

OPERCULUM – AUGUST 2016

Chairman's Column

As winter is drawing to an end we are looking at a busy time in the Botanic gardens. The garden beds and perennial border have been cut back ready to spring away with new life as the weather warms up and hedge trimming is underway. This has been made much easier this year with our new hedge trimmers, loppers and pruners.

We are currently extending the birch grove with the addition of 6 new *Betula* species and cultivars, including the shrub birch *Betula pumila* which is the only birch to turn orange in autumn. This will take the total number of types of birch up to 21, making it one of the largest and most extensive public birch collections in Australia.

The winter garden has commenced with the planting of a number of trees with winter flowers, interesting winter bark or interesting growth habit. A curiosity included in this area will be the contorted hazel (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') with crazy twisted shiny branches bearing long drooping catkins during winter and spring.

The oak rondel continues to develop with the planting of the copper beech hedge enclosing the entire planting of *fastigiata* (columnar) English oaks and English box.

We are excited to have received two sculptures from local artist Tony Emmett. Installation of the sculptures, 3 garden benches and stage 2 of our donated pavers will be undertaken in August ready for dedication on Tuesday 13th September. Please come along and help us celebrate.

This year we will hold our first summer open garden. Four Burradoo gardens neighbouring each other will open during the height of the hydrangea flowering season. The Plant propagators group has been busy growing a number of the sensational hydrangeas to offer for sale at the gardens. Further information will be included in coming newsletters.

- Charlotte Webb OAM.

BGANZ Day

As reported in the last June / Winter edition of *Operculum*, BGANZ (Botanic Gardens of Australia and



New Zealand Inc) held the inaugural National Botanic Gardens Open Day on 29 May 2016. Over 60 Botanic Gardens across Australia and New Zealand, including SHBG, took part on the day.



SHBG used the opportunity to introduce more people to the gardens by hosting *Music in the Gardens*. The event was coordinated by Julie Blanchard and presented talented local performers; SHACappella, Three for Tea, Wuka Plukas, Highland Singers, Oxley College Chamber Orchestra, Women of Note and Bowral Drummers. Photos show *The Highland Singers in their green*

jackets and the colourful Wuka Pluckers.

There was also an information tent and SHBG benefitted from money raised through the sale of plants and merchandise. (*Chris Webb mans the Plant Stall below.*)

Overall, the day was a great success. The display of the Concept Plans in the Information Tent provided an insight for those who were



unaware of the Gardens and the plans. Hosting activities like this Music Day has proven to be a great way to encourage interest in, and hopefully participation in, the Gardens and its development. The Plant & Merchandise Stall raised funds that were put towards the costs of the day. There is now consideration being given to holding another musical event in summer.

Autumn Gardens Weekend – 2017

Yes, we have just had an exhausting but very successful Autumn Gardens Weekend for 2016 – but now that we have all had time for a quick breather, it is already time to start working towards next year's event.

The Autumn Open Gardens 2017 will occur on the weekend of Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd of April 2017 – this being the weekend closest to ANZAC Day. Please lock it into your diary.

To start things moving, the Friends Committee has met to review of the 2016 event. The meeting took note of feedback from both members and visitors with a view to

identifying the areas where things worked well and to highlight the areas where improvements could be made.

Looking ahead to next April, there will be a need for planning, preparation and help on the day. Some of the items on the checklist are:

- Locating 6 suitable gardens, and their willing owners, who can join a very select group to showcase the autumn beauty of the area.
- Preparing for the Plant Fair. Around 4,000 plants were cultivated, potted, grown and sold for the 2016 Plant Fair. This work has already started with winter propagation well underway, but there is still a lot of work to be done so that plants can be ready for sale in Autumn. We need lots of pots and lots of helpers!
- Volunteers. To help make the SHBG look its best; to set up the Plant Fair; to set up tents, signage and parking at each garden; to assist on the day at the Plant Fair (people with plant knowledge, cashiers, organisers, customer assistance and parking); to assist at each of the gardens (ticket sales, parking, visitor assistance; dismantling everything and packing up). We need at least 150 volunteers – but can use many more.

Do you have some time that you can offer during the year, in preparation for the day or on the day?

During the year monthly Working Bees involve a few hours of commitment although some more time may be appreciated as we get closer to the event.

For the Autumn Open Gardens & Plant Fair in April, we would ask each volunteer to help on either a morning or afternoon on Saturday or Sunday. That should allow time to do your own plant shopping and/or visit some of the wonderful Open Gardens. The December issue of *Operculum* will contain more details and an opportunity for volunteers to indicate their preferred tasks and availability.

Grants and Donations

The Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens relies on the great contribution of time given by individual members of the Friends Group. The SHBG also needs the financial and in-kind support from a range of grants and from donors. Some recent grants or donation include:

- IMB Community Foundation grant of \$7,100 to install an automatic watering system and erect a shed for the safe storage of chemicals.
- Donation of \$1,000 from Bowral Garden Society towards general planting.
- Berrima Rotary donation of cash and in kind to the value of \$20,000.
- \$5,000 Community Building Partnership from the State Government recognised by MP Jai Rowell and used to lay concrete base under the donated paver paths.
- New Amenities Block constructed and fitted out with support from Home Hardware Mittagong, Beaumont Tiles, IMB and Argyle Landscaping.

- \$15,000 grant from Commonwealth Stronger Communities for commencement of the path.
- Terra Firma, the Queensland-based producers of Organic Life, have donated a pallet of 40 x 25kg bags of Organic Life valued at almost \$1,000.
- \$4,000 donated from the Wingecarribee Council Community Assistance Scheme for defibrillator and permanent seating.



(Photo shows SHBG Director Lyn Collingridge receiving the donation from Councillor Gair.)

And there has been a range of generous cash donations from personal supporters.

All the generous grants received have been put to

good use laying out the gardens, building facilities and acquiring equipment.

Photos show Tristram Fieldhouse putting the new equipment to good use.

SHBG will continue to actively pursue grants and donations, as well as revenue raising through event including the Autumn Open Gardens & Plant Fair, in order to develop and operate the Gardens.



And of course the ability of the SHBG to meet costs in developing and managing the gardens is greatly assisted by the wonderful work done by The Friends and other

supporters. This includes the Autumn Open Gardens & Plant Fair as well as other fundraising and merchandise sales throughout the year.

Plant Growers Group

The Plant Growers Group is already working to propagate, pot and grow plants. This is great opportunity to share your skills and expertise, as well as learn from other volunteers while making new friends over a well-deserved cup of tea. The Plant Growers Group meets at the SHBG on the same days as the First Tuesday Working Bee.

The Plant Fair held this past April included the sale of almost 4,000 plants. Most of these had been grown by Friends. The Plant Growers Group has already started propagation for the 2017 Plant Fair.

The Plant Growers Group is always looking for small pots. If you have any plastic pots, up to a 20 cm diameter size (about 8 inches), please drop them off at SHBG.

Hard wood cutting propagation.

At the July Working Bee the workshop led by Charlotte Webb, Tony Davis and Maureen Purtell concentrated on propagation from hard wood cuttings. Winter propagation by the Friends included cuttings and division of winter coloured red and yellow stemmed dogwoods, purple and golden *Physocarpus*, cut leaf *Sambucus*, Smoke bush, *Kolkwitzia*, *Ledebouria cooperi*, *Veronicastrum Cohen Jansen*, *Tricyrtus Manikoi Gold*, *Zephyranthes*, *Daylilies*, *Itea*, *Phlomis russeliana*.



Margaret Buckland and Glynn Stiller working with the cuttings.

Pruning Perennials

Nearly 20 hardy souls signed on for the much needed garden and nursery work on a cold and wet Tuesday 2nd August.

As well as pruning the perennial garden beds, and the planting of trees in the Maple Grove, nursery work was continued.



Sandy Alsop planting for spring growth.

New equipment helped make the work a lot easier and the tough disposable gloves proved to be popular.

Right: Chris Blaxland, Chris Webb and Les Musgrave plant in the Maple Grove.



Below: Maureen Purtell and Sally Gaudry pruning the perennials.



Barking Mad

One aspect of designing with plants which is often overlooked is the effect or the impact which can be created by the characteristics of a tree's bark. In choosing trees to be planted in our Winter Woodland, bark characteristics have been a major consideration. We already have the Birch grove with its very obvious bark but there are many other species which also have prominent bark colours and characteristics.

In the next few weeks we will be planting a range of trees in the Winter Woodland including the *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki', the 'Coral Bark Maple', with its brilliant fire engine red bark. It will grow into a spectacular medium sized tree. We will also be planting *Acer griseum*, the 'Paper Bark Maple', with its cinnamon coloured curiously peeling bark. A small to medium tree which is very slow growing but definitely worth the wait, not only for its curious peeling bark but also its fabulous autumn colour.

Three other maple species which have also been selected for bark characteristics are *Acer rufrinerve* 'Winter Gold', *Acer palmatum* 'Arakawa' and *Acer aoyagi*. *Acer rufrinerve* 'Winter Gold' has brilliant golden bark and butter gold autumn colour. *Acer palmatum* 'Arakawa', the 'Rough Barked Maple', has extraordinary warty and fissured dark brown bark and finally *Acer palmatum* 'Aoyagi', the 'Green Coral Bark Maple', has unusual pea green bark and golden yellow Autumn foliage.

The Winter Woodland will be a sight to behold in its leafless splendour!!

Friends of the SHBG

The Friends of the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens is managed by the Friends Committee with the primary responsibilities, as set out by the Board of SHBG, being:

- ✓ Expanding community awareness of and support for SHBG
- ✓ Organising and participating in fundraising activities to support the activities of SHBG
- ✓ Providing a group of volunteers to assist with the Friends administration and ongoing activities
- ✓ Enlisting expertise which might be drawn upon to assist with special events
- ✓ Maintaining regular contact with Friends, volunteers and donors

The Friends provides an opportunity for those within the local and wider community to demonstrate support for the establishment of a Botanic Garden. There are more than 300 financial members of the Friends giving their time and effort to help bring the Botanic Gardens to life.

Working Bees

The SHBG relies on volunteers to do the work required in the garden. There are regular working bees and volunteers may also be called on for special projects.

New volunteers are always very welcome. To comply with safety requirements, there will be regular short induction sessions covering the equipment on site and the emergency procedures in place.

First Tuesday of the Month: 10am – Noon



Please come along the first Tuesday of each month with comfortable clothes, hat and gloves. Enjoy a friendly chat over morning tea. September 6th; October 4th; November 1st; and December 6th.

Extra Working Bee – Tuesday August 23rd

With spring hopefully coming soon, we may need extra Working Bees to prepare the Gardens. Thank you to all the Friends and supporters who gave their time on August 23rd to attend to the pruning, planting, weeding and nursery work that needs to be done.

Dedication Event – 13th September, 10 am

All Friends and supporters of the SHBG are invited to the official unveiling and dedication of donated items that will enhance the Gardens. Park benches have been donated by the Bowral Garden Club and the Highland Garden Society. Two magnificent sculptures have been generously donated by Mr & Mrs Emmett.

Please RSVP 9th September to info@shbg.com.au to help us determine the catering requirements.

For the Diary

In addition to the regular monthly working bee at the SHBG, here are some local events that may be of interest:

- SHBG Working Bee: Tuesday September 6th
- **Donation Dedication – Tuesday 13th September**
- SHBG Working Bee: Tuesday October 4th
- **Bowral Classic Bike Race:** October 23rd
- **Tulip Time** – Tuesday 13th to Sunday 25th September
- **Robertson Open Gardens** – 8th & 9th October
- **Bundanoon Garden Ramble** – 23rd & 24th October
- **SHBG Friends Christmas Drinks** – tba
- **Hydrangea walk and plant sale** – 10th December
- **SHBG Autumn Open Gardens '17** – April 22nd & 23rd

More Operculum

Over the past few years, Operculum has been published quarterly. This has been a good way to keep Friends and supporters informed of past happenings and events to look forward to.

This edition is the first of what we hope will be a regular bi-monthly publication. This will mean publication in August, October, December, February April and June.

More frequent publication should enable more timely reports on activities and plans. We also plan to extend the scope of the content to specifically include articles on the business (people, plans and performance), the gardens (design, development and plants) and activities of the Friends (working bees, social events and fund raising).

Your comments and suggestions are welcome. We invite you to submit your articles and photos to the editor for inclusion in future newsletters.

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