



The Friends of The Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden *Port Augusta Incorporated* **Newsletter** November 2011

President's Message



ANPS members on tour with guide Dennis Dobson



Busy bee at AALBG

Our last meeting for the year is approaching and Christmas is almost upon us. It has been decided to hold our Christmas get together immediately after the meeting on 3 December from 4.30 to 6.00pm (details elsewhere in Newsletter). Instead of a dinner later in the evening the Christmas function will be an informal get together with nibbles drinks and snacks, held in the Visitor Centre and catered by the Bluebush Café staff. There will be a moderate charge. We hope this will be more convenient for all, especially those who travel long distances to attend meetings, as formerly when we had a dinner, we would all leave the meeting at 4pm and return to the Garden for the dinner a couple of hours later. I take this opportunity of thanking all members for their support and extend best wishes to all for Christmas and the New Year.

Our Conference organizing Committee continues to plan for the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens conference which we are hosting next year in August. We expect about 200 Friends of Botanic Gardens from many parts of Australia and possibly New Zealand as well to attend. Sponsorship is currently being organized and the conference catering and venues are finalized. This will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase our Garden and our part of South Australia. We continue to be delighted with the co-operation and support being shown by City Council. Chris Nayda stated recently, 'The council has been wonderful and we now feel we can walk in to see them anytime we wish.'

We were thrilled to hear that former Gardener at the AALBG, Bernie Haase is to return to the AALBG and work two days a week. He was the first employee at the garden and worked there by himself right from the beginning with occasional volunteer and council help, until after some years a second employee was appointed to work with him.

He is passionate about the garden, has a great deal of knowledge on the Garden and his knowledge of arid zone plants is second to none. He will be a real asset. He recently assisted AALBG employees on a plant collecting expedition seeking additional plants for the Garden.

After almost three years of delay, work in the large circular courtyard adjacent to the Visitor Reception Centre is progressing with drip irrigation installed and more plants planted. It was to have been completed more than two years ago and former plantings were cleared, some basic work done and then left largely bare. There have been adverse comments about the bare area and associated drift sand nuisance. The Friends donated \$25,000.00 to facilitate this work more than two years ago. Friends volunteers have helped with propagating and planting in the courtyard and hopefully it will be complete in the new year.

Tourism numbers have increased considerably this year at the Garden, especially those undertaking guided tours. With rains and Lake Eyre filling again and inland waters and vegetation in abundance bus and air tour companies stop at Port Augusta en-route on tours to see inland waters, and bring their groups to the Garden for guided tours.

This has really overtaxed our small band of trained tour guides and it is pleasing to hear that two more guides are currently in training. This will help spread the load considerably.

**Again, my best wishes to all for Christmas.
Until next time, John Zwar, President**

Next Meeting

Next Meeting of the Friends will be held at the: Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Conference Room on Saturday 3rd December 2011 at 1pm.

This will be followed by a Christmas get-together with drinks and nibbles at the Visitor Centre from 4.30 - 6.00pm

We hope all Friends and visitors are able to join us for this. There will be a small charge.

Our guest speaker will be Mr Daniel Duval, Technical Officer - Seed Collections & Research Seed Conservation Centre Botanic Gardens of Adelaide

He will be talking about some of the rare and interesting endemic flora collected in the Arckaringa and Copper Dam area north-east of Coober Pedy last year.

FRIENDS OF AUSTRALIAN ARID LANDS BOTANIC GARDEN COMMITTEE FOR 2011-2012

President - John Zwar
Honorary Secretary - Chris Nayda
Honorary Treasurer - Geraldine Davis

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bernie Haase, Peter Langdon, Peter Marmasch, Julie Owen, Fay Poole, Ronda Hall

Out and About in the AALBG

Many eremophilas are flowering now especially the *Eremophila maculata* with one showing an unusual form (see photo). Dr Bob Chinnock advises us that 'This is an occurrence occasionally seen on *Eremophila maculata* and *E. racemosa*.'

In the AridSmart Gardens *Hakea francisiana* has been a picture, flowering for the first time and the mint bush *Prostanthera aspalathoides* growing around the urn looks and smells wonderful.

Grevillea magnifica, also flowering for the first time, looked magnificent near the Rare Plants entrance. *Acacia ramulosa* (the horse mulga) has legumes hanging around it like candles. They are green striped and almost straight.

In the courtyard the garden staff have been busy putting in a watering system and planting more plants including *Ptilotus obovatus* (Pussy Tails), *Swainsona formosa* (Sturt peas) and *Eremophilas*. More work is expected there in the near future. They have also been mulching around the car park and cutting down weeds.

A small working party spent a few hours last month, planting a series of plants along the main path into the centre. Among those still growing are *Goodenia varia*, *Lotus australis* (Australian trefoil), *Acacia toondulya* and *Senecio magnificus* but the *Wertaloona* Daisies have disappeared.

GUIDE NOTES

The guides have had the busiest 3 months ever, with at least two buses visiting the AALBG every week (sometimes three on one day). This has certainly helped showcase the garden and most of these people have been amazed at the variety and diversity of ARID plants.

Members of the Australian National Plants Society pre conference tour had a wonderful day at the AALBG taking three different tours each. There are guided tours every weekday at 10am and these also have been very well attended.

Chris Nayda - photos Chris Nayda



Eremophila maculata (purple) unusual form



Grevillea magnifica



Hakea francisiana



Legumes on *Acacia ramulosa*



Samphire with emergent stamens



Thysanotus Fringe lily

Arid Lands Recipe - Quandong Rocky Road



INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 100g Packet Quandong Fruit Leather, roughly chopped
- 400g chocolate chips or chocolate block
- 2 cups (250g) dry-roasted peanuts OR 250g broken sweet biscuits
- 1 packet (250g) marshmallows, roughly chopped

METHOD

1. Grease & line a 22 x 33cm baking tray or slice tin with baking paper.
2. In a medium size microwave-safe bowl (or use a double boiler), melt the chocolate. Stir occasionally until chocolate is smooth. Stir the remaining ingredients into the chocolate, combining well and breaking any bits of biscuit that look too big.
3. Pour into prepared tray & chill until firm. Cut into squares.

Preliminary Notice Conference of Friends of Botanic Gardens 2012

September 2011
PRELIMINARY NOTICE

Dear Friends,

RE: Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens conference Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th August 2012 to be held in PORT AUGUSTA SA.

Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden (FAALBG) are now deep into planning for the next Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens conference which we are looking forward to hosting here in Port Augusta SA on the Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th August 2012.

We have been working closely with the staff of the Garden as well as the Port Augusta City Council to produce an enjoyable, stimulating and interesting conference for all garden lovers.

As always we plan to space the program to allow time to network and tour our unique garden as well as some most interesting speakers covering aspects of our theme: **'MANGROVES, MYALLS AND MORE'**

There will be time for other Botanic Gardens to present a static display of their gardens, and time will be allocated in the program for short presentations of interesting and innovative developments of your gardens. If you would like to participate in this part of the Program please forward a precis of your presentation before March 15th 2012

Registrations will become available on the Association's web site during February 2012: www.friendsbotanicgardens.org

Key Guest speaker: Professor Chris Daniels
Director of the Barbara Hardy Institute, Division of Information Technology, Engineering and Environment, University of South Australia, and Presiding Member of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Natural Resource Management Board

The title of his talk will be: **'Backyards: the most important room in the house'**

PLEASE NOTE: To assist us with planning for this bi-annual conference, we would value your indication if some of your members are planning to attend thank you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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AridSmart Nursery Report



Volunteers busy propagating at nursery AALBG

The AridSmart Nursery has been kept very busy during the last 3 months propagating plants both for sale and more importantly for the gardens botanical collection. Bernie Haase and I ventured on a plant collection trip to the far north of the state to Mungeranni Station during the week of the 5th - 9th September. Many new and interesting plant varieties were collected, both seed and cuttings. As usual we were too early for some of the Acacia varieties and too late for some of the others, but a great selection was collected. Many of the cuttings that were taken have since struck and have been potted on for hardening and will be planted in the garden during early Autumn and a lot of the annual seed will be planted at this time. Rhonda and Peter Hall have also been supplying us with many *eremophila* cuttings from both their collection and Ken Warnes extensive collection and these are being propagated for the upgrade of the *eremophila* collection.

A comprehensive audit has been conducted of the *eremophila* garden and we have lost a lot of specimens and varieties from the garden. These cuttings have all been processed by the gardens volunteers and many of the earlier collected specimens are now being potted on. We have been very busy propagating Sturt's Desert Peas at the nursery in time for Christmas. Around 150 seeds are planted each week into peat tubes and we are having a great success rate propagating by this method. The plants are to be marketed as 'Baby Sturt Peas' direct for garden planting and also in large bright red pots and hanging baskets for Christmas gifts.

So until next time Happy AridSmart Gardening,
Deon Schumann, AALBG Collections Co-Ordinator

Unusual Eremophilas



Eremophila mirabilis

These few lines and photos are about some of the more unusual *Eremophilas*, the first is *Eremophila mirabilis* (*mirabilis* means wonderful), it has grey-green warty leaves about 2cm long and 2-3cm wide, with a blunt tip they are furrowed down the centre. The flowers are pale yellow with purplish spots on the outside, the calyx is large and pinkish in colour and stays long after the flowers are finished, it grows to about 1.5 metres high. I have seen this plant growing at Niagra Dam near Kookynie an old gold mining town in Western Australia.



Eremophila rigida

The second plant is *Eremophila rigida*; the name refers to the stiff rigid leaves that are grey - green and shaped a bit like a short garden trowel that is only about 1.5 centimetres long, the flowers are cream tinged with yellow, it grows to about 1.5 metres high and is one of the most unusual looking *Eremophilas* with its rigid foliage, it grows in central Western Australia.

Peter Hall
(continued on page 4)

Native Flora near Lake Gilles, Eyre Peninsula SA

'Friends' of AALBG Thelma and Austin Eatts took us to their property to see the plants in the paddock which they have had declared a Heritage area. It has been surrounded with an electric fence. After the very good rains in the area it was great to see many plants flowering. We found Boronias, Velleias, Acacias, Ptilotus exaltatus (Mulla mulla), Eremophilas, Calytrix, Westringias, Goodenias, Eucalyptus and Halganias just to name a few. To see such an amazing array of native plants in such a small area was a sight worth seeing.

Chris Nayda - photos Chris Nayda



Foreground - *Calytrix tetragona* / Background - *Acacia calamifolia*



Boronia coerulescens / Blue Boronia



Calytrix tetragona



Ptilotus exaltatus



Velleia connata

Unusual Eremophilas (continued from page 3)



Eremophila rotundifolia



Eremophila grandiflora

Another Eremophila that is a bit different is *Eremophila rotundifolia* named for its stiff silver - grey roundish leaves, flowers are pale to deep lilac and sometimes pink. It grows to 1.5 metres in height and about 1 metre in width, and is usually mushroom or umbrella shaped. This species occurs in South Australian and just into the Northern Territory, it grows up the Stuart Highway and starts a bit north of Glendambo.

Another unusual plant is *Eremophila grandiflora*, this time because of its flower size and shape. The flowers are up to 5-6cm across, flower colour is pale mauve with purple spots and brownish throat. The leaves are a bright shiny green and are about 10cm long and 1.5cm wide. *Eremophila grandiflora* is again from Western Australia.

Peter Hall

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