



**Menai
Wildflower
Group**



Newsletter of Menai Wildflower Group August 2015

President's Report

With all the south-westerly winds blowing lately, everywhere's cold unless you've been fortunate to be out in the wintry sun. Our weekend group meetings have really lent themselves to these wintry conditions.

For those fortunate enough to enjoy Phil Trickett's demonstration on his unique grafting techniques last month, we hope that now you may have a go at your own cuttings and develop some interesting results. GOOD LUCK.

If anyone has been participating in the POWL (Powerful Owl) projects over the past years, there is a unique opportunity to learn some new insights into their behaviour. Matt Mo is our Saturday 8 August speaker, and is rather excited with any fauna surveying and has shown a real conscientious connection to the POWL programmes.

Remember that Lloyd runs the propagation workshops on the third Saturday of the month (from 1pm) where you can continue your own experience with growing your Australian native plants.

Lloyd Hedges will be conducting his annual Waratah Walk on 27 September, so keep it wel-penned in your diary.

See you all at our next meeting,

Jason Cockayne

Coming Local Events

(See Special Interest for others)

- 8 Aug** Menai Wildflower Group Meeting
Guest speaker – Matt Mo
“Powerful Owls New insights”-
1pm Sat start
- 15 Aug** Working Bee at IRFB 9am start
- 15 Aug** Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm
- 5-6 Sep** Open Day- Grevillea Park, Bulli
10-4pm
- 9 Sep** Menai Wildflower Group Meeting
Guest speaker – Lloyd Hedges
“WA Trip Part 2”
- 19 Sep** Working Bee at IRFB 9am start
- 19 Sep** Propagation at IRFS nursery 1pm
- 27 Sep** Waratah Walk –contact Lloyd
Hedges

Contents

<i>President's Report</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Coming Local Events</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Special Interest</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Plant Name Labels</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Tree Day</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>June Guest Speaker</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>July Guest Speaker</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Nursery Report</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Group Meetings</i>	<i>7</i>



From the Treasurer

APS NSW has decided to raise the membership fees in order to cover extra admin and publishing costs. The fees are increasing by \$3 for each category and this is effective from 1Jan 2015 (Note: members with a renewal date prior to 31 March 2015 will pay at the former rate). An updated membership renewal form can be found on our website.

Sharon Pearson

ATTENTION – CHANGE OF MEETING START TIME

We are trialling a new 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 30 Sep'15.

Any items suitable for inclusion in the newsletter may be sent to the Editor (Post to Secretary or e-mail 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 15 August and 19 September.

Nursery group held at the Tip Nursery, Lucas Heights Waste Management site most Monday mornings from 9.30am to 1pm. 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/ 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

Visit Sylvan Grove

The East Hills Group will again be hosting garden visits at **Sylvan Grove Native Gardens** on **Wednesday 9th September** from 10am. A complimentary morning tea will welcome visitors upon their arrival. Guided walks will begin from 10.30am.

If you are considering attending this event, would you let Lloyd know by 30 Aug so that he can RSVP with numbers attending by no later than Wednesday 2 September.

MWG Calendar 2016

If you want your photo to be considered for inclusion in abovementioned calendar, your **photos must be submitted by the end of the October meeting.**

Plant Name Labels

Last year MWG won a grant to provide name labels for the Australian native plants in the front gardens of the Illawong Rural Fire Station, so that new members and the community can readily determine the names of plants they see there. With the help of our colleagues in the Sutherland APS Group, we have managed to organise the first of the aluminium strips that indicate the botanical name of many of our favourite plants. The work of John Arney is especially noted, as engraving on metal strips is not for the faint-hearted.

Lloyd Hedges happily applied the muscle necessary to get the strips well anchored once I found I could not even lift the mallet!

Hopefully, we will all become better acquainted with a bigger range of Aussie natives as we stroll around the gardens this summer.

Pam Pitkeathly

Tree Day

MWfG donated plants to schools and other community organizations'.



June Guest Speaker

At our first Saturday meeting of the year Mark Abell presented a talk on Australian Alpine Flora. His talk was based on his visit to the alpine areas of NSW during Christmas 2010.

He explained that the alpine environment is the area above the tree line to areas of permanent ice & snow; where regular, persistent snow occurs; the mean average temperature is less than 10°C and where there is a physical limit to tree growth. He noted that alpine and sub-alpine areas cover less than 15% of Australia.

The NSW alpine area covers the Snowy Mountains and Kosciuszko National Park and includes Mount Kosciuszko – the highest mountain in Australia at 2228m. In the summer months Mark recommended Thredbo as a good base as it remains open outside the ski season and has good access to walking tracks including the Mt Kosciuszko alpine area. Summer is the perfect time to visit as you would be amazed by the abundance of flowers during that time of year.



White Alpine Sunray daisies

Mark showed us some stunning photos of the alpine landscape – snow-capped mountains (yes, it can snow in summer), rivers and abundant alpine, sub-alpine and riparian vegetation. The plants have a short flowering season – either early season (Nov) or late season (Jan) with different plants flowering at different times during the season.

The plant communities range from:

- Feldmark – the most exposed areas – the plants have to be tough here
- Short Alpine herbfield – the area below the snow melt
- Tall Alpine herbfield – this is where the majority of alpine plants live and there is a denser coverage of vegetation
- Sod tussock grassland – in the valleys
- Heath – in the better drained areas
- Fen – permanent wet areas
- Bog – either valley bog or raised bog where the soil is wet and acidic

Mark showed us some photos he had taken of the many species and the abundance in which these plants flower due to their short flowering season.



Euphrasia collina (Eyebright)



Leucochrysum albicans (Alpine Sunray)



Caltha introloba (Alpine Marsh Marigold) – note the unusual leaves



Pentachondra pumila (Carpet Heath)

Mark also mentioned that the insects are mainly black to help absorb as much sunlight as quickly as possible and flowers tended not to be red (i.e. bird attracting) as most plants are insect pollinated.

Threats to this alpine area include:

- Fire – in 2003 there was the first major fire since 1939 – as alpine plants are very slow growing fires occurring too regularly would prevent sufficient regrowth.
- Weeds
- Feral animals – rabbits, foxes, horses, pigs and trout
- Human damage – grazing, development, skiing, hiking, etc.
- Climate change – increased temperature, decreased snow cover – to survive plants would need to move to higher ground, but are limited physically by how far up (altitude) they can go.

Mark recommended ‘Kosciuszko Alpine Flora’ by Costin et al, as a good reference book for alpine flora. If you want to see more of Mark’s alpine flora photos, go to the APS NSW facebook page.

I have always wanted to visit the Snowys in summer so now that I have been inspired by Mark’s experience and photos I will have to go there this summer – I hope to see you there too.

Sharon Pearson

July Guest Speaker

Phil Trickett started experimenting with WA banksias 11 years ago, gradually refining techniques through trial and error before expanding into other genera. The recently developed ‘cutting graft’ technique has proved to be relatively successful and has great potential for the home gardener.



Successful grafts so far include:

Banksia – 37 species, Dryandra – 6 species, Grevillea – 21 species, Isopogon/Petrophile – 14 species, Eremophila – 41 species, Hakea – 26 species, Pimelea – 5 species and many more to come!

To grow spectacular plants and preserve rare species at risk of extinction in the wild, as well as special forms of unusual coloured specimens, prostrate forms and species where seed or cutting methods are difficult, grafting and propagation enables many plants not otherwise able to be grown in certain areas to survive.

The need is for more grafting to take place. With the process being slow and difficult to learn and no-one to learn from, many mistakes are made along the way; persevere for success. Many find it difficult to acquire skills. There needs to be more information and literature available and the easing of the historical secrecy by grafters.

We've all tried to grow WA plants, quite a number of which are found to be difficult to grow in our climate though some success has been gained in the following two methods:

- Whip graft on seedling – graft scion on to a seedling of chosen plant at least 12 mths old;
- Cutting graft – slit down side of stock plant, top leaf left on stem, insert wedged new stock and tape, success experienced with stock plant *Eremophila muelleriana*.

Plant in jiffy plug trays – growth monitoring is simplified by gently lifting the stock plant out of the tray to check the roots as they appear out the bottom of the plug; when appropriate, plant plug in a larger pot.

Traditional methods for grafting usually require stock seedling to be grown first; the 'cutting graft' solution solves many of the above.

The basic technique for grafting:

- The cambium layer of scion and stock must be matched
- Match the diameter of the stock and scion

- Stock diameter can be larger than scion – the solution is to match the cambium layer on one side



There are many advantages of learning the cutting the graft method; it's easy, quicker with each graft, ready access to stock material from your own garden, easy to trial different stocks, mistakes don't matter and it's cheaper.

Vital techniques for success:

- Soak all material in bleach solution – 1 part bleach, 8 parts water
- Sterilise all tools with methylated spirits
- Parafilm or Nescofilm [available from medical suppliers] for the taping of graft to stock plant
- Stanley knife and spare blade
- Trial and error to determine humidity tolerance levels and maximise protection from summer heat. All will vary according to the seasons and particular grafting species
- Protect cuttings from wind; and
- Allow time for grafted plants to harden off

Recommended stocks:

- Banksia – *integrifolia*, *cunninghamii*, *serrata*
- Grevillia – 'Carrington Cross', 'Poorinda Royal Mantle' or any tough hybrid
- Hakea – *salicifolia*
- Isopogon/Petrophile – *I. anethifolius*, *P. pulchella*
- Pimelea – *ligustrina*
- Eremophila – various *myoporum* species

Easy species to graft:

- Isopogon – *cuneatus*, *trilobus*
- Eremophila – *calorhabdos*, *muelleriana*

- Banksia – *laevigata subsp. laevigata*,
brownii, *media*
- Grevillea – *alpina*

Experimental Cotyledon cutting grafts –
Banksia *blechnifolia* on to *integrifolia*

Phil gave a practical demonstration of his tried and true grafting techniques and invited participants to test their skills. Each stock and graft cutting was matched in diameter and following the procedures dipped in bleach solution and patted dry prior to the application of Nescofilm;

At eye level, hold the spare Stanley blade in the left hand and the stock plant *Isopogon P. pulchella* [example cutting] in the right, gently slit down halfway through the stem to the cambium layer. Cut a wedge in the base of the graft, *Isopogon cuneatus* [example cutting] and place into the slit of the stock plant, cut a small piece of Nescofilm and stretch and wind around the join to secure and prevent water penetration, run the blade down the sides of the base of the stock plant, dip in hormone gel and place the new plant into a jiffy plug and tray.

Phil houses his grafts in a shade cloth enclosure with a poly roof. Living in the Milton area on a remnant rain forest property with volcanic soil, he has found grafting is the answer for success. Within our own gardens we have the opportunity to retain favourites and experiment with others. All the participants in Phil's workshop came away rewarded with the knowledge he shared with us.

Marion Payne

Now showing at Illawong Rural Fire Station.



Acacia denticulosa



Hakea Burrendong Beauty

Nursery Report

Lucas Heights Nursery:

Thanks to ongoing efforts by members Anne and Marian W and Janet Riepon from East Hills group we have more than adequate plants for National Tree Day. To date, about 500 have been supplied, well down on the figures from previous years because of new guidelines in public schools that discourage the planting of gum trees and shrubs. We supplied schools and preschools as far apart as Keiraville and Blacktown.

Kareela Public School still held a planting event and I had the pleasure of talking to their E Team about the improvements trees offer our environment.

The release of Suez environment's (formerly SITA) plans for the area reveal a finished open parkland (read grassland with the odd tree) style and no attempt to regenerate the former bush.

This, of course, means that a bush regen nursery is surplus to requirements and while we are still welcome to remain on site there will come a day when we have to move. That is something the group will have to consider closely.

IRFB micro nursery:

We have been holding propagation days on the third Saturday of the month at 1pm. Attendance while poor from members has received support from the East Hills Group and a trickle of the curious public. It would help if we had a few regulars.

On 15 August Propagation Day we will be demonstrating and trialling the cutting/graft technique shown to us by Phil Trickett at our last meeting. Come along and give it a go.

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.

Lloyd Hedges



Graeme checking the orchids

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

Website is www.menaiwildflower.austplants.com.au

E-mail is 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
General Committee	Pam Forbes	9543-6224
	Margaret Olde	9543-2242
	Marion Payne	9543-1040
	Pam Pitkeathly	9771- 9789



Thanks to Ron for mowing the lawn and to Graeme for sage advice on the orchids as we prepared for the meeting this Saturday and the Propagation day the Saturday after.



Illawong Rural Fire Station

Group Meetings

Monthly meetings (except January) of the Menai Wildflower Group are usually held at