

OPERCULUM FEBRUARY 2015

Southern Highlands Autumn Gardens Weekend: 18 – 19 April 2015

The garden owners are busily making sure that their properties will be ready for the influx of visitors. This year there are two country properties—'Woodlands' at High Range and 'Arcadia', Berrima—and six town gardens, including 'Quindalup' where the SHBG Nursery is being held. The map of the locations of the gardens is on the back page.



'Upper Woodlands', Corner of Woodlands Road, High Range



'Arcadia', 59 Nathan Street, Berrima

Tickets are available online at www.shbg.com.au or you may purchase them at each of the gardens. Schoolchildren are entitled to free entry.

\$35 all weekend pass entry to all 8 gardens

\$10 for 3 Secret Gardens only

\$5 per single garden (excluding the 3 Secret Gardens)

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The SHBG Nursery at Quindalup

Don't miss out on the rare, unusual and hard-to-find plants, which will be available at the SHBG Nursery, open from 9am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday at the SH Autumn Gardens Weekend. These plants have been raised locally by the SHBG Plant Growers Group—an incredibly dedicated band of people who propagate, feed, weed and dote on the little plants. How can they not grow beautifully given all the hard work and devotion that goes into producing them?



Some of the plants being prepared for the plant sale



Hats on and heads down while propagating!

Working Bees

On the first Tuesday of every month, the Botanic gardens become a hive of activity. Over forty Friends gather to work on all sorts of jobs around the site. Frequently there are 'spare' plants for sale and at the March working bee (Tuesday 3 March at 10.00am) there will be an opportunity to buy daffodils reared by our own 'Daffodil Man', Tony Davis. Tony is donating bulbs to plant around the birch grove and he is intending to have a sufficient supply to sell to the Friends and the general public at the working bee.

Next Working Bee

Tuesday 3 March 2015—

There will be a special sale of daffodil bulbs.

The Southern Highlands 'Daffodil Man'



Tony Davis at his daffodil patch at Quindalup

Tony has been involved with hybridizing daffodils since 1984 and, according to him, he has 'almost learnt how to do it'. He is one of only twenty breeders of daffodils in Australia. If you read the literature it sounds relatively easy to pollinate a daffodil by simply shaking or brushing the flower so its pollen comes into contact with the stigma. If you want to hybridize your daffodils, however, you have to decide what characteristics you are after and choose two separate plants: one to provide the pollen and one to produce the seeds. It takes years and years to become a successful breeder!

The photograph below is one of Tony's new daffodils, named in honour of Jim Osborne, who died in June 2011, just eleven months after he took leave from the Chairmanship of the SHBG Friends committee. In 1999 he was a founding member of the steering committee for the Botanic Garden—his passionate and enthusiastic support for the SHBG will always be remembered. How fitting that a daffodil named in his honour will be planted by Tony.



***Narcissus poeticus* 'Gentleman Jim'**

Tony and his partner, Maureen Purtell, were made Life Members of the SHBG in September 2013.

Plans for the Gardens

Kate Cullity (Taylor Cullity Lethlean) has produced the detailed plans which were formally adopted by the Board at its meeting on Tuesday 17 February. There will be a special Louisa Atkinson Fern Garden named in honour of Caroline Louisa Waring Atkinson (1834-1872), naturalist and writer, who was born at Oldbury, Berrima. Her name is not only commemorated in the Loranthaceous genus *Atkinsonia*, and both *Erechtites atkinsoniae* and *Epacris calvertiana*, but also a horticulturally distinct fern ranking as a form of *Doodia caudata* was named in her honour *D. atkinsonii*.

Book Launch—10 April 2015 at the SHB



The new book, *Gardening in the Southern Highlands*, by Deidre Hill, is to be launched at 4pm on the site of the Botanic Gardens by the Mayor, Duncan Gair on Friday 10 April. It is a comprehensive manual written for gardeners in the Southern Highlands, from creating a garden to every aspect of managing a garden with a large section on plants suitable for a cold climate. All of the plants listed have been assessed for their local suitability, particularly for their potential to become environmental weeds. Tony Davis has written the chapters on growing and breeding bulbs and establishing lawns.

Rotary Club of Berrima District Event



Rotary members enjoying a 'Thank-you' party at the site

On Wednesday 11 February the Rotary Club held a barbeque on the site of the SHBG—to say a big 'thank you' to all the volunteers who worked so hard in the organisation of the January Berrima Gaolbreak. If you missed all the activity at the Gaol this year, watch out for a future event. It was such a successful weekend. We particularly enjoyed the Opera night with the local corellas joining in! The Club donated \$2500 to the SHBG, for which we are very grateful.

Photos of Friends at the February Working Bee



Shandra Egan & Lois Morrison potting



Chris & Charlotte Webb, Elizabeth Symonds & Clive Probyn working in the Shade House

Don't be put off from attending the working bees if you have a crook knee or a bad ankle—we always seem to be able to find a job to suit everyone. Writing plant labels, potting on, or washing pots can all be done in a sedentary position. There's no lying down on the job but as long as you can walk to the shed from parking your car, we can use you!



Noel Symonds washing pots and Laurel Cheetham scrubbing old venetian blinds to make into plant labels



Carole Scott, Elizabeth Symonds & Lynne Moore writing labels—every plant pot needs identification

The Hedge

Several people have asked about the hedge—*Escallonia bifida*—planted along Kangaloon Road. Despite the 'Doubting Thomases' who wondered if the little plants would ever grow, it has flourished and become a beautiful feature for the site. The doyen of English garden writers, the late Christopher Lloyd waxed lyrical about it:

The majority of escallonias are serviceable but second-rate shrubs. *Escallonia bifida* (syn. *E. montevidensis*) is in quite another class. It is the last of its genus to flower—not until October after a cool summer but a month earlier if it has been warm. Then it becomes radiant with large, domed panicles of pure white blossom more star-shaped than tubular. Red admirals and tortoise-shells adore it and show up dramatically against their snowy background. This is a vigorous shrub but its growth is soft and brittle, easily damaged by frost and wind.¹

A native of Brazil and Uruguay, it can grow to four metres high. It may be considered old-fashioned by some, but it is obviously great for hedging. This summer the fragrance from the clusters of pure white flowers has permeated the air.



The hedge—*Escallonia bifida*

The Board of SHBG:

Chairman: Charlotte Webb OAM
Members: Barry Barford, Frank Nevill
Jacqui Page, Chris Webb

Committee of Friends of SHBG

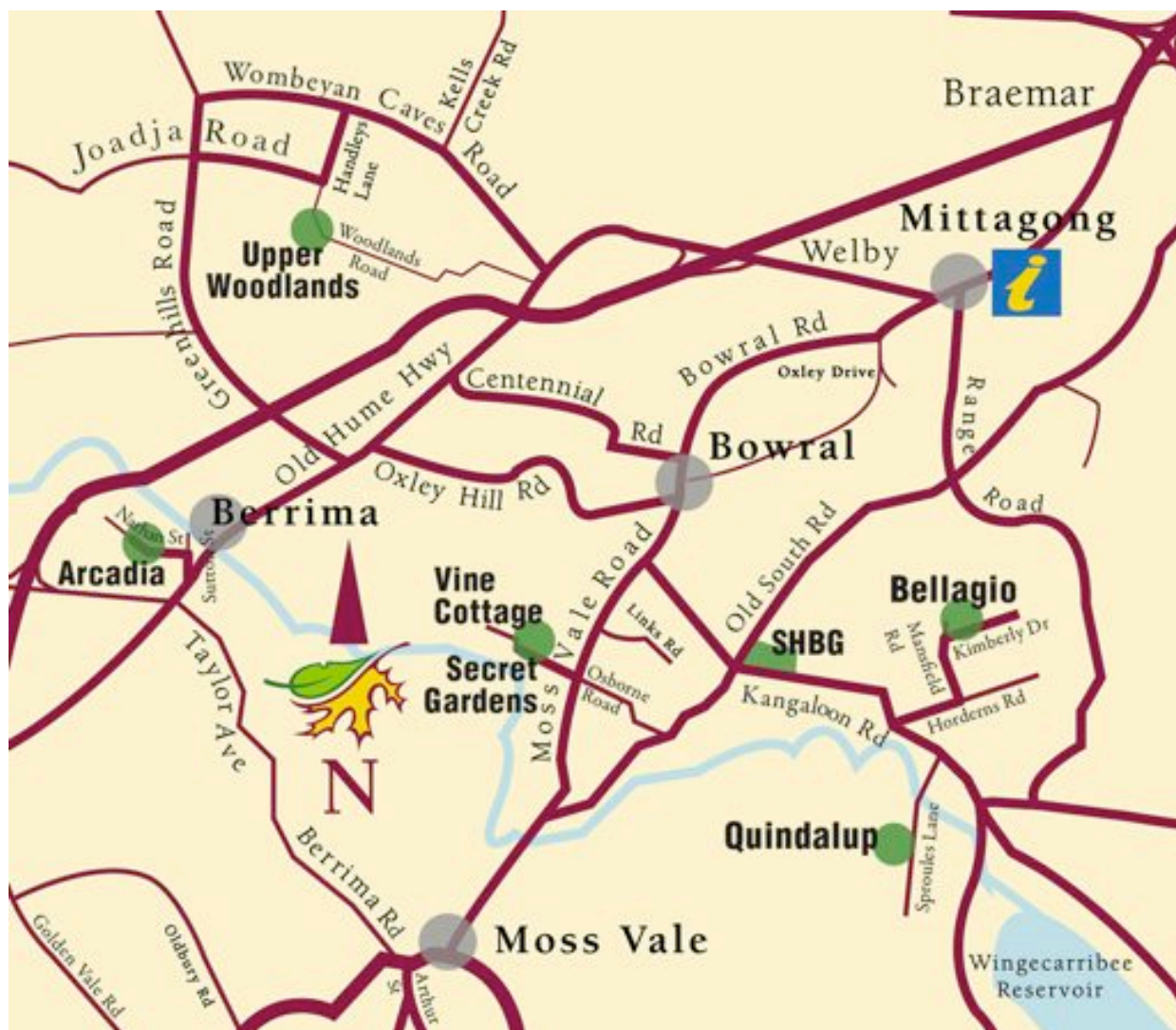
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Noel & Elizabeth Symonds

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¹ Christopher Lloyd, *The Adventurous Gardener* (Frances Lincoln Ltd, London 2011) (1st pub. Allen Lane, Penguin Books Limited, London, 1983), p.92.

Locations of Town and Country Gardens 2015



1. **'Upper Woodlands'**, corner of Woodlands Road, High Range, is a spectacular large garden with conifers, mature eucalypts and flowering deciduous trees. There are beautiful plantings of rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas, lavenders and teucrium. From the garden there are wide views of the countryside. Golden laburnums are planted round the lake—and you are welcome to stop in this lovely place for a picnic (no barbeques).
2. **'Arcadia'**, 59 Nathan Street, Berrima, is situated on a working farm with beautiful trees and vistas. The current owners created this country garden from a paddock in 1967. The late Claude Crowe, of Berrima Bridge Nurseries fame, helped them with the original landscape design. The trees have now fully matured into magnificent specimens. Berrima TownLife organisation will provide refreshments on both Saturday and Sunday (18-19 April). Plunger coffee or tea with scone, slice or cake will cost \$5 per person. Lunch menu (*to be served at approximately noon to 1.30pm*) will include a sandwich (or soup if cold!)—cost \$8 each.
- 3 - 6. **'Vine Cottage'**, 126 Osborne Road, Burradoo, and the **Three Secret Gardens** located close by—122 Osborne Road, **'Redmyre'** and **'Applegrove'**. This is a delightful corner of Burradoo and it is a rare treat to be able to wander from garden to garden to enjoy these pretty gardens for all seasons. 'Vine Cottage' is set in a silver birch grove and its driveway is an avenue of plane trees. Many original sculptures have been integrated into the garden and the artist's studio will host an exhibition of floral art.
7. **'Bellagio'**, 4 Kimberley Drive, Bowral—a glorious garden of five acres, in which you may imagine that you have been transported to a lakeside villa in northern Italy. The crescent-shaped lake creates a focal point in this beautifully planted and designed grand garden.
8. **'Quindalup'**, 180 Sproules Lane, Bowral—this flourishing garden is a plant-collector's delight, with ten acres of mature trees (many rare species), as well as beds of perennials and ground covers. The SHBG Nursery will be held in what used to be the Quindalup nursery for rare plants.