finalised the program for the coming year, and has an interesting and varied range of activities to help us all learn more about growing Australian plants, and encouraging all members to get involved.

Getting value from your membership of the Australian Plant Society means being involved in activities. The committee of course can only offer activities based on their knowledge and expectations.

If the program is to consider the needs of all members throughout the south east area, we need you to be involved. The South East is a large area so your contributions/ideas are always welcome both for the newsletter and for our monthly activities. Just contact one of the friendly committee!

**If you have any issues or ideas, any of the committee would appreciate your input.**

## LOST AND FOUND

A green Pashmina scarf was found in the hall after our talk by Angus Stewart at Moruya on 6th February. If you have missed this item call Michele Pymble on 44738587.

## **Future activities**

**April Phil Trickett and Catriona Bate Garden visit, featuring Banksias, and propagation day**

**More details will be in the next newsletter**

**The details of activities for the remainder of the year will be included in next month's newsletter**

## **APS NSW Region news**

The board of the Australian Plants Society NSW (the Society) has been giving significant consideration to the future direction of the Society. This has been prompted by declining membership and income, and financial losses at the state level. If we are to survive, we need to attract and retain new members and volunteers. In order to do so, we must meet the needs of the members of our communities in a rapidly changing world.

For this reason, the board is developing a strategic plan to guide the future direction of the Society. The board is also holding a strategic planning workshop on the weekend of Saturday 28 May and Sunday 29 May 2016. District groups will be invited to send one committee member to the workshop which will be held at a central location in Sydney. Travel costs will be subsidised and twin share hotel accommodation provided for those requiring it.

It would be appreciated if you would advise your district group committee members of the date for the workshop and give thought to who from your committee should attend. Ideally those attending should be strongly committed to the future of the Society, well connected to local members, a key influence and able to represent your group's views. All board members including delegates will also be attending.

Should you have any questions about our strategic planning process please contact John Aitken on 9589-1363 or Alix Goodwin on 0417-679-964.

**The committee is happy to hear from any member who would like to attend this meeting in Sydney**

**We have been advised of a visit to South Coast by Blue Mountains Group APS, and the following information was provided by them:**

Our planned visit is 7 October to 10 October 2016. We are planning on staying at the Depot Beach Cabins and have mapped out the following itinerary:

Walks:                Saturday - Durras Mountain (AM), Murramarang Aboriginal Walking Trail (PM)

                          Sunday - Broulee Island (AM), Eurobodalla Botanical Gardens (PM)

Evening Meals:     Friday - Local club, Batemans Bay

                          Saturday - Restaurant, Batemans Bay

                          Sunday - BBQ at Cabins

If you have members who could guide interpretative walks in any of our planned walking locations that would be wonderful. Equally, if members of the SE group wished to join us on any of our planned walks (or perhaps even dinner on Saturday night) I am sure they would be warmly welcomed.

**Looking forward to hearing from you. My mobile number is 0417-679-964 if it would help to chat.**

**Any member who would like to join with the Blue Mountains Group is free to do so. Please contact Alix on the above number**



## Membership Renewals

Annual memberships come due for renewal at each quarter of the year and I send reminders, with an attached form, to members at the beginning of March, June, September and December.

Recently, the Group Committee decided that it would speed up the process of membership renewal or application if members sent their payments direct to the Regional Office, and the preferred method is by direct credit as detailed below:.

**BSB: 062 217**

**Account Number: 0090 7163**

**Account Name: Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd**

**Reference: Your surname and membership number**

If preferred, payment by Cheque and Money Order, payable to Australian Plants Society NSW can be forwarded **with the completed form** to APS NSW, Membership Officer, PO Box 3066, BOWENFELS, NSW 2790.

**To help me to keep accurate records of our SENSW Group would you also please send me an e-mail ([peteandjenny.john@gmail.com](mailto:peteandjenny.john@gmail.com)) giving your name, type of membership and method of payment.**

If you have any queries or require a copy of the renewal form you can contact me at the above e-mail address.

### New Members

**We are pleased to welcome recently joined members Gabi and Tony Robey of Malua Bay, and Catriona Bate and Phil Trickett of Milton.**

**Welcome to our group. We trust your involvement will be fruitful.**

**Jenny John**

**Membership Officer APS SENSW Group**

## Plant of the Month

Whilst pottering (read weeding) in the garden recently, I was attracted towards an odour coming from nearby. Thinking I had stood in 'something' I was surprised to see 6 or more long reddish stalks with slimy brown caps, obviously some kind of fungi. These I had never seen before, and was happy when Jenny John said she thought she knew what they were, and promptly sent me some information, which I outline below.

*Phallus rubicundus* was named in 1823, but an older name of *Stayrus rubicundus* was used as early as 1811. A member of the stinkhorn family of fungi, it is widely distributed through the warmer areas of the world, and in Australia is found in NSW, the ACT, Q'land, Vic. and Tas. It occurs naturally among plant debris in forests, and in well manured areas in towns, such as in gardens where wood mulch is used. We are of course used to seeing Earth Stars come up regularly in mulch, but this was first for me.

The fungi starts underground as a whitish spherical or egg shaped structure, about 3cm or so, and the fruiting body grows to 15cm tall, consisting of a hollow tubular stalk, orange to red in colour, topped with a foul smelling tapering cap, greyish or brown in colour, about 2 – 3 cm long. The fruiting body soon collapses, and within a day little evidence was left of where they had been, although the in ground

structure was still evident just below the mulch, attached strongly to the soil with a whitish cord like root. (mycelial cord, or rhizomorph, which literally translates as root-form)

These fungi are beneficial additions to our gardens, digesting woody material and turning it to humus, which in turn benefits the plant roots nearby.

An interesting note is on a study which demonstrated that when mosquitoes, attracted to the fungi by its smell, died after consuming it. It is possible that this might lead to a biological control for mosquitoes in tropical areas.



A similar smelling fungi, *Aseroe rubra*, Anemone stinkhorn, or red bodied earth star, is common locally, and is noted as the first fungi to be exported, possibly accidentally, from Australia to Europe. This attractive fungi also completes its life cycle in spread mulch, although it is common in forests, living in decaying ground vegetation.

#### COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

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