



The Herb Age



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

NO 443



*"The flower doesn't dream of the bee.
It blossoms and the bee comes." Mark Nepo*

THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

www.herbsocietyvic.org.au



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Facebook

www.facebook.com/groups/4104516136342577

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

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| President | Jan Illingworth |
| Vice President | Vacant |
| Committee Secretary | Sam Taylor |
| Treasurer | Carmen Hollway |
| The Herb Age Editor | Naomi Ingleton |
| (Assisting) | Meridith Hutchinson |
| Membership Officer | Vacant |
| (Acting) | Marie Baker |
| Committee | June Valentine |
| Committee | Nigel Holmes |
| Committee | Lesley Northey |
| Committee | Justine McDonough |

The Herb Society of Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we join together and pay respects to Elders past, present and yet to emerge.

HSOV MONTHLY EVENTS

HSOV meets on the first Thursday evening of every month, from February to December. Monthly events often feature a guest speaker, mini-talks or event theme, like a picnic or trivia, and followed by herb refreshments.

Monthly events are held at:

- **Room MB10 Main Building**
- Burnley campus of Melbourne University (was Burnley Horticultural College)
- 500 Yarra Blvd Richmond
- Enter MB building from the main entrance
- **Room is open 7.00pm for 7.30pm start**

Parking inside the grounds is often limited. There is ample parking on Yarra Boulevard, which is free after hours. Public transport access is nearby.

Next Meeting Details: See Page 4

HSOV DETAILS

ABN 22 261 579 261

PO Box 396, Camberwell,
Victoria, 3124, Australia

Bank Details to deposit payments, including membership renewals:
BSB 633000 / Account 158914432

Membership can also be paid via Try Booking link:
<https://www.trybooking.com/CHUGD>

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|--------------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
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THE HERB AGE

*Official Newsletter of the
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.

Please Email to
theherbage@outlook.com

Deadline
for next issue:
Wednesday 6th
March 2024

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THE HERB AGE

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

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Cover photo and quote: The photo has been provided by Jan Illingworth, showing bees buried in the deep red flowers of a Eucalypt. It was taken in Cobram on the Murray border; one of the town's street trees bursting with blooms and bees. See an article on page 9 about the majestic Eucalypt.

The quote is from Mark Nepo, a spiritual writer, poet and philosopher, whose several books have produced many quotes. Among some of my favourites are "we think that accomplishing things will complete us, when it is experiencing life that will" and "...I keep looking for one more teacher, only to find that fish learn from the water and birds learn from the sky."



But this simple one I like the most is "The key to knowing joy is being easily pleased." I think gardeners are very aware of this one, whether it be taking joy when seeds pop their first shoots through the soil, or the gentle waft as you brush past mint and thyme, or eating your home grown herbs, or sharing cuttings and herbs from your garden with friends or watching the sky change. Best wishes for a lovely 2024 and may you all enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

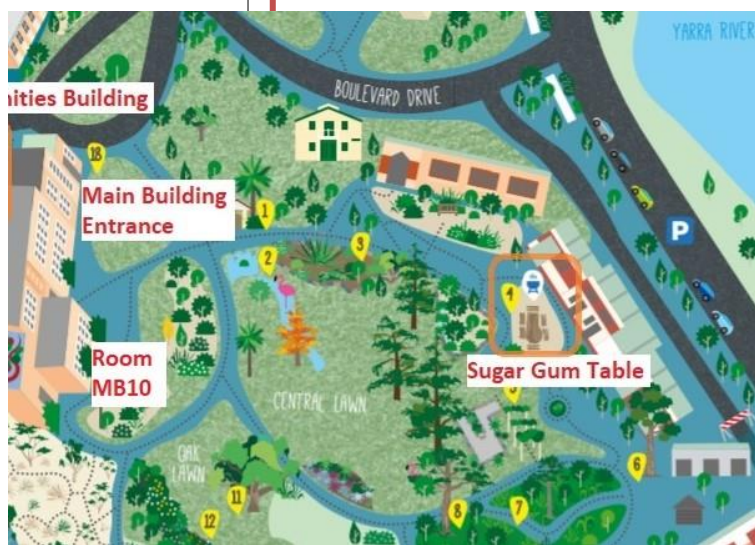
Our Next General Events

Burnley Horticultural College Campus and Gardens

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

Thursday 1st February 2024

Come join us for the HSOV New Year PICNIC



Early - From 6.00 pm

BYO Picnic to Share

At the Sugar Gum Tree Table

Near the Herb Garden in Burnley Gardens
(or in our usual room MB10 if poor weather)

Bring food, drink to share and be ready to chat.

A great chance to view the Herb Garden, in
anticipation of restoration or walk the historic
Burnley Gardens before or after the picnic.



Thursday March 7th 2024

General Monthly Event in Room MB10

Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start

Please bring plate of Supper to share or herbs for tea

Guest Speaker: Jan Illingworth, Naturopath

Topic: Herbs and History of Greek and Cyprus

Yazoo! As a Naturopath, Jan is passionate about the use of herbs and plants for health. The last issue from December 2023, included a compilation of posts from our fabulous President's 3 month Greek and Cypriot Odyssey, that barely scratched the surface.

This talk will take us away from the tourist tracks, on a journey of discovery of the flora and fauna that are at the roots of western medicine. All with a light hearted herbie perspective and told with Jan's incredible knowledge and dry sense of humour. Should prove to be fascinating and fun.

President's Report

Welcome to the new year and hope your Christmas and the holidays gave you all a refreshing break. Now, thinking of the planning for 2024, we have some good things happening for the year which will be posted presently.

My deep appreciation and thanks to the committee members for striking up some fab ideas and tons of energy. We would also like to put out a call for members input and suggestions of talks that will be gratefully received. If you have seen a recent talk, heard about it on the radio or from a friend, please email us at theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com with the details. Or even better, consider if you can do one yourself. HSOV provides a fee to speakers, so contact us to find out more.

We would also like to encourage posting herbie photos and events of gardens visited on the Facebook page. www.facebook.com/groups/4104516136342577. The group is a forum for HSOV members and people with the same interests. Please join the group if you haven't already, pass it on to friends, family and like-minded people to help us build the group up. Please feel free to include any up and coming happenings that we may like to attend.

Kicking off the year is the picnic on the 1st of February at the Sugar Gum table, Burnley Gardens. BYO a plate to share and a drink if desired from 6pm. Weather outlook is currently looking perfect - hope to see you all there.

Jan Illingworth, President

March Event - Farm Visit

We look forward to confirming a March visit with one of Victoria's leading herb farms to provide members a practical and hands on experience as to the lifecycle of growing and selling herbs, as well as additional knowhow on their various medicinal, culinary and ornamental uses through a guided tour.

At this stage, we are hoping to visit the Yarra Ranges Herb Farm. This is the farm of Caleb Armstrong, the amazing Pharmacist, who spoke at the Herb conference in 2022. His growing expertise is in using western medicines with herbs. We are not sure if the planets will align just yet, but if not, there are some other options that are also being explored.



The visit is being planned for mid to late March. Details will be provided shortly via email, on our website and our Facebook group. If you are unable to access these media and are interested in attending, please contact Sam or other committee members

Sam Taylor

 **WELCOME** to our Newest Member

Carol Kirby is our newest Herb Society of Victoria member.

A very warm welcome, Carol and we hope to see you at an event very soon. 😊



Herb Garden Revitalisation

HSOV are currently in talks with Burnley to review the herb garden planting schedule and catalogue. If you're interested in contributing to this re-design or taking part in potential future working bees, please contact the committee on theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com. The current plant listing of the garden is below for members information:

Medicinal Herb Section:

- Goats Rue
- Spiny Bears Breeches
- Turkish Oregano
- Borage
- Greek Sage
- Northern Evening Primrose
- Wild Germander
- Catchfly
- Pansy
- Columbine
- Dropwort
- Spanish Foxglove
- Skullcap
- Sweet Pea
- Feverfew/Wild Chamomile
- Hollyhock
- Water Figwort
- Oakleaf Geranium
- Persian Tobacco
- Savory
- Spur Flower
- Figwort
- Echinacea
- Sweet William
- Velvet Plant
- Wood Sage

Quadrant 2:

- Tansy
- Sweet Wormwood
- Lemon Balm
- Bird Cherry
- Wonder Violet
- Poppies
- Mint
- Artichoke

Quadrant 1:

- Toothpickweed
- Swiss Chard
- Faba Bean
- Rhubarb
- Peruvian Ground Apple
- Coltsfoot
- Canna Lily
- Currant Tomatoes
- Alexanders

Infusion Bed:

- Rosehip, Red Valerian
- Tansy
- Pineapple Sage
- Lemon Balm

Sam Taylor

Committee Member Sam Taylor

The committee has some new faces to be introduced. We'll start with Sam Taylor. On his first visit to the Herb Society of Victoria mid last year, he joined the HSOV, plus the committee and has taken on some key roles. You'll be seeing and hearing lots more of Sam! Next issue, we hope to Justine McDonough and new Editor Noami Ingleton.

Sam is passionate around re-examining historical medicinal herbal uses and validating these using modern science. He has a particular interest in herbs for longevity and cognitive enhancement. He is eager to welcome back a horticulture student base to HSOV and to help the society with further outreach efforts through novel events and new social media channels. Sam's grandfather was a herbalist and nursery owner, and he hopes to keep on this tradition.

Share your Joy!

The Herb Society of Victoria is a self-sufficient, member driven organisation with an aim to share knowledge about everything related to herbs. It is for the members and by the members and it takes all of us putting in a little or a lot to keep the Herb Society thriving. Thank you to all members for contributions to the Herb Age over the time I have been editor and I look forward to reading many more as Naomi takes over the role. Remember, knowledge is only useful if its shared.

In fact, what interests you about the world of herbs, gardening, nature, environment, natural science, traditional remedies, or plant uses, will also interest someone else. How many times have you wondered about one of the above and done some research into it, or seen a herb in a place you hadn't expected, or viewed an article and you've come away thinking 'Really? – that is amazing'? Well, so will someone else! Be the agent for bringing that joy to others.

Just pop down a few lines about a book/article you've read a garden/show/exhibition you've seen, recipe/gardening tips you've tried or whatever else and email it off. Great if you can provide a photo or 2 too. Please provide all references and tell us what your experience of it is. Our President has been setting a fine leadership example, by submitting interesting articles, often book reviews, travels or photos with a few herbal gems of wisdom and insight - thank you Jan.

Thankyou Naomi, for becoming our fabulous new Herb Age Editor. Please be extra supportive of Naomi in the new role, by sending in lots of articles for the Herb Age. Share your valuable and valued herbie knowledge.

Meridith Hutchinson, Outgoing Editor

Polygala Tenifolia

Ed note: At last years AGM, Sam gave a talk about the neurological and anti-inflammatory benefits of Polygala, excerpted below:

Polygala Tenifolia: Highlighting herbs with holistic cognitive enhancing properties.

Polygala Tenifolia is part of a large genus of flowering plants belonging to the family Polygalaceae, commonly known as milkworts or snakeroots.

History and Regional Use:

Ancient Greece: Polygala was believed to elevate milk yields in cattle which is why it was named "much milk" in Greece

Ancient China: Was used to treat mood and psychotic illnesses in North Asian regions.

Modern Day: In the present day, many compounds from Polygala are being researched, isolated and standardised for use in the nootropic or "smart drug" industry.



How it Works:

MAOI Effects: The herb has monamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) properties, which can help increase the levels of neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain, potentially improving mood and cognitive function through full spectrum enhancement.

NDMA Receptor Protection: The herb has been found to exhibit NMDA receptor antagonism, which is involved in preserving learning ability and retaining memories.

Increased Nerve Growth Factor: The herb has been reported to increase production of nerve growth factor (NGF), which is essential for the growth, maintenance and survival of neurons. Increased NGF levels may support overall brain health and cognitive function.

Multifaceted Antioxidant Properties: Acts as a protection against environmental stressors like toxins, alcohol, and stimulants that can be harmful at high doses

Preparations and Dosage:

Dried Root Extract: Best for improving learning and spatial memory (1-3 grams per day)

Alcoholic Tincture: Is best for the mood boosting effects and is generally stronger due to more bioactive compounds in the ethanol content (2.5 to 7 grams a day)

Water Extraction (Tea): Is best for the anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant effects of the herb - and is generally milder (1-3 cups per day)

Sourcing:

Standardised Capsules: Nootropics Depot is generally the most reputable and trusted source - containing all parts of the plant and being independently quality tested.

Extracts: Esty has a wide range of herbal preparations, but due diligence is required.

Fresh Plants and Seeds: All Rare Herbs Australia - an online distribution site - sometimes stocks the seed.



Cultivation:

1. Grows best when planted in Autumn to avoid the summer heat and allows its root system to establish.
2. Plant in full sun to partial shade. It prefers light and well-draining soil and can tolerate coastal settings. It is mostly found in grassland as its natural habitat.
3. It is quite self-sustaining and only needs light pruning with minimal fertilisation.
4. In addition to its cognitive benefits, it can also provide ornamental benefits through its deep purple and pink flower.

Sam Taylor

A Fine Posie Holder

The photo is an expanding silver posey holder at The Johnston Collection, museum of fine art and fine decorative art in East Melbourne. There was a special viewing in mid-January of things usually closed up in boxes or drawers. This would be perfect for tissue mussyies! The top section opens out like petals, then you pop your Posie in and put a pin through the side to hold it in.

Marina Bristrin



Humble Gum Leaf or Natural Wonder?

Ever played a gum leaf? Some members who have been around a while, may remember the interesting talk June Valentine gave on Eucalyptus at our June 2019 general event. I'm always in awe of the things I learn through the Herb Society, like how they have been harvesting the same trees for 100 years to produce commercial Australian Eucalyptus oil - remember to always check the country of origin and stick to Aussie oil for the best quality. At the end of June's talk, she gave us the opportunity to play a gum leaf...or rather try. A skill that was clearly beyond my limited range. But there is much more to the gum leaf, than a would be instrument.

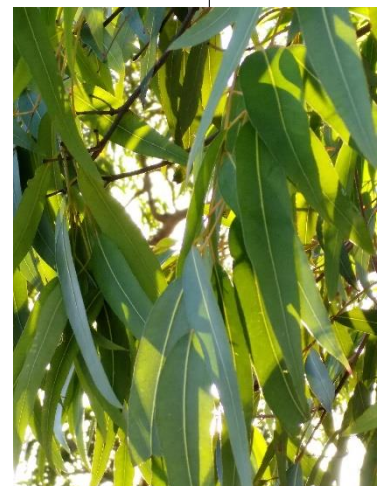
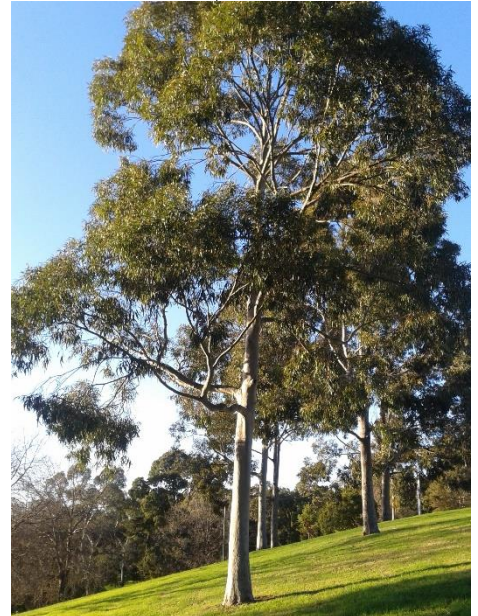
There are 900 Eucalyptus varieties; 894 of which are native to Australia, ranging from elegant giants to low sculptured beauties, with trunks from smooth alabaster white to dark, fibrous and rough barks and motley effects and colours all the way in between. The calyx that forms the flower provide the source for its name, from the Greek 'eu' for well and 'kalypto' to cover.



Eucalyptus are the world's tallest flowering plant, the flowers providing a rich source of food for insects, birds, animals and they have been particularly stunning this year. I have loved the drive to see my brothers in Drouin, where the streets are lined with flowering gums of white, apricot, orange, pink, crimson and the famous scarlet red. The flowers turn to woody fruit, an inspiration for the cherished "Gumnut Babies."

Of course, they are 'Gum' trees and thick sap oozes on damaged trunks to form the gum. This resin (and other parts of the tree) has been used for food and medicine by indigenous peoples for many millennia. The gum tree also being a source for tools, transport, shelter and traditional stories. The roots of some trees, like those from the Murry Mallee region have large lignotubers underground, which send up new shoots after bushfires have destroyed the tops. The oldest trees in Australia are up to 500 years old, but some of these roots have been estimated up to 900 years old. The oldest fossils, dating 52 million years ago, were found in Patagonia, while genome sequencing has dated Eucalypt origins to at least 109 million years ago, sharing the lands with the dinosaurs.

Eucalyptus has that wonderful smell, especially after rain. In the nearby park in the mornings, as I stand to do Qigong with mozzies waiting in the shadows, I grab a few leaves that have dropped to the ground, crush them and rub my hands over my arms, t-shirt and hat to help to keep those insects at bay. The leaves have oil glands packed with Eucalyptus oil, with many uses that are well documented in June's talk (see issue "416 August September 2019 Herb Age" under the HSOV members section herbsocietyvic.org.au). The leaves also contain biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCs), which react chemically with the atmosphere and this gives rise to the 'Blue Mountains' distinctive colour. Research is showing Gum trees are the greatest recyclers of CO₂ to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.





But that's not all. The leaf of the Eucalyptus tree is a fascinating piece of natural engineering. The oil makes the leaves unpalatable to deter harmful insects eating them, but it is super sophisticated. From the ABC article quoted below "In 2013, biologists discovered that a yellowbox tree (*Eucalyptus mellidora*) in a sheep paddock in New South Wales could change the smell of its leaves from one side to the other to protect itself against attack." The leaves store material drawn up from the soil by the tree. X-rays have revealed minerals and elements, including gold in the Kimberley regions. They also change during the life of the tree. Young saplings hold their leaves out horizontally to catch the sunlight for growth. As they grow, and are exposed to more sun, the leaf twists on the stem to droop down, reducing exposure and water loss.

Eucalyptus trees are so much a part of the Australian identity. They are majestic, great adapters, culturally significant, fascinating and very useful trees. All parts of the tree have a story to tell, including the leaf. From musical instrument to gold detector, from air purifier to insect repellent, the humble Eucalyptus leaf is truly a wonder of nature.

Meridith Hutchinson

References:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2018-01-26/eucalyptus-trees-an-iconic-australian/9330782>

<https://www.csiro.au/en/news/all/articles/2018/march/national-eucalyptus-day-five-things-you-might-not-know-about-these-flowering-giants>



Bush Seasons Flora and Fauna

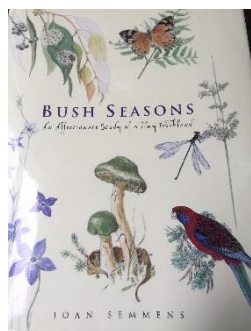
Following finding the lovely book: *Bush Seasons* by Joan Semmens, I thought it would be a nice trip to Alexandra to take a look at the McKenzie Flora & Fauna Reserve which she had detailed. On the Goulburn River before Eildon, Alexandra was a well vegetated that inhabited by about 700,000 Aborigines before 1824.

Hovell and Hume, spoke highly of the grazing area which was subsequently taken up by squatters until divided up with an area purchased in 1865 by the Scot, Donald McKenzie. He introduced sheep and some bullocks which struggled with scrub, wild dogs, fires, floods and tyranny of distance before gold was found in Alexandra.

Moving up to the 1930's, it was decided after a rifle range and golf club were rejected, that the 45 hectare area should be made into a reserve to revert back to bushland for all to enjoy including native animals (though I did see a hare) and plants. Jean comments that the; "bushland has no spectacular beauty, no instant gratification – only the artless placement of colour, shape and shadow...a purity of sound, a fragrance of leaf and of earth, and a quiet stillness."

The book on the other hand, has beautiful illustrations by Jean with researched facts on each plant, animal, birds and butterflies. The pink flowers; centaury with native dandelion in the background, butterfly is the Skipper *Trapezities sp.* Alexandra is a very pleasant place to visit anyway as it has 4 pubs, 2 op shops and a craft brewery.

Jan Illingworth



Floral Wedded Bliss

It was a lovely night for our December monthly event. The early share picnic was well attended with a fabulous and varied array of morsels to choose from, and wine! Donado's home made wine featuring with a little left over to share at supper after the main event. And there are definitely a few recipes required for the Herb Age. If what you made got more than one 'yum' or delicious', then send it on in! It was so lovely to see Shahni Hance join us for the picnic too.



Shahni gave an incredibly interesting talk of the history of wedding flowers. There was a magnificent display of old fashioned wedding flowers and items, all labelled and with the flower meaning. She particularly prized the antique waxed orange blossom, which is 'Purity and loveliness.'

Flowers for weddings can be traced back to Roman times where both brides and grooms wore garlands of Ivy to symbolise internal love. In medieval times, they carried onions and garlic to ward off bad spirits and it is in the Middle Ages that the floral toss appeared. Wheat and nuts were also added to signify fertility. In the Elizabethan era, men and women carried and adorned their hair flowers. Queen Victoria introduced the wedding Tussie Mussie, made of snowdrops, as they were Alberts favourite flower and Myrtle sprigs from Albert. The sprigs were planted and even now, royal weddings include a piece from these trees.



She explained that when she started as a florist, the flowers were wired for nearly all bouquets, but today most are stemmed bunches. It has changed as it was a time consuming (and therefore costly) process, with wire stems for each flower, then wired together and finished with ribbon. The result was very light, easy to manage and if done well, the flowers lasted for days. Tip: if looking for cheaper florist wire, try Apack in Dandenong. The stretchy florist tape can be found at most \$2 shops.

She had prepared several examples and show wiring a few flowers to made a great wired bouquet with herbs, calendula and lavender. I was lucky enough to win in the raffle and have dried it. Then she whipped up another of hydrangea and miniature roses. So beautiful. Thanks to those who brough in family wedding photos which showed the changing fashions. Thankyou also to Anna Lorains for the great photos, summing it up as a " Wonderful and very educational evening". Many thanks to Shahni.

Meridith Hutchinson



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