



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

May 2010

News from the President



It is encouraging that some people have responded to our request for more Garden Guides, though more are still needed. If at all interested in finding out more about the role of guides please contact Chris Nayda, who will be happy to explain this. Training is provided, along with guides' notes and it is not a difficult job. Garden Guides meet some really interesting people from all over the world. Additional guides will take the pressure off the few who are presently handling all guided tours. With cooler weather more visitors will be booking tours so please give this some thought if you live in the Port Augusta area and have time and consider helping if you can.

In March a number of Friends helped promote the AALBG at the ABC Gardening Australia Expo at the Wayville Showgrounds in Adelaide at the Garden's promotional display, during this well attended 3 day event.

More recently Friends have assisted council staff with AALBG plant sales at the 2 day Laura Folk Fair which was well attended on the Saturday but quieter on the Sunday with rain forecast. In May several Friends are travelling to Mildura for the conference of the Friends of Australian Botanic Gardens, hosted by the Australian Inland Botanic Garden. As we have been invited to host the next conference in 2012 at Port Augusta, it will be useful to see how the event is run and promote the AALBG as the next conference venue.

We look forward to seeing those who can attend our May meeting when Lisa Stevens will speak about her experiences as an environmental volunteer with Frontier in Tanzania. To Friends all over Australia and overseas who support the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden our sincere thanks for your support and interest. It really is appreciated.

John Zwar, President, April 2010

Ronda Hall on duty at the ABC garden Show in March this year.

Five Friends of Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden helped out over the weekend.

The stand was set up by Michael Anlezark and many favourable comments were passed.

Next Meeting

NEXT MEETING OF THE FRIENDS AALBG

- Saturday the 29th May 2010

- 1pm at the Conference room of the AALBG

GUEST SPEAKER

Lisa Stevens talking on her trip to Africa with the volunteer conservation group Frontier. Counting Cat prints was just one of the many things they did.

Citrus glauca (Native Lime)



Closeup of *Citrus glauca* - note sharp spines



Grove of *Citrus glauca* Nth of Port Augusta

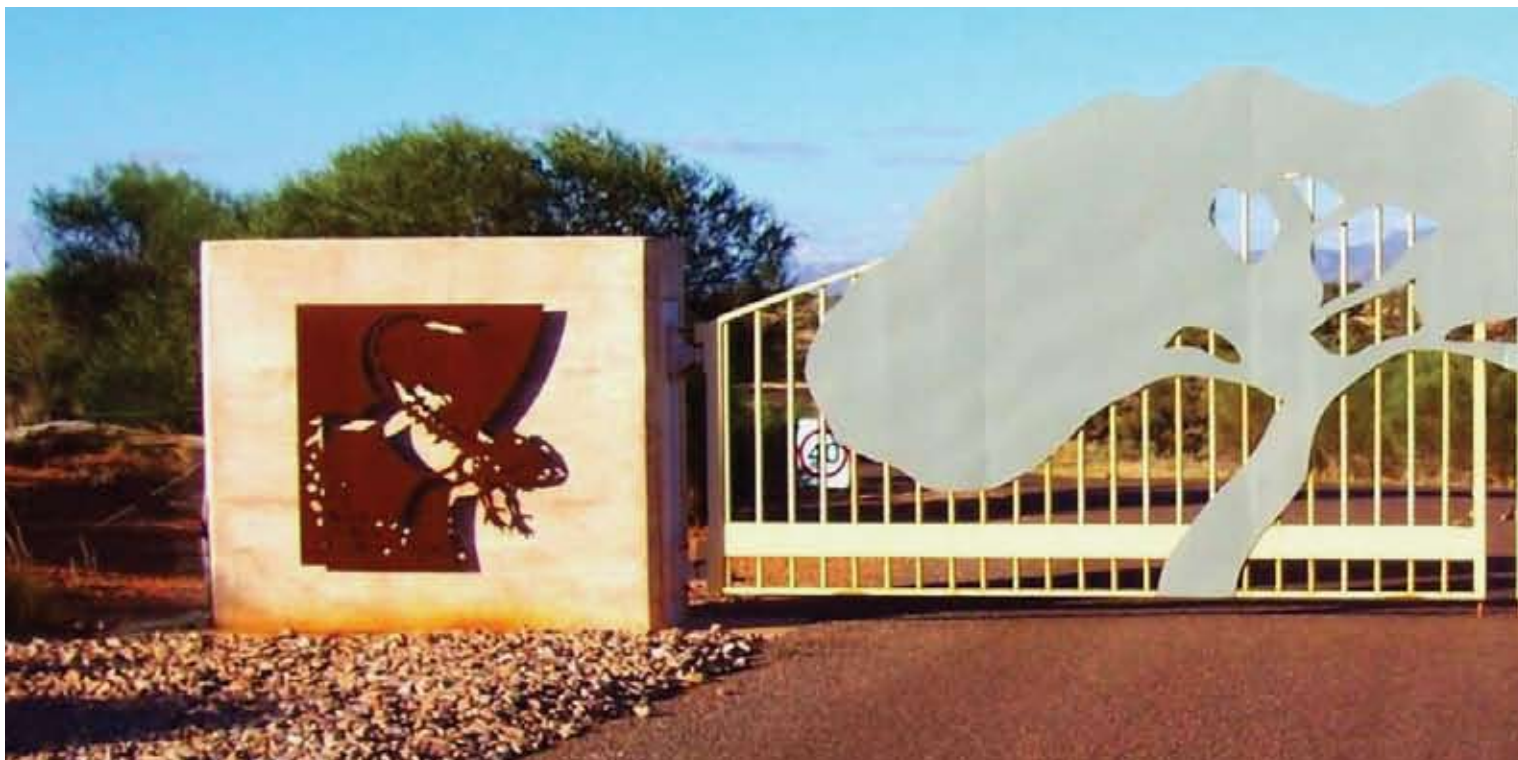
Citrus glauca, commonly known as Native Lime was formerly known as *Eremocitrus glauca*. It is native to semi arid NSW, Queensland and a few locations in central South Australia including the Port Augusta region. It is not common in SA but is much more widespread in the other two states. It is often a small spiny shrub but at its best can grow into a small tree of 6 or 7 meters. Often growing on heavy clay soils it is the only citrus adapted to withstand long periods of drought, and is also tolerant of extreme heat and frost and a considerable degree of salinity. The spiny green stems have grey green oblong leaves which tend to drop in drought periods. Small greenish white flowers are followed by small edible greenish yellow fruits 15mm in diameter about 8 weeks later.

Citrus glauca is potentially important for citrus breeding programmes and hybridises with many other citrus species. Obviously its drought and salinity tolerance are features of interest to citrus breeders. Although not widely cultivated it will grow successfully in drier areas. It has a suckering habit and is often found in large clumps. Suckers can be dug and transplanted. It can also be grown from seed and budded onto other citrus. Specimens are growing in the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden. A large specimen grew in heavy red brown earth clay soil in the Waite Arboretum in Adelaide for many years, on natural rainfall of 600mm and no irrigation. In the wild the average annual rainfall can be as low as 200mm, perhaps even less. It makes an interesting garden specimen with useful fruit. Native Lime is a prized bush food plant, and fruit can be used in drinks, for marmalade, jams, and sauces and has a pleasant lime flavour.

It is popular in native food restaurants. Specimens are growing in Spain and the US and possibly other dry regions of the world. Although not a striking tree in appearance its useful fruit and potential in citrus breeding programmes may mean this interesting small tree will play an important role in future.

John Zwar

Photos: Christine Nayda



Some Plants of the Top End



Calytrix exstipulta



Grevillea pteridifolia

If you are one of those people who travel to the top end of Australia for the winter there are a few plants that are flowering at that time. If you can take your eyes off the road for a while and still dodge the Macks, Kenworths and Jaycos you will see some very nice plants. Probably the first and most noticeable is a member of the Myrtaceae family, *Calytrix exstipulta* [turkey bush]. This plant grows all across the top end of Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory. It grows to about 4 metres and covers itself with bright pink flowers from June to September. The timber is hard and straight stems are used by Aborigines to make spears. The next plant you may see is another one that grows right across the top end even up to Cape York and some closer islands and as far south as Barcaldine in Queensland. It is *Grevillea pteridifolia* or fern-leaved Grevillea.

It grows to 8 metres, has silvery green fern like leaves and brilliant orange flowers about 18cm in length. The flowers are full of nectar and are visited by birds and insects. Aborigines sucked nectar from the flowers and also use the wood for various tools. It also flowers during Malabar [June to September] the cool season. [It is considered a weed in Florida USA]. As you drive along the highway you may see flashes of bright yellow. It will be the flowers of the Yellow Kapok [*Cochlospermum fraseri*] These are up to 8cm across and easily seen. Unless you stop and take a walk you may not see the 6m shrub as it is deciduous and usually a bit ragged looking. Aborigines again use the plant, the tap root of young plants was cooked and eaten and the hairs of the seed are used for body decorations. When the plant flowered this indicated that freshwater crocodiles and turtles are carrying eggs and when it fruited it was time to dig up the eggs to be eaten.

A shrub or small tree that I found very interesting when told about it, is the *Excoecaria parvifolia* or Gutta-Percha tree. It grows to about 7m, flowers are very small in short spikes with male and female on separate trees. This plant has a milky latex or sap which can injure eyes. The plant is reported to poison sheep although cattle browse it with no ill effects. Aborigines prepared a wash from the inner bark to treat boils. The interesting part to me was that the sap is now used in dental work and also in electrical insulation. It also grows in the 3 top end states.

Peter Hall

Photographs: Peter Hall



Entrance to AALBG - Photograph: Peter Hall

Bird Group Outing with Flinders Ranges Water Cruises

Six of us went down the gulf with Aaron from Flinders Ranges Water Cruises in the afternoon of Saturday 10/04/10. The trip was timed so that the tide was out and the mud-banks would be exposed for feeding waders. South of the Yacht Club a small flock of White Ibis were feeding amongst the mangroves accompanied by a White-faced Heron. Further on were a couple of Sooty Oystercatchers and a Little Egret darting about in the shallow water catching a small fish. On a channel marker a spotted - backed juvenile Crested Tern was begging unsuccessfully to an adult. Both the birds took little notice of the passing boat, so we had good views. A dolphin surfaced near the boat and then another with a small calf. "That makes three calves this summer" said Aaron who knows them all by sight. We proceeded south, seeing more Sooty Oystercatchers along the shore and a Caspian Tern overhead. Solitary Greenshanks were feeding on the mud banks and some 50+ Little Black Cormorants were seen roosting together. Three waders at Orchard Point south of the hospital, turned out to be a Terek Sandpiper and two Grey-tailed Tattlers, both migratory species from

the northern hemisphere and not all that commonly seen in South Australia. Aaron put the bow of the boat onto the mud bank and we had gripping views of them catching shrimps on the incoming tide. We went on towards the power station where hundreds of Pied Cormorants were nesting on the transmission-line towers. There were birds on nests, chicks in nests, and nests being built. A continual stream of birds were flying to and from the site, either feeding young or bringing in more nesting material, mainly leafy mangrove sticks. It was a hive of industry, albeit a bit smelly. On the return trip, we saw stingrays and couple of large Eagle Rays in the shallow water near Curlew Island and a large male Musk Duck floating nearby. Back near the Yacht Club, we stopped to greet "Joy", a large female Dolphin that lay on the surface alongside the boat, looking at us with a very large eye before slowly swimming off. She is a regular and is easily recognised by her badly scarred back. We saw 20 species of birds, so a good two hours spent, especially seeing the Terek and the Tattlers. It was also interesting to note birds like Yellow-throated Miner, Crested Pigeon and Grey Shrike-

Thrush, birds not usually associated with mangroves. Next summer I hope to be a bit more organised for more of these trips.

Peter Langdon

BUS TRIP TO WITTUNGA BOTANIC GARDEN

The Australian Plants Society Port Augusta and Districts Group is arranging a two day bus trip to Wittunga Botanic Garden and Gawler Food Forrest on 2nd and 3rd October 2010 (Long Weekend)

The Friends and Guides of Adelaide Botanic Garden have invited us for lunch on the way and all Friends of AALBG are invited to join this trip and see two wonderful gardens and the Food Forest at Gawler. A good chance to swap information with each other.

For more information please contact:
President Mrs. Ronda Hall on 8641 0112
or sec. Chris Nayda 8642 4684

Vale, Brian Powell AM

It is my sad duty to inform members that Friends foundation member, Brian Powell of Quorn died on ANZAC Day. He was in the Royal Adelaide Hospital and did not recover following heart valve surgery. Our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife of 62 years, Fay and to Anne & Ian and their families. Brian (and Fay) were strong and active supporters of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden from the time it was proposed. He was a member of the Council Advisory Committee, then the Board then Reference Group, established to set up, plan and develop the proposed garden, and to recommend management procedures as well as being a Foundation Member of the Friends. He is responsible for the Eremophila Garden in front of the Visitor Interpretive Centre at the Garden, and organised plants (from the Hall's Eremophila Nursery) and volunteers to plant them, mulch and help install Irrigation before the opening of stage 1 of the Garden in 1996, so that a bare area disturbed by the building works would be planted up and more attractive for the opening. He was much happier actually doing things than sitting around at meetings talking about them, which was a cause of frustration for him. Brian will be remembered for his huge contribution to many environmental causes, especially in northern South Australia, ably backed up

and supported always by Fay. On moving into Quorn several years ago, at an age when most people slow down, he proposed a garden of Quorn regional native plants in the town parklands. Work started promptly and the Powell Gardens were opened by SA Governor Marjorie Jackson, shortly before the end of her term as Governor. These gardens have continued to flourish and expand, maintained entirely by Brian, Fay and volunteers and will be one of a number of fitting memorials to his vision and ability to "get things done". Brian, a good friend to many and a very practical environmentalist will be missed by all who knew him. His was a life well lived. A more detailed obituary will be included in the next newsletter. Brian's funeral was held in Adelaide on 30th April. The Friends were represented at the funeral.

John Zwar, President.

Brian was showing a group of TAFE Horticultural & Garden Design students around Powell Gardens, Quorn August 2009



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Issued 30/04/2010 by Christine Nayda, Secretary / Treasurer, The Friends of the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, Port Augusta Inc.