



Southern Highlands
Botanic Gardens

OPERCULUM

September 2019



WOW, WE WON A PLAYGROUND

Can you believe it? We won some funding. It feels like we won the lottery. And it was all because of the huge community support for our 'all abilities playground'. We can't say THANK YOU loudly enough.

Maybe our Facebook page says it all. Big grins from some board members with a thought bubble "We Won!!! Thank you for voting for our playground".

This fabulous result is worth all the effort we took to instigate our voting campaign. Letterbox drops, handing out flyers, helping some people with the voting process and just telling all our friends to please vote, all helped. Much effort from our volunteers went into implementing this voting drive and we appreciate all that determination and energy. But the pain is now gone and we can bask in the result.

With up to \$200,000, we can now start the preliminaries on creating this bit of infrastructure in the garden. Some hoops to go through with council, some running around finalising details on absolutely everything and, of course, managing the Funding Deed with the government to ensure we properly account for all the money we spend.

It will take until around the end of February 2020 to get this project completed. Once the order for the playground equipment is placed (following council approval and signing of the Funding Deed) it will take a few months to manufacture some of the equipment. Earthworks need to be done and some extensive landscaping to make it all come together and look very inviting for our young visitors and their mums and dads.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Is there anything else to talk about?

Playground,
playground,
playground!

We are thrilled to have been recognised as the most popular project for the grant application within the Wollondilly electorate.

Sadly I live 'across the river' near Moss Vale in the Goulburn electorate, so was not able to vote for our Botanic Gardens playground.

On a high note – I was very pleased to see Moss Vale High School receive funding for their teaching café, which was the project I was eligible to vote for.

Now we need to wade through the approvals to construct the playground with the Council. Let's hope this is a speedy road.

Always the optimist, we anticipate the playground being constructed as soon as the equipment has been manufactured. Expected installation date is late January unless approvals slow us up.

As you know we have submitted a Development Application for change of use for our nursery to allow retail trade. After 18 months and a submission to review the 17 pages of conditions placed on the development application, the revised Development Application has now been placed back on public exhibition until early October.

Please feel free to make a submission to the Council about our application.

Charlotte Webb OAM



Paul d'Hondt explains directional pruning for lateral branches.

CORRECTIVE TREE PRUNING WORKSHOP

Arborist Paul D'Hondt described the response of *Acacia* spp to grazing as one of his fascinating examples of how trees might react to our management and how gardeners must consider the body language of trees.

He emphasized that most trees feed from the surface – and a very wide surface. Feeder roots may reach a distance equivalent to 3 times the height of the plant. So why do we focus on feeding inside the drip area? And why do we put compost in the hole before we plant the tree?

Soil microorganisms are critical for delivering nutrients to a tree, so we should boost the development of the mycorrhiza – Paul suggests weekly watering with a sugar syrup (50g in 1L) for several weeks after planting.

He offered many more intriguing thoughts before we went anywhere near a tree.

An excellent workshop attended by 40 Friends and visitors.

The day was quite windy and it would have been much more comfortable to have this and similar instructional sessions in an Education Centre. Please donate!

STEPPING OUT Saturday 31 August 2019



Five of our directors attended a workshop on creating and supporting community gardens, organised by STEP at the National Arboretum, ACT.

STEP (Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park) is a regional botanic garden, education and conservation centre within the Arboretum, demonstrating southern tablelands' species of eucalypt trees and understorey plants.

Workshop participants were volunteers and staff from 5 gardens ranging from a 1 hectare coastal patch at Shoalhaven Heads to one of 167 hectares adjacent to Lake Burrendong, near Wellington NSW.

These gardens differ greatly, but there were many common issues and opportunities to share ideas. Funding is, of course, a major concern, even for those under the wing of a government agency. As is the recruitment and involvement of volunteers. We all need to bring more volunteers on board as the work and the gardens grow.

Horticultural discussions revealed some marked differences. Two of these gardens start with deep ripping before planting. That's quite a contrast with our preferred minimal tillage approach. But we all apply lots of mulch.

CULTIVAR OR VARIETY? THAT IS THE QUESTION

We are often asked the difference between a cultivar and a variety. This is often seen on plant tags as the third name. You will often buy a plant name something like *Salvia involucrata* 'Joan'. The first word is the Genus, so there are lots of salvia. The second is the species. In this case involucrata. There are lots of other *Salvia* species, like *nemerosa*, *patens*, *pratensis* etc. The final name, usually in inverted commas, is the Cultivar of Variety. For botanical naming correctness it is not written in italics and it is enclosed in inverted commas.

So what is the difference and how do you tell?

Variety – naturally occurring cross, comes true from seed

Cultivar – humans interfered cross pollinating etc. May or may not come up true to seed.

BOARD ACTIVITIES

Meetings with politicians



Nathaniel supporting our building appeal for the Education Centre meeting with Lyn Collingridge, Chris Blaxland and Charlotte Webb

The board is actively lifting the profile of SHBG in the political arena. Charlotte Webb, Chris Webb, Chris Blaxland and Lyn Collingridge met on two recent occasions with local MP, Nathaniel Smith. Apart from garnering his general support to help fund the garden, we have also asked him to champion our request for a grant we are preparing to the NSW Government to help pay for the construction of our Education Centre. Nat is very positive and shows a great interest in the garden and our relationship is developing well. He was particularly interested in receiving the Urbis Report (see below). We also travelled to Sydney to meet with a representative of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, MP. This meeting gave us a chance to begin a conversation with the Minister's office to show how SHBG can contribute to open spaces in regional NSW. We are working on continuing this conversation.

Urbis Report

We have just received an economic and social benefit analysis of SHBG, undertaken by Urbis. This report is very exciting and encouraging for the future of SHBG. It estimates that, when fully developed, SHBG will deliver a net benefit of \$56.6 million to the Southern Highlands region over 20 years. The report also expects SHBG to create 40 jobs during the construction period of around 2-3 years of the garden and Visitor Centre, with \$16.8 million in construction activity during that period. Following completion of the construction period, it is expected that SHBG will create 18 jobs in the tourism industry and generate almost \$19 million of increased regional tourism spending over 20 years.

Traffic plan

Part of the process of our DA application for our liquor licence (originally submitted in December 2018), is to have a Traffic Management Plan. It might sound a funny mix but makes sense when you think that our liquor licence is all about holding events at the garden – not that liquor will be served at all events, it certainly will not. But it makes good sense to have a traffic plan for our events, which are going to increase in number as time goes on. It is good governance to document exactly what we need to do when we are managing lots of people and cars on the site during an event. So, we now await council's final tick on our traffic plan and for the DA.

Visits to other botanic gardens

In July a contingent of board members attended the Royal Sydney Botanic Gardens for the Annual General Meeting of affiliated garden members. This gave them the opportunity to see what goes on behind the scenes with a big botanic garden and to meet those involved with the oldest botanic garden in Australia. While there, they paid a visit to the 'must see' Calyx, a magnificent horticultural showpiece and you can see in the attached photo the group there.

In August, another contingent visited the National Arboretum Canberra to attend a one-day workshop with members of STEP, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park. STEP is classified as a regional botanic garden under the auspices of the Arboretum. The workshop was a good opportunity to, again, exchange notes on how other botanic gardens carry on their business and to meet the people involved. Topics discussed included how to support and enrich volunteers, fund raising and site management. A long, but valuable and enjoyable day for all. Everyone came home with new and valuable ideas.



Directors Chris & Charlotte Webb, Lynn Collingridge and Greg Freckmann at The Calyx in the Royal Sydney Botanic Gardens



Members at STEP, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park

Fundraising & Community Outreach



Anne Kragh handing out
How to vote leaflets in
Springetts Arcade

Positive Promotion in Springett's Arcade

Some wonderfully positive feedback was received from shoppers in Springett's Arcade recently in response to our voting promotion for the All Abilities Playground. We were able to set up a table inside the arcade and we received an overwhelming amount of support and encouragement from both locals and visitors. Not only were we able to talk to people about the grant application, but also had the opportunity to answer questions about the development of The Gardens and the wonderful local community involvement.

Thanks to Sue Taaffe, Monica Waples, Lyn Collingridge and Anne Kragh who donned SHBG aprons and dug in to help out.

Preschool Visits

Many local preschools also received visits and were more than happy to distribute our How to Vote flyers to parents and friends. And again, the feedback on the desirability of the playground for the Gardens was an overwhelming "Yes"

Bowral Markets

Kathryn Jeffrey and Carolyn Jefford braved a very cold and windy morning to approach market goers with How to Vote flyers and like the Springett's Arcade crew, found a warm reception for our project.

Up, up and Away – a fabulous Kite Flying day (and not just for kids!)



What a day! Bags of wind, beautifully decorated kites and happy, happy kids! Joy would have to be the best word to describe the faces of those, standing face to the sun, arms outstretched, watching intently as their kites tipped and pulled in the winter sunshine. Not only was the Kite Flying day successful in terms of visitors and participants, but also in the range of ages enjoying themselves. A huge thank you to Kathryn Jeffrey for creating the magic in the kite making workshop. We can't wait until next year!

School's in – Bowral High School Community Support

We have the undoubted pleasure of receiving a large group of Year 7 and Year 8 boys from Bowral High School in the Gardens each month as volunteers. Under the supervision of teacher Adam Miller and a hardy group of volunteers, the boys are shown how to plant, mulch, pot up and water the young plants throughout the garden. They are a quiet and diligent group who now have their own work to come back and see in years to come.

A further connection with the school will be forged when we are able to get our Education Centre built. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented the group from attending on more than a few occasions. An indoor learning space is urgently needed!

Everyone enjoys a picnic

All this activity and community outreach at the markets, Springett's arcade and the kite day also gave us the opportunity to gather over 450 signatures to support our funding application for a picnic setting in the garden. Fingers crossed.

The Dwarf Dogwood Collection

When the Department of Environment laid out its guidelines for the Bird Habitat area one of the more puzzling constraints was to have a 10m buffer around the whole area which could not contain any trees. What do you plant which is not a tree which will also cope with inundation when it does rain, drought most of the time, has winter interest and needs little supplementary water? Luckily for us we already had quite a good supply of *Cornus alba* Sibirica and *Cornus sericea* Flaviramea plus numerous other species. These coloured stemmed dwarf Dogwoods were just the answer to this dilemma.

Having access to the relatively readily available *Cornus alba* Sibirica with its bright red bark and *C. stolonifera* Flaviramea with yellow stems it was a logical decision to begin a collection of the many other species and cultivars which are equally hardy and all of which display the same, although varied, bark characteristics.

These deciduous dwarf Dogwoods are native to North America where they typically grow in riparian areas. They are botanically described as a multi stemmed, suckering, upright deciduous shrubs which produces flat topped clusters of tiny white flowers in spring. The foliage is typically simple, ovate green leaves (there are also golden cultivars) which turn quite dramatic autumn colours. They grow to around 3m x 3m. The bark of the many upright stems is often red although they can also be yellow, purple or black.

Our current collection contains the following:

Cornus alba Sibirica
C. alba Spaethii
C. alba Elegantissima
C. amomum
C. pumila
C. sericea Flaviramea
C. sericea Kelseyi
C. sericea Baileyi
C. sericea ssp *occidentalis* Sunshine

It is envisaged this collection will be a registered collection with the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia before the end of the year.



Cornus alba Elegantissima



Cornus alba Sibirica showing the intense red bark.
The colder the winter the stronger the red.



Cornus sericea ssp *occidentalis* Sunshine

OUR DAFFODILS ARE NOT *JUST* DAFFODILS

How lucky are we!

Over the past few years we have been the recipients of a most amazing collection of daffodils – all bred by our very own founding member Tony Davis, with his ever supporting helper Maureen Purtell.

Tony has spent years refining his daffodils, breeding, hybridising, and waiting...waiting.. waiting patiently while the new crosses take up to 3 years to flower. Then the excruciating decision – is it any better than the parents? Did it achieve what he was aiming for?

If one were to rummage through Tony's compost there very well may be quite a few bulbs that just didn't meet Tony's high standards for a new cultivar.

Recently Tony named a number of daffodils after early pioneers in the development of our botanic gardens, such as Annton (Ann & Tony Emmett), Miss Maureen (can you guess?), Miss Lynette (Lynette Lamb), Miss Di (Di Grant, Plant Growers Group), Miss Sally (Sally Gaudry), Gentleman Jim (Jim Osborne), Mr Chris & Miss Charlotte (the Webbs).

Many cultivars are also named after our local area, including Burradoo Gold, SHBeeGee, Kangaqueen, Bundanoon, Burradoo Road.

We are currently in the process of creating an inventory of the 'Tony' daffodils. We have approximately 90 clumps, representing 60 or so cultivars. Our records will eventually show parentage, breeding dates and identification of the registered cultivars.

So if you visit the gardens while the daffodil are flowering you may see someone in a folded pretzel pose as they photograph the daffodils 'in situ' – as our policy in the gardens is no picking of flowers!



Objective



Burradoo Magic



Dot Hunter



Kangaqueen



Miss Lynette



Gentleman Jim



Miss Charlotte



Mr Chris



Tony inspecting his daffodils in the Botanic Gardens



Miss Maureen



Cultivar - yet to be named

WEEKLY WORKING BEES

Our regular Tuesday working bees have become the place to be. We now have a regular attendance of 25 – 30 volunteers who disperse themselves around the garden tending to plants, gardens and the nursery.

The gardens and nursery are now weed free, with plenty of stock growing on for sale ready for the warmer weather.



Over winter we have had some great short education sessions at the morning tea, including new member, Steven Wilson, who stepped us through simple Bonsai elements, including how to retrieve wayward bonsais. Shandra Egan gave a demonstration on presenting Camellias for show, and Charlotte regularly offered one on one teaching sessions on taking winter cuttings, including hydrangeas and other deciduous shrubs.

Ever diligent Judy Keast ensures everyone has a very welcome morning tea, supported by the generous volunteers who bring in a plate or two. Chris Webb has excelled lately with his fantastic offerings of lemon drizzle cake, gluten free chocolate cake (only healthy bit is the gluten free!!) and his latest offering of sour orange cake.

Please feel free to join us at morning tea and our education sessions weekly at 11.30am Tuesdays. Please bring your own tea/coffee cup as we move to an environmentally sustainable garden.



NEW BALD CYPRESS FOR THE GARDENS

In recognition of the generosity of Bowral Garden Club who make an annual donation to the gardens, this winter we planted 3 Bald Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) to recognise their ongoing contribution and support for the gardens. The area selected for the trees is poorly drained, which becomes boggy and ponds with water in wet weather, makes it an ideal location for these fascinating deciduous conifers.

Taxodium have adapted to growing in areas that occasionally become inundated with water by developing “pneumatophores”, also known as Cypress knees. These rather weird growths act like aerial roots, allowing gaseous exchange for the roots.

As a deciduous conifer, Bald Cypress turn an amazing yellow/orange in autumn before the leaves drop and expose an interesting, fissured bark on the trunk of the tree.

After planting the group of 3 *Taxodium*, Bowral Garden Club went on to give a donation of \$500 towards the installation of a seat in the area of the *Taxodium*. Is there such a thing as a ‘Bald’ seat?



AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY TREES

A new avenue of trees has been planted in the Garden.

Lining the edge of the gravel path in front of ‘The Shed’, five new Lipstick maples (*Acer rubrum* ‘October Glory’) will now link the Autumn woodland to the winter walk.

Thanks to the generosity of the Australian Garden History Society, Southern Highlands Branch, we were able to purchase advanced stock of these magnificent autumn colouring trees to create the link.

Lipstick maples are recognised as one of the most vibrant autumn colouring maples available. For those who don’t know these trees – just drive past the Bowral Memorial Hall in Bendoooley Street next autumn and you will see what is in store for the gardens.



AGHS members Clive Probyn, Les Musgrave, Chris Webb, Charlotte Webb & Meg Probyn



“Master Craftsman and Milliner Peggy Stone
is supporting SHBG with a
Feather Flower Workshop
onsite at SHBG on
Sunday 3 November from 10am to 1pm.

This is an ideal opportunity to create your own flower to use as a fashion adornment or for decorative use. Materials supplied but please bring your own sharp scissors and some tweezers. No particular prior experience required. For something different please join us at this workshop. Morning tea and lunch provided. \$75 pp. Bookings: www.trybooking.com.au/

HELPING WITH CHILDREN

We are calling for Volunteers to help with the children visiting and working at the Garden.

If you would like to become involved with these new enthusiastic supporters, you will need to get a **Working With Children Check** which is **free** and then register the number with SHBG.

It is easy to register.

Log on to the website:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check>

and follow the links to apply.

Then go to the Service NSW office in Mittagong to show your photo ID and your Notification will come through in a couple of hours.

Forward the approval number and your date of birth to info@SHBG.com.au for the register

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 27th October 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Harpers Mansion, Old Hume Hwy Berrima
Entry: \$5 Plant sales sourced & managed by SHBG Friends.



Sunday 3rd November
Feather Flower Workshop- 10am - 1pm
\$75 per person includes morning tea & lunch



Saturday 7th December
Christmas Picnic & Plant Sale
10am - 5pm in the Gardens
Sausage sizzle and wine bar operating throughout the day.



**Working Bees
Every Tuesday
10am - noon**

**Wear comfortable clothes, hat & gloves
Enjoy a friendly chat over a cup of tea.**

**Thank you in advance for your support -
it is always appreciated**

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Next Operculum due to be published in December.
Deadline for articles & photographs
1st November

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