

Bowral Garden Club

INC (established in 1963)

Address: PO Box 910, Bowral, NSW 2576

NEWSLETTER February 2012



'Friendship through Gardening'
Affiliated with the Garden Clubs of Australia Inc.

What's on in February

6 February (Monday): The first Club meeting for 2012 will be held at 1.30 pm at the Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley St, Bowral. The theme is 'Geraniums and Pelargoniums' with guest speaker Robyn Bible.



Geranium rouge

8 February (Wednesday): 10.30am: Committee meeting at 39 Villiers Road, Moss Vale

13 February (Monday): 10.30 am: Potting morning in Marilyn Gleeson's shed. 'Mist Hill', 511 Illawarra Highway, Moss Vale, entrance off Fitzroy Road (first on left).

20 February (Monday): 10.30 am: Garden Visit to "Summerlees", a beautiful historic garden at 219 Illawarra Highway, Sutton Forest. See next column for details.

Potting morning

This is reminder that we need lots of plant material for the potting morning—sprigs from your daisies, geraniums, pelargoniums, fuchsias, lavenders, etc, in fact anything that is suitable for cuttings. If you can't attend the potting day, please either send plants with someone who is coming or bring them to the February meeting for Marilyn. She will take them home and either pot them or keep them in water till the following Monday. The plant stall is the club's major fund-raising activity so any help you can give is much appreciated. If you are bringing pots please make sure they are **REALLY** scrubbed clean and spider-free! Marilyn generously provides coffee before we start work and the whole potting exercise is great fun, so those of you who haven't yet joined in—do come.

Summerlees Outing

The outing to *Summerlees* Estate in Sutton Forest will be a special treat on Monday 20 February. Situated at 219 Illawarra Highway, the 8-acres of historic garden resemble a vast park with its protective avenue of old cedars, and huge poplars framing the views to the north.

The garden is part of the existing estate of 70 acres (the original land grant is dated 1822). The grand Victorian house (built in 1875) is one of the significant homes of the Southern Highlands and features elegant lacework verandahs. The property is next door to *Hillview*, the country residence of the Governors of NSW in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Turn through the gates and along the driveway lined with ancient elms. There will be signs to show you where to park. Coffee and tea will be provided in the ballroom - and you may also bring a picnic lunch.

What's On in March

5 March (Monday): 1.30 pm Club meeting at Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley St, Bowral. Theme is 'Dahlias' with guest speakers Gerard and Olwyn of Highland Dahlias.

12 March (Monday): 10.30 am Garden Visit to Les and Elaine Musgrave at 41 Clearys Lane, Avoca. Elaine will also open her studio.

19 March (Monday): 10.30 am Activity morning: Botanical Art at 2 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, Bowral.

26 March (Monday): 10.30 am Robertson Nursery visit and coffee

Beware of Euphorbias!

I have been cutting mine back as I have done for many years without a problem, but last week a drop of sap went into my eye. The burning pain was immediate and even though I irrigated my eye for almost half an hour afterwards the pain continued for 4-5 hours. It was so intense that I had to lie down with a cold compress on my eye to try to relieve the burning sensation. I did know that the sap can cause skin irritation and some people have a severe reaction to it but this is my first experience of it and, as I don't want to repeat the experience, I am now wearing safety glasses in the garden when I don't have my sunglasses on.

Marilyn Gleeson

Garden Tips

All our gardens have benefited from the coolest December for seventy years and plenty of rainfall. The lawns are looking greener than ever and the healthy canopies on the trees and the abundance of weeds are testament to the wet conditions. An old-timer was heard to say that the usual weather pattern in this area is ten years dry followed by ten years wet so maybe we can look forward to nine more years of rainy summers. The next few weeks should bring the hottest period of the year.

One very hot day can kill the tender plants in the garden and although in normal conditions one should only water after the sun has gone down, there's little point in trying to save a plant at 7pm when it's been fatally damaged at 12

noon. If plants look as though they are seriously burning or shrivelling they need watering immediately—preferably from tank water and not the mains. Ensure the mulching in your garden is up to scratch—the experts suggest 6-8 cm of leaf litter, sugar cane, Lucerne, compost, shredded newspapers or pebbles. That amount of cover will afford most plants adequate protection. Avoid direct contact of mulch with trunks and stems.

Talking about protection, the only way we have managed to stop the parrots and possums from eating all our fruit is to tie plastic bags round the end of the branches. The trees are too tall for netting and anyway the birds seem to be able to get into nets with ease. (Last year a fruit bat died in our neighbours' netting over their apricot tree.) The plastic bags seem to be a solution of sorts. We get a few fruit and the birds and possums enjoy the rest. THREE whole cherries were saved this year!



Saving a few of the delicious apples (Cox's Orange Pippin)

Hydrangeas: Some gardeners like to prune their hydrangeas in February. Others prefer the late winter pruning so that the old flower heads can remain on the bushes and be enjoyed through the months and used in autumn and winter flower arrangements. There are some advantages for a February prune, however, as the new growth does have longer to mature and the pruned bush takes up less space if you have a small garden. If you do prune, you should cut only those stems that have flowered and make your cut just above a small node carrying two fat buds. Cut out the old wood at the base of the plant and any old wood that is bearing spindly canes.

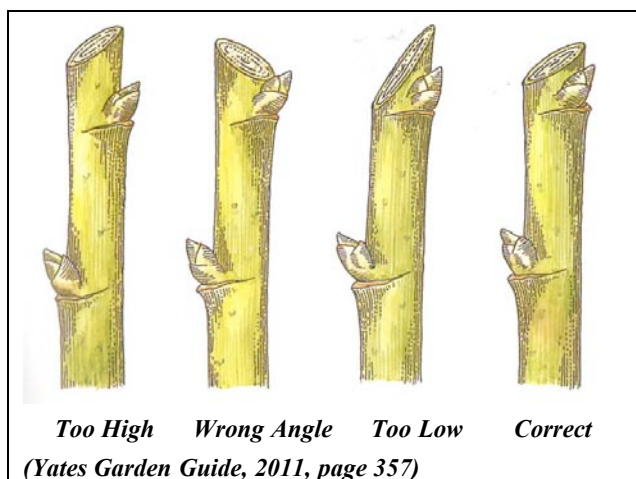
Geraniums and pelargoniums: If you take cuttings at this time of year they should thrive and develop roots very quickly—as long as you keep watering in hot weather. Don't forget to save some for the Club Plant Stall in October.

Tomatoes: It's been a slow start for our tomatoes this year with lower temperatures during December. Apply some more slow-release fertilizer or organic fertilizer pellets. Allen Gilbert recommends that once the plants begin to crop, weekly or fortnightly applications of a liquid fertilizer or manure tea will assist fruit production. If your tomato plants are in pots, Gilbert also recommends that the pots be wrapped in foil to reflect the heat and prevent the roots being boiled.

Research at the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (now Burnley College and part of the University of Melbourne) showed that where basil plants were planted round tomatoes, the tomatoes cropped better than those without the support of a companion. They recommend four basil plants to each tomato plant. The reasons for the success are fourfold: the basil plant roots open up the soil around the tomato plant which provides extra oxygen to the soil; the basil plants provide partial shading for both plants and soil and also reduce weed seedling growth; and finally that the repellent nature of the aromatic scent given off by the basil leaves deters insects and pests. (Allen Gilbert, *Tomatoes for Everyone: A practical guide to growing tomatoes all year round* (Highland House, 1997, p.38-39)

Roses: Now is a good time to prune your roses for their summer trim. Tidy-up the bush and remove any dead branches or those showing die-back using a sharp saw. Cut back to the bud about 5 cm below the dead section. Shorten the canes by half to two-thirds, always cutting to just above an outward-facing bud.

'It is important to distinguish between 'water shoots' and 'understock shoots'. The former are tall, vigorous, sappy shoots which suddenly develop from the crown of the plant (above the bud union) or from an old cane, while the latter arise from below the bud union. Always leave the water shoots because they are important for the future framework of the bush —these are to be shortened in the winter prune when the wood is fully matured. Remove 'understock shoots' as low as possible.' *Yates Garden Guide*.



Where have all the Bees Gone?

Gardeners like to see bees around the garden pollinating the vegies and fruit trees and when they're not we might ask – where are they? Is it due to global warming or some awful mite or virus? Well, it may not be as sinister as that as it seems that bees are a bit like us. They won't be out and about if it's dark, too cold or if it's windy, damp or raining. Sound familiar? Apparently, the temperature needs to be around 15°C with no wind and the sun shining before they'll take a turn outside. And if the weather is right and they are out and about, they also need nectar, pollen and water. If they don't find those things in our garden they could be just over the fence in someone else's garden! So, to answer the question 'where are the bees?'—they are probably either tucked up in their hive or else visiting someone else.

A second question for those of us who didn't do biology at school might be: 'What on earth do they do with what they collect and where does the honey come from?' Well, a few facts, courtesy of the Internet, might be of help to us!

Honeybees visit flowers to gather nectar and in the process transport pollen between plants thus fertilizing them, as we probably know. They also collect pollen along the way to take back to the hive to give to the nurse bees who convert it into a creamy substance (called 'royal jelly' or 'bee bread') to feed to the young larva. Apparently it is very rich in protein, vitamins, fats and minerals; hence we ladies have used it in our face creams and food supplements.

Now we've dealt with the pollen part of things but that leaves us with the nectar and nectar isn't honey, so where does the honey come from? Apparently, nectar is 70 to 80% moisture and by reducing it to less than 18.6% the bees can store it in cells in the hive without fermentation taking place. In the process honey is produced and bees use it for the energy to fly and also to heat the hive in winter.

Finally, bees go shopping only for nectar with the very highest sugar content and sunflowers, borage, marigolds, hollyhocks and poppies are said to be some good bee attracters, particularly borage. Bees also need available water. So to bring those helpful little chaps puzzling to our gardens we can do our bit - but the rest is up to the weather.

J Braithwaite

Seed Bank

Free to Members, heritage and open pollinated vegetable and flower seeds suitable for planting in late summer, early autumn will be available at the February meeting. This is an experiment but if it proves useful to Members more seasonal seeds will be ordered in over the year. Barbara Wilson will be giving more information on the new seeds at the meeting.

Members' thoughts on "What my garden means to me"

At the Christmas Lunch the members were asked to write a sentence or two about what their gardens meant to them. There were recurring phrases from the group - 'where I think, work and relax', 'a place of peace' and there were also some heartfelt and amusing comments:

'When inside the house, it transforms the windows into a living, ever-changing framed piece of art.'

'Light, colour, peace - a place to work, read, wander.'

'A big smile on my face when I open the bedroom curtains in the morning.'

'Love seeing the flowers and birds through my window.'

'The larger the garden—the more distant the neighbours!'

'A refuge for being myself with no one else to please.'

'A place for recharging my batteries and to do my thinking and to have tranquility.'

'My haven, my joy. The birds, the change of seasons, the surprises that pop up.'

'Not too much at the moment as it's only small.'

'A lot of hard work, but I really like my little park and the wild life it attracts.'

'I enjoy going from one wonderful fragrant flower to another through the seasons.'

'May I never cease to see and feel the beauty of my trees and flowers, my visiting birds, frogs and butterflies!'

'I enjoy the peace and tranquility of the garden and the change of seasons.'

'Tranquility and good food.'

'Restful to the eyes - a sense of space and serenity - a treasure trove of fruit and vegetables.'

'Hard work! Drudgery! I need a trailer!'

'Food for the body, joy for the soul, and a prayer that the possums and the cockatoos will leave it alone.'

'All of the above—plus a challenge and a battleground—fending off the predators.'

'Creative challenge, hard work but satisfying and a peaceful retreat.'

And this was a little quip from someone sitting within earshot: 'When the doctors say they can do no more, there's always the garden!'

Visit to Camden Park

On Monday 21 November twelve members went to Camden Park, home of the Macarthur family since early 1830s. We were shown the reclaimed garden by Colin Mills, a volunteer from the Camden district and one of about 20 people donating their time to reclaiming and clearing the overgrown areas of this historic garden.

The first members of the Macarthur family were collectors of rare and interesting species for their garden. The new resident members of the family are trying to restore the garden to its former glory with the help of the volunteers.

A clump of about six Chilean Wine Palms (*Jubaea Chilensis*) were pointed out down in the valley to our right, with a lone specimen immediately in front of us on the lawn at the rear of the family home. These palms are becoming rare in their natural habitat in Chile. Also along the back of the home is Wisteria maintained to hedge height so as to allow the architecture of the house to be viewed.

The volunteer gardeners are putting a large amount of work into clearing a creeping weed called Cat's Claw, similar to Jasmine to look at, but comes from a huge bulb deep in the ground and continues to grow.

Another tree of interest to us was the Queensland Bottle Tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*).



The jacaranda blossom in front of Queensland Bottle Tree - probably reaching its life span.)

We were shown the remains of a very large Orchid House and the remains of the ‘Ovens’ they used to heat the Orchid and Fern Houses. A fire was lit in the iron ovens and water circulated through iron pipes into these houses to maintain the required temperature for the plants.



Iron water heaters

The plant species throughout the garden were interesting, and earlier members of the Macarthur family had planted numerous amounts of bulbs. We saw flowering pink and white lilies called Rain Lilies (*Zephyranthes*), which had been found in the undergrowth by Mr Mills and replanted in a new part of the garden currently being worked on by the volunteers. These Rain Lilies come from South America and, as their name suggests, need a shower of rain to bloom.

Native Hibiscus plants, both pink and white, were in flower. These come from southern and western Australia and recently were grown from seed by the volunteers.

Victorian cloches made of glass and metal are now back in the new garden—a lovely reminder of Victorian times.



Restored Victorian Cloches

A most enjoyable and interesting tour (and easy to negotiate on the level paths) and we finished off the morning with a picnic in the paddock outside the home boundary.

Kay Lawson

Muriel’s Musings on Presents and Pets

2012 is a week or so old and so far so good. December 2011 (for me) finished with a flourish. Every day on the calendar had something to do or something to happen on it—Garden Club and Legacy luncheons, *About Face* book launch. I derived an almost childish pleasure choosing books for my six great-grandchildren—the seventh just made it on December 28th. It is safer to buy books—but I did lash out and bought (soon to be five-years-old) Liam a bedside light—it is a globe of the world and he has already learnt to find and name countries.

Think I will give books to the big kids as well as the little ones next Christmas. Much as I delighted in making the eight Christmas puddings, I couldn’t go through the trial and error of gift-wrapping them again. The difficulties I

encountered with the “made in China tissue-thin red cellophane” caused me to very soon run out of lady-like expressions as I tried to gather the four corners into a bon-bon-shaped parcel. And then the next challenge was to wrap the slippery curling gold ribbon around and around—this also tested my patience and finger agility. Having managed the tie-off there was then the problem of the remaining four sticking out corners on the dome-shaped gift. More lady-like expletives were needed to poke the corners in place with sticky tape. I won’t go one about it but leave it to your imagination.

My granddaughter Sarah in Canberra has two lovable dogs—canine versions of Laurel and Hardy—the caramel and white Staffie named Jersey and the ‘act first and think about it after’ terrier called Skeeter. According to vets, chocolate is taboo for dogs—it can be fatal they say. So Sarah has a problem with Jersey as he is a chocoholic—can sniff chocolate in cupboards or the fridge. A week before Christmas Sarah had a PostPak parcel on the hall table containing presents to be posted to a friend—expensive chocolates were included. While Sarah was upstairs, the ‘boys’ retrieved the parcel, ripped it to shreds, wolfed the chocolates, silver paper wrapping as well! The result was a hurried trip to the vets to have their stomachs pumped and an overnight stay. Sarah now has to have a locking device attached to her fridge door as the ‘boys’ had learnt how to open it with their noses. Not that they would find anything to their taste in there—Sarah is a dedicated vegetarian and they haven’t, as yet, developed a taste for Tofu.

On the home front I must say that I’m not trouble-free either. It’s the time of year when the two cats are shredding and the beautiful black long-haired Rag Doll Sheba seems to do most of her shredding on the light cream coloured carpet throughout the house. Vacuuming doesn’t cope with the problem—but the currycomb brush, I’ve kept as a memento from the days when we had horses, does a fine job. (Are you picturing me down on my knees scrubbing the carpet with the brush?) It works wonders—only it seems that I’ve made the carpet static and the cats won’t walk on it—but con me into carrying them in and out. Shah of Purrria is ‘easy-peasey’ to pick up but the beautiful voluptuous Sheba is another challenge. She doesn’t eat much, but she sleeps a lot and I think that must be fattening as she now won’t fit through the cat-door I had installed to save me from having to let them in and out all the time.

Muriel Stuart

Management Committee

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Secretary:	Lynne Moore	4872 2433
Treasurer:	Pam Bailey	4869 5117
Program:	Kay Fintan	4861 2594
Meet & Greet:	Pat Keen	4861 5815
Membership:	Marilyn Gleeson	4869 3881
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Social Secretary:	Catherine Mah	4861 7268
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	Wendy Gamble	4862 2766
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