



The Herb Age



DECEMBER 2017

NO 406



*Making a garden is somehow like conducting a symphony.
Different plants come forward at different times and you need to
think very carefully about their placement in relation to each other.*

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch

THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

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Meetup group: www.meetup.com/Herb-Society-of-Victoria/

AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- ☼ To act as a forum for all persons interested in herbs for their mutual benefit and fellowship.
- ☼ To further the education of the public in the use, value and growing of herbs.
- ☼ To promote and encourage the organic growing of herbal plants.

Patron: Penny Woodward

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HSOV BRANCH INFORMATION

The Herb Society of Victoria

General meeting is on the first Thursday of every month, from February to December, open 7.00pm for 7.30pm start. At: Room MB10 Main Building. Burnley Horticultural College campus, 500 Yarra Blvd Richmond MelRef: 45 A12

Next Meeting: See page 4 for details.

The Hills Branch

meets on the third Wednesday of the month from February to November at 7.45pm
At Belgrave Library, Reynolds Lane, Belgrave MelRef 75 F10.

Coordinator Ian Lewis

Victorian Salvia Study Group Branch

meets regularly at garden visits, sale days, working bees and events. See more info on www.salvias.org.au

Coordinator Lyndi Garnett

Secretary Heather Lucas

WORKING BEE: VOLUNTEERS WELCOME

Tussie Mussie Making to support the Collingwood Children's farm. On the mornings of the Second Saturday of the month at the Collingwood Children's Farm Market, St Heliers Street, Abbotsford. MelRef 44 G5.

Advertising Rates	Quarter page	\$15.00	Half page	\$25.00	Full page	\$45.00
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THE HERB AGE

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Herb Society of Victoria*

Six issues published per year, covering:

- ✿ February/March
- ✿ April/May
- ✿ June/July
- ✿ August/September
- ✿ October/November
- ✿ December

Members' original contributions are warmly welcomed.

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THE HERB AGE

DECEMBER 2017

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Cover Picture: Spring herbs in the garden. Photo taken at the Garden of St Erth recently, as well as a pair of ducks with the cutest brood of 15 ducklings, below.



Our Christmas Meeting

Burnley Horticultural College Campus
and Gardens, Burnley. Mel Ref 45 A12

Parking inside the grounds is limited so, if possible
please park on Yarra Blvd and walk in.

Thursday 7th December

Part 1 Picnic get together from 6pm

In keeping with our Christmas meeting tradition and
for those who can make it a little earlier,
Meet at the Sugar Gum Tree Table (near the Burnley Herb Garden)
BYO plate to share.

Part 2 Main Meeting

Room MB10 Please be seated 7.15pm for 7.30 Start

No need to bring Supper for after the meeting.

The committee will supply some festive fare.

Speaker: Marie Economedes from 'Marie 'n Things'

Topic: Unusual Herbs plus herbs for sale

Marie is a multi-qualified Horticulturist who lives and breathes edible and medicinal herbs and native bushfoods; her previous home having over 3,000 species.

She now lives in Warrnambool, propagating popular and unusual herbs to sell at farmers markets all over Victoria. Marie has superb labels with botanical names, warnings, where to plant and watering needs for excellent growth

PS above pic at top of the page is June Valentine's cinnamon, clove and star anise Christmas tree, each layer tied with string.

February Meeting Thursday 1st: BYO Picnic from 6pm

Yes, it is a long way off! We will do our best to have the Herb Age out before the February meeting, but just giving a heads up, as our printers close for the Christmas break, which may delay the Feb/March issue of the THA. BYO picnic at the Sugar Gum Tree Table. No formal meeting, but a walk around the garden is on the cards.



President's Report

Reading Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu*, was a revelation – about how Aboriginal people used the land before European settlement. Pascoe drew upon not only on his own knowledge of the indigenous cultures of East Gippsland and Tasmania, but also the journals of early explorers and settlers. These journals tell of permanent settlements, estimated to be up a thousand people, living in permanent houses – stone in the colder parts of the country and wood and thatch in the warmer areas.

Explorers write of seeing vast fields of yams *Dioscorea hastifolia* in Western Australia and Yam Daisy or Murnong, the little sweet potato *Microseris lanceolata* (*pic below*), in Victoria. These fields went on for miles, and some huts had been found to store grain and tubers – watertight and vermin proof, to cater for large numbers of people gathering for ceremonial occasions.

We heard Bruce address a gathering in the Fitzroy Town Hall, where he elaborated on the method of Aboriginal land management that did not result in wild fires and destructive floods. European style of farming, seemingly, was unsuited to the conditions and the soil types of parts of this continent. These are only snippets of what is to be found in this book, which has been reprinted fourteen times since being published in 2014. I found it a very interesting read.

Also attending the address was Beth Gott, a plant physiologist / Ethnobiologist who has written many scientific papers about the traditional significance and uses of indigenous Australian plants.

Dr Gott has worked at Monash University, School of Biological Sciences, since 1980 and she is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at Monash. Beth Gott is **95**. What an inspiration - she gives us all hope! Dr Gott was an advisor to the Melton Botanic Gardens when planting plans were being considered for the Indigenous Gardens.

At the time of writing the last issue of *The Herb Age*, I thought that the Melton Botanic Gardens may have been the only BOT that had been established, governed and maintained by volunteers. I have since heard of another one (*Gardening Australia*, 14. 10. 2017).

Sophie introduced us to the Pangarinda Botanic Gardens at Wellington East, near Tailem Bend in South Australia. Volunteers of the local Australian Plant Society were concerned about the loss of many indigenous species – that were becoming threatened because of current land management practices.



They were given 25 ha of crown land which they had to clear of weeds before beginning planting in 2000. They began with planting local indigenous species that were becoming endangered. Their interest soon extended to include species from dry, Mallee type areas. Their priority was to plant species that were almost non-existent in the wild. They included Bush Tucker medicinal plants, and later Western and Eastern Australian species. They have done a remarkable job in such a short time – it looks wonderful. I would definitely like to visit these Gardens the next time we drive to South Australia.

Spring has arrived at last, and our gardens are looking splendid. It's time to plant summer crops and just enjoy being outside in our gardens in the sunshine. Best Wishes for the Festive Season and if you plan to go away for the holiday period, take care and enjoy!!



Robin Calabrese, President

December Outing and Lunch

TUESDAY 5th December.

Visit 2017 Archibald Prize Exhibition of Paintings, Geelong Art Gallery, Melway 401F4

Meet at Southern Cross Station platform for the 9:50am Geelong train.

As occurred last year the Archibald Exhibition may be seen in Victoria only at Geelong Gallery. Entry to this Exhibition is \$12 concession. Expect to see some well-known artists in this exhibition. Geelong Gallery is about 500m from the station. Several other gallery spaces have free entry to their exhibitions.



Lunch can be at the Courthouse Cafe which is just along the street from the Archibald Exhibition at the corner of Gheringhap & Lt Malop St. Geelong, Phone 5224 1588.

Menu items include:

- Pie of the Day
- Jailbird Chicken Schnitzel, roll or sandwich
- Thai wrap: chicken, rocket, carrot, bean sprouts, snow peas, capsicum & sweet chilli sauce: half wrap or full
- Falafel: half size or full

We can inspect **Johnstone Park** which is being reworked as a wetland garden. This park is very conveniently sited between Geelong Railway Station and the Art Gallery. Next door to the Art Gallery is the new Geelong Library covering about 5 levels. This building provides a high level of library facilities for the community and is well worth visiting.

Other attractions nearby in Geelong include the Wool Museum and, since it is summer, Eastern Beach and the swimming area.

We should be able to catch a return train around 2pm which would take us to Southern Cross Station around 3pm. The return train fare will be under \$10 Concession. You should use your Myki for this trip.

Please advise me if you are planning to attend. I need to book a table for lunch.
Graham Ellis

A Sustainable House Wins



Many people are aware that Velda and I have been building a sustainable house with our builders, Positive Footprints. The house reduces use of mains water, generates electricity on the roof to reduce demand from the grid, has a well-insulated structure which is airtight to make the house comfortable all year with minimum heating. Our house has won the Architecture and Design Award for 2017 Best New Sustainable House in Australia. We are very proud of all the wonderful building people who completed such a great home for us with amazing attention to detail. Congratulations to Positive Footprints.

Photos are at <http://www.sustainablebuildingawards.com.au/category/single-dwelling-new/>

Graham Ellis

January Outing and Lunch

WEDNESDAY, 3rd January 2018.

Visit Gasworks Arts Park, Melway 2JG7

Meet at the corner of Bridport and Richardson Streets Albert Park at 10:30am to inspect sculptures around the park. Some of these have been produced in a warehouse on site.

This park also supports a range of plants local to Melbourne. Indigenous people have provided information about the traditional uses of many local plants. This has been developed into a Bush Trail to help us understand the importance of these plants to aboriginal people. In one section of the park is a number of full size fruit trees which may well be in fruit for our visit. One of the buildings has a small gallery which exhibits paintings and 3D works.

We should be able to enjoy lunch at Priscilla Jones Cafe within the park, 21 Graham St, Albert Park, phone 9682 8255. We will arrive at the cafe around midday. Some offerings are:

- House baked **muffin**: sweet or savoury \$4.00
- Avocado **mash** – \$ 15.00: mashed avocado, green peas, mint, feta, cherry tomatoes and lemon dressing on multigrain – add poached egg \$ 3.00 – add bacon \$ 4.00
- Tandoori **chicken wrap** – \$ 14.00: with Indian chutney, baby spinach and tomato

Transport is Tram route 1 to Stop 30, then turn right along Richardson St for 300m to the park. A local Bus 606 runs along Richardson St from Elsternwick to Port Melbourne but it is infrequent.

Reminders: This outing is on a **Wednesday**, 3rd January. For swimmers the Bay is quite close.

Please advise me if you are planning to attend.
Graham Ellis



October Outing

On a pleasant Spring day seven members met at the Botanic Gardens to visit the Children's Garden. This is divided into 2 sections: the play area and the vegetable /flower plots.



The garden has been organized for children to explore and enjoy. They are encouraged to pick a leaf or two and ramble through the jungle of bamboo, the lavender labyrinth, or climb the Tree Tower.

A number of toddlers loved the water play area where water runs down a channel to a pond in another section. There were broad beans and parsley growing in the vegetable garden. School Children visit and are given instruction on how to pot cuttings and lessons about the plants and trees growing there. We had lunch at the lake in perfect sunshine. Thankyou Graham for organising an enjoyable visit.

Marie Reuill

Weeds Plants and People

September meeting had another wonderful speaker with John Dwyer, presenting his new book and favourite hot topic – “Weeds Plants and People”. The cover of the book is deceptively simple – a photo from what could be any local country lane. A tangle of plants, all described as weeds in some context. The cover actually has 22 ‘weeds’ from Dandelion and Plantain to Blackberry.



John started the talk as he started the book with the difficult question of how to describe a weed. This is in fact what fascinates him about weeds; the intangible and flexible notion of the term; that a weed to one person can be a welcome, useful plant to another. The very word ‘weed’ is an emotive one, with descriptors like ugly, hated and evasive. Trying to answer the question ‘what is a weed’ really does raise more questions. Are some plants always a weed or never a weed? And in fact a ‘weedy plant’ can be a good choice for a spot where nothing else grows.

His book delves into the history of the subject and he has chosen to illustrate the plants/weeds with photos of historic specimens from local collections. About a third of the book’s pictures are from specimens amassed by Baron Von Mueller. For example Corn Poppy, collected in 1849 or Dock, which had already taken hold in Victoria when gathered in 1852. Weeds have become successful because it is man who has moved them around the globe, allowing them ingress to new environments and eco systems. The relationship between weeds and people is a close one.

Some plants that were once grown in abundance to be used for food, medicine etc, became unfashionable, redundant or destructive, as they escaped from gardens and farms to become weeds. Plants like:



- Paterson’s Curse, *Echium plantagineum* (above). Also called ‘Salvation Jane’; the different names for the same plant clearly demonstrating how it can be regarded as both useful and weed.
- Nut grass, *Cyperus Rotundas* (below). Now one of the worst weeds in the worlds, but 7,000 years ago it was a major food source in Africa, were the tubers were eaten in abundant. Residue of the plant has been identified on the teeth of skeletons from that period.
- Sow Thistle, *Sonchus oleraceus* (left). Referred to medicinally in the texts of Roman Pliny and Culpepper’s mid 16th century Herbal.

The bog bodies in Europe are a fascinating source of information of early man. The stomach contents of Grauballe Man from 300 BC show his last meal to be gruel of 72 different plants. His was a sacrificial demise and the meal suggests that all of the plants were extremely important to his people, many of which, of course are now weeds.

Throughout history, man has declared war on weeds, but John declares it is time for a truce as the herbicides we use just create resistance and contamination. Instead we should seek a better way to manage weeds with respect, look at the good points and the wildness they represent.

The HSOV has a copy of John’s book, available to any member to borrow. A reminder our library has a vast amount of material and borrowings are free. Just talk to our new librarian, Marie or outgoing librarian, Jan or a committee member for more information.



Meridith Hutchinson

Vale Ray Boatman

When Heather Marnie, my husband Alan's cousin, came from Sydney to stay with us, and she invited a young man she had met at a conference in Adelaide to afternoon tea, and she made a cake for the occasion, we did not imagine that they would marry, produce three children, and Ray, a life long gardener, introduced to the world of herbs by my mother, Enid Carberry, would establish and run his own herb nursery at Daylesford when he was teaching there, or that he would be a foundation member of the Herb Society of Victoria where his enthusiasm, knowledge and organizational ability helped the Society to flourish. Ray was president for two terms. He helped to arrange the annual Herb-fests, held in the main hall of Burnley College, putting together the competitive events (floral arrangements, breads, herbal dips, miniature gardens, etc., etc.), the displays by members, such as edible flowers, medicinal and culinary plants, cake decorating with crystallised flowers, Jill's Shakespeare's plants, potted plants for sale and much more. He showed us how to pot and present plants for exhibition or sale.

Ray's monthly bus outings were a regular highlight, always including a number of nurseries or places of herbal interest. Marjorie Hutchinson provided hot thermos drinks for lunch. Outings became more ambitious, to the Grampians, interstate to NSW and Tasmania, Norfolk Island and China.

In between these and many church activities Ray fitted in a full time teaching position at Menzies Creek School, becoming Headmaster. After his retirement Ray became involved with the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, the Sherbrook Information Centre and managed several private gardens.

In later years, plagued by ill health, his indomitable spirit overcame it all, except for the last. Ray died on August 24th, two days after his 88th birthday. A contingent of Herb Society Members from near and far attended his 'Celebration of Life' at St Thomas Church, Upper Ferntree Gully, which was packed with family and friends. Ray's brother John spoke of Ray's childhood on the family farm, when, as a five year old he taught his younger brother the alphabet and to read. He held weekly flower shows with his brother, where their exhibits were clearly labelled, such as 'three pink roses, different varieties', 'foliage arrangement,' and so on. There were never classes for yellow flowers. Ray did not like yellow.

We will greatly miss Ray's presence, his enthusiasm and extensive botanical knowledge. We extend our sympathy and condolences to Heather and the family.

Collen Muir

Haiku Poem

Five hot air balloons

Form the night sky's Southern Cross

One grey Melbourne dawn

Meridith Hutchinson



Another Burnley Scrap Book Entry

In the June-July THA I pasted some notes in a Small Burnley Scrap Book. Well, since then I have come across more related scraps to add.

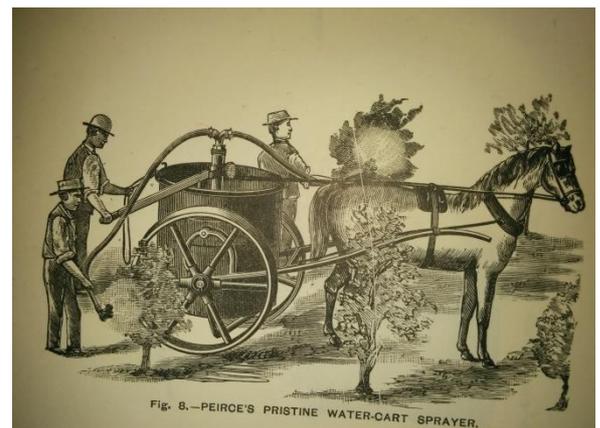
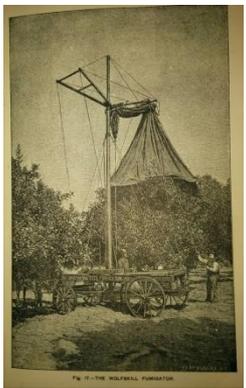
I have acquired a copy of the recently published Part VI of Charles French's *Handbook of Destructive Insects in Victoria*, which was never published in his life time. Part I (price 2/6) was first published in 1893, and part V in 1911, covering some 139 insect species, both native and introduced, with exquisite plates, in colour, by Charles Brittlebank and L.C.Vald Andersen, illustrating life histories and food plants. Much information is included about natural, biological controls by parasitic insects and diseases, spraying and other means, mainly toxic, of controlling pest species, such as spraying citrus trees inside fumigation tents, discussed in the previous article. The newly published Part VI contains a biography of this remarkable man and his son Charles jnr., who succeeded him as Government Entomologist, from which these notes are taken.

Charles French was born in 1842 in Kent and migrated to Victoria in 1852 with his mother and stepfather. Like so many others they tried their luck on the gold fields. In 1858 he was apprenticed to Scott's nursery in Hawthorn. During the six years he was there he assisted with the planting of the Burnley Gardens which were opened in 1861, including planting the Californian Redwood, which still stands in the Gardens today. Later he became Manager of Bogie's Nursery in South Yarra, where he met Baron von Mueller, at that time Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens. This led to French's appointment in the Botanical Branch of the Chief Secretary's Department, then to the Phytological Museum of Melbourne in 1881, which later became the National Herbarium, which was then under the control of von Mueller. By 1886 Charles French had become first herbarium assistant.

From an early age Charles French developed a keen interest in entomology. An article he wrote on wood boring beetles, published in 1874, is considered to be the first article on economic entomology published in Victoria. In 1880 he was a foundation committee member of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, along with other luminaries as Baron von Mueller and contributed to von Mueller's '*Key to the system of Victorian plants*'.

In 1885 he was awarded Fellowship of the Linnean Society of London and later, the Royal Horticultural Society of England, the Society of Isis, Dresden, Germany and the Entomological Society of London. He was appointed Government Entomologist, assisted by his son Charles, and in this capacity published twenty two articles on combating plant diseases. His responsibilities and achievements were too many to quote here. He delivered lectures to the public regarding the economic importance of protecting birds as controllers of pest insects.

His Museum of Economic Entomology and Ornithology was put on the curriculum of Victorian State Schools. In 1893 he delivered a lecture on: Economic Entomology: Some advantages to be derived from its study. In: Monthly lectures delivered at the School of Horticulture, Burnley, by various specialists in 1892-3.



After Mr Pescott's position as head of Burnley, he was appointed Government Botanist and Director of the Botanic Gardens. He then sent the manuscript to Stanislav Fish, who succeeded Charles jnr. as Chief Biologist of the Plant Research Laboratory at Burnley. At Mr Pescott's suggestion the manuscript was filed in the library. When the Laboratory was closed in 1993 the library and records were sent to the Institute of Primary Industries at Knoxfield, where the manuscript disappeared. It was not until the Knoxfield site was in turn closing down that in 2011, while sorting boxes of old files stored in a shed for many years, two staff members discovered a box containing the missing manuscript and illustrations.



Four dedicated enthusiasts, Alan Yen and Gordon Berg of the Department of Primary Industries, Peter Menkhorst of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Professor Tim New of La Trobe University, then undertook the task of editing Part VI, which they have done with great skill and competence. In what has obviously been a labour of love, their result, completing the set, is worthy of Charles French and his pioneering work in his important field. Modern printing methods have enhanced the illustrations by fellow Field Naturalist Charles Brittlebank and I.C.Vald. Andersen to reveal their true artistry and skill.

In 2003 The Age published an article describing the finding of 'the holy grail of entomology---rising from archives.' The last chapter, it says, is available from the Field Naturalists Club. It is now available from specialist natural history book sellers. There is no copy of the Handbook in the Burnley Library

Colline Muir

Post Script. During the 1940s my mother, Enid Carberry and I were active members of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria. My mother had also been a keen member in her youth. Charlie French was one of the dapper, white haired, 'Victorian' gentlemen of great knowledge, who were always willing to share that knowledge with newer, younger members. It was a wonderful link with a much earlier time. Colline

November Walk and Lunch

Our First Tuesday Walking Group met at the Fritsch Holzer Park in Camberwell on Cup Day.

According to the website, Augustus Fritsch and the Holzer brothers formed The Upper Hawthorn Brick Co in 1883. The Company employed around 50 people and produce 250 000 bricks a week, which were used throughout Victoria. The Council purchased the area in 1972, and used it as a landfill site until 1986, then in 1995, The Council and the Hawthorn Rotary Club reconstructed the land into a park.



The park is large and open. The quarry area has been transformed into a wetland, which is still being planted with grasses and water plants. Native plants have been used extensively and the park is very popular with picnickers, dog walkers, joggers and families.

Infuse Café has an Asian influence, serving tasty dishes and good coffee. We had a small flutter (sweep) on the Cup. Nine Herbies enjoyed a very pleasant day in Camberwell.

Robin Calabrese



TCM Herbs in the Garden

Dr Brian May was our guest speaker way back in July. Brian is a clinical fellow researcher at RMIT and private practitioner in Traditional Chinese Medicine. He has written and co-written dozens of research papers into the effectiveness of TCM Herbs and enjoys growing them too.

In this talk, he looked at some of the TCM herbs that can be grown locally. Just a note that when TCM refers to a herb for the liver or kidney, that means the energetic meridian for those organs, not specifically the organs themselves.

As with any medicinal herbal material, below is general information and you should seek advice for specific circumstances.

Some of the many herbs Brian focused on included:

- **Balloon Flower, Platycodon**

This is easy to grow, dies down in winter with robust growth in spring. Be careful to grow in well drained soil as it can rot in winter if its gets too wet. In the RMIT garden, they have grown double flowered in blue (see pic) and also in white.

You can harvest the root after 2 years, which is used in TCM for coughs, colds and reducing phlegm and Lung meridian diseases. The roots are used in Korea in soups, specifically for the lungs and mixed with other herbs as a general tonic. It is an essential ingredient from 16th century Ming Dynasty recipes.

Houttuynia cordata, has a fishy smell and taste when cooked. It is good for a tough cough and is sometimes mixed with *Platycodon* for lung complaints.

- **Goji Berry, Lycium barbarum**

Also easy to grow, and can be grown from seed. They don't need a lot of water and will grow in salt affected soil. They produce berries from 5 to 60 years. He suggests looking for a plant with different genetics so they can cross pollinate.

Goji's are high in carotene and are therefore good for the eyes. In TCM, it is used for the liver and kidney energies. It can be used as a tonic for the elderly and can be drunk as a tea with hot water. If you get bad reactions to the tomatoe family of foods, then be careful with Goji's.

- **Ginseng**

There are many varieties of Ginseng. The Asian and American varieties are grown in China and Korea. Siberian Ginseng is in the same family but not a true ginseng. Ginseng is hard to grow, but can be successfully grown here. It must be grown in a cool spot, even an hour of hot sun can kill it off and it is also susceptible to root rot. He suggests keeping it under shade cloth.

It dies down over winter and has everything already at the beginning of the new growing season. So all stems, leaves and berry buds are already formed on the plant, but in miniature and just get bigger as the growing season continues. It has an impressive flower and is a nice looking garden plant. See pic of American Ginseng from Brian's collection.

Ginseng has many uses in TCM, including improving energy and for aches and pains, but not so much for rheumatic arthritic pain.

As always, Brian's passion and knowledge flowed to make his talk very informative and a bit of fun too. Other plants he discussed included:

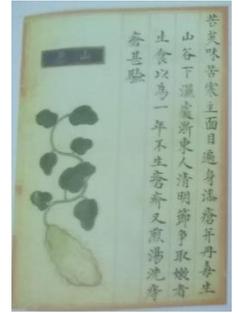
- *Codonopsis*, a Ginseng lesser substitute



- *Dioscorea batatas*, a very valuable vine in Japan and China (see pic from Ming dynasty herbal)
- *Agastache rugosa*, also called Korean tea, whose leaves are good for nausea and to ease a full stomach
- *Prunella vulgaris*, a good plant to cover wet spots in the garden and used a lot in TCM for sore eyes and headaches, often with chrysanthemum.
- *Isatis tinctoria*, (Wode), different parts of the plant are used for fever, sore throat/mouth and mouth ulcers. Once again it is often combined with chrysanthemum.

Thanks so much to Brian and to Jill for organising yet another very interesting, knowledgeable speaker.

Meridith Hutchinson



Clive Alive O!



The HSOV had the pleasure of hearing Clive Larkman speak at the August GM.

Clive grew up in the Yarra Valley and his father started a nursery in 1984. His father Barry, passed away 1989, and this led Clive back from his overseas adventure to continue the business with his mother.

Within a year, Clive met his future wife Di and together they commenced building the successful nursery, which today is situated in Wandin. The opportunity to take on the Renaissance Herbs business in 2007 was not to be missed and Clive and his team now propagate over two million plants annually. His degree in Botany gives Clive an expert understanding in all plant related matters and he is involved with many local and international groups.

The one thing that appeared to be the theme of the night was Clive's love of food that he just wanted to share with everyone. His eyes lit up and he became very animated as this passion drives his love of cooking. He passed around some tasty plants such as Wasabi, not for the faint hearted and a mushroom tasting plant that apparently only one in four people can taste. I felt like yelling "bingo" as I could taste the mushroom flavour coming through, it was amazing to get this taste from a leaf.

Clive gave us ways to use the plants in our diet, and was very frank with calling out "salt is not seasoning, it is just salt". Herbs are seasoning that you add at the end of your cooking so as not to lose their flavour. Another great tip for those that may be averse to a hot chilli and need to reduce the heat is to have some sugar. He swears this is the best remedy.

Clive has such a great understanding of how plants grow, he is a world traveler always looking for new plants to bring back here and explained how plants are often misdiagnosed and that rules can be broken to have success in growing. By understanding soils you can understand how a plant evolves. His pet hate is incorrect labelling of a plant in a pot, such as the Cardamom leaf plant that is commonly mistaken as a true Cardamom.



It was a fascinating talk that covered a number of topics and I personally learnt a lot from his fantastic knowledge and entertaining style. He also brought a huge range of pots for everyone to purchase. So I will leave this article with his words of wisdom that you must eat three parts of plants in your meals to get the full nutritional nourishment – stems, leaves and fruit.

For recipe ideas head to <http://www.clivescorner.net.au>

Jeanette Boyce

Vale Bill Whitehead

26.06.1916 – 22.09.2017

It is with much sadness that another of the Salvia Group founding members has died. It was Bill with the help of Ray Boatman who instigated the beginning of our Group. Bill asked Ray to place an ad in the Herb Age asking for people who might be interested in growing Salvias to come to a meeting. Bill was the then rep of the OPCA (Ornamental Plant Collections Association) .



Here we were around Trudi Fry's big round table and a little old man was telling us about conserving plant collections, next to a very tall slender man advocating that we should grow and collect Salvias that Salvias were a worthwhile collection to be conserved. We were all in awe of Bill's collection of approx 12- 20 Salvias as most of us had no idea that so many existed. At the time I thought I had quite a few – I had 4 known Salvias.

Bill was very passionate about his Salvias, especially *S. leucantha* (Mexican Sage) He knew that the species was purple and white, and he thought that the ordinary purple form should have a hybrid name, but unfortunately nothing ever came of his campaign for this ordinary Salvias to be named. But to his surprise, some years later a new form of *S. mexicana* has been named after Bill – Salvia 'Bill Whitehead'. This Salvia was presented to him at Trudi Fry's 80th birthday.

Bill was passionate about herbs, Salvias and Tai Chi. He was a founding member of the Geelong Herb Society and was their president for many years. About 1990, he resigned from the President's position but remained an active member. He also decided to donate his Salvia collection to the Geelong Botanical Gardens. His plant collection still forms part of the garden outside the gates of the Botanical Gardens.

Whenever the group came down to visit Geelong Botanical Gardens, we would always visit Bill and partake of some of Shirley's wonderful curry puffs and walk around Bill's small back yard, examining Bill's herbs and extolling how wonderful his herb garden was. Bill loved growing unusual herbs, plants like Woad, Summer Savoury, Southernwood and a good Oxalis collection..

With the help of Des Lawrence, (head gardener of the Salvia Collection at the Geelong Botanic Gardens) Bill was able to stay in touch with what was happening with the group. Des brought Bill up to Nobelius on numerous occasions, armed with his secateurs, wanting only to help and be part of the team maintaining his precious Salvia Collection.

Although Bill wasn't able to make the journey up to Melbourne in the last few years, we still kept in touch through his Birthday cards, his beautifully hand written letters, always extolling his *S. leucantha*. Graham Ellis visited Bill quite often, taking him to lunch (which he loved, especially as he was able to have a beer) and visit the Geelong Bot gardens to see his beloved Salvia Collection.

Sadly his Shirley was taken ill and died. He missed her dreadfully as a companion and soul mate. He looked forward to his visits from Graham.



Bill had a wonderful 100th Birthday, coming up to the Herb Society meeting, where we all had a wonderful time celebrating with Bill. Colline Muir made a magnificent Cake in his honour. Bill took great pleasure in cutting his 100th birthday cake, giggling and laughing as the night wore on. Bill stole the show with his infectious smile and giggling, everyone was in raptures the whole night with Bill being the Star!

Bill was a wonderful person, with a ready smile, always generous with his knowledge and eager to give and share plants.

Wonderful memories, for someone so special.

Lyndi Garnett



Apple Tree



The label stated quite clearly that it was a 'dwarf apple, Granny Smith'. What joy! I had seen one a few months previously, loaded with fruit, bending gently to the ground, on the old scale about six feet in height. It was clearly morning; the sun was on the fruit, still wet with dew. I had thought for some little time about ordering the tree, I took into account, for example, my age, very long term gardening plans have been shortened somewhat. Sheer logic told me that with only two people in the house, why another tree, again?



I had prepared the ground, a good dose of old sheep manure, plenty of compost for this sandy soil, dug over and left to settle and for time to do the work, Worms came into the area after just a few weeks, seeking food and moisture. Yet I still thought about it. Why bother a case of apples from a local market, or as a result of a day in the country, so much easier, and no work, no chores.

Maybe I could level the whole backyard with concrete and paint it with green. But the worms worked well and over the months as the blasting summer heat moved, oh so slowly into autumn I could see the change, the change in the soil structure, the look of the soil, the tilth, that lovely old word, so little heard these days.

On a pleasant autumn afternoon, with the days still long and leaves not yet quite falling, my Mother came for afternoon tea. Frail still, but determined, she spoke of childhood days in England and the bluebells. And, upon arrival in Australia, her first fruit, a Granny Smith. She would comment on the colour, such a lovely green, like the bush after rain, and the bite, so firm, so very firm, not mushy like some these days.

And, as one should, we had tea, with little cakes, a tea strainer and a tea cosy to keep the pot warm. And, while the tea and time made their way with things there was time for talk, not hurried, not brash, just a few words about family doings and the lady two doors down, but one. And Crewe station, ever so big, nothing like it here you know, ever so big. And the milk went it first, as this is the way of things and the little tea strainer rested on the cup and the tea was poured, slowly.

And then we talked about tree: and growing things for food and just how important it is to grow things to eat. My Mother used to point out that if you had to buy everything you need heating for the house, cooling for the house, food for the table then, what is the point of it all; they have 'got you' she would say. It does not matter what you grow, just decide what you like, then grow it. Grow it in a tin, a box, dig up a concrete, whatever, just do it. The afternoon light came through the window and t soon became time to go.

Leaving was not with a rush, there was no hurry with the leaving, the sun shone through the window onto her hair. We talked down the hall, she touched the odd piece of furniture, noted the picture of a distant relative, the picture of herself when young. We said our goodbye and she walked off down the street, a little old lady with a bit of a limp but determined to walk straight and tall. And then I went inside and ordered my Granny Smith apple tree.



Albizia and Relatives

For weeks now when we look out of the kitchen window we are likely to see feathery branches rapidly moving up and down, marking the arrival or departure of charismatic eastern spinebills or perhaps a flock of tiny silver eyes. Why so? The albizia is in flower! Native to s-w W. A. the greenish-yellow bottlebrush flowers of the *Paraserianthes lophantha*, syn. *Albizia lophantha*, *A. dislochia*, *Acacia lophantha*, *Mimosa elegans*, *M. distachya* nom. illeg.,



Caped wattle, Crested wattle, Swamp Wattle, Cape Leeuwin Cape Wattle, must be full of nectar, for they attract nectar feeding birds as nothing else in the garden does at this time of the year (August, September). Spinebills also enjoy albizia flowers in June and July when they come for the tubular flowers of correas and salvias. From the kitchen window I can watch a spinebill in the albizia flitting from flower to flower, sometimes hovering like a hummingbird.

The 150 or so plants that are or were classified in the genus *Albizia*, have been a taxonomists' delight, or nightmare, many species being relocated into different genera a number of times, a kind of snakes and ladders. They are distributed about tropical areas, especially in Africa and Asia, but there are two

Australian species, one in WA and one in the north, an indication that the genus was around before the breakup of the supercontinent Gondwanaland. Many species are important forage, timber, medicinal and ornamental plants. The genus is named after an Italian nobleman Filippo degli Albizzi who introduced it to Europe in the mid-18th century.

Although the flower arrangement of *Paraserianthes lophantha* resembles those of callistemons, it is closely related to acacias, in fact it has several times been classified as an acacia, but is now thought to be most closely related to a Malaysian genus, *Serianthes*, rather than *Albizia*. The leaves of *P. lophantha* are about 20 cm long, 14 cm wide and bipinnate. The seeds are brown, oval, flattish beans, eight or nine to a pod. Very fast growing, it grows up to about 10m, making a quick screen, especially useful if you suddenly find a two storied building going up next door to you. Although not long lived, about ten years or so, it allows something more permanent to be planted in between, and in the meantime it is very ornamental and little birds may have a treat.

As for herbal uses, the only one I know of is the production of stink bombs. This is achieved, as many of us will know who are old enough to have worn, as children, leather shoes with metal heel protectors, is achieved by collecting some seeds, putting them on a hard surface and stamping on them. When squashed, the seeds are spat on and a very satisfactory stink results.

Albizia julibrissin is known, among other names, as the Persian Silk Tree, the specific name coming from a Persian word for silk tree, referring to the long, silky stamens that make up the conspicuous part of the flowers. In China and Japan it is known by many names referring to its antidepressant qualities, such as Tree of Happiness, and He Huan Pi, which means 'Meet and Enjoy Bark'. It grows to about ten metres, is deciduous and has puffy pink flowers. It is one of the most valued Chinese botanicals for relieving stress and depression. Flowers and bark are also used orally for sore throat, sleeplessness and to improve mood, especially after an emotional shock.



Externally it is used to reduce swelling associated with trauma, skin conditions such as acne and carbuncles, relieves swelling and stimulates blood circulation. It may be used as a poultice. Chopped bark, pills and capsules are available at most Asian markets. In an ancient 2nd century Herbal it is considered a powerful antidepressant and spiritual herb to help anchor the soul. It is associated with heart and liver meridians. Ancient Chinese herbalists, observing how albizia leaves close at night, thought it would be good to treat sleeplessness, and it is still used for that today. This is like the European ‘Doctrine of Signatures’, where a plant part might resemble a human organ or disease, such as walnuts resembling brains, so it was thought to be a treatment for that organ or disease. Sometimes, coincidentally, it worked!

In western medicine, new research has promoted renewed interest in the Tree of Happiness, which contains high concentrations of saponins, polyphenols and triterpenoids, all of which are said to have an important impact on human health. This tree and *Albizia saman*, the Rain Tree, are also hosts for lac scale insects, which colonise the stems and produce the red lac that is used in the production of shellac. A variety, *A. julibvissin* var. *rosea* with pink flowers, is a popular horticultural subject.

Albizia lebbek is a wide spread species native of Africa, India, South China, Malaysia and Northern Australia. The tree has extended its range far beyond its native habitat, including in Australia, where it is moving south and is considered an environmental weed, encroaching on native vegetation in a number of areas.

So useful is this tree that one web site lists 154 local names, from Africa, India, Malaysia, even Brazil. One English name is woman’s tongue tree! An attractive tree growing to ten metres, the bark, leaves, seeds and flowers are used medicinally. It is included in the Ayurvedic Pharmacopeia of India. Where it is recommended for lowering cholesterol and relieving respiratory distress. The bark contains saponins used in soap making and tannins, used for tanning fishing nets in India. The seeds contain crude protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, niacin, vitamin C, and most of the essential amino acids. A web site, Health Benefits of Shiri, lists 35 benefits. (One effect not listed here is a reduction in sperm production. This could be a benefit for an overcrowded planet). Modern research has confirmed anti-inflammatory activity.

Agroforestry uses include the improvement of soil fertility by nitrogen fixing root nodules, benefiting grasses growing under the trees; the shallow, extensive root system is useful to bind soil and prevent erosion. The deciduous leaves, flowers and fruits are valuable as forage, while the flowers are rich in nectar and pollen for honey bees. The timber is used for fuel and charcoal as well as being an excellent carpentry wood suitable for decorative veneers. The trees are used as shade for delicate crops such as tea are extensively used for street plantings and avenues, commonly planted along roads in Queensland.

My daughter Kerry is presently aboard. She has sent me photos of an Albizia with purple flowers, a sign post in a botanic garden directing visitors to Albizias and another taken in a botanic garden in northern Brittany that appears to be our own *P. lophosperma*. There are many Australian plants there, such as callistemons, coppiced eucalypts and lomandras included in the general planting, which is dense, as natural vegetation would be in such an exposed position overlooking the English Chanel, above a small bay.

Colline Muir

References, web sites:

Albizia julibvissin – National Arboretum Canberra

Albizia lebbek – Fact sheet

Albizia lebbek - Weeds of Australia, Biosecurity of Queensland Edition

Albizia lebbek -Herbs Treat and Taste

Albizia lebbek –Useful Tropical Plants

Health Benefits of Shiri - *Albizia lebbek*, Free Spirit Magazine



Salvia Study Group Branch News

Well once again the year has flown by and Christmas is almost upon us. The Salvia Study Group wishes everyone a very safe and happy Christmas with family and loved ones. I also hope that we have all prepared (mulched, etc.) for the summer ahead of us and that our gardens survive and continue to give us much pleasure.

For December we only have the one event, being our Christmas luncheon, which is being held at our Publicity Officer's magnificent country garden on Sunday, 3rd December at 11am at 65 Glynns Road, North Warrandyte. Bring a Christmas plate to share and a chair. Join in all the festivities of the season.



May everyone have a happy Christmas and New Year and we all look forward to 2018 being filled with lots more garden visits and events.

Heather Lucas, Secretary

2017 AGM Minutes

Herb Society of Victoria

VENUE: MB10 Burnley Campus, University of Melbourne

DATE: Wednesday October 6 2017

TIME: 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Robin Calabrese, The President, chaired the meeting welcoming all members.

APOLOGIES: Annie Gargano, Carmen Hollway

CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES: AGM minutes 2016 confirmed on the motion of Jill Bryant, seconded by June Valentine

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

The President reported on the history of the Burnley Gardens and the relationship with the FOBG (Friends of Burnley Gardens) who have made valuable contribution over the years to keep the gardens at their best. Some long term contributors who have recently passed were recognized for the amazing investment of their passion, time and energy over many years and will be very much missed, Judith Fry and Ray Boatman.

Robyn Calabrese announced the Society Secretary Vera Williamson will be stepping down after many years contribution. Her great work and long standing time in the role were recognized and thanked. Graham Ellis has kindly offered to take on this position.

Special thanks were made to Jan Dilworth who has done a splendid job holding several positions including past President and most recently the keeper of Herb Society's library. Her contribution highly noted. Jan has relinquished the Librarian Coordinator role and passed the baton onto Marie Baker who volunteered to look after the library.

Other thanks were to Phyl Knaggs who has stepped down from the committee. Phyl has also held the role of Committee Secretary and has provided ongoing support and hard work for many years helping to keep the society going.

Last big thanks to Marion Bond whose passion for striking plants with her husband Graham, has enabled plants to be sold at many different events over the years and keep the HSOV front of mind for our audience. A key contributor to the committee.

Tussie mussie's were presented to thank all the retiring committee members.

Other members recognized and thanked Neville Kelly, Membership Officer and Graham Ellis for organizing the lunch outings. For full President's report – refer to the Oct/Nov Herb Age P18

Tea Roster

DECEMBER

Mem Alexander
Kelly McBrady
Katherin Grellis

If you are unable to attend the meeting on the evening which you are rostered for teas, please try to arrange an exchange of duty with someone else or, as a last resort, contact Carmen Holloway.

Please bring fresh herbs for the tea pots if possible.
Thank you to all our willing helpers. Your extra effort is very much appreciated.



2017 AGM Minutes (cont.)

BRANCH REPORTS

The President brought attention to both the Hills Branch and the Salvia Study Group reports in the Oct/Nov Herb Age Pages 16 and 16

TREASURER'S REPORT

The financial profit and loss statement and balance sheet plus the auditor's report were referred to the Oct/Nov Herb Age P14

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

The President declared all positions now vacant and vacated the chair. Graham Ellis read out the relevant rules #50-53 and confirmed all new nomination requests.

Nominated and voted in:

- President Robyn Calabrese
- Vice President June Valentine, Jill Bryant
- Treasurer Joy Thompson
- Committee Secretary Jeanette Boyce
- THA Editor Meridith Hutchinson
- Committee Member Annie Gargano
- Committee Member Heather Davies
- Committee Member Carmen Hollway
- Jill Bryant continues the appointment of Website and Facebook manager

PS: After the AGM closed, Kelly McBrady nominated and was appointed to the committee. Jan Illingworth also joined us during the November meeting. Welcome aboard to our newest committee members.

MEMBERSHIP

Current membership numbers 148

Robyn Calabrese took the chair and introduced the three mini speakers, Felicity Sigmont, Jan Illingworth and Julie Wilkinson Flores.

Meeting closed 8.45pm

Jeanette Boyce, Committee Secretary

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