



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

November 2010

President's Message

On behalf of the Friends Committee I extend best wishes for Christmas and the new year to all AALBG Friends and supporters, near and far. Those who live close enough and are able to volunteer doing various tasks at the Garden are thanked for their input too. Many Friends live far away and can rarely visit.

I invite all to consider attending the biennial conference of The Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens which we will be hosting at Port Augusta in 2012 17th to 20th August. We expect to have people from all over Australia and New Zealand participate in tours, activities and have some excellent guest speakers and presentations lined up. We hope to see many of our Friends there. More details of the conference will be provided nearer the event.

John Zwar, President



Acacia papyrocarpa

Christmas Dinner

An invitation is extended to ALL FRIENDS for our Christmas dinner at the Bluebush Cafe at AALBG on the 27th November at 6.30pm.

This is a good chance to catch up with everyone and see the AALBG at its best in the early evening.

Cost: \$30

Bookings: Chris Nayda on 8642 4684

Eremophila polyclada x divaricata (Summertime Blue)



Eremophila bignoniiflora



Next Meeting of The Friends of AALBG

Saturday the 27th November 2010 at 1pm at the Conference Room at AALBG

Clive and Claire Chesson will be our guest speakers for the final meeting this year. Clive is a geneticist and former university researcher and lecturer but more recently until retirement co-ordinated the Diploma of Environmental Management course at TAFE SA Urrbrae campus. Clive and Claire are passionate about native plants and bushwalking, and every week spend time in national parks and reserves, surveying native plants.

Claire is an accomplished photographer and has stunning pictures of a huge range of plants. They have more recently become interested in native orchids as well. Their illustrated presentation is not to be missed if you enjoy seeing and learning more about our beautiful native flora.



Triodia irritans

Indigofera australis



Indigofera australis - Photos: Michele Mahoney

In August I received the following email message and the two pictures:

I am a member of the Friends of the arid botanic garden, naturally I have an interest in arid area plants and while out in the field the other day noticed this plant. We checked our book on plants but were unable to identify it the closest being a groundcover of the Swainsona species.

The bush was about 1.2 m tall and was covered in these pea flowers, we wondered if you know what this plant is. We live in the north east pastoral area at Plumbago station, the plant is close to the homestead next to a rocky outcrop. There is a number of these plants there but we haven't noticed them anywhere else on the property. We would be very interested to find out what it is please email us back if you have any ideas.

Yours faithfully, Michele Mahoney

The two pictures were taken by Michele. I identified the plant as *Indigofera australis*. In South Australia it occurs in the Flinders and Olary Ranges and is widespread in all other states except the NT as well. In the SA arid zone it is typically a small shrub with arching stems to about one meter but can grow twice this size. In the wild growth may be straggly and untidy but in cultivation it can grow into an attractive specimen and a light trim after flowering (or after seed has been collected) will help keep growth compact and improve flowering. It is frost hardy and drought tolerant once established. The pinnate foliage is a blue green colour and the small pinkish purple pea flowers are born in elongated clusters arising from leaf axils. Timing of flowering can be determined by significant rainfall events but is often winter and spring to early summer. Seed is produced in small pods which can be picked when dry and seed germinates readily after soaking in hot water. *Indigofera australis* tolerates a wide range of soil types but appreciates good drainage. If not overwatered plants in cultivation can last many years.

The dye indigo comes from the leaves of some of the 700 *Indigofera* species which come from many parts of the world. If the top of the plant is damaged, by bushfire for example, new growth can arise from the base of the plant.

The foliage is a food for the larvae of some native butterflies. The plant will grow in full sun though thrives in light shade as well. It is sometimes called Austral Indigo and may have other common names in various regions. It has been cultivated in England, under glass since 1790 and is still grown there. In some regions Aboriginal people have used crushed *Indigofera* roots to poison water to catch fish. This is an attractive small plant worthy of a place in the garden so why not consider growing one? It is likely to be available at native nurseries around Australia. It grows well at the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden.

John Zwar

Plant of the Month - *Prostanthera sericea*



Prostanthera sericea (Silver-leaf mint bush)

A small shrub 1-1.5m with fine soft silvery leaves and a white flower with lined throat very similar to its larger cousin *Prostanthera striatiflora* (jockey cap) but much smaller. Comes from the Great Victoria Desert area near WA and SA borders.

Flowers in the spring and looks great with lovely silver leaves. A very delicate looking shrub. *Prostanthera* commonly known as Mint bush, is a genus of the family Lamiaceae. There are about 90 species within the genus all of which are endemic to Australia. *Prostanthera* species are used as food plants by

the larvae of hepialid moths of the genus *Aenetus* including *A. Eximia* and *A. Ligniveren*. *Prostanthera* are cultivated as ornamentals and for essential oil and spices.

Source: Wikipedia

Bird Outing to Whyalla Conservation Park and Point Lowly

Nine of us met at the entrance to the Whyalla Con. Park on a cool Sunday morning. We saw a few species there including Crested Bellbird, Red Wattlebird and Grey Strike-through. We then proceeded slowly through the park towards Wild Dog Hill picking up Mulga Parrots, Ringneck and a very nice male Mistletoe bird along with White-browed Babbler and a group of Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, some being juveniles with dark eyes, causing a bit of identification problems. Near the northern boundary there were an Emu and a Brown Falcon being harassed by a Black-faced Woodswallow and some White-fronted Chats. A few pairs of Blue Bonnets were there also. At Wild Dog Hill, a Thick-billed Grasswren was heard not far from the car park

and then two flushed out towards the rocks. For the next half hour, we quietly followed the movements of some four birds as they gave us brief but good looks at this hard to sight bird. There was also a family of Variegated Fairy-wrens there with a very nice male amongst them. We climbed to the top of Wild Dog Hill which was covered with flowering Rock Isotomes and saw a Willie Wagtail and a Common Bronze-wing. Out of the conservation park and on towards Point Lowly we saw Pallid Cuckoo, Weebill, White-winged Fairy-wren, Variegated Fairy-wren and a very nice male Splendid Fairy-wren. Along from Fitzgerald Bay we saw more Mulga Parrots, a flock of White-fronted Chats with lots of juveniles in it and a few Zebra Finches, plus

Silver Gulls, Pied Cormorants and Pelicans. At Point Lowly, there were lots of Black-faced Cormorants, Crested Terns and Pacific Gulls in various age related plumages. Quite near the shore were seen three Short-tailed Shearwaters which allowed a good look with the scope. Further out there was quite a large flock [60+] of these birds, flying and bobbing about in the waves. Near the shacks there were House Sparrows and Common Starlings and a Spotted Dove. A pretty good day with 47 species seen.

Peter Langdon



Nankeen Kestrel & Honeyeater



Mulga Parrots



Welcome Swallow - Photo: Heather Adams



Above - Gourd's Goanna

Above Left - *Petalostylis labicheoides* (butterfly bush)

Left - *Grevillea juncifolia*



Unless where stated, all photos credit: Chris Nayda

Tour Report

The Friends hosted 28 Guides and Friends from Adelaide Botanic Gardens on 28th September 2010. The day started with an early morning Bird Walk with Peter Langdon kindly donating his time to take us around. Breakfast at 8.30am at the AALBG cafe followed by tours of the Garden with 4 AALBG tour guides leading the tours. A quick dash to the nursery at 11am for those who wished to buy plants and then lunch at noon, also at the cafe.

Everybody then hopped onto the bus (including all the tour guides who were officially invited to spend the rest of the day with the group) and drove to Powell Park in Quorn where we were met by Geraldine Davis and Mary Kammermann who showed us around the Park and then took us on a tour of Quorn ending up at the Flora Reserve on the Western edge of Quorn. This was amazing with orchids, calytrix, daisies, beautiful *Velleia arguta*, fringe-lilies and many more plants flowering. A truly wonderful way to finish the day. We thank Geraldine and Mary for taking us around and spending all afternoon with us. A dinner at The Willows Restaurant in the Pichi Richi Pass followed.

The Guides have been very busy taking tours around the garden with a lot of tourists calling in especially to see the Garden. With trained guides still in short supply it has been a struggle. A new guide training course will start in the New Year so if you feel this is for you please let me know. Most of the plants in the AALBG were planted in 1996 so now are well established and it is great to see how tall the trees and shrubs are and the Garden is now looking the best I have ever seen it.

Chris Nayda

Adelaide Guides enjoying garden walk



French visitors with Chris

Contacts

President: John Zwar Phone Home: (08) 8338 6658 Work: (08) 8372 6876 Email: jzwar@bigpond.com
Treasurer: Geraldine Davis Phone: (08) 8648 6399 Mobile: 0418 447 020 Email: glgadavis@bigpond.com
Secretary: Christine Nayda Phone: (08) 8642 4684 Mobile: 0434 717 382 Email: b.nayda@bigpond.com

PO Box 2040, Port Augusta, South Australia 5700

Issued November 2010 by Friends of Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden Inc. Port Augusta