



## CAMPERDOWN BOTANIC GARDENS AND ARBORETUM TRUST INC.

Newsletter no 12

Summer 2015

### The VCAT appeal

Congratulations to the many donors who have contributed so far to the fighting fund to help cover the cost of the VCAT appeal. Your contributions will be very important in helping to fend off the current threat. Every dollar is welcome.

The VCAT hearing is scheduled for 2 March 2016. The Trust was required to attend a practice day hearing in November. Legal representatives of Corangamite Shire Council and the caravan park proprietor attempted to dismiss or reduce our 18 grounds for appeal against the recent permit approval for 10 new structures to be built in the caravan park. They were not successful.

At that hearing it was also acknowledged that mediation is irrelevant in this case as the appeal is based on processes not being followed and important issues not being considered.

Many misunderstandings (and some deliberate misrepresentations) have been publicised in letters and articles in the local media. The Trust committee does not intend to address each of those individually. We will say, however, that proper meeting procedures have been followed and decisions of the majority have prevailed.

The purpose of the Trust and its stated aims have always been about supporting the conservation and improvement of the Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum.

Some people would have preferred to be concerned only with the pleasure of volunteer gardening – and who can blame them? Some committee members resigned because they didn't want to engage with 'the politics'. Again, who could possibly blame them? Who would enjoy taking the risk of public vilification and ostracism in our small community?

One of the most peculiar allegations is that Trust committee members have failed to communicate with the parties involved. Council officers would be able to confirm that all decisions about the retention and development of the caravan park have been made in secret and at every stage have been off-limits for discussion, and emphatically 'not negotiable'.

Our committee members would much rather spend their time planting trees, hoeing weeds in the shade of beautiful trees, chatting with friends as we rake leaves on the lawn and enjoying the delights of new flowers emerging in the sunshine, but we're not prepared to allow this place to be damaged further by incompatible commercial uses, and we don't intend to fiddle while Rome is burning.

### CMP progress

The steering committee for development of a Conservation Management Plan has met for the first time. A brief has been sent to selected consultants, and submissions received.

The next step is to select a consultant to carry out the work. An assessment of the history of the site, its present state and possibilities for the future will be considered. Public consultation will be part of that process.



## Trees in waiting

We have dozens of rare and interesting plants, especially trees, waiting to go into the botanic garden and arboretum. Some are ready to plant; others are being grown on. They have been purchased, donated or grown from seed from specialist growers, historic properties or other arboreta and botanic gardens.

Several have been purchased at auctions conducted by the International Dendrology Society and the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia (Plants Trust).

We look forward to the opportunity to start planting these special trees once the Conservation Management Plan is prepared and the Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum can look more confidently to the future.



Above: The Ombu Tree (*Phytolacca dioica*) is a spreading shade tree from the Pampas grasslands of South America. It is not often seen in parks and gardens, but there is a large old specimen in Centenary Park in Terang.

Below: New Zealand Rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) is unusual in being that country's only native member of the Proteaceae. We have two, donated by Sally Randall and Beryl Bartacek, propagated from a significant tree at the historic Nobelius nursery in the Dandenongs.



## What's growing?

### English Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

English Holly was very popular with 19<sup>th</sup> century gardeners. We have two. Many large specimens can be found in old homestead gardens, public parks and the grounds of churches and civic buildings.

The variegated form was particularly popular. It is very decorative in a vase at Christmas, even without the red berries, which don't appear in southern hemisphere gardens until winter. (The picture below was taken in May.)

It's a tough evergreen tree, but we would be unlikely to choose English Holly for the garden now that we know how keen it is to self-sow from seeds spread by birds.



## What about our Arboretum?

The new Canberra arboretum has rapidly become the city's major tourist attraction, with 530,000 visitors in the last year. Visits to the National Botanic Gardens are also up by 22%. These figures are impressive when you consider that tourism in Canberra has declined overall.

In Melbourne, a new 20-year master plan is being prepared for the Domain parkland. It will take account of climate change, biodiversity, urban ecology, tree health, increasing visitor numbers, a growing and diverse population, and the need for beautiful spaces for events and community activities.

Heritage Victoria's specialist horticulturist John Hawker described the Domain parkland as a botanical paradise: 'Just call it Melbourne's arboretum', and called attention to the need for succession planting of special trees for the future. He and Camperdown's Pamela Jellie conducted a walk-and-talk in the Domain in November for the Australian Garden History Society as part of the community engagement process for the new plan.

Geelong's Eastern Park is not only an arboretum with a fine collection of Australian and exotic conifers and many other trees, but is described on the City's website as a 'wonderful world of its own' and an 'escape from the everyday hustle and bustle'. It is a 96-hectare park, surrounding the four-hectare Geelong Botanic Gardens (in a similar layout to our botanic gardens and arboretum) and a popular recreation space for jogging, walking and cycling, off-leash dogs, picnics and the enjoyment of spectacular views.

A recent walk-and-talk conducted by John Hawker for the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens highlighted the hundreds of new trees planted in Eastern Park and the careful attention being given to detail in the restoration of avenues and succession planting to replace ageing trees.

Below: Pamela Jellie (centre rear) talks about the history of the Domain parkland to an AGHS tour group.



Above: A Canary Island Pine (*Pinus canariensis*) planted by the Trust in Camperdown's Arboretum.

Closer to home, the new park being planned in Terang is another exciting arboretum project, and will add to the interesting collection of trees already growing in Centenary Park.

Our Arboretum occupies most of the 25-hectare Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum site. Like Melbourne's Domain and Geelong's Eastern Park, it is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. Although neglected for most of the last three or four decades, it has the potential to be every bit as impressive and valuable as they are.

We need to remind our Council that there are better options than gifting this place to private individuals for their own personal or commercial benefit. We shouldn't have to watch while other councils and other communities benefit from the enormous environmental, social and economic value of their own parks and arboreta.

The Trust remains ready and willing to contribute to the development of this special place.

Below: John Hawker (left) leads a walk-and-talk at Eastern Park.



## Noorat visitors

The Botanic Garden is a popular spot for Christmas breakups and end-of-year celebrations. Noorat Garden Club visited on Sunday 6 December for their annual breakup picnic lunch. Pamela Jellie showed them around.

Club member Eve Black commented afterwards: 'Pamela accompanied us to the BG's, giving us a very interesting talk as we wandered about. It is a very long time since I've been there and I was astounded and delighted with what I saw.'

Noorat is a town of garden enthusiasts, which is not surprising given that it is home to one of Victoria's most significant historic gardens at Dalvui, the historic Mount Noorat property and William Martin's renowned garden, Wigandia.

With a membership of over 60, Noorat's garden club is one of many keen clubs in towns across the Shire.

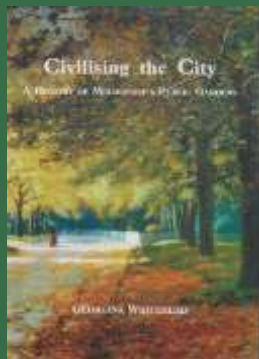


Above: Commonly known as Bushman's friend, *Brachyglottis repanda* is one of the New Zealand plants that Dalvui's owner and keen gardener Pam Habersberger has been propagating for our Botanic Garden.

## Civilising the City

Georgina Whitehead's wonderful book on the establishment of parks and gardens in early Melbourne has just been re-published.

A perfect gift for anyone interested in garden history, it's available from the Royal Historical Society of Victoria or good book suppliers.



## Working bees

While the weather is warm, there will be plenty of need for keeping the water up to establishing plants and doing our bit to keep the garden looking good for summer visitors.

Working bees will continue to be held on the second Sunday of the month – 13 December and 10 January – with an 8.30 am start.



Above: Janet O'Hehir at the BGANZ congress. (Photo: Mary Bell, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney)

## Wollongong conference

Richard Benfield, chair of the International Garden Tourism Association and Professor of Geography at Central Connecticut State University in the United States, was a keynote speaker at the Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ) biannual congress in Wollongong in October.

According to Dr Benfield, garden tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism activities in the world. In the US gardens attract more visitors than Disneyland and Disneyworld combined. Garden tourists are also interested in the food, heritage and culture of an area.

Botanic gardens and arboreta, large and small, were represented at the conference. The theme of Connecting to Communities gave plenty of opportunity for stories about community involvement in successful projects.

*Gardening Australia's* Costa Georgiadis spoke about the important contribution made by older people, our community elders, who are likely to be the ones with time to spare for volunteering and often inspire children and other family members to become interested in gardening.

Janet O'Hehir (above) attended on behalf of the Trust and gave a presentation on the importance of 'communities of interest', connections to networks and relationships with friends and staff from other gardens, which allow us to share knowledge ideas and inspiration.