



**Menai  
Wildflower  
Group**



# Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group April 2016

## President's Report

The changing season is upon us and has come with some relieving rain. Lower temperatures and added precipitation provide a good formula for planting.

Our year started with Karlio Taliana's informative talk on East Coast banksias in particular the smaller varieties suitable for urban gardens. At our March meeting we had wonderful opportunity to put design of our gardens into perspective with a very insightful talk given by Kath Gadd. Her talk focused around garden design with natives in mind and how we can use certain species to compliment or contrast each other. There was an interesting slant on smaller gardens and how to use certain species to the best of their application. Gardens do seem to take time to mature as an aesthetic, pleasing environment, so any initial design insights are well worth putting into practice.

The compound nursery is coming together in leaps and bounds, with neighbouring APS groups using the facilities with great results. With this in mind, just ask what you can do to help the compound nursery and gardens to be kept as an outstanding feature of the Illawong RFS, and continue to show our prowess and community spirit from members of Menai Wildflower Group.

*Jason Cockayne*



## Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

**2 Apr Working Bee at IRFB 9am start**

**2 Apr Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm**

**13 Apr Menai Wildflower Group Meeting**  
Guest speaker – Tony Wales, River Keeper  
“Local Rivers” 7pm

**7 May Working Bee at IRFB 9am start**

**7 May Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm**

**7,8 May Open Day grevillea Park, Bulli 10-4pm**

**11 May Menai Wildflower Group Meeting**  
Guest speaker – David Noble  
“The Fascination of Fungi” 7pm

**15 May Fungi Field Trip – Bola Creek**

**14,15 May Open Day grevillea Park, Bulli 10-4pm**

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### ***From the Treasurer***

An updated membership renewal form can be found on our website.

*Sharon Pearson*

If any member knows of someone who would like to do a talk for our group for 2016 please give their details to a committee member.

### **ATTENTION –MEETING START TIME**

The doors will be open from 6.30pm and the meeting will start at 7pm. Why not come along at 6.30pm for a wander around the garden or chat over a cup of tea.

### **Special Interest**

**Deadline for contributions to next newsletter will be Wednesday 25 May'16.**

**Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or e-mail [fergsrus@ihug.com.au](mailto:fergsrus@ihug.com.au)) before the deadline.**

**Working Bees** at IRFB start at 9am and include weeding, mulching and lunching.

Propagation days are now a regular part of running the nursery at Illawong Rural Fire Station. The next two will be at 1pm on Saturdays 2 April and 7 May.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery. Please contact Lloyd Hedges if you wish to start attending.

**The Group's Website Home Page** can be easily accessed by doing a Google search using the phrase "Menai Wildflower Group" and selecting what should be the first option offered.

### **Visit a neighbouring group**

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/](http://www.austplant.com.au/) and check out what other districts are doing, particularly our neighbours:

Easthills <http://easthills.austplants.com.au/>  
and Sutherland  
<http://sutherland.austplants.com.au/> .

*Lloyd Hedges*

### **Vale Don Setchell**

It is with our deepest sadness we announce the passing of Don Setchell after a long illness. Don and Karen have been long term members of the group.

Don, though quiet, joined in our bush walks with enthusiasm while Karen was, for many years, a nursery volunteer.

### **Special Project**

MWFG will be assisting the NPWS in an exciting regeneration program at Five Islands off Wollongong. We will be by growing the plants required for revegetation. The introduced kikuyu grass on Big Island is causing big problems for the wedge tailed shearwaters, commonly called mutton birds. These birds migrate over huge distances to nest along the NSW coast. Their nests are in burrows so they can be tangled and trapped by the thick, fast growing kikuyu. The nesting mutton birds on Big Island need help. The islands were damaged by farming, erosion and weeds. The project involves poisoning the kikuyu and replanting with plants grown from locally sourced native seed – lomandra and banksia for Lloyd to grow at our nursery. It will be years before the problems are solved but it's great to be part of this regeneration. Lloyd is waiting for lomandra seeds

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/wedge-tailed-shearwaters-big-island-killer-weeds/7202962>



### Clean-up Australia Day

Thanks to the enthusiasm of the 1st Alford's Point/Menai Scouts and the Woronora Rural Fire Brigade the old Kooyong Scout camp was cleaned up quickly and efficiently. It was all over by 11am when we retired to a sausage sizzle ably prepared by Ron. Greg and Pam's research into the history of the site was well appreciated and Marion's support for the exercise was appreciated.

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On Tuesday we joined Chris Lloyd in **releasing a Powerful Owl** that had collided with a car. The owl proved to be fully recovered and quickly flew off.



Editor's Note: It didn't get very far. Ron Fraser found it at the Easter Show.



### February Guest Speaker

Karlo Taliana spoke about East Coast Banksia Cultivars

East coast banksias are becoming more popular as garden subjects and plant breeders have sourced naturally small forms of the banksia species – mostly from the south coast. Many of these species grow on headlands where they are pruned by winds, so naturally form smaller plants but they remain as dwarf plants when propagated away from their

natural habitat. These coastal headland banksias are important to preserve owing to the potential development of these headlands.

The conditions that these cultivars need to grow well are:

- Good drainage – they like water but not wet feet
- Sunny aspect – but can cope with some shade, but the sunnier the aspect the better flowering
- Don't fertilise – phosphorus burns the roots, causes poor flowering
- Prune plant when it is young – it looks a better plant (bushier & more flowers) and extends its life by up to 5 years. No heavy pruning. Karlo dead heads about 75% of the spent flowers so energy is put into new flowers, the remaining dead flowers add character – but it is a personal choice.
- Aspect is important

There are several low growing forms that are not commercially available yet. Karlo has *Banksia oblongifolia* growing in his garden that grows to nearly 30cm whereas the normal form usually reaches 2-3m.

Examples of the cultivars:

***Banksia spinulosa var. spinulosa***

'Birthday Candles' 0.45m (H) x 1m (W). Gold flowers with red styles. It tends to be unreliable with flowering and prefers morning sun not afternoon sun.



*Banksia 'Cherry Candles'*

'Cherry Candles' – as for Birthday Candles but the styles are redder. It tends to flower more readily than 'Birthday Candles'

'Coastal Cushion' – a slightly larger plant 0.60m (H) x 2m (W) with deeper red styles on golden flowers. It is more reliable to flower further north.

'Yellow Wing' – Orange flower spike, 0.5m (H) x 1.8m (W)

***Banksia spinulosa var. collina***

'Stumpy Gold'- 50cm (H)

***Banksia integrifolia*** – a very common plant that is important as rootstock for endangered species

'Roller Coaster' – 4m spread – very useful to stop erosion on a steep embankment, but doesn't flower often.

***Banksia serrata*** – there are low growing forms but are difficult to grow in Sydney.

***Banksia ericifolia* (Gosford form) x *Banksia spinulosa var. cunninghamii***

'Giant Candles' – Up to 5m wide, but can be pruned back hard so new growth comes from the lignotuber; flowers heads are up to 40cm tall; often leaves will yellow so needs iron chelates

***Banksia ericifolia***

'Bronzed Aussie' – styles are bright red, 2m (H) x 1.5m (W). It has extra buds at base of flower stalk



*Banksia 'Bronzed Aussie'*

'Bulli Baby' – it has abundant flowers with styles that start yellow and change to red. 1.5m (H) x 1.2m (W)



*Banksia 'Bulli Baby'*

Karlo recommends that the 2 best banksia cultivars for a suburban garden are 'Bulli Baby' and 'Cherry Candles'

He also said that every native gardener should plant at least one banksia in their garden as they flower in autumn and provide food for birds when there are few other native plants in flower.

*Sharon Pearson*

## March Guest Speaker

Kath Gadd spoke about Native Garden Design  
*'A garden is a process not a product'* Fiona Brockhoff

Kath has been involved in the Garden Design Industry since 2004 and for the last six years has dedicated herself to using only Australian native plants. Her business is Mallee Design her website [malleedesign.com.au](http://malleedesign.com.au)

Kath outlined the principles of garden design and demonstrated them with many slides

### Design Principles

Following basic design concepts in even a general way can help create an harmonious and cohesive garden

#### Mass and void

Refers to the balance between solid spaces-rocks, trees large shrubs and empty areas – ground covers, paving, water.

#### Focal points and Framing

Create one focal point for each vista. Use the view from windows as frames for the living painting. Mature trees can be the focal point and new plantings the frame.

### Unity and Repetition

Multiple use of the same plant can tie the different beds together into a harmonious space. Repetition of sleepers, edges and stone walls also gives the same effect.

Best avoid choosing the plants until the shape size and form have been decided – only then choose the plants. This of course is the reverse of which most of us, well me anyway, operate.





*Sharon Pearson*

Robin Tuckfield with his successful cutting/graft of WA *Isopogon dubius* on to the local root stock *Isopogon anethifolius*.

He has been warned we will be around to take cuttings.



## Nursery News

Easter kept us busy keeping the bunnies away from our plants.



Illawong Rural Fire Station

## Group Meetings

Monthly meetings (except January) of the Menai Wildflower Group are usually held at 7:00pm on the second Wednesday each month, although we have introduced day-time meetings for some of the months. The venue is the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters. New members and friends are welcome.

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary,  
PO Box 3104 Bangor NSW 2234

Website is [www.menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au](http://www.menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au)

E-mail is [menaiwildflower@austplants.com.au](mailto:menaiwildflower@austplants.com.au)

President	Jason Cockayne	9570-8559
Vice President		
Secretary	Annette Tuckfield	9543 - 1490
Treasurer	Sharon Pearson	9570-8559
Editor	Alan Ferguson	9543-8216
APS-NSW Delegate	Mary Hedges	9543-1216
Publicity Officer	Marion Payne	9543-1040
General Committee	Margaret Olde	9543-2242
	Jan Riley	
	Pam Pitkeathly	9771- 9789