



Operculum

Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens Inc

Newsletter No. 10

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Birds on the Botanic Gardens Site

The bird species, Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*), has been identified as feeding on a section of the Botanic Garden site. These birds are migratory and arrive from Japan in September and depart in March on their return journey to Japan where they nest and produce their young.

Whether this constitutes a habitat needs to be addressed through the Federal Department of Environment before we can proceed with the development. We are respectful of bird habitats and have included a habitat in our concept plan for the Gardens.

This is not an uncommon situation and was similarly faced by the Mt Annan Gardens when under development. A strategy, working around the arrival and departure of migratory birds, was implemented.

The next step will be a study by a fauna expert who has been retained by Council. When this study has been completed and the next steps identified, we will advise all stakeholders.

Therefore, activity planned for the first quarter of this year (e.g. the fence) has been postponed until the bird migration issue is resolved.

SHBG Committee

Town and Country Gardens

The gardens open on Saturday April 28 and Sunday April 29 2012 will showcase seven beautiful properties in the Southern Highlands.

We are very grateful to the owners for their support in our fund raising endeavours for the development of the Botanical Gardens.

1. ***Wandella*** (475 Old South Road, Mittagong), the property of Richard and Jay Griffin, is a classic country garden of three acres set on a working cattle property on the outskirts of Mittagong. Beautifully planted with a large lake home to a wonderful array of water birds.

2. ***Greenbriar Park*** (1117 Old South Road), owned by Robert and Janet Constable, is a country garden of about 6 acres set on a larger property which boasts its own vineyard and cellar door. With its sweeping lawns and beautifully planted garden beds, lakes and a folly, it's a garden not to be missed.

3. ***Coombe Wood*** (226 Range Road), an 8½ acre property owned by Simon and Mariese Grant reflects their passion for maples, many of which they have grown from seed. With a backdrop of massive indigenous eucalypts, there is a wealth of deciduous trees as well as conifers, rhododendrons and camellias.

4. **Bellagio** (4 Kimberley Drive, Bowral) is owned by Roy and Wendy

Alvaro—an Italian inspired Australian garden of 5 acres with interconnected lakes, waterfalls, springs, fountains and a grotto. Beautifully planted with a large variety of deciduous trees making this a spectacular garden in autumn.



The drive and lake at Bellagio

5. **A native garden** (4 Earl Street, Mittagong), created over the last 14 years by Geoff and Sarah Cains, is set on a one-acre site near the top of Mt Gibraltar. An ecologically sensitive garden, much of the indigenous flora has been maintained and enhanced by additional planting of many other Australian plants.

6. **Woodleigh** (221 Oxley Drive, Mittagong) developed over 20 years by the owners Geoff and Jeanette Allen, sits on a north-facing slope near the top of Mt Gibraltar. With both exotic and native shrubs, the garden features several ponds, a waterfall, a fairy garden, and has extensive views to the Sydney Harbour Bridge (when it isn't raining).

7. **Quindalup** (180 Sproules Lane, Bowral), owned by Deirdre Hill, comprises 10 acres of park and woodlands, with rare trees and shrubs. A rare plants nursery was previously situated on the site and this is where

the Plant Stall will be held over the weekend.

Over the last year, with Les Musgrave as co-ordinator, Friends of the SHBG have been busily propagating plants for the stall. It will be well worth a visit for those keen gardeners who want to purchase some rare and interesting plants.

The plant stall has been supported by Bowral Co-op and we thank them for all their generosity.

Simon Grant on Species Cyclamen

Almost everyone is familiar with the showy, splashes of red, white, crimson or pink of the florist shop cyclamen that at times look artificial, but few are aware from what they have arisen, the wild species. Attractive leaves and a profusion of flowers, more than make up for what they may lack in size however, at a time in the garden when most other plants are resting.

Altogether there are 23 different species, the range of species allowing the flowering season to encompass most of the year with only the hot middle of summer missing out. This reflects their Mediterranean origins with hot dry summers and cool wet winters, though they do extend into central Europe, around the Black Sea and across the Caucasus to Northern Iran.

Almost every famous battle of history seems to have had a unique species or variety growing close by. Perhaps the most unexpected discovery was that of the last found species in 1986 in Northern Somalia nearly 3000km from the closest other species in Israel. At least it should be safe from poachers for a while.

Botanically cyclamen are now grouped in the family Myrsinaceae (not a family teeming with great garden plants). Their storage organ is a tuber (developing from the hypocotyl), the leaves and flowers growing directly from it. These 'bulbs' can grow to 25-30 cm in some species and help the plant survive the summers with little or no water. The name Cyclamen comes from the Greek word 'Kuklos' which means 'circular' and refers to the spiral stalks attached to the seed pods. To the casual observer the species looks similar but with closer inspection the subtle variations in leaf and flower become apparent. The leaves may vary in shape and size; they may be round, heart or kidney shaped. Mostly they are variegated, often strikingly, and in some could almost be grown for that feature alone. The flowers of the species have five petals with a range of pinks, purples and white, usually with a darker 'nose'. They are mostly lightly perfumed and remarkably long lasting. As the species multiplies readily, in a few years the carpet of leaf and flower can be stunning.

They can be grown in any well-drained soil but most need some sun protection as in the wild they come from woodland conditions. Hot dry summers are not usually a problem as they are often dormant at that time. To maximise the flowering season I would suggest the following species that are readily available, hardy and multiply freely.

***Cyclamen purpurascens*:** The only evergreen species comes from the most northerly range centred on the Alps through France to Austria, the Czech Republic and even Southern Poland. It

flowers in summer to early autumn and as such don't like to dry out. They prefer dappled shade.

***Cyclamen hederifolium*:** This is probably the best-known species with good reason. It quickly multiplies tolerating harsher conditions including more direct sun than the previous species. It comes from southern Europe including south-eastern France through Italy, Greece and western Turkey and a number of islands including Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily and northern Crete. If you only grow one, this should be it. It flowers in autumn and also has some of the finest leaf patterns that remain an attraction for several months.



Cyclamen Coum

***Cyclamen coum*:** This species, coming from around the Black Sea, may be smaller but is one of the easiest to grow and flowers copiously in mid winter. The flowers vary from white to dark crimson-magenta and similarly a range of leaf patterns exists.

***Cyclamen repandum* group:** This group extends the flowering season into spring with different species originating from the Balearic Islands of Spain to Rhodes. My favourite is now called *Cyclamen rhodium* ssp *peloponnesiacum* and is always covered in flowers in early spring.



Cyclamen rhodium subsp. peloponnesiacum



Cyclamen rhodium subsp. vividum

Finally, where do the brightly coloured plants sold by florists fit in? Apart from the leaves it is hard to recognise that they have arisen from the one wild species; *Cyclamen persicum*.



Cyclamen Persium

Despite its name, it has never been found in Persia, instead coming from the eastern Mediterranean. Cultivated from the mid 1700s, it is a testament to careful cultivation and selection

techniques that have resulted in the spectacular varieties now sold, though to the purists they are still not the equals to the humble species as garden plants.

Simon Grant 2012

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