



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group

April 2017

President's Report

Well what a wonderful start to the year we've had with a very successful APS Quarterly meeting hosted by our group.

The quarterly meetings have been a fresh approach and have brought members together from groups all over the state. It is great to see members whom you meet at different venues and share a common interest in a quick conversation or a brief introduction and then get to support the proposed speaker or event.

The Royal Easter Show is on from 6 to 19 April 2017. A.P.S. is having a stall and are asking for volunteers. You will receive a free pass for the day if you register to volunteer for a few hours. Please contact Leonie Hogue on 9528 6083.

Thanks to all the efforts from Lloyd and the compound nursery group there is now an opportunity to join NPWS in helping to revegetate the Big Island. The island is part of the Five Island Nature Reserve located in the Wollongong area near Port Kembla. The plants grown by our nursery group will enhance the habitat of the Little Penguins, Shearwaters and Petrels. If you are interested in joining the project, talk to any of the committee members for more information.

Our next speaker on the 12 April is Lisa Harvey who will be sharing her insights into the POWL Project, the project that monitors the movements and behaviours of the iconic Powerful Owl.

See you all at our next meeting.

Jason Cockayne

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Thysanotus tuberosus P Forbes

From the Treasurer

APS NSW membership fees are now: Individual \$56, Individual concession \$48, Joint \$66, Joint concession \$58. If you wish, you can renew for 3 years. An updated MWG renewal form has been posted on the MWG website.

Sharon Pearson

Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

1 Apr Working Bee at IRFS 9am start for weeding, mowing and socialising.

1 Apr Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**12 Apr Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Lisa Harvey will be discussing her work on Powerful Owls.**

6 May Working Bee at IRFS 9am start

6 May Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm

**10 May Menai Wildflower Group meeting
Eric Whitby**

**10 Jun Menai Wildflower Group meeting
(note this is Saturday)**

Snowy Mountains Walking Week

A contingent of 15 Menai members joined Sutherland APS for the biennial walking week at Pygmy Possum Lodge, Charlotte's Pass. Once again John Arney had prepared a great program and the week provided a cool respite from Sydney's heat with temperatures peaking in the 20s. The walks ranged in length, difficulty and environment.

Porcupine Rock walk wound through Snow Gums (*E pauciflora*), with Prostanthera, Pimelea, Mountain Caraway, Bidgee-Widgee, Mountain Celery, Alpine Baeckea, Mountain Plum Pine (*Podocarpus lawrencei*), Mauve Leek Orchids, Waxy Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia cercea*), a Veined Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra seyanea*), *Richea continentis* and Mueller's Snow Gentian (*Chionogentiasis muelleriana*).

The Sawpit Creek walk through Montane Forest showed us Vanilla Lilies (*Arthropodium milleflorum*) nodding beside the path with *Wahlenburgia* (*Wahlenbergia glorius and ceracea*) and some of the ubiquitous range of daisies including the lovely yellow *Podolepsis robusta*.



Some of the walkers at Porcupine Rock P Forbes

Both the walks to Mt Stilwell and along the Main Range included a great display of flowers. Alpine Herbfields had meadows of Snow Daisy (*Brachyscome nivalis*) and Billy Buttons (*Craspedia* sp), Purple Eyebright (*Euphrasia collina*) Mountain Celery (*Aciphylla glacialis*), Prostanthera (*P. monticola*) and Bogong Gentian (*Gentianella diemensis*) with quaint white flowers with dark veins and yellow centres. We enjoyed the aroma of Alpine Candles (*Stackhousia pulvinaris*), a mat-forming herb with yellow star-shaped flowers.



Gentianella diemensis P Forbes

The fascinating Feldmark, a product of the windswept location and thin soils, was a mix of

low growing herbs adapted to the cold, dry conditions, including Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*) and Silver Ewartia (*E. nubigena*).



Alpine meadow P Forbes

Snow falls over winter were heavy enough that there were still significant drifts of snow (now ice), some very close to the track!

Overall we had a week of great company, fresh air, panoramic scenery and a huge range of flowers and animals. A great gallery capturing the week can be seen on our Facebook page.

Pam Forbes

Successful Quarterly Meeting

The February APS Quarterly Meeting held at the Fire Station was a great success.

The walk to the aboriginal engravings on Barden Creek was well attended (around 15 members from several areas) despite the threatening clouds. We got through the walk with no rain and enjoyed this lovely forest walk with a few early flowers brightening the bush. The four flowering banksia species were particularly interesting.

Approximately 70 attended the meeting, listening to some interesting updates and suggestions from office holders. Lloyd's talk on

Pink Flannel Flowers generated much interest and all the potted plants were quickly sold. With sales of other plants and the last of our calendars we raised \$320 with another \$153 from the raffle.



Lloyd's talk E Sizgek

Thanks to Lloyd Hedges for talking (and much more), to Mary Hedges and Jennifer Maclaine-Cross for demonstrating their various craft talents and to all those who helped with setting up, selling, supplying food, etcetera. Great team effort.

The wreck of RMS Quetta and Stanley Island (Yindayin)

As you may or may not know, Jay loves his scuba diving, so when he was given the chance to join a group to dive an interesting wreck in Far North Queensland you couldn't hold him back!

Royal Mail Ship (RMS) *Quetta* struck an uncharted rock and sank in 1890 off the top of Cape York with many losing their lives – one of Queensland's worst marine disasters. The diving of the *Quetta* is challenging due to the huge tidal flows and unpredictable weather. Fortunately for Jay, diving conditions were perfect. During his week of diving, Jay got to visit Horn Island and Thursday Island off the Top End and then the group sailed south to visit Stanley Island.

Flinders Island National Park is made up of a group of 7 islands of which Stanley Island is one and is part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. It is 340km north of Cairns and 180km north-west of Cooktown. The Flinders Island Group is made of Battlecamp formation

sandstone and features sandstone cliffs, stony soils on terraces, beaches, sand dunes and sandstone hills.

Stanley Island is famous for its aboriginal rock art found in 2 rock shelters – they show a variety of animal images as well as various ships from an Indonesian perahu to a European lugger.



The traditional owners are part of the Cape Melville and Flinders Island People (Yiithuwarra people) and Stanley Island is an important cultural site. They also use fire to manage the land in order to maintain plant diversity as well as protect cultural sites.

The vegetation on the island includes eucalyptus and melaleuca woodlands with grassy shrubby understorey, grasslands, coastal vegetation and mangroves. Jay highlighted the particular plants that he noticed when he visited and how the locals used them. These include: Kapok – *Cochlospermum gillivraei* – family Bixaceae. The flowers are bright yellow and ripe capsules open to show black seeds in a cotton-like fibre. This fibre was used for stuffing pillows and bedding.

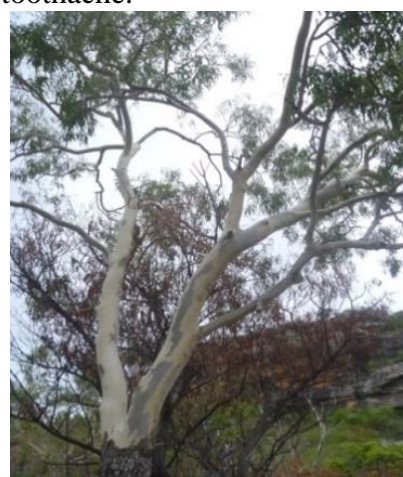
Cabbage Palm – *Livistona muelleri*. The heart of the palm is eaten raw and the fronds are used to make humpies.



Pandanus – *Pandanus tectorius*. Leaves are woven for mats. Its pineapple-like fruits are roasted and eaten.



Lady Apple – *Syzygium suborbiculare*. the red fruit tastes like apple. Mangrove Boobialla - *Myoporum boninense spp austral*. Moreton Bay Ash – *Corymbia tessellaris*. The bark is boiled in water and the infusion eases toothache.



Jay would highly recommend Stanley Island as a fascinating place to visit - a bit off the beaten track but it is great place to connect with aboriginal culture and observe plants unique to that part of Queensland.

Sharon Pearson

Plant Nutrition Talk with Bruce Higgs

How much do we know about native plant nutrition? As a former industrial chemist and nurseryman Bruce conveyed much valuable information regarding fertilisers. Many people think you plant Australian natives and forget that they need to be planted in appropriate locations, mulched, irrigated and fertilised. You must keep in mind the type of fertiliser used as there is not a lot of information for native growers in comparison to that for exotics. The following recommendations were made:-

Know the soil type, and match plants to appropriate soils. Build up a rich fertile soil and keep it moist enough to suit plant type but not waterlogged. Monitor the soil pH and check it suits your plants. Fertilise according to the nutritional needs of your plants. Choose the correct fertiliser and read labels – excess urea and ammonia can be toxic in winter. Sandy soils leach so need to be fed more often. Drainage needs to be improved in clay soil. Controlled release fertilisers are recommended as they're self-regulating and more stable over a longer period. If plants do not respond, check labels and change accordingly.

More information can be found at:

www.darvillnursery.com.au.

www.extension.umn.edu/garden/

Community Opportunities

If you are interested in some bush regen, check out the information about Bushcare on Sutherland Council's website. There are many sites and weeding provides good exercise and good conversation. Improve the environment and learn more about our local flora.

Jason can recycle your old plastic pots. Please give them a rough rinse and leave them at the compound.

Special Interest

Deadline for contributions to next newsletter is Sunday, 21 May.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to

Secretary or e-mail mwfeditor@gmail.com) before the deadline.

Working Bees are held on the first Saturday of month at IRFB starting at 9am and include weeding, mulching and munching.

Propagation days are now a regular part of running the nursery at **Illawong Rural Fire Station**. They are a great opportunity to be involved in interesting project and learn new skills. Members can assist in MWG ventures or propagate species for themselves. The Saturday meetings are open to the public and next two will be at 1pm on 1 April and 6 May. The **Tip nursery group** continues to work on **Mondays**. Please contact Lloyd (95431216) for more details on either of these opportunities. A group of members is also meeting on **Tuesdays at 9am**. Contact Pam Pitkeathly regarding Tuesdays or if you are enthusiastic about helping on another day - phone 9771-9789 or email pit.keath@bigpond.com.

Keep up to date with our **Facebook page** or use our **website** which can be easily accessed using an internet search for the phrase "Menai Wildflower Group" and selecting what should be the first option offered.

Meetings are held at the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade each month except January. Most meetings are held on the second Wednesday at 7:00pm. The three winter meetings: June, July, August are held on the second Saturday of the month at 1pm. The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.

When you joined the Menai Wildflower Group you became a member of the NSW APS and therefore are **welcome at other APS group** meetings, bushwalks, etc. This gives members a lot more activities to participate in.

Visit the APS NSW website www.austplant.com.au/ and check out what other districts are doing, particularly our neighbours East Hills and Sutherland:

<http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>

<http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/> .

Lloyd Hedges

Nursery Report

The Tip nursery has two projects underway: Growing plants for the Dharawal and 5 Islands National Parks and the supplying ANSTO with some plants to revegetate the old nightsoil depot site.

National Parks supplied seed harvested from near the sites for us to propagate. These included *Eucalyptus racemosa*, *Hakea dactyloides*, *Leptospermums polygalifolium* and *junerperina* for the Dharawal Park and *Banksia integrifolia*, *Lomandra longifolia* and *Rhagodia condolleana* for 5 Islands.



Propagators at work at the fire station Lloyd Hedges

A saltbush, the *Rhagodia* in particular is considered to have friendly roots for the seabirds that nest in burrows and are prone to getting trapped by the kikuyu grass that has invaded the islands.

The nightsoil site ceased operation in the 80s when the Sydney's sewer system was completed. It is a large area (about 70 thousand sq metres). We do not have the capacity to supply all the plants required but we will supply what plants we can from plants grown from seed collected on the site.

All these plants are expected to go into the ground this autumn and MWG members are encouraged to join in on one of the planting days. We expect to get further details on the planting program at a 6 April seminar organised by NPs in Wollongong. ANSTO hopes to do some of the work with volunteers from the staff. I intend joining in for a day and I hope some other members will join me.

Lloyd Hedges

Curra Moors Walk

The walk with Sutherland APS through Curra Moors to Garie displayed a surprising number of flowers as well as beautiful scenery. A large group including 9 walkers from Menai tackled the 5km (or 9km) walk - some of us took the wrong turn and went the long way! The rain stayed away although the seas were still impressive and the track was very wet in places. The unusually lush bush and sparkling streams were more than adequate compensation for this slight inconvenience. Highlights were a couple of orchids, fringe lilies, Christmas bells, teatrees and many banksias and, of course, lots of fungi after all the wet weather. Thanks to John Arney for a most enjoyable walk. More photos can be seen on Facebook.



Looking south towards Garie P Forbes

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