



The Herb Age



JUNE/JULY 2021

NO 427



"I, borage, always bring courage" John Gerard

THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

PO Box 396, Camberwell, Victoria, 3124, Australia

ABN 22 261 579 261

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www.herbsocietyvic.org.au

www.facebook.com/herbsocietyvic/

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

HSOV COMMITTEE

Committee

Lesley Northey

President	June Valentine
Vice President	Nigel Holmes
Past President and The Herb Age Editor	Meridith Hutchinson
Committee Secretary	Graham Ellis
Treasurer	Carmen Hollway
Membership Officer & Library Coordinator	Marie Baker
Committee	Jill Bryant
Committee	Robin Calabrese
Committee	Jan Illingworth
Committee	Heather Davies
Committee	Mary Dawson

HSOV MEETINGS

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

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

Next Meetings: See Page 4

The Hills Branch

meets on the third Wednesday of the month from February to November at 7.45pm at various locations.

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THE HERB AGE

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Herb Society of Victoria*

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year, covering:

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

Members' original
contributions are warmly
welcomed.

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Meridith Hutchinson
The Editor, The Herb Age
PO Box 396
Camberwell, 3124

Email to

theherbage@outlook.com

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THE HERB AGE

JUNE/JULY 2021

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Cover Pic and Quote:

Borage is all its blue glory. This was one of the many English herbs brought with the first fleet. See Jill's article on page 10.

The quote by Herbalist and author, John Gerard (1545 to 1612) is from his celebrated book "The Herball, or generall historie of plantes" of 1597. This herbal contained over 1,000 species of plants and over 1800 woodcut illustrations, becoming one of the first plant catalogues and immensely popular.



Late News from the world of Herbs and Spices.....

June Valentine has reported a case where a husband relabeled all of the jars in his wife's spice rack.

Apparently, he's not in trouble yet, but the Thyme is Cumin. Boom Boom!

Our Next Meetings

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.

You must sign in using the University QR code or book on entry, as well as the
HSOV attendance book. Masks should be carried and worn if necessary.



Thursday 3rd June 2021

Birthday Meeting - Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start

Erbie

Time for a bit of fun!

Join Our **41st Birthday**

Trivia Time Celebration

Hosted by June and Meridith

To earn an extra point for your team,
WEAR A HERB to the meeting!



Thursday 1st July, 2021

General Meeting - Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start

Guest Speaker: Karen Sutherland

Topic: Edible Favourites



Karen Sutherland from Edible Eden is horticulturalist who consults and designs gardens for home harvest. Her own garden has a huge variety of edibles; exotics and especially indigenous plants. She is also co-author of the book 'Tomato: Know, Sow, Grow, Feast'.

Her last presentation to the Herb Society in 2016 on edible plants drew huge interest. This time she returns to select a few interesting favourites. Not to be missed!

President's Report

G'day from your new (recycled) president. My previous two year stint began in 2014 but this time I will only be filling this role until our 2021 AGM in October.

We've had a typical autumn so far some lovely balmy days followed by cooler evenings. The changing colours of European deciduous shrubs and trees are in sharp contrast to the evergreen Australian plants in our parks, gardens and streetscapes.

One of my most recent garden outings was to the Ferny Creek Horticultural society autumn show in Sassafras. There were eye-catching displays on the tables (including a herb section) with a point system for 1st, 2nd and 3rd awarded. Some very green thumb (ed) gardeners in the club. There were also plants for sale, plus cut flowers so you could create your own bouquet. Flowering at the moment are Proteas, banksias and leucadendrons with so many varieties and colours. Gorgeous! There were also garden walks of the 4 hectare garden conducted throughout the weekend. The FCHS has a spring show on the weekend of the 4th and 5th September and I highly recommend you visit.



The city of Whitehorse recently conducted a sustainable living weekend and I attended Millie Ross's (from gardening Australia) presentation. She is an innovative Gardener who specialises in creative constructions, sources low-cost materials and uses plants in unusual ways. Millie showed us a wonderful basket (bought from an op shop) filled with potted up herbs to take camping so they can be used fresh to flavour meals.

Membership is due on July 1st and we have reluctantly had to increase fees for those Herb Society members who receive the herbage by post. (it's been \$34 for at least five years). It costs about \$3 to print and post each copy, and you'll agree that it's in a wonderful publication thanks to that our excellent editor Meridith. Email membership will remain at \$26 so if you wish to save \$12 consider changing from post. Single membership will now be \$38.

Happy Herbing everyone,

June Valentine President

Committee Changes

Welcome to our latest Committee member, Mary Dawson. Mary recently joined the Herb Society and come along to our March committee meeting to dip a toe in water and test it out. Thank Goodness for us, she found it to be nice and warm and decided to join the committee. Mary has already offered some fresh ideas and was the main driver behind the request for the Longacres garden visit, inspired by our April speaker.

At the same committee meeting, June Valentine put her hand up for the President role until the next AGM, which will revert back to the usual month of October. June is of course, well experienced in the role, having previously been President for 2 years. Thank you June, for stepping up and providing leadership for the Society; it is very much appreciated.

In fact; a very big thankyou to all our wonderful committee members.

Longacres: an upcoming tour

At the April meeting Guest Speaker, Craig Wilson of Gentiana Nursery, presented a wonderfully diverse presentation which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. It was particularly inspiring to hear about Craig's passion for gardening in the context of several properties that he cares for. A special part of the evening for us all was his description of how the gardens at Longacres have evolved over time.



Longacres at Olinda was the final home of the great Australian landscape artist, Sir Arthur Streeton. Designed and planted by Sir Arthur himself, he often drew on the garden to inspire his painting. Craig described some of the historical gardening projects at Longacres, which demonstrated the dedication, knowledge and love that has developed in that creative relationship with the environment and resounded with all at the meeting.

At the conclusion of Craig's presentation, some of the committee enquired if the gardens are ever open to the public and about the possibility for members of the Herb Society of Victoria. Craig suggested that we present our idea to the current owner, the Hon. Julie Dodds-Streeton QC. A draft letter was tabled at our recent committee meeting and sent to Julie for consideration.

We have requested a simple walk-through tour of the gardens, which we hope will be guided by Craig, clearly the best person to lead the tour. Numbers for this fantastic opportunity will be limited. We are yet to confirm dates and details, but it is expected for later this year. As per Julie's comment 'It is very cold and rainy at Olinda from late May through to mid October, so you may wish to plan for November onwards, when the garden is at its best.'

Mary Dawson



Baby Sun Rose

Baby Sun Rose with the tongue twister botanical name of *Mesembryanthemum cordifolium* was formerly known as *Aptenia cordifolia*. It is an exceptionally easy to care for ground cover that can take the hottest part of your garden. It has delicious, edible fleshy leaves and bright pink flowers. Add it to your garden and try it in your summer salads.

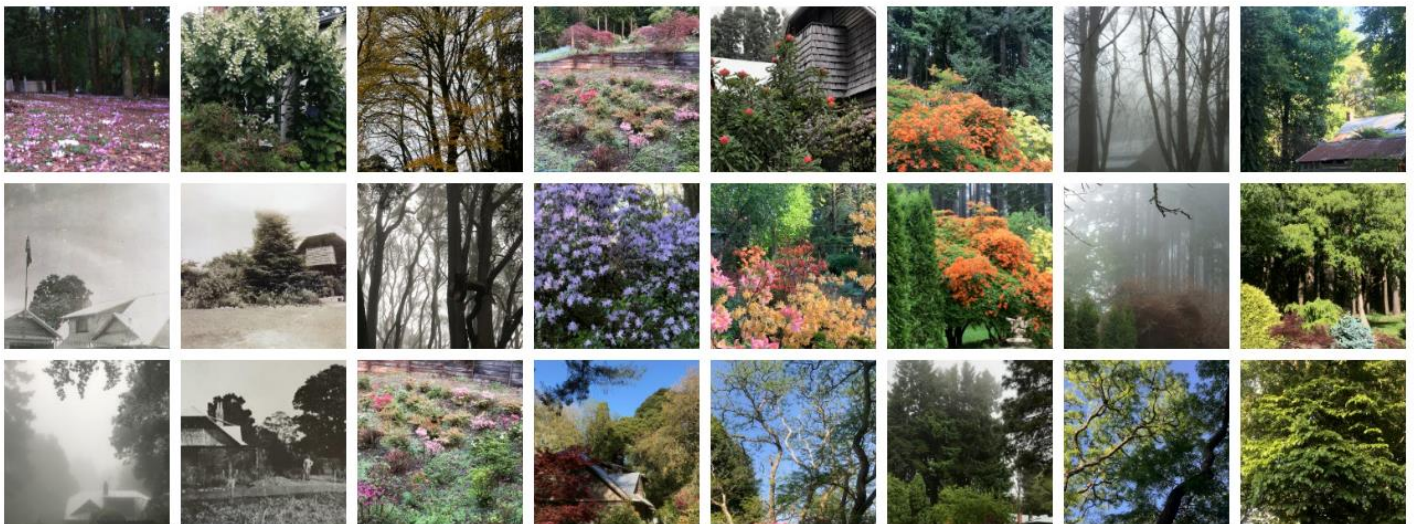
Pat Dawns

It's all about the Garden

Our April meeting guest speaker was Craig Wilson from Gentiana Nursery in Olinda. The official topic was rare and unusual Cottage Garden Plants and he certainly had many of them for sale. I bought the sweetest miniature fuchsia with wee leaves more akin to Thyme leaves. This became an Easter gift for my mother in law, who hates chocolate but loves plants, to fit into her very small garden. We visited her the other day, and saw it in flower for the first time. They are miniatures indeed; the tiny pink flowers are about 2 mm wide by 8 mm long; about 5 of them would fit on my finger nail! But I digress.....and so did Craig!

Craig is more than a plantsman; he is also a great gardener and garden restorer and much of his talk was about his passion for gardening. He started, as all good gardens should, with the preparation of the soil, passing on some tips he has gathered over the years. One is to leave prunings, especially tree branches and wood with the leaf litter in the garden. The more wood, the better. While it can look unsightly, it is important for the promotion of the good soil bacteria and insects, which creates better soil.

He also believes you cannot overfeed plants. According to Craig, most plants in our gardens and pots are undernourished, making them susceptible to pests and depriving them of being their best. Once again, the more the better. Feed well and feed often is his motto.



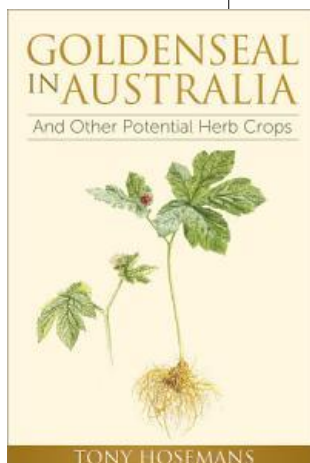
The main attraction was the Longacres garden, designed and planted by Sir Arthur Streeton, which Craig has been working on for many years. It is still in the Streeton family and the house is well preserved. When he started gardening there, much was overgrown and he has taken care over the years to prune, feed, plant and move plants from wrong positions. More than once, he has had to assert his expert opinion with the owner.

One example was an enormous camellia growing against the house. It was so large that it was in danger of damaging the house, but was also very pretty in flower, and discussions on pruning it back were not going well. Craig decided on asking for forgiveness rather than approval and lopped it back very hard. Within 2 or 3 years of feeding and care, it had grown to a manageable and safe height, with even more flowers. He had won the 'discussion'.

Craig had an amazing collage of several dozen photos from Longacres and clearly, could easily have talked for hours on each and every one of them. As interesting as it was (and it really was), we had to gently steer him back to the rare cottage garden plants he had for sale. There was a large range of plants available, so he was only had time to talk on a few of them in the time left. One he chose to mention was the miniature fuchsia and hence my purchase.

Meridith Hutchinson

Library Report



Do you have a library book that you are enjoying a little too much?

Our records show that a number of members are in possession of library books that they have borrowed. It would be appreciated if members would check their bookshelves and return any outstanding books at the next General Meeting. It is important that library books are available for the benefit of all members.

If any members are unable to attend to return books, please contact Marie Baker to discuss the matter.

Marie Baker, Librarian

And did you know that there are over 450 books in our library, so something for everyone. Many are specific to Victoria or Australian and some are hard to find items – here is just a select few of the diverse titles you can borrow:

A Barefoot Doctor's Manual (Guide to traditional Chinese Medicine.)	The Barefoot Doctor
A History of Herbal Plants (Botany, history and folklore combine to make this an Interesting account of herbs.)	Richard Le Strange
A Modern Herbal	Mrs M. Grieves
A Physician's Posy (An alphabetical posy with its better known remedies.)	Dr D. Shepherd
An Australia Herbal (Well compiled with particular interest to Australians.)	Penny Woodward
Australian Bush Flower Essences (History, purpose and making of Aust. Bush essences.)	Ian White
Dyemaking with Australian Flora (200 different items for wool dyeing)	Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria
Evening Primrose Oil (The story of the remarkable evening primrose.)	Judy Graham
Herbs for Health	John & Rosemary Hemphill
Home Made Wines (How to make wines, beers, and ales)	Peggy Hutchinson/Mary Woodman
How to grow Golden Seal in Australia	Tony Hosemans
In Praise of Parsley	Compiled by Guy Cooper & Gordon Taylor
Mice Don't like Spearmint (Many interesting facets of gardening)	Margaret Knight
Pest Repellent Plants	Penny Woodward
Plants of the Merri Merri (A home gardener's guide to using indigenous plants of the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne.	Friends of Merri Creek.
The Encyclopaedia of Herbs and Herbalism 350 colour plates, 190 drawings, comprehensive Reference.	Malcolm Stuart
The Golden Age of Herbs & Herbalists	Rosetta E. Clarkson
The Herb Tea Book	Dorothy Hall
The Kitchen Gardens at Heligan: Lost Gardening Principles rediscovered.	Tom Petherick
The Potted Herb (For people with limited space, topiary)	Abbie Zabar
Traditional Bush Medicine	Northern Territory Aboriginal Communities
Useful Wild Plants in Australia (A host of practical uses for native flora)	A.B. & J.W. Cribb

Memberships Due

Dear valued members,

We are fast approaching that time of the year when memberships are due on 1st July.

The printed and mailed Herb Age carries a high cost to produce and distribute, both in terms of dollars and cents, and to the environment as well. To help cover the increased costs of printing and postage, memberships that receive a printed Herb Age have been increased by \$4 per year.

We would like to encourage members to move to an email distributed Herb Age where possible; the price of these membership have remained the same.

Your ongoing support is very much appreciated.

Marie Baker, Membership Officer

Pickled Cumquats

At our meeting, I was chatting with Pat Down about cumquats – we'd just received a third bag of them – from someone who has a tree and is very happy to share their bounty!!! We've made cumquat marmalade and pickled cumquats. Pat hadn't tried the pickled ones, and as cumquats are now in season, I thought I could share the recipe we used.

Pickled Cumquats

Discard bruised, mouldy or squashed fruit. Wash cumquats within an hour of use. Remove the stems carefully, to avoid tearing the skins.

These fruit flavour a roast chicken or duck beautifully. Crush one inside the cavity of the bird, and when it is cooked, use a tablespoon of the vinegar to deglaze the baking dish before adding a glass of wine or stock.



Ingredients:

1 teaspoon salt
600 ml of water
500 g cumquats, washed
150 g caster sugar
½ stick of cinnamon
1 teaspoon of cloves
600 ml white wine vinegar

Method:

Dissolve salt in water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Pour over cumquats in a bowl, and let them stand for 12 hours. Drain. Simmer sugar and spices in vinegar until sugar has dissolved. Simmer a further 5 minutes. Carefully pack cumquats into a hot sterilised jar, then pour in the boiling vinegar syrup and seal. Store in a cool place. Leave for several weeks before using. Both the pickling syrup and the cumquats can be used.

Reference: From Stephane Alexander's The Cook's Companion - the big orange book, page 258 (including the introductory notes).

Robin Calabrese

Plants on the First Fleet

The first Fleet ships left England from Portsmouth on 13th May 1787 in fine weather so the convict passengers were allowed on deck. Special enclosures had been built to protect plants from the salt spray and strong winds of such a long journey. From England some small trees, bushes were housed. The 11 ships first sailed to Tenerife and to Rio di Janeiro in Brazil where they stayed for a month and then to South Africa's Cape Town. At Each port they took on fresh water, fresh foods and plants.

HERBS FROM ENGLAND

Included: Horseradish, Hyssop, Artichokes, either Globe or Jerusalem varieties, Borage, Calendula, Sage, Chamomile, Fennel, Garlic, Thyme, Red Clover, Lemon Balm and probably Blackberry. Of course, bags of food seeds were on board. Wheat, Barley, Corn and perhaps rice too. To feed all on board for months and for seed to plant in the colony.

Plants from England



Horse Radish



Hyssop



Globe



Jerusalem

Herbs from England



Fennel



Garlic

English Herbs



Sage: Salvia officinalis



Camomile: Anthemis nobilis

More English Herbs



Thymus vulgaris



Trifolium pratense

Herbs from England



Borago officinalis



Calendula officinalis

I love the listing of all the items on the 11 Ships of the First Fleet.

Easily to see the list was written by Pen from memory! No eraser, no way to change the order!

“ 20 Bushels of Seed Barley
1 Piano
10 Bushels of India Seed Corn
12 Baskets of Garden Seed ”

PLANTS AND SEEDS FROM RIO DE JANEIRO

- Banana – plants
- Cocoa – in the nut
- Coffee – both seed and plant
- Cotton seeds
- Guava seeds
- Eugenia or Pomme Rose (a plant bearing fruit shaped like an apple and with the flavour and odour of a rose)
- Indigo (a plant from which indigo dye is obtained)
- Ipecacuana – three sorts (an emetic and purgative)
- Jalap (a plant used for its purgative properties)
- Lemon - seeds and plants
- Oranges - various sorts – seeds and young plants (Originated in China)

Plants from Rio di Janeiro



Banana *Musa spp* Coffee *Coffea arabica*

Plants from Brazil



Cotton: *Gossipium hirsutum*

Brazilian plants



Cocoa and Guava
Theobroma cacao *Psidium guineense*

(Old World plants introduced by the Portuguese)

- Prickly Pear with the cochineal insect on it for Red Dye of Soldiers' Coats (the only species then growing naturally in the vicinity of Rio)

- Tamarind [Its origin is not given, but this is the most logical source].

Dye plants from Brazil



Indigofera tinctoria *Opuntia ficus-indica*
Blue Dye, but Cochineal insects eat Prickly Pear, Red dye

PLANTS FROM THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE SOUTH AFRICA

- Apple and Pear
- Fig tree and Quince (young trees and seeds)
- Strawberry Fruits of the First Fleet
- Vines of various sorts
- Sugar Cane
- Indian Corn (Introduced to Africa from the Americas)
- Seed wheat and barley
- All sorts of grain, as Rice, Wheat, Barley, Indian Corn etc for seed, which were purchased to supply whatever might be found damaged of these articles that were taken on board in England
- Oak and Myrtle (young trees and seeds)
- Bamboo
- Spanish Reed (Danube reed used for fishing rods)

References Collins David, An Account of The English Colony in New South Wales, edited by Brian Fletcher The History of Australian Cooking.



Apple Tree *Malus domestica*



Pear Tree *Pyrus communis*



Quince Tree *Cydonia oblonga*



Fig Tree *Ficus carica*



Strawberry *Fragaria ananassa*



Grape Vines *Vitis vinifera* - various



Wheat *Triticum aestivum* and Barley *Hordeum vulgare*



The crop plants were taken with their seeds from the Cape Town area to replace any seeds and plants, acquired earlier, which may have been damaged on board, by wind, rain or salt spray. The images of apples, pears, quinces, figs, strawberries, grapes are much bigger as they are modern hybrids of earlier less abundant fruits in the 1770s and 1788! The same applies to the grains, wheat, barley, oats and to the Indian corn cob.

The use of bamboo and Spanish reed for practical purposes, especially the latter to make fishing rods, were essential plants for daily survival in the new land. Including Oak trees and acorns and Myrtle for shade and decoration in the new colony reveals the degree of thought, planning and anticipation of dealing with new situations that Captain Arthur Phillip, Joseph Banks and the other organisers effected so capably.



Indian Corn *Zea mays*



Sugarcane *Saccharum officinarum*

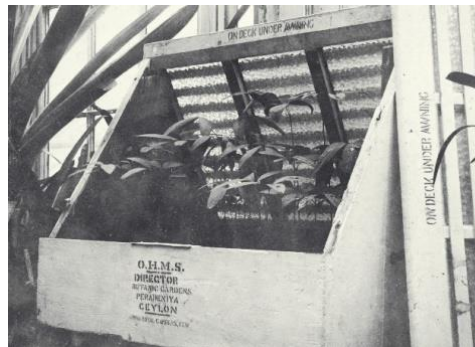


Bamboo *Bambusa oldhamii*



Spanish Reed *Arundo donax*

The fact that special enclosures were designed and built to house living trees and smaller plants in pots, is another indication of the immaculate preparation for this incredible undertaking. Unfortunately, there are no copies of drawings of these plant enclosures. There are descriptions of them but only modern images are on the web! I shall include images of those from the 19th century



The Wardian Case was invented accidentally in 1829 by Dr. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, who was also an amateur naturalist. The Wardian case was sealed with glass panels so plants in pots could survive for three years, as the transpired water dropped back into the soil and sun shone through the glass. However, 1829 is much later than 1787, the year that the First Fleet left England! See above images of Wardian cases. This device allowed plant hunters to successfully transport live plants across the globe.

Jill Bryant



Von Mueller Strikes Again!

While having lunch at Mt Baw Baw, Von Mueller struck again. While he was searching for alpine plants, he apparently was the first person in Victoria to ski down a slope, hence a run named after him. Was there anywhere in Victoria, this man did not go?

Jan Illingworth

The odd things you see

It was my gorgeous husband's birthday the other day and I took him out for a wonderful fine dining experience to celebrate. On entry, I was surprised to see glass door fridges filled with jars of strange objects in strange liquids, so I had to have a closer look, of course. They were quite fascinating, including pickled rose petals, preserved pine needles, strawberry gum infused fermented honey and pickled wild garlic.

The meal started with an appetiser that made me think of Colline Muir (as she has often brought nasturtium leaf wraps to our meeting suppers). These were tiny parcels wrapped in nasturtium leaves, even the stalk popped out on top. In case your interest is tweaked, the restaurant is called Gaea, described as petite degustation-only; it has amazing dishes you do not see anywhere else and is definitely for special occasions.



Totally unrelated, and not herbie, but in the department of 'Truth is stranger than fiction' that I can't resist sharing. We have been cleaning out and packing up to move house and came across some old papers. Definitely not fine dining, we found Women's Weekly diet recipes from 1974. Anyone for Sweet and Sour Liver or maybe Liver and Apple Casserole is more to your liking! And an article from The Sun on December 12, 1952 is 'Fisherman fights for life with octopus'. To summarise, a fisherman near the rugged shoreline of Pepin's Island, NZ was out at night and got out of his boat in waist high water to untangle a snare. An octopus caught him instead, wrapped a tentacle around a leg and dragged him under the water into a deep hole. He barely managed to escape to tell the tale.

From picked rose petals to fighting an octopus, I bet you didn't expect to see that! ☺

Meridith Hutchinson

The Herb Society of Victoria Inc.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

We welcome your renewals, which are due on **1st July**.

TITLE (Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

FIRST and LAST NAMES _____

BUSINESS NAME (optional) _____

ADDRESS _____

STATE _____ POSTCODE _____ MOBILE _____ HOME PH: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Please tick one of the membership boxes.

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership - The Herb Age by post | \$38 (2021 price) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership - The Herb Age by email | \$26 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership - The Herb Age by post | \$48 (2021 price) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership - The Herb Age by email | \$32 |

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In Person at our meeting, using cash or cheque with your renewal form

Preferred Method - Transfer funds into HOSV Bank Account and forward renewal form

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ADD YOUR NAME in the Additional Information/Reference field, to identify your payment.

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So we can check your details are correct please *return this completed form via:*

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