



## CAMPERDOWN BOTANIC GARDENS AND ARBORETUM TRUST INC.

Newsletter no 30

Winter 2020

### Refurbishing the rose garden

In 2018 we received two grants from the Australian Garden History Society. The Victorian Branch provided \$5000 for the refurbishment of the rose garden.

There was a rose garden in the Botanic Garden from the earliest days, but it was lost as the Gardens fell into disrepair over time. In 2006, with advice from Heritage Victoria, the rose garden was reinstated, but again, over time, it deteriorated.

The AGHS grant has enabled us to carry out restoration of the watering system, replanting of arches, soil improvement, mulching, fertilising, companion planting, and the installation of an urn.

Most of the plants, including the original roses, have been donated by local nurseries, Trust members and specialist growers.

Below: Parks and Gardens staff Mick, Dale, Steph and Matt, worked with Trust members to install the urn as a centrepiece to the rose garden.



A grant of \$5000 has also been provided by the National Management Committee of the AGHS. This will enable new border plantings on the eastern side of the garden.

The AGHS plays a vital role in promoting awareness of significant gardens and cultural landscapes throughout the country, and supporting their conservation. The Trust has been a member of the Society since our establishment. See the AGHS website at

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/>





## Growing Victoria's Botanic Gardens

A new feature gateway will be one of the outcomes if we are successful in the second round of the State Government's \$4 million Growing Victoria's Botanic Gardens funding program. Grants of up to \$300,000 are available to botanic gardens and arboreta throughout Victoria.

The grant scheme acknowledges the social, environmental, cultural and educational value of botanic gardens and arboreta. Applications will come from local councils, not-for-profit groups and committees of management.

The funds will serve to rejuvenate botanic gardens and arboreta across the State, upgrading physical assets and amenities and increasing their capacity for research, conservation and education, as well as addressing the challenges presented by a changing climate.

Victoria has a unique network of botanic gardens and arboreta, most of which, like ours, were established in the 19th century. With their beautiful landscapes, outstanding tree specimens and special features, they have become important places for social wellbeing for local communities and beautiful places that attract visitors.

Our application focuses on re-opening the Arboretum to public access, managing trees and creating a significant gateway to acknowledge the Botanic Gardens and Arboretum as a special place and provide a fitting welcome for visitors.

If our application is successful, Council will provide a co-contribution to funding, as well as managing the works involved. The outcome of grant applications will be announced in November.

Below: Californian Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, and deciduous American Swamp Cypress, *Taxodium distichum* – are just some of the special trees in the north-eastern section of the Arboretum, which is currently closed to public access.



### What's growing?

#### Irish Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*)

In February 2018 many visitors to the Botanic Garden were dismayed to find that the Irish Strawberry Tree, *Arbutus unedo*, at the back of the potting shed had been cut down.

Arborists inspecting trees around the Shire and in the Botanic Gardens and Arboretum had prepared their regular tree audit and advised that the tree had become unsafe and needed to be removed.

*Arbutus unedo*, is an evergreen tree from the Mediterranean region, western Europe and parts of Ireland. Like many of our Australian eucalypts, it is adapted for resprouting after fire and other disturbance – like being cut to the ground.

Two years after being cut down the tree has regrown and is flowering, with its tiny pale pink bells.

*Arbutus unedo* is well suited to the conditions in our Botanic Gardens and Arboretum and will be an attractive feature for many years to come.

You can see three other specimens at the Botanic Gardens. One is growing in the barrier planting that separates the Gardens from the caravan park, another outside the garden fence on the south side, and another growing alongside the pathway outside the western fence.



## The old days



We have heard many stories about school picnics, which used to be held in the area of the park now occupied by the caravan park. Sue Cole provided the picture above of a group of children at a school picnic in 1949. From left, the girls are Barbara Boyd, Janet Thornton, Helen Smith, Helen Robinson, Wendy Edge and Janet Anderson. Unfortunately, we don't know the names of the two boys.

The photo below shows a group of people sitting on the lawn in the Botanic Garden. We don't know any details, but can see that it was before the 1960s because the rotunda is visible in the background. The Burns statue is also present, but of course that wasn't removed until quite recently.

We would be interested to know if anyone has any more information about this picture.



## Follow us on Instagram



We post regularly on our Instagram account, *Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum*, to showcase features and seasonal changes. We now have 1800 followers.



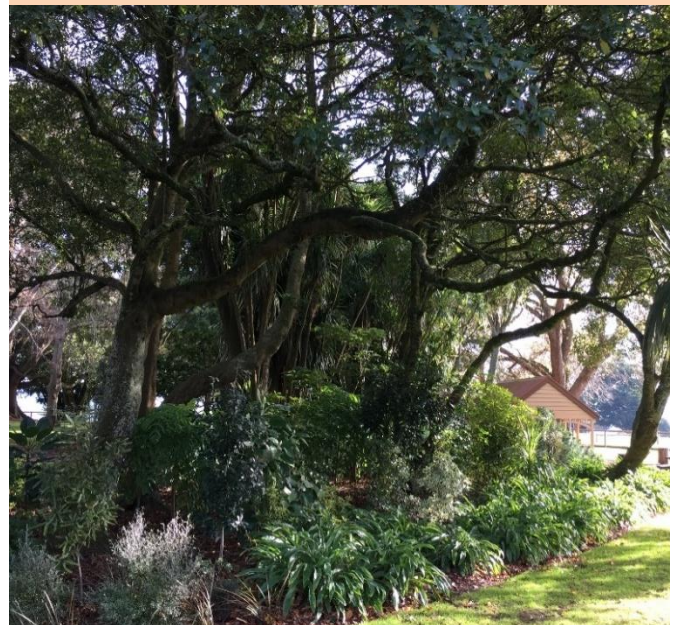
You can also follow our other account, *Corangamite Trees*, which highlights the interesting and special trees growing around Corangamite Shire.

## Now and then

Back in June 2014 we were creating some new planting areas under trees. With the help of a team in the community corrections orders program, we spread pulverised sheep dag mulch and began to plant.

William Guilfoyle was known to have an interest in plants from the South Pacific and New Zealand, and with the Gardens already having several splendid old clumps of New Zealand Cabbage Trees, *Cordyline australis*, as well as a Whitey Wood, *Melicactus ramiflorus*, propagated from a historically significant tree at Purrumbete homestead, and an Akiraho, *Olearia paniculata*, a New Zealand daisy tree, we had the start of a collection. We've developed a collection of New Zealand plants around the picnic shelter, choosing species suitable for a dry shady spot. Rock Lilies, *Arthropodium cirratum*, cultivars of *Pseudopanax lessonii*, *Corokia* spp., *Meryta sinclairii*, *Astelia banksii*, *Phormium tenax* and *Entelea arborescens* are some of the many species that are growing well.

Below: You can see the difference since 2014 (bottom) and in June this year (top).







## 'Solution' or just another problem?

For around 20 years there has been talk of a road being built through the old Arboretum gates through to the Botanic Garden. This has long been hailed as a 'solution' to the problem of visitors having to put up with the unsightliness and incompatibility of a caravan park in the entrance drive to the Botanic Garden, with its unrestricted traffic and parking, and shanty town vibe. Visitors often ask, 'Can't you do something about that caravan park?'

More recently, since the caravan park was leased to a private operator, another 'problem' is the fact that the caravan park proprietors do not want to have members of the public driving through 'their' business premises. Already the lease gives them sole rights to the toilet block and playground, which the public can access only with their agreement. Now there is a call for the business to be given sole access to the entrance drive too.

It is time to acknowledge that the problem is the caravan park. It should not be in our public park. It is time to relocate the caravan park in a better site, where it can have room to grow and develop as it wants to.

Yes, we all know that campers were encouraged from as far back as 1940s and that caravans have been in the park since the 1960s. However, the caravan park is now a commercial business and its development takes priority over the primary purpose of the public park. The place was reserved for the enjoyment of the public, not for paying customers, and not for the benefit of private individuals.



When Council decided to lease the caravan park to a commercial operator in 2013, no-one gave any thought to the effect that would have on the Botanic Gardens and Arboretum and their conservation or potential for development. The only thought was that the responsibility for managing the caravan park could be transferred to a private operator. Suddenly it was not about people being able to camp in a public park; it was about how a private operator could maximise the profit from a business operating in our public park – while being subsidised with ratepayer funds.

Recently, with an influx of workers from wind farm projects, the caravan park has also become a place for accommodation for workers and their trucks. This not only further spoils the ambience of what should be a beautiful treed park, but it creates a dangerous situation for caravan park customers and their children.



While the caravan park has swallowed up an estimated \$1 million of our money, the Botanic Garden has no budget allocation, other than the half time work of one Parks and Gardens staff member, supplemented by our team of volunteers doing the gardening.

A road that would destroy the north-eastern section of the Arboretum is not a solution to the problem. A road through 3.5 hectares of public parkland is a bad idea. Who would want a 'shared' road in such a small area of parkland, where kids riding bikes, mothers wheeling prams and pet owners walking their dogs would have to share a road with cars, buses and other vehicles?

No-one doubts that a caravan park is a desirable facility to have in Camperdown, but it can't continue to grow in our public park. Paving paradise by building a road would simply degrade our most beautiful public asset. The problem should be fixed once and for all, and the solution is obvious.

## Dates to remember

Sunday 9 August	Working bee
Sunday 13 September	Working bee
October	AGM (date to be advised)