



Operculum

**Southern Highlands Botanic
Gardens Inc**

Newsletter No. 11

June 2012

Waratopia Gala Dinner 1 September 2012



Telopea speciosissima (E. Musgrave)

The committee is delighted to announce that the Waratopia Gala Dinner will be held on 1 September at the Annesley Ballroom and Garden Room commencing at 7pm. Invitation and RSVP are included with this issue of *Operculum*.

The guest speaker will be Professor David Mabberley, Executive Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. His topic is *The Role in Society of the Modern Botanic Garden*. Professor Mabberley was formerly Director of the Herbarium, Library, Art and Archives at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (2008-11).

Before his time at Kew, David was at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA where the Botanic Gardens were established in 2005 under his management. He lived in Australia in 1996 and was Chief Executive Officer of Greening Australia (NSW). He was President of the Society for the History of Natural History 1993-1996 and President of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy 2005-2011.

An exhibition and sale of prints and paintings by Elaine Musgrave and Suzannah Blaxill will be set up in the Garden Room.

As seating is limited to 115 we advise Friends to book as soon as possible. The bookings will be open to the general public from 20 July 2012. We look forward to seeing you on 1 September.

SHBG Committee

The Birds!

The birds have long since flown away but the wheels of bureaucracy grind slowly on. The reports from the consultancies are completed and we now await the Minister's consideration of the issues.

We are still very hopeful of being able to start planting trees during this winter. The avian interlude has delayed our fencing plans by six

months but it hasn't dampened our spirits and we look forward with renewed enthusiasm to the next stage of the venture.

Charlotte Webb OAM

On Monday 11 June 2012 the Governor-General announced the Queen's Birthday Honours List, which included the name of our President, Charlotte Webb, who received the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) "For service to the community, particularly through the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens".

The citation for Charlotte includes the following: *Founding Member, Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens since 1998; President, since 2007.*

Volunteer Landscape Designer, Welby Garden Centre; volunteer garden design teacher. Former Secretary, SH Branch, Australian Garden History Society. Former President, Australian Institute of Landscape Designers and Managers.

Many congratulations Charlotte!

Raffle

Raffle tickets (\$10 for one ticket and \$20 for three) are currently for sale and the winning tickets will be drawn at the Waratopia Gala Dinner on 1 September.

First Prize: Cotswold Furniture Garden Bench 6ft long (value \$2000 approx).

Second Prize: Two airline tickets to Melbourne from Sydney or Canerra and Entry to 2013 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (value \$500).

Third Prize: Books from Bowral Bookshop, Bong Bong St, Bowral (value \$100).

Tickets are available from the Friends of SHBG Committee members (see page 4).

The Town and Country Gardens Weekend in April



The view across the water at Bellagio (R. Willis)

The owners of the seven open gardens for the April weekend did us all proud. The gardens looked stunning and the comments from visitors made it very clear how much pleasure the beautiful properties had given to many individuals. It is a very special treat to be invited to visit some of the most beautiful gardens in the Southern Highlands.

Sincere thanks are due to the owners for all their co-operation, preparation and hard work—without them the weekend could not have happened.

Special thanks to Deirdre Hill for not only opening her garden but also

allowing us to run the plant stall at her property. The total funds raised from the weekend was \$35,000, out of which the plant stall raised \$13,000.

The event would not have been possible without all the team work—including volunteers on the gates, car parks and setting up gazebos. To all these people we extend our warmest thanks.

Les Musgrave and his team produced a huge array of quality plants for sale. And the stall was run so efficiently with many volunteer staff giving helpful advice to the visitors. It was virtually impossible to drive off without a bootful of plants. A tremendous achievement.

The weather was beautiful, the crowds were more than we could have hope for, so overall the weekend was a resounding success. The Friends Committee extends its warmest thanks to all concerned. Plans for next year (April 27-28, 2013) are already beginning to evolve.

A Dip into the History of Botanic Gardens

Botanic gardens are older than you might have imagined. *Orto Botanico* in Padua, Italy is the oldest botanical garden in the world. In 1533, the Venetian Republic instituted the Chair of Botany at Padua University to study medicinal plants which were called 'simples'. They soon discovered that they needed a garden to grow these simples and by 1543 *Orto Botanico* was not only established as a garden but there was also a library where

dried plants were stored for students to examine.

Fifty years later, the great maritime explorations started to introduce European society to thousands of new species. They needed to be grown from seeds, classified and stored. Botanists were challenged in many directions. It was miraculous that many seeds were successfully germinated in the Northern Hemisphere and it was often the new Botanic Gardens that nurtured this emerging science.

The compound microscope with its multiple lens was the break-through for the science of Botany. By the mid 1600s, scientists were examining plants in minute detail and attempting to find clues in order to classify them.

Rival naming systems competed for dominance and ranged from describing plants by their roots, stems or leaves—even by their resemblance to ailments. Nicholas Culpepper linked plants with star signs and astrology.



Carl Linnaeus' house and garden showing plants classified according to his binomial system (photo C. Dwyer)

Two hundred years later, Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) studied medicine at Uppsala, Sweden where there was

a fine botanic garden. His passion for the natural world took him to Holland to study for a doctorate and it was there that Linnaeus met eminent botanists who encouraged his work. It was Johann Gronovius (Dutch physician/botanist) and Isaac Lawson (Scottish physician) who saw Linnaeus' unpublished tabulation of the natural world based on the sexual organs of plants. They were so impressed with his reasoning that they funded publication of *Species plantarum* (Stockholm 1753) which is now accepted as the starting point for modern botanical classification.



The Baroque Garden, part of Uppsala's Tradgarden, Sweden (photo C. Dwyer)

Education remains at the forefront of the charter for modern day botanic gardens and it is this aspect that distinguishes them from parks and gardens.

Carolyn Dwyer

References:

Aitken, Richard, *Botanical Riches – Stories of Botanical Exploration*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2007.

Don, Monty and Derry Moore, *Great Gardens of Italy*, Quadrille Publishing Ltd, London, 2011

More help needed . . .

At a recent Friends Committee meeting it was noted that there are some areas of our organisation of the Open Gardens Weekend that require more assistance—both physical and administrative.

For example, we need more help in organising the plant stall and the collection and delivery of plants. If you would be interested in volunteering in any capacity, please contact Ted Duncan (4862 3163). He would be delighted to hear from you.

Friends of SHBG Committee

Ted Duncan (Chair) 4862 3163

Ian and Carolyn Dwyer 4871 2667; Shandra Egan 4871 3609; Judy Keast 4862 5444; Meg Probyn 4871 3134; Noel and Elizabeth Symonds 4862 5173; Rosemary Willis 4861 3732.

Executive Committee of SHBG

President: Charlotte Webb

Vice-President: Ross Stone

Secretary: Jacqui Page

Treasurer: Jan Edwards

Members: Jamie Baker, David Cummins, Geoff MacBean, Chris Webb

Contact details for the SHBG

Secretary:

PO Box 707, Moss Vale NSW 2577

Tel: (02) 4861 4899

info@shbg.com.au

www.shbg.com.au

Contact details for Newsletter

Editor: Meg Probyn

Tel: (02) 4871 3134

probyn44@bigpond.com