

THE GARDENS

AUTUMN 2021

Issue 128

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GOING UNDERGROUND

FUNGI COME TO THE FORE

MEET THE NEW CEO • WHAT'S ON
• FRIENDS FOR LIFE • WALKING TOURS

Foundation
& Friends of the
BOTANIC GARDENS



Fortune's keteleeria
Keteleeria fortunei

Introduced to Britain in 1844 by the British plant hunter, Robert Fortune, this great tree, related to the true firs, *Abies* spp., did not thrive in Britain. It was later sent to the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney where it thrived and remains today a 30m plus giant. The massive trunk is clothed in heavy corky bark while the crown is too high to see well. It grows in the Palm Grove, bed 23a north of the Cryptogram House. A younger specimen grows in the Oriental Garden's western edge of bed 50 where the attractive foliage can be appreciated.

Margaret Hanks



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On the cover

Aseroe rubra the Starfish Stinkhorn or Anemone Fungus, was the first fungus named and scientifically described for Australia. It is notorious for its foul smell of decaying flesh, which attracts flies that spread its spores. The image was captured by Sydney-based amateur photographer Glenn Smith, who specialises in nature and landscapes.



AUTUMN UPDATE

Hopeful Honeyeaters
by Pamela Pauline



GARDEN ART MONTH

Four enticing exhibitions – all free for entry – and a guided sculpture walk are set to make this year's Garden Art Month a major drawcard for the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.

The marquee event, *Fungi x Botanica*, runs from 24 April to 9 May at Lion Gate Lodge. It combines the 21st exhibition of Botanica with an artistic foray into the fascinating world of fungi (for more details head to page 18).

Garden Art Month will also feature two new exhibitions. *Natures Best* (22 March–5 April in The Calyx) will focus on the works of artist Cylene Whiteley, who uses a wide variety of mediums to

celebrate the natural world. And *In Progress 3* (27 April–9 May in The Calyx) will feature painters Lorraine Best and Richard Sakurovs, who draw on their love of nature to explore new and familiar landscapes.

One of the most intriguing elements of this year's Garden Art Month will be *Fragile Beauty Rich and Rare* (6–26 April in The Calyx). Award-winning portrait, landscape and fine art photographer Pamela Pauline spent 18 months capturing images of endangered flora, before compositing and layering them to create the complex, contemporary, highly-detailed compositions that will be on display.



DON'T MISS APRIL SCULPTURE WALK

As part of this year's Garden Art Month, horticulturist Paul Nicholson will take visitors on a fascinating tour of the Royal Botanic Garden's sculptures, statues and memorials.

Nicholson, who has been a horticulturist with the Royal Botanic Garden for more than 25 years, is also currently the manager of the Garden's Volunteer Programs, where he designs and leads bespoke tours for visitors and specialist groups.

"Each (of the Garden's sculptures, statues and memorials) has a story to tell," he says, "revealing the fascinating evolution of values, aesthetics and artistic taste of society."

Tours will run every Wednesday during April (10am–12noon), with participants meeting at The Calyx. The price is \$20 for Foundation & Friends members and \$25 for the general public.

For more information and bookings visit rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/whatson/Wednesday-walks



Parrots in Peril, Poised Palms
and *Yesterday* by Pamela Pauline



NEW HERBARIUM MARKS KEY MILESTONES

The new National Herbarium of New South Wales at the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan is continuing to take shape, with installation of the building's stylish fly-roof structure due for completion by autumn.

Construction of the Herbarium's rammed earth vaults is also now underway, while several fit-out issues are also being finalised, including the design of the facility's audio-visual systems.

Meanwhile, a concerted push over December and January has seen the number of discrete images stored and available for viewing in the Herbarium's AWS cloud edging towards 400,000.

As part of the Herbarium's Digitisation Project, more than 515,000 specimens have now been captured as high-resolution digital images - a remarkable achievement given the level of preparation, imaging, transcription, and data management the process involves.

The total number of digitised specimens includes more than 86,000 packet specimens and almost 430,000 flat-sheet specimens.

A further 600,000-plus Herbarium specimens are now stockpiled for digitisation, while almost 70,000 transcriptions have now been completed.

In the last financial year, Foundation & Friends members supported the Herbarium Digitisation Project by providing \$750,000 in funding.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



A belated welcome to the New Year and a quick update for our members and supporters.

PEOPLE

Following the completion of an executive search program the Board was pleased to appoint Peter Thomas as our new Chief Executive Officer – I encourage you to turn to page 16 to learn more about Peter's experience, background and philosophy.

Meanwhile we welcomed back Karen Vien, our former Chair of Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, who agreed to fill the casual vacancy occasioned by Peter as he now fills the CEO ex-officio position on the Board. Also joining us is Carla Armanet, Director, Experiences, Partnerships & Engagement, as the Garden's new representative director. Carla replaces Dr Brett Summerell, Director of Research & Chief Botanist, who will continue to be an active contributor to the Foundation & Friends program.

I am honoured to have been re-elected by our Board as Chair, and I can also confirm Kate Horrobin's re-election as Deputy Chair. I look forward to working with all Board members – along with management and volunteer teams – to ensure our ongoing success.

In the Foundation & Friend office, two part-time staff members have joined the team: Julia Sparkes with

exhibitions and Alice Bruyn with events. A warm welcome to both!

EVENTS

I am pleased to report that we have recommenced art classes and some Australian trip itineraries. In addition, we have established our Exhibition and Events program, with our first exhibition of the year – *Fungi x Botanica* – opening at Lion Gate Lodge on Friday 23 April.

I trust you will join us to celebrate and enjoy our first-class events.

In the meantime, thank you all for your continuing support in these challenging times.

Ian Breedon

***Chlorophyllum* – Shaggy Parasol Fungi by Elaine Musgrave from the *Fungi x Botanica* exhibition**





WHAT THE FLORA?!

The Gardens has launched a smart and engaging new video series called What the Flora!? The entertaining videos explore some of the cutting-edge research taking place at the new Australian Institute of Botanical Science to protect Australia's unique plant life. Topics will cover everything from hand-pollinating tiny, endangered orchids with toothpicks to battling plant diseases with DNA science.

The first episode – which went live in January – explains how scientists are using seed-banking to guard endangered native plant species against bushfires (last summer, about seven billion trees were impacted by the fires). New videos are set to appear each month until May.

What the Flora?! is presented by the Gardens' Science Communicator Vanessa Fuchs, who is also responsible for the award-winning Branch Out podcast, which since its launch in 2018 has attracted more than 120,000 downloads.

"We've done videos before, but nothing like this quirky style, which is something you could imagine on Netflix as a miniseries," says Fuchs. "The aim was to produce something light, fresh and modern that engages people with the role plants play in our lives, and the work our scientists are doing to protect those plants."

"The videos will also help raise the profile of the new Australian Institute of Botanical Science and show people the diversity of research being undertaken."



FRESH FACES AT COTTAGE 6

Foundations & Friends recently welcomed two new staff members to its Sydney team.

Julia Sparkes joins the organisation as part-time Exhibition Project Manager. Sparkes, who recently completed her MBA, brings to the role extensive experience managing creative projects. Her most recent positions included Studio Manager/ Art Director at Candle Bark Creations, and Studio Manager/ Operations Coordinator at content creation agency Studio Mondo.

Outside of work Sparkes says she loves to travel, but with international borders shut for the time being, her energies are being directed to two little rescue dogs she adopted last October.

New part-time Events and Marketing Assistant Alice Bruyn first joined Foundation & Friends as a volunteer, then worked at the organisation as an intern. She is now actively promoting events and managing communication with volunteers and members.

Born and raised in Tamworth, Bruyn moved to Sydney in early 2020 and is currently studying Event and Hospitality Management at Kenvale College in Randwick.

"Working at Foundation & Friends has really allowed me to combine my love for nature and events," she says.



Blue Mountains Botanic Garden

BLUE MOUNTAINS ROAD TRIP

The addition of a new roadhouse diner has further enhanced the Blue Mountains Road Trip – a joint initiative between the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden and some of the region's local businesses.

An interactive map on the SydneytoBlueMountains.com.au website showcases 18 experiences that can be mixed and matched to create a fun trip from Sydney to the Blue Mountains.

The newest addition to the collection of experiences, the High Hopes Roadhouse in Bilpin Village, is the brainchild of Sean Moran and his partner Michael Robertson, who also operate Panaroma restaurant in Bondi. The Roadhouse is open every day and offers country-style, locally grown fare, along with some of Moran's best-known dishes.



**AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE OF
BOTANICAL
SCIENCE**

AIBS SET FOR ONLINE LAUNCH

The Gardens is officially launching the new Australian Institute of Botanical Science (AIBS) next month with an exciting online event on Thursday 25 March.

AIBS consists of the physical and virtual scientific collections, research, facilities and staff at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan and the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah.

It will be one of the nation's premier botanical research organisations and will help ensure the survival of plants and build more resilient ecosystems for future generations.

Hosted by the Garden's Chief Executive, Denise Ora, the launch event will take place on 25 March and feature an impressive line up of speakers and guests.

Stay tuned for more details on the Garden's website and social media channels, as well as the Foundation & Friends eNewsletter.

THE GARDENS FAREWELLS FORMER EDITOR

Gina Hetherington, Editor of The Gardens magazine since 2017, was sadly forced to step down from the role late last year due to ill health. Foundation & Friends CEO Peter Thomas paid tribute to Hetherington's dedication and creativity.

"Gina's hard work ensured The Gardens was an entertaining, informative and valuable source of information," he says. "Thank you on behalf of all our members, and best of luck as you focus on your recovery".

Meanwhile, journalist and editor David Carroll has stepped into the role as Guest Editor. Carroll, who has a background in science and communications, brings more than 25 years' experience to the role.

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



It's been an exciting start to the year, and we are certainly getting back into the swing of things across the Gardens with a busy schedule of activity already taking place.

I would like to congratulate Peter Thomas on his appointment as the ongoing CEO of Foundation & Friends. Carla Armanet, Director of Experiences, Partnerships & Engagement at the Botanic Gardens Greater Sydney, was also recently appointed to the Foundation & Friends' Board and she is already working closely with Peter on exciting fundraising opportunities for our wonderful Gardens.

Through the Smoke, Through our Eyes is an exhibition launching in March 2021 showing firsthand accounts and experiences from the staff at Mount Tomah during the 2019 Gospers Mountain bushfire. I hope that you can visit this exhibition to see the artworks created entirely by the staff, each one tells a different story of survival and

camaraderie as the Gardens faced one of its biggest natural threats in history.

Works continue to move at a fast pace at the New Herbarium in Mount Annan, which is on track for completion later this year. I am constantly impressed by the level of professionalism from the construction team, the architects and all staff.

Climate change is of course a global challenge and we have a responsibility to lead, encourage, and contribute to research, particularly relating to plants and their habitats. With that in mind, we are taking a bold step forward by launching the Australian Institute of Botanical Science on 25 March 2021 – through its establishment we have ambitious plans to expand and elevate our role in botanical science on a local, national and global scale. The virtual launch is open to everybody and I would be thrilled by your attendance (see story this page).

Denise Ora



New exhibition, Through the Smoke, Through our Eyes, open in March

LIFE REWARDS THE TRULY COMMITTED

As volunteers, Juvie Ormonde and Raoul de Ferranti have shared a number of milestones. In the mid-2000s, after retiring from their respective careers, both began volunteer work with Friends of the Botanic Gardens. In 2008 each stepped up to serve on key roles on the organisation's committee. And 13 years later, their outstanding contributions have been recognised with Life Membership awards. Upon hearing of their awards, the two also shared almost precisely the same response: "There are others more deserving". Plenty, including the Foundation & Friends Board, would disagree.

Raoul's interest in supporting the Gardens was piqued in 1998 when his mother passed away and he and his sisters made a donation towards the construction of a small pavilion at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden to memorialise their parents. A couple of years later, having retired from a long career in the mining sector – during which he nurtured a strong interest in the Australian bush – the Gardens were on his radar for volunteer activities.

"The problem was that I had to wait for a spot to become available on the Growing Friends team, which only operated on Tuesdays and Thursdays," he says. "I was finally able to come onboard in 2004 when a Wednesday team was created."

Raoul quickly became involved in developing the nursery space in Sydney and within a couple of years was helping coordinate the Growing Friends operation. By 2008 he was President of Friends, and following its merger in 2012 with the Foundation he took on the role of Deputy Chairman for another three years, only stepping down from the Board in late December.

Today, he remains a key member of the team that runs Growing Friends. "We now have separate teams in Sydney for each day of the week who propagate and sell, plus a team to sell on Saturdays. And we have significantly expanded the team at Mount Annan. The total sales revenue we raise has gone up from around \$30,000 a year to more than \$200,000.

"The most rewarding aspect for me has been the improvements we've made in the volume, range and quality of the products we create and the reputation that we've developed. There are always challenges in organising and coordinating separate teams, but it's also been immensely satisfying to work with such a disparate group of people who are so passionate and bring such a range of skills to the organisation."

Juvie Ormonde's initial involvement with Friends of the Botanic Gardens had more to do with timing than sentiment.

"I love plants and gardens so I joined the organisation in late 2005 and after I retired I started looking for volunteer jobs in cultural institutions," she says. "I applied for a couple and Friends were the ones who got in first."

Juvie's career had seen her work as an auditor and regulator of major financial institutions for the Auditor-General of New South Wales and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. So, not surprisingly, when the

position of Company Secretary became available in 2008, the organisation's then Chief Executive asked if she'd take on the role. Thirteen years later she continues to shoulder the responsibility.

For Juvie the most rewarding aspect of her involvement with Foundation & Friends has been the people encountered and the friendships forged, particularly through her involvement with the organisation's many fund-raising exhibitions.

"The variety of people I've met has been one of the great benefits of an amazing experience. And of course its satisfying to know that funds raised through the exhibitions are helping ensure the Gardens survive and support their work in the study and conservation of plants." So satisfying, she says, that being awarded Life Membership elicited mixed emotions.

"There are so many others who have been volunteering for longer, I felt a little bit like 'why should I be rewarded?'" she says. "Especially for something from which I get so much benefit."

Raoul was equally surprised and humbled: "If anything, it made me realise how many others have been growing for even longer than me and are equally or more deserving of recognition."

Understandably both are keen advocates of volunteering and encourage members to get involved in projects that genuinely interest them.

"It's important to identify the skills you have that can make an organisation better," says Juvie. "And then be prepared to bring a sense of adaptability, determination, and commitment, you can't do a little bit and then drop off. You also need an appreciation for other people's views, and of course you need a good sense of humour!"

David Carroll

'It's been immensely satisfying to work with such a disparate group of people'





Photos: Jamie Plaza, Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah



The Blue Mountains
BOTANIC GARDEN
Mount Tomah

SHEDDING LIGHT ON AUTUMN'S COLOURS

WITH SUMMER FADING, MORE SOMBRE SHADES WILL SOON TRANSFORM MOUNT TOMAH'S FOLIAGE. SENIOR HORTICULTURIST MARION WHITEHEAD EXPLAINS THE FORCES THAT FASHION A VISUAL TREAT

As we approach autumn, Sydney's weather can often be a little confusing, leaving us in two minds as to whether we put away our summer clothes and reach for more snug attire. We aren't the only ones a little baffled by the weather: a quick look around Mount Tomah suggests there are plenty of trees also at a loss as to what they should wear.

Autumn colours, which are generally at their most vibrant at Mount Tomah in late April, are in fact caused by well understood chemical changes in the leaves of deciduous trees.

As the temperatures fall and days become shorter, less light is available to the plants and, as a result, production of chlorophyll (the green pigment in a plant's leaves) dwindles and eventually breaks down. Once the chlorophyll has deteriorated, pigments present in the leaf are revealed, such as carotene – the pigment which gives carrots their orange hue and autumn leaves their yellow appearance.

Meanwhile, the reds we see in spectacular autumn foliage are created by the reaction of the last of the sugars created by the chlorophyll with proteins in the cell sap, resulting in a purply-red pigment called anthocyanin. The production of this pigment requires specific environmental conditions, including lots of sunlight, temperatures slightly above freezing and low rainfall.

Unfortunately, due to unseasonably warm weather, we have in recent times seen far less of these red and purple pigments and just a glimpse of some yellows. While it's easy to lament the fact that we might not occasionally

see some autumn colours, it's also an opportunity to stand back and appreciate how little control we have over nature and how it can continue to surprise us.

The good news is that there is still plenty of colour to see at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah: the proteas are putting on a lovely display, there are beautiful pink and white nerines, cyclamen and begonias in the Formal Garden and there are dahlias blooming too. But if its traditional autumn colours you yearn for, wander around the bottom of The Residence and near the North American Woodland.



'Once the chlorophyll has deteriorated, pigments present in the leaf are revealed'

HOT TIPS ON NATIVE PICKS

AUSTRALIA'S BEAUTIFUL, ADAPTABLE AND ROBUST INDIGENOUS PLANTS ARE THE MOUNT ANNAN HORTICULTURE TEAM'S 'SPECIALIST TOPIC'. SENIOR HORTICULTURIST CHRIS COLE REVEALS JUST A FEW OF HIS TEAM'S FAVOURITES

Telopea speciosissima
(Waratah)





Grevillea eriostachya
(Desert Grevillea)



Carpobrotus glaucescens
(Native Pigface)



Dwarf acacia (Dwarf Wattle)

Mount Annan’s horticulture team take care of an incredibly diverse range of native plants spread across our woodlands, grasslands, rainforests and horticultural displays (as well as the new seedlings in the Nursery).

When it comes to native plants, home gardeners are also spoiled for choice, which can make it hard when deciding which plants are best for your garden.

The following list is by no means comprehensive, but it does provide a good place to start if you are thinking of making the switch to natives or want to introduce a few sustainable – and special – plants to your garden.

UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL

● *Telopea speciosissima* (waratah)

This is probably the most recognisable Australian native plant due to its striking colour and the fact that it holds the prestigious title of New South Wales’ floral emblem. These evergreen shrubs are low maintenance and can be used as a feature plant in a large pot or garden bed. The flowers are mostly bird-pollinated and will attract eager honeyeaters to your backyard.

● *Grevillea eriostachya* (Desert Grevillea)

We love grevilleas so much that we dedicated a garden to display their spectacular flowers. The Desert Grevillea

are found across Western Australia and produce a tall golden yellow flower in late winter and spring. They are drought- and frost-resistant, making them a low maintenance ‘must-have’ for most Australian gardens with full sun.

● *Pimelea spectabilis* (Rice Flower)

Another Western Australian beauty, *Pimelea spectabilis* produces the largest flower clusters in the *Pimelea* genus and blooms in winter and spring. This native plant does best in dry, sunny gardens but can be featured in a pot with well-drained soil if you are in an area with humid, wet summers.

GREAT WATER SAVERS

● *Doryanthes excelsa* (Gynea Lily)

A stunning Sydney local, *Doryanthes excelsa* is found across the basin to north-eastern New South Wales. They make an excellent container plant and will provide a striking architectural effect to your garden. Plants grown from seed will not flower until about eight years of age so we recommend sourcing an established plant from a nursery.

● *Carpobrotus glaucescens* (Native Pigface)

Carpobrotus glaucescens is a native succulent that is perfect as a ground cover, binding sandy soil and preventing wind erosion. They are a hardy plant

that can tolerate extended dry periods or strong winds. The large, daisy-like flowers bloom from October to January but also sporadically throughout the year. The fleshy fruit and leaves have been used by Aboriginal people as bush food and bush medicine. The fruit is said to taste like salty apples and, when roasted, the leaves have been used as a salt substitute. The juice of the leaves can be used to relieve pain from insect bites and early European settlers were known to use them as an anti-scurvy treatment.

SUSTAINABLE AND STUNNING

● *Dwarf acacia* (Dwarf Wattle)

Acacias (wattles) are the largest group of plants in Australia and our Wattle Garden features many of the 950 species, including Australia’s floral emblem *Acacia pycnantha*. Dwarf species such as Crimson Blush, Australfora Winter Gold, Bower Beauty and Limelight are sustainable and low maintenance options that provide a vibrant sunshine-like colour in the darkest months of winter. They are low spreading shrubs that require well-drained soil in a full sun or partly shaded position. If you have clay soil, plant it in a raised bed or mound the soil to improve the drainage. >

'Make sure you stop by the Growing Friends Plant Sales'

● ***Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midgen Berry)**

Austromyrtus dulcis, known as Midgen Berry, flowers in spring and summer and has sweet-tasting fruit produced in waves, from spring to autumn. The fruit can be picked and eaten straight from the plant (the berries are white and covered in small blue spots, giving them a unique appearance). Midgen Berry is an easy plant to grow in gardens, containers or pruned as a small shrub perfect for small balconies and courtyards.

● ***Bossiaea walkeri* (Cactus Pea)**

Belonging to the native pea-family Fabaceae, Cactus Pea has flattened stems which are a pale blue-green colour that helps protect the plant by reflecting heat, and the tiny leaves have very few stomata which reduces water loss. Like most native pea plants, the Cactus Pea is low maintenance, very easy to grow and great for beginners. The peas can be harvested eight to 10 weeks from sowing and are a great source of Vitamin A, C and folate. The brilliant red tear-drop flowers open in spring and autumn making it a striking feature plant in any garden.

GET GROWING

Hopefully we've sparked an interest or provided you with a few ideas. If so, make sure you stop by the Growing Friends Plant Sales at the Visitors Centre on your next visit to the Australian Botanic Garden and take a look at the selection of rare and endangered native species.



Pimelea spectabilis
(Rice Flower)



Doryanthes excelsa
(Gynea Lily)



Austromyrtus dulcis
(Midgen Berry)



Bossiaea walkeri
(Cactus Pea)

VICTORIA LODGE BUSHTUCKER EXPERIENCE

HISTORIC VICTORIA LODGE, ON THE NORTH-EASTERN BOUNDARY OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN SYDNEY, IS NOW HOME TO A NEW 'PLANTS TO PLATE' BUSHTUCKER EXPERIENCE

The tour and tasting is led by Aboriginal guides from Shared Knowledge – a renowned Aboriginal-owned company that specialises in creating authentic First Nation cultural experiences.

As part of the Bush Food experience, participants take a tour of the Garden to learn how to identify seasonal bush foods and gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal heritage, culture and connection to country.

The lunch features a three-course meal showcasing seasonal bush foods incorporated with everyday ingredients, while the morning and afternoon teas offer an twist on the traditional high tea with a variety of sweet and savoury bites.

The driving force behind the bushtucker experience is Shared Knowledge Managing Director Drew Roberts.

Drew is an Arakwal, Bundjalung man from the Northern Rivers, making him a black sand, saltwater person. Born on Gadigal country, Drew is an experienced teacher with a passion for sharing a First Nation understanding of plants and the bush that has been passed down from generation to generation.

"Knowledge is not something that you own in Aboriginal Nations, but something you share," he says. "Our vision is to contribute to a thriving community with responsibility, respect and reciprocity."

The Victoria Lodge Bush Food experiences are on offer every Friday and Sunday:

- Bush Food Morning Tea
\$49 per person, 10am–11.15am
- Bush Food Lunch
\$90 per person, 12noon–2pm
- Bush Food Afternoon Tea
\$49 per person, 2.30pm–3.45pm

For more information and bookings please visit rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/bushtuckerexperiences (make sure to advise of special dietary requirements at the time of booking).



BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PETER THOMAS BELIEVES FOUNDATION & FRIENDS IS PERFECTLY POSITIONED FOR GROWTH. DAVID CARROLL REPORTS

Careers often follow circuitous paths to unforeseen destinations, but a quick dig into Peter Thomas' past suggests Foundation & Friends' new Chief Executive Officer is precisely where fate intended him to be.

Growing up in an old weatherboard house in the northern Melbourne suburb of Coburg, Thomas was nurtured by academics with a passion for science, education and the great outdoors. His father lectured in Geophysics at Melbourne University, while his mother worked within Victoria's Education Department and played a key role in founding Melbourne University's Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute.

"My parents became involved in orienteering in the 1970s, which meant we often went bush on weekends and invariably on those trips we'd visit local

botanic gardens," he says. "We explored not just the forests of Victoria but all across south-east Australia and it made me look at the world differently."

Thomas' mother was also "a bit of an activist", taking part in protests against a freeway the Victorian government planned to build along the Merri, the family's local suburban creek.

"Not only did the protests stop the project," he says proudly, "they also helped change the way Melbourne's entire river and creek environment was looked at."

When it was time to start plotting his own course in life, Thomas decided to combine his creative flair and mathematical talents and study industrial design, which led him to work for a variety of manufacturing companies in Melbourne in the early 1990s.

"Unfortunately, it was not a good time

for manufacturing in Australia. Eventually I came to Sydney and fell into community and fundraising work, and after gaining experience with a couple of smaller charities I joined Amnesty International, the world's largest community-based human rights organisation.

"Amnesty had been struggling to generate income for more than a decade and pretty quickly after arriving I became the only fundraiser left. I ended up working across a broad range of roles and management positions, eventually becoming Chief Operating Officer and Director of Fundraising.

"It was a stimulating environment and ultimately we had a lot of success: when I started we raised around \$4 million a year and by the time I left it was well over \$25 million. We really grew individual giving through monthly donations, along with the major donor and bequest programs."

The aim now, he says, is to use those skills and experiences gained during almost 20 years with Amnesty, to help evolve Foundation & Friends.

"Our organisation has great foundation pillars. For a start we have



Proud gardener Peter and his mother in their family home in Coburg, Melbourne

'I'd like to see us play a key role in helping people engage with bigger issues'

a passionate, committed and engaged volunteer base of more than 300 people, with more wanting to get involved. We also have an excellent and supportive relationship with the Botanic Gardens, which wants us to succeed. And the three Gardens are fantastic assets, with so many dimensions that people are unaware of, including the critical research taking place.

“What we need to do now is identify new and improved ways for people to engage and contribute, so that we can build an organisation that is stronger, healthier and enjoys sustainable growth.

“There are certainly plenty of opportunities. Each Garden for instance, is surrounded by different audiences and catchment areas, which gives us the opportunity to engage with more diverse groups and grow our supporter base.

“It also feels a bit at the moment that – despite its three beautiful spaces, remarkable history and cultural connections – the Gardens are confined as a poor cousin to some other cultural and scientific organisations. Yet in terms of our current public discourse – whether its climate change, resilience to bush fires, the importance of open space to mental health, food supply and biodiversity, etc. – there is a real relevance right now to what the Gardens do. I'd like to see us play a key role in helping people engage with those bigger issues.

“In addition, it's vital that we use our position as an independent body to advocate on behalf of our members and the public. And that means there will be times – as there have been in the past – when we need to speak out to protect the Gardens from development and to push for things we want to see happen.”

Finally, given the painful impact COVID-19 has had on Foundation & Friends' finances, Thomas believes it is vital the organisation develops a more diverse funding base.

“I've travelled extensively with my partner to gardens across the world, and they are so often better supported financially by their communities.

“We need more people to know that if they want to get involved with the Gardens, Foundations & Friends is a fantastic way of doing so, whether through taking part in activities, making a donation or leaving a gift in their will.”



New Foundation & Friends
CEO Peter Thomas

FUNGI X BOTANICA

BOTANICA HAS LONG BEEN THE JEWEL IN THE GARDENS' EXHIBITION CROWN, BUT EVENTS HAVE CONSPIRED TO ENSURE THIS YEAR'S SHOW WILL BE SOMETHING SPECIAL. ROBBIE MACINTOSH AND SUE WANNAN REPORT

As a respected and renowned celebration of world-standard botanical art, Botanica is used to commanding centre stage, but this year it is – for the first time – sharing the limelight with a collection of equally striking portraits of the mysterious, complex, often-underground world of fungi.

Fungi X Botanica (24 April–9 May) combines the 21st Botanica, always planned for this year, and Fungi, an exposition originally scheduled for last year but postponed in the uncertainty that marked 2020.

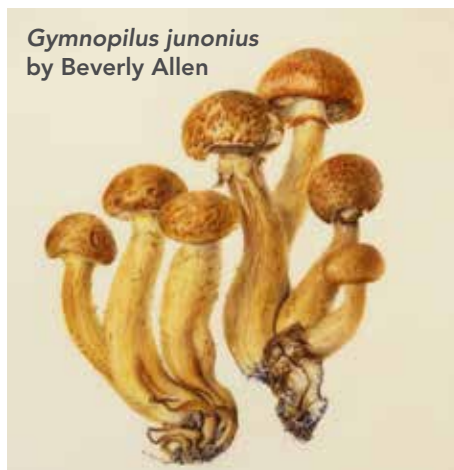
Botanica sets a high benchmark in the botanical art world. Many of the artists have international reputations – reputations that sometimes germinated in those early Botanica exhibitions. And Foundation & Friends has played a significant role in the recognition of excellence in this genre.

Favourites such as Beverly Allen, Angela Lober, Elaine Musgrave and Susannah Blaxill will again be part of this year's exhibition.

One startling image, by Leonie Norton, another Botanica favourite,

is the aptly named *Amorphophallus titanum*. That's the plant that produces a flower up to three metres tall that smells like rotting meat and is often called the corpse flower. Not only is the flower astonishing, but so is the corm that produces it – typically weighing about 50 kilograms (although the current world record holder is a plant at Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh that weighs 153.9kg).

Several of Botanica's best-known artists have chosen to depict fungi this year, giving them a foot in both camps.



Gymnopilus junonius
by Beverly Allen

Beverly Allen has done fungi on vellum, as has John Pastoriza-Piñol, whose painting of *Morchella elata* (one of the edible black morels) will make mushroom hunters salivate.

John once said that his work exists "in a realm somewhere between the hyper-real and literal, and the surreal and fantastical", which pretty much describes the amazing, and little-known, biosphere of fungi.

The world of fungi and mycelium is a scientific wonder; something we are only starting to understand. Mycelium is the earth's underground natural internet, mushrooms in all their forms being the resulting fruiting bodies of this nearly invisible world. Reach down and move a log and you will see a vast array of fuzzy cobweb-like cells – that's mycelium, the network of fungal cells that permeates all landscapes. When you pick a mushroom (only about 10% of fungi produce mushrooms) you stand on a vast network of fungal mycelium which is the foundation of life.

Among other things, mycelium is the grand recycler. It processes organic decay, converting it to soil. Without this



Medicinal fungi by Anna Voytsekovich



Amorphophallus titanum
by Leonie Nortorn



Minka Gillian Fairy Glen

metamorphic process, the plant world would choke in decaying matter. Fungi are the building blocks of the ecosystem.

Along with old growth forests, mycelium networks act as a significant biological sink for carbon storage. It is now being used in medicine, textiles, building materials, regenerating soils and to break down toxic material.

All of which provides rich inspiration for an enquiring artist.

Sculptor Minka Gillian, who works with found materials and whose awesome Mind Garden exhibition recently attracted much attention,

is focusing on mycelium for her contribution to Fungi X Botanica.

Claire Stack, a Botanica exhibitor since 2007, has done an exquisite graphite on paper image of mushroom gills.

Anna Voytsekovich, another Botanica regular, has done a magnificent acrylic on stretched canvas of medicinal mushrooms. Anna, who has a PhD in botany, is known in scientific publications for her extensive work on lichens.

Ceramicist Jo Victoria has created beautiful porcelain-ware after watching a video on mycelium. "I'm interested in giving voice to silent histories," she says.

Look also for Lynda McPherson's beautiful Faeryland watercolour, of delicate pink and white fungi emerging through leaf litter, mixed with maidenhair fern.

Fungi X Botanica encompasses many genre, including photography, graphite, watercolour and acrylic art works, ceramics, glass, paper art and sculpture, all focusing on the magic world of fungi. It will be held at Lion Gate Lodge, which lends itself to a subtle separation of the two aspects of this exhibition: BOTANICA downstairs and FUNGI upstairs.



*'Videos of fungi
will run throughout
the exhibition'*

MULTIMEDIA

Highlights of the exhibition are not just on the walls. A range of interesting events and surprises are being planned, including:

- The Good, the Bad and the Delicious - a presentation by Edward Liew, Manager Plant Pathology and Senior Research Scientist at the Royal Botanic Garden, about how and where fungi get their food, which often dictates whether we regard them as the good guys or the bad. The presentation will also discuss how we use some of these fungi. Following the talk there'll be a stroll through the gardens, ending up at Lion Gate Lodge for brunch, and a chance to see the exhibition. Tickets to this event cost \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members.
- Videos about fungi will run throughout the exhibition, including the award-winning Mycelium Made, featuring Amanda Morglund's innovative use of mushroom technology in fashion design. Keep an eye on the Foundation & Friends eNewsletters for extra activities during the exhibition.



FUNGI X BOTANICA

24 APRIL–9 MAY, 10AM–4PM

Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

OPENING NIGHT, FRIDAY 23 APRIL, 3PM–7PM

Join the *Fungi X Botanica* curators for the official opening of this year's exciting exhibition. Enjoy a drink and canapés in the beautiful Garden, and take the opportunity to view and purchase works before the exhibition opens.

Members \$45, Non members \$55 (tickets allow for one-hour of exhibition access, with drinks and canapés). Bookings are essential.

Tickets are available from rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/botanica.

SO MUCH MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

FIGHTING DISEASE, FEEDING FAUNA, SUSTAINING FORESTS AND RECYCLING WASTE, FUNGI, SAYS DR BRETT SUMMERELL, DESERVE TO BE CELEBRATED AS NATURE'S GOOD GUYS

Having in the past dwelled on some of the negative aspects of fungi as plant pathogens, it's now time – in the interests of fairness and because they are the well-deserved focus of this year's Botanica exhibition – to accentuate the positive.

For starters, it might come as a surprise to learn that the fungi are possibly the second most diverse group of organisms after the insects – and that diversity is simply spectacular. The number of species of fungi is estimated at somewhere between 1.5 and 5 million, yet only around 120,000 of them have been formally described by mycologists. So, at best, 90 per cent of the fungi, and at worst nearly 98%, are still to be discovered and described. Given that, it is likely that huge numbers will go extinct before we even find and document them all.

Fungi are in a kingdom of their own and are quite separate from the plant and animal kingdoms. Of the two however, DNA analysis has shown that the fungi are much more closely related to animals than they are to plants.

The cell chemistry of fungi is also much closer to that of animals as they have a compound called 'chitin' in their cell walls. This is the same carbohydrate polymer that is found in the exoskeletons of spiders and other insects. It's what gives the thin cell walls of fungi rigidity and structural support.

That said, the study of fungi is traditionally associated with the study of plants as a subdiscipline of botany

– probably because they are perceived as being more static than animals. That's why mycologists are usually employed in schools of botany or, of course, in botanic gardens.

When people hear the term fungi, they usually think of mushrooms. This is a misnomer because the vast majority of fungal species are microscopic and broadly termed moulds, yeasts and mildews; only becoming visible when they form colonies that we are familiar

with on fruit and vegetables in the bottom of some of our fridges or growing on substrates like leather in very humid weather.

These fungi are biochemical powerhouses with the capability to breakdown everything from plant matter to aeronautical fuel. There is great interest into researching the potential of fungi to sustainably breakdown plastics and solve one of the biggest scourges of modern society.



Hexagonia tenuis, the Honeycomb Polypore, at Limpinwood Nature reserve



Hyacinth Orchid, *Dipodium* sp.

MYCORRHIZAE

Some of the most important fungi ecologically are those that form an association with plant roots. In this symbiotic relationship – called a mycorrhiza – the fungi reside in or on the plant roots and may grow out into the soil to dramatically extend the amount of the soil that can be utilised. There are different types of associations, with some mycorrhizal fungi forming specialised structures (arbuscules) within the cells of the plant roots while others grow on the outside of the roots (ectomycorrhiza). These fungi help in extracting nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorous and minerals from the soil for the plant to use.

A lot has been written recently about the network of roots and fungi and the possibility that this provides a means for individual plants to communicate with one another (it's a subject explored, for example, in Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees*). Certainly, there is evidence of chemical signals relating to defence mechanisms in plants being transmitted between individual trees through the fungal network. The how and why of this are the subject of much ongoing research and some researchers have coined the term "wood wide web" to describe this phenomenon.

Some plants have gone even further and can be completely reliant on fungi. In this type of symbiotic relationship – defined as mycoheterotrophic – the plant gets all or part of its food from parasitism upon fungi rather than from photosynthesis. A good example is the hyacinth orchid, *Dipodium* – a plant that is leafless, but produces spectacular flower spikes in summer. Relatively common in the bush around Sydney, this orchid forms an association with a species of *Russula*, a mushroom (common name brittlegills), that provides it with nutrition. >



Hericium clathroides, the Icicle Fungus,
Lamington National Park

'Fungi are more closely related to animals than they are to plants'



Cymatoderma elegans, the Leathery Goblet, at Tooloom National Park

'Without fungi the planet would be submerged in dead plant and animal matter'

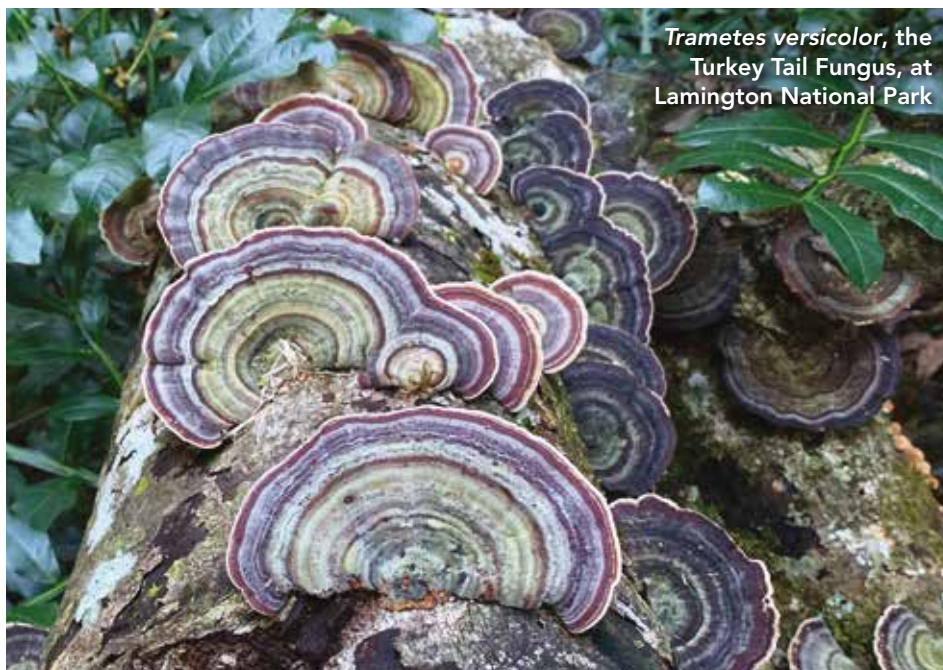
There is also increasing recognition of the importance of these fungal associations when establishing urban forests and other types of tree plantings in built up areas. All too often the soils in these situations are bereft of microbes – especially fungi – and mycorrhizal associations may not form. As a result, the trees perform badly, have difficulty establishing and mortality is higher.

It is possible to artificially inoculate the root system with some of these fungi and to use some of the technology that has been developed by foresters to improve establishment. For example, when the Wollemi pine was planted at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, we included soil and root material from around one of the very closely related hoop pines from the Garden. Our research had shown that the Wollemi pine had a couple of mycorrhizal fungal associations with a structure similar to that observed in *Araucaria* species, so we presumed that placing soil and roots from around these species might help the Wollemi pine establish. It is still alive so we can't have hurt it!

Unfortunately we know so very little about these fungi and their identity. Many of the mushrooms we observe are mycorrhizal, but it is difficult to definitively link them to the tree species with which they are symbiotic. And there is a huge number that remain unidentified, but with DNA fingerprinting tools we are starting to define the relationship between the host plant and the fungus.

LICHENS

Talking of symbiosis there are also a range of different fungi species that live in a close beneficial relationship with an alga to create the combined "organism" known as a lichen.



Trametes versicolor, the Turkey Tail Fungus, at Lamington National Park

Tens of thousands of species of lichen are found even in the most hostile environments on Earth – from deserts to Antarctica. Lichens will grow on pretty much anything that doesn't move, and it's not uncommon to even find them growing on slow moving animals.

FOOD AND MEDICINE

Fungi are an important food resource for all sorts of animals, not just humans. Native truffle fungi, for instance, are an important food resource for wallabies, potoroos and bandicoots, which in turn disperse the spores of these fungi across the landscape in their dung. And following the recent bushfires, a number of pyrophilous fungi fruited very rapidly, providing an important source of food for smaller organisms.

From a human perspective the most important fungi are the yeasts. These differ from most other fungi in that they are single-celled organisms and of course are the fungi that are responsible for fermentation. If it wasn't for a yeast fungus called *Saccharomyces*, we wouldn't have bread and we wouldn't have beer, wine, whisky and vodka.

Then of course there are a range of fungi that we eat such as the common button mushroom, oyster mushrooms, shitake, saffron milk caps, porcini, slippery jacks, and of course white and black truffles (reputedly the most expensive food in the world, selling for around \$6,000–\$7,000 per kg!).

Soy sauce also depends on the fermentation of soybeans by a fungal mould, *Aspergillus oryzae*, while creamy camembert and blue cheeses such as gorgonzola and roquefort are reliant on the growth of various species of penicillium moulds to provide their unique taste and texture.

ROTTING AWAY

Most of all the fungi are good guys because they are nature's great recyclers and decomposers.

If it wasn't for fungi, the planet would be completely submerged in masses of dead plant and animal matter. Fungi contain a complex array of enzymes that break down cellulose and lignin, the key chemicals in plants and timber. They subsequently turn these into simple chemicals that can be more easily absorbed by plant roots so that they can grow more effectively.

Fungi are also essential for creating hollows in trees, which are critical habitats for birds, mammals, reptiles and all sorts of creatures.

Ultimately, fungi are critical for healthy ecosystems and a healthy planet. And while a few species have given fungi a bad name, there is no doubt that we, and all of the other organisms on this planet, would not be able to survive without them.

Brett Summerell is Director Research & Chief Botanist at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

CRISIS HELPS REKINDLE HORTICULTURAL CONNECTIONS

IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC, PEOPLE HAVE LOOKED FOR WAYS TO LIFT THEIR SPIRITS, AND FOR SOME THAT'S MEANT RENEWING THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE NATURAL WORLD. JOHN SIMON REPORTS

It's hard to fathom the contrast between the extreme droughts of 2019 and the bountiful rainfall of 2020, driven by a shift into La Niña weather patterns.

With global events dominating our lives recently, many might have missed just how green and verdant our three Botanic Gardens and the Domain have been. In fact, one might imagine that many Australians have been totally distracted from nature – interestingly that doesn't seem to be the case.

The world's fixation on the global pandemic has certainly exacerbated some behaviours – one of them, not surprisingly, being the consumption

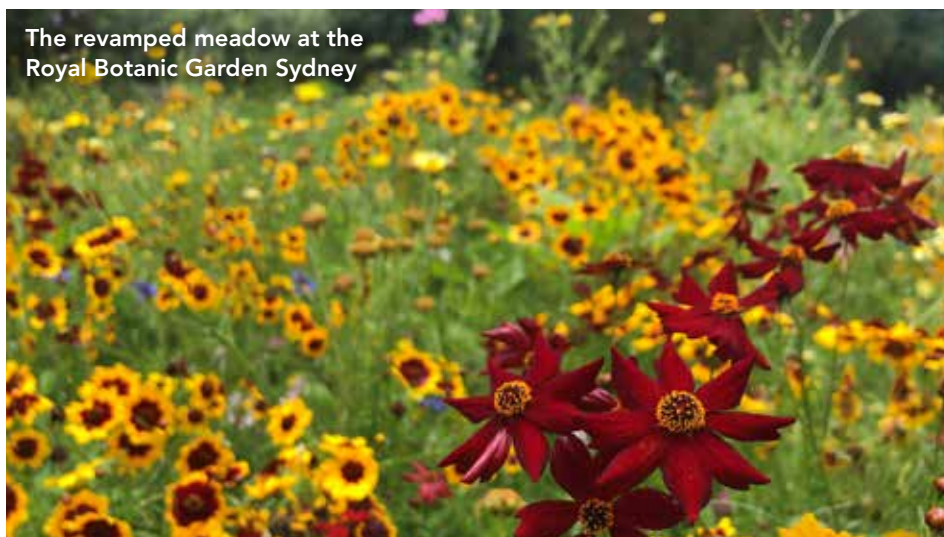
of alcohol (including, hopefully, our delicious new Botanic Gardens Grown Gin). But it has also resulted in some astonishing outcomes for the environment. While we all appreciate the enhanced air quality and the reduced traffic on our roads, as a horticultural scientist it has been particularly heart-warming for me to see society's shift back to nature and horticulture.

The pandemic lockdown resulted in shelves being stripped of plant seeds, seedlings, indoor plants and potted specimens – a trend that the green life industry desperately needed, and I only wish they could have foreseen. Even our Growing Friends has had demand

outstrip supply and it has taken many months, under tough and restrictive conditions, to rebuild stock levels.

After battling successive droughts and water restrictions, where many plant nursery's failed to survive, the future for horticulture looks much brighter and botanic gardens everywhere will play a pivotal role resetting human behaviour and encouraging more people to continue to enjoy parks, gardens and nature experiences in the new 'normal'.

Over the last year many agencies managing green spaces have recorded a significant uplift in visitation across the nation. Our organisation is no exception, with year-to-date visitor numbers up 21 per cent at the Australian Botanic Garden and 25 per cent at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden. An anomaly to the trend is the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney where visitation is down almost 50% – a combination >



The revamped meadow at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

'Shelves have been stripped of plant seeds, seedlings, indoor plants and potted specimens'

The horticulture team remains committed to creating awe-inspiring botanic displays, such as The Calyx exhibition inBloom, the topiary koala (below right) at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and the spectacular topiary bee (below left) at the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan



'Our next Calyx exhibition will transport you to an underwater paradise'

of missing interstate and international tourism, cancelled events and office workers working from home.

Regardless of global events, each of our Gardens and the Domain remain a hive of activity – more so since the heavens opened, our turf has grown non-stop and dormant weed seeds have returned with a vengeance. Extensive turf renewal and renovations, combined with lower foot traffic, have resulted in some of the most spectacular lawns ever seen, especially throughout the normally heavy-trafficked Domain. Our gardens continue to be carefully tended by a remarkable and passionate team of more than 120 horticulture staff, ably supported by colleagues right across our organisation.

While our core mission remains focused on plant conservation, we are as committed as ever to creating engaging and awe-inspiring botanic displays – let's face it, everyone has needed a boost in current times! Reinforcing this role is our latest Calyx exhibition, inBloom, which burst onto the scene in August, followed shortly thereafter by our supercharged rain-boosted spring displays, particularly the Spring Walk (Sydney), paper daisies (Mount Annan) and daffodils (Mount Tomah). More recently, the revamped meadow at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney has literally burst into life buzzing with pollinators galore and blooms a plenty.

Those of you who ventured out to the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan last year would have also seen the rapid redevelopment of the Garden's Nursery. It now boasts 7,000 square metres of new and dedicated production space (equivalent to almost six Olympic-size swimming pools), with the Foundation & Friends generously donating one of the new production shade houses.

This new infrastructure transforms the organisation's capacity for producing



The Australian Botanic Garden's new Nursery now boasts 7,000 square metres of new and dedicated production space



Spring daffodils at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden

rare and threatened flora. And it will be an instrumental component in the future development of the Australian Botanic Garden and the Australian Institute of Botanical Science when it launches this year. A further upgrade of the Nursery (Stage 2) is currently being documented to replace the Garden's antiquated propagation greenhouses with state-of-the-art infrastructure to support our Horticulture and Science operations.

Capitalising on people's growing connection with nature, we intend to increase our engagement with an ever-expanding audience, supporting the broader green life industry and making real inroads to threats to biodiversity.

While we get on with the business of saving plants, our teams continue to finalise plans for our next spring and summer displays, a suite of garden renovation projects, our exciting new Herbarium landscape at Mount Annan, the trial garden in Sydney and the rebuilding of our collections at Mount Tomah, including an exciting Wollemi pine project.

And stay tuned for our next exciting Calyx exhibition, which will transport you to an underwater paradise.

John Siemon is Director Horticulture, Australian Institute of Botanical Science, Botanic Gardens Greater Sydney

GARDEN
FOCUS

A BEAUTIFUL RELIC

CYCAD

Lepidozamia peroffskyana
Family Zamiaceae

This is one of the slow-growing, long-lived cycads that is a relic of the species that were abundant in the Mesozoic era, many millions of years ago. This Australian cycad species is interesting and attractive at all stages of its growth. It was first scientifically described in 1857 by a Russian botanist, from a specimen growing in St. Petersburg. One wonders how it got there! The species occurs naturally on rainforest margins and sheltered slopes, from sea level to around 1,000m height, in an area roughly from Gympie in Queensland to Taree in NSW. There is one other species in this genus of cycad in Australia which is *Lepidozamia hopei*. This species occurs naturally in Queensland in an area north of Ingham,

from sea level to the tablelands around 1,000m above sea level. It is one of the largest of all cycads growing in Australia.

It can be grown in tubs or in the ground, ideally in filtered sun or complete shade. Cycads are not related to palms but their arching, spreading fronds are palm-like in their structure. The Royal Botanic Garden has more than one specimen of this species but the one to seek out is close to the western edge of the Palm Grove in bed 25. It has a thick solitary trunk from ground level that branches out into four corner trunks. The shiny, stiff fronds, with masses of narrow, sharp dark green leaflets arch out from the thick stems. Clearly, conditions where it is growing are ideal. Dappled sunlight, with shelter from strong wind and soil that does not dry out readily have allowed this fine specimen to flourish

over the years. Over very many decades this cycad has been known to grow 5–6m in height.

These interesting and attractive plants are not difficult to grow. They must have well drained soil or potting mix and regular, deep watering until they are well established. Mulching the soil or potting mix surface helps maintain soil moisture in warm, dry weather too. Occasional applications of weak, liquid fertiliser may be helpful in the early stages of growth.

Growing Friends Plant Sales sometimes has young, seedling plants of this cycad for sale. In my view, these plants are interesting and attractive at all times. It is always thought-provoking to grow a plant knowing that the species dates back to the Age of Dinosaurs!
Margaret Hanks, Growing Friends, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

PLANTS IN THE GARDENS

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THE WONDERFUL PLANTS TO LOOK OUT FOR NEXT TIME YOU VISIT THE GARDENS



Camellia amplexicaulis

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN SYDNEY

Autumn is one of my favourite times, with the weather finally cooling down and many plants putting on wonderful displays before winter sets in.

In the camellia gardens, the sasanquas are on show from April through May. Some of our species camellias are also at their best including *Camellia amplexicaulis*, which is unfortunately thought to be extinct in the wild. This rare beauty can be seen flowering in late autumn and early winter in bed 4b near Rathborne Lodge.

You will also find the Brazilian Red Cloak *Megaskepasma erythrochlamys* – which makes a stunning large garden shrub with conspicuous crimson bracts – flowering prolifically in the Palace Gardens. And autumn is a good time

to visit the Palace Rose Garden, where the modern roses put on a final flush of flowers before the horticulturists give them their winter prune in July.

Some of the best autumn colours can be found near the Oriental Garden, where a lovely *Ginkgo biloba* offers a great display of golden foliage each year.

In the Tropical Garden, facing the Band Lawn, is the Hong Kong Orchid Tree *Bauhinia x blakeana*, which between March and July produces blooms that resemble those of an orchid. Another wonderful autumn flowering tree is the Silk Floss Tree *Ceiba speciosa*, which can be found in bed 60 and just across the road in the Australian Rainforest Garden.

It is a great time to work in and enjoy the Royal Botanic Garden. David Laughlin, Curator Manager Royal Botanic Garden Sydney



Banksia spinulosa
'Birthday Candles'

AUSTRALIAN BOTANIC GARDEN

Banksia are an iconic feature of the Australian landscape and make a fantastic addition to the home garden. A stand-out is 'Birthday Candles', a form of *Banksia spinulosa* selected for its dense mounding habit (around 0.5m), making it a perfectly-sized home garden plant – even for small gardens, courtyards and balconies. In autumn and winter it puts on a show with masses golden candle-like flowers that are a favourite with nectar-feeding birds, providing much-needed food for wildlife at a time when there is not much else in flower. A member of the Proteaceae family, *Banksia spinulosa* 'Birthday Candles' is related to grevilleas and waratahs, so plant them together for an eye-catching display. At home in the ground or in a pot, 'Birthday Candles' makes for a very versatile plant. For best results, always plant in free-draining soil and remove spent flowers.

Simon Reid, Horticulturist, Australian Botanic Garden



Rhododendron 'Max Sye'

BLUE MOUNTAINS BOTANIC GARDEN

While at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, keep an eye out for *Rhododendron 'Max Sye'*. The Garden is home to just over 600 named species and cultivars of rhododendron, and while most are at their peak in spring, *Rhododendron 'Max Sye'* looks amazing from March to May. A compact plant, it produces large clusters of deep-red blooms in autumn, with the benefit of second flush of flowers in spring. You can find *Rhododendron 'Max Sye'* on the Terrace stairs, between the Cascade water feature, the viewing deck and the Plant Explorers Walk.

Ryan Newett, Supervisor,
Ornamental Gardens & Nursery,
Blue Mountains Botanic Garden

GROWING FRIENDS PLANT SALES

The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney
Mon–Fri 11am–2pm,
Sat 10am–2pm

**The Australian Botanic Garden
Mount Annan**
Mon–Sun 9am–4pm

**The Blue Mountains Botanic
Garden Mount Tomah**
Mon–Sun 9.30am–4.30pm



GROWING FRIENDS

New to the Growing Friends' range, *Gloxinia sylvatica*

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

How do we decide what to grow for sale at Growing Friends?

In Sydney each of our five, week day teams – comprising around 12 volunteers per team – has a list of plants from which they propagate. On average each team propagates about 120 different plants over the course of the year.

At Mount Annan we have three teams and together they currently propagate 110 different plants. That means that at most times we have more than 400 different plants for sale in Growing Friends Plant Sales.

Availability can vary depending on the supply of seed, cuttings or plant off-sets, or the time of the year. But

the introduction of bar-coded labels three years ago has enabled Team Leaders to use sales revenue data for propagation planning.

Plants can go in or out of fashion but some plants such as Blue Ginger, Coleus, Flannel Flower and Blue Lechenaultia remain popular every year. We continue to add new plants to our range as others drop out and especially popular at present is the assortment of ferns and shade-tolerant plants suitable for indoors and patios.

One thing is for sure: Growing Friends offers a wide range of plants which perform well in the coastal climate of NSW, many of which are not found in other retail nurseries.
Greg Lamont, Horticultural Supervisor, Growing Friends

WHAT'S ON

For more information about events, and to book, visit rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/whatson. All activities have been planned with your safety in mind, including social distancing and hygiene measures. Events with the **BF** symbol are organised by Foundation & Friends, and these can also be booked by calling the office on (02) 9231 8182.

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS



CREATIVE COLLAGE WORKSHOP With Toni McDowell

Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden, Thu 25–Fri 26 March, 9.30am–4pm

Explore the exciting possibilities of collage, originally invented by Picasso and Braque. A great entry into making abstract art, this workshop stimulates ideas, themes and visual stories, while using plants as inspiration. Students will learn leaf printing and experiment with paper, string, bark, paint, crayon and ink. The result? Unique greeting cards and artworks ready to hang.

M \$280 **NM** \$320 **R** **L** **i** **BF** **★** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

ASTRONOMY AT THE CALYX

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Tue 23 March, 18 May & 17 June,
6.30pm–9.30pm

Join us for a night of astronomy, star gazing and storytelling surrounded by the dazzling inBLOOM plant display. Travel through space to visit mysterious planets far from Earth! More than 4,000 planets have been discovered around other stars. Dr Angel Sanchez-Lopez or Professor Fred Watson will take you on a journey to these strange 'other' worlds. How do astronomers discover them?

M \$37 **NM** \$41

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/astronomy



inBLOOM

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Open daily all autumn, 10am–4pm
Immerse yourself in a showcase of colour, surrounded by more than 20,000 spectacular plants and flowers, and one of the largest living green walls in the southern hemisphere. Please note The Calyx will be closed on 4 March. Entry by donation. Suitable for all. rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

KEY: **M** Foundation & Friends' member **NM** Non-member **MC** Member's child **NC** Non-member's child **F** Free
MT Morning tea provided **L** Lunch provided **R** Refreshments provided **MP** Materials provided **B** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au
BF Book through Foundation & Friends **★** New member gift voucher can be used **i** More information with booking



KOKEDAMA WORKSHOP

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
 Sat 17 April 10.30am–12.30pm,
 1.30pm–3.30pm

This modern art form uniquely presents plants and flowers encased in a magnificent moss ball. Using natural sphagnum moss, natural fibre twine and two beautiful plants, led by the renowned team from Merchant and Green, you will create and then take home this gorgeous living work of art. Suitable for ages 15+

M \$92 **NM** \$98

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



ANZAC WREATH-MAKING

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
 Sat 24 April, 10.30am–12.30pm

Come and join the team from Merchant and Green and make a beautiful, personally-inspired natural boho wreath for ANZAC Day. You will take home a natural fibre wreath with a focus on Australian flora and locally-grown eco-friendly materials where possible.

Suitable for ages 15+

M \$90 **NM** \$95

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



SOUL SOOTHING SOAP MAKING

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
 Sun 2 May, 10.30am–12.30pm

This unique workshop is led by Wiradjuri educator Renee Cawthorne. Renee will share her knowledge of the healing qualities of Australia's fragrant native plants and lead you through the process of creating soap using beautiful natural ingredients. Take home your handmade soap infused with aromas to wash away your worries and soothe your soul. Suitable for ages 12+

M \$31.50 **NM** \$35

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



GARDEN-GROWN GIN MAKING

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
 Sun 2 May, 1.30pm–3.30pm

Learn about the curious history of gin and see how Phillip Moore, award-winning master distiller, skilfully distils gin using the French perfumers' technique of enfleurage to extract delicate scents and flavour from hero botanicals. You will have the opportunity to sample some Garden-grown gin.

Suitable for ages 18+

M \$45 **NM** \$50

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



NATURE AND LIGHT ART CLASS With Charlotte Thodey

Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden, Tue 18–Wed 19 May, 9.30am–4pm

The course emphasis will be on the close-up observation of nature and light. It will look at the basis of drawing, the composition of objects on the canvas and the setting out of the painting according to tonal values. Participants will then proceed to the careful building up and layering of colour to capture the light which reveals the fleshy essence of the fruit.

M \$300 **NM** \$340 **R** **L** **i** **BF** ★ rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

EXHIBITIONS & CONCERTS



**FROM THE HIVE...
SWARMING TO THE CALYX**

Presented by Marijke Gilchrist
The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Mon 1 March–Sun 21 March,
10am–4pm

Inspired by the Australian outback and dramatic seascapes, Marijke is experienced across a range of painting mediums, collage and silk dying, and combines these with the encaustic technique which uses heated beeswax and pigments to give works an aluminous, ethereal quality. Suitable for all ages **F**
www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



THROUGH THE SMOKE, THROUGH OUR EYES

Exhibition Space, Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Visitor Centre
Thu 4 March–Tue 27 April, 9.30am–5pm

This exhibition shows firsthand the experiences of Blue Mountains Botanic Garden staff during the 2019 Gospers Mountain bushfire. The exhibition is a moment of reflection, as well as a celebration of nature’s ability to be resilient, resourceful and regrow. Showcasing artworks created entirely by the Garden’s staff, it tells a story of survival and camaraderie as the Garden faced one of its biggest natural threats in history. Suitable for all ages **F**



SUMMER IN THE DOMAIN

The Domain – Phillip Precinct
Dates from March

Summer in the Domain is a COVID-safe concert series that will begin in March, with headlining performer Vera Blue playing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Other confirmed artists include Bjorn Again, Client Liaison, Confidence Man and Touch Sensitive. Concert-goers will be able to purchase pods that will be arranged to minimise congestion. Suitable for all ages
Tickets to go on sale in late February
rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



NATURES BEST

Presented by Cylene Whiteley
The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Mon 22 March–Mon 5 April,
10am–4pm

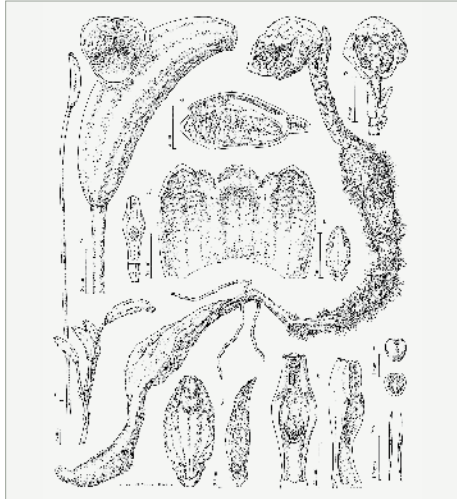
Inspired by the world of birds, animals and plants, Cylene Whiteley has captured the detail of the natural world and environment around us. The works are in various mediums including watercolour, acrylic, graphite and coloured pencil. Suitable for all ages **F**
rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



FRAGILE BEAUTY, RICH & RARE

Presented by Pamela Pauline
The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Tue 6 April–Mon 26 April, 10am–4pm

Informed by a lifelong connection to nature, Pamela Pauline tells a story of Australia’s endangered flora. With careful research and guidance from expert horticulturalists, Pamela has spent the past 18 months photographing endangered flora and threatened birds to highlight our biodiversity crisis and to encourage conservation efforts. Suitable for all ages **F**
www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



MARGARET FLOCKTON AWARD

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
June (dates TBC)

The best international scientific botanical illustrators compete for prizes in this prestigious annual exhibition hosted by Foundation & Friends and the Royal Botanic Garden. Ink, graphite and digital works highlight the important role of contemporary illustration in botanical research around the world. Suitable for all ages **F** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

FUNGI X BOTANICA

Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Garden, Sat 24 April–Sun 9 May, 10am–4pm
Historic Lion Gate Lodge will host two exhibitions, side-by-side: Fungi and Botanica. The Fungi exhibition will encompass many genres including photography, graphite, watercolour and acrylic art works, ceramics, glass, paper art and sculpture. The parallel Botanica exhibition celebrates its 21st anniversary and sets a high benchmark, showcasing the very best of botanical art from Australia and across the globe. Suitable for all ages **F** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



IN PROGRESS 3

Presented by Lorraine Best & Richard Sakurovs
The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden
Tue 27 April–Sun 9 May, 10am–4pm
Lorraine Best and Richard Sakurovs have been continually inspired by nature as they explore familiar and new landscapes. The uniqueness and diversity within Australia is celebrated, with colour and texture taking centre stage in their artworks. Suitable for all ages **F** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



3THREE3

The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden, Mon 10 May–Sun 23 May, 10am–4pm
In the exhibition, artists Fiona Barrett, Mollie Pegler and Charles Barrett celebrate nature's imagery. The artists use a variety of mediums including photography, painting and mosaic to create an exhibition full of colour, dramatic light and movement. Suitable for all ages **F** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

GUIDED AND SELF-GUIDED WALKS



ABORIGINAL CULTURAL TOUR

Meet at the Palm Grove Centre, Royal Botanic Garden

Every Wed, Fri and Sat throughout autumn (excluding public holidays), 10am–11.30am

Learn about the diverse history and culture of the Aboriginal people of the Sydney region. Uncover the Royal Botanic Garden's rich Aboriginal heritage by exploring plant uses, culture, artefacts and tasting some bush foods.

Suitable for adults and families
Children under 7 years are free

M **NM** \$42

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/AHT



GHOSTLY GARDEN

Meet at the Woolloomooloo Gate, Royal Botanic Garden

Fri evenings at sunset, 12 & 26 March, 9 & 23 April, 7 & 21 May

Take a twilight adventure through the Garden in this spine-tingling storytelling event, within the Garden gates after hours. Hear spooky and kooky stories of the Garden's past as flying fox flit above your head.

Suitable for adults and ages 12+ with a reasonable level of mobility

M \$37 **NM** \$42

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On



NATURE THERAPY WALKS

Royal Botanic Garden, Sun 21 March, 18 April & 16 May, 10am–12noon

Australian Botanic Garden

Sat 24 April & 29 May, 10am–12noon

Blue Mountains Botanic Garden

Sat 6 March, 24 April, 11am–1pm

Originating in Japan, *Shinrin-yoku* (or forest therapy) is a preventative health practice that improves wellbeing by immersing your senses in nature.

Facilitators guide participants through sensory experiences, mindfulness and nature appreciation and concludes with a Japanese-inspired tea ceremony.

Suitable for families and ages 13+

M \$32 **NM** \$35

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HELLO KOALA SCULPTURE TRAIL

Australian Botanic Garden & Campbelltown City, Thu 1 Apr–Fri 30 Apr, 8am–5pm

The Hello Koalas Sculpture Trail is an award-winning public art project that is coming to the Australian Botanic Garden for the first time. This highly engaging cultural experience encompasses over 20 one-metre-high fibreglass koala sculptures designed and painted by Australian artists, in a blend of arts and culture, heritage and environmental themes. Collect your map from the Visitor Centre. Hello Koalas was conceived and created by Arts and Health Australia. The sculptures celebrate Australia's most popular and iconic species, the koala, and weave their magic through the personalities of individual koalas.

Suitable for all ages **F** australianbotanicgarden.com.au/hello_koalas



FREE GUIDED WALKS

Depart Visitor Centre

Blue Mountains Botanic Garden

Discover the beauty and history of the Garden on foot with one of our volunteer guides. Tours run most days, excluding Easter. Please call (02) 4567 3000 to check if a tour is running on the day you plan to visit. Bookings not essential, groups are limited to 10 people. **F**

TALKS



THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DELICIOUS

Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden, Thu 29 April, 10am–12pm

Explore the fascinating nature of fungi with Dr Edward Liew, Manager Plant Pathology and Senior Research Scientist at the Royal Botanic Garden. Fungi exist in a wide range of environments and come in a fascinating, often enchanting, range of colours, shapes and sizes. But one thing they have in common is that, unlike most plants, they don't produce their own food. How and where they source their food often dictates whether we regard them as the good or bad guys. The session will include a walk through the Garden with our expert guides. Suitable for ages 18+ **M** \$30 **NM** \$35 **R** rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

EXPERIENCES

HELPING HANDS

Discover the work that goes into maintaining the Gardens and learn from our expert horticultural staff. Activities may include guided assistance in pruning, shaping, and improving plants that grow in the Gardens, and other gardening jobs. Wear sturdy boots and bring a hat, gloves, sunscreen and water. Please note that a parking pass may be purchased on the day. Members Only

F **BF** **i**

Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah

Education Centre, Wed 3 Mar,
7 April & 5 May, 8.30am–12noon

Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan

Meet at the main car park,
Wed 10 March, 14 April & 12 May,
8.30am–12noon

Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

Foundation & Friends Terrace,
Thu 18 March, 15 April & 20 May,
8.45am–12noon.

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN



SEEDLINGS NATURE SCHOOL

Royal Botanic Garden (Nature Classroom in front of Farm Cove Eatery)
Every Thu in Mar & every Thu from 29 April–17 June inclusive, 10am–12noon

Australian Botanic Garden (Bowden Centre)

Every Wed until 24 March & from 28 April–16 June, 9.30am–11.30am

Bring your little one along to explore, grow and develop in nature.

Each week's program is a combination of nature-based activities, games and stories, combined with supervised free-play time in the Garden.

Suitable for children aged 2.5–5 years and their carers

MC **NM** Online \$18, drop-in \$23 rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/seedlings

australianbotanicgarden.com.au/What-s-On/Seedlings-Nature-School



AUTUMN GARDEN FUN

Australian Botanic Garden: 8–10 April

Royal Botanic Garden: 11–15 April

Blue Mountains Botanic Garden:
15–17 April

Looking for some creative and active fun in nature to keep the kids happy during the school holidays? From outdoor theatre shows to sunset spotlight tours, First Nations art workshops, rainforest-in-a-jar gardening and science fun – there's something for every curious child!

Paid and free activities

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/holidays

EXPLORE AUSTRALIA

FOUNDATION & FRIENDS' POPULAR TOURS PROGRAM IS BACK AND – WITH INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL CURRENTLY OFF THE TABLE – THE FOCUS IS ON EXPLORING SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S SPECTACULAR REGIONS

Members can book the tours with confidence for a number of reasons, including a flexible cancellations policy and the introduction of a range of COVID-safety measures such as extra cleaning and hygiene protocols. The tours also venture to remote areas, which means social distancing comes naturally, and the guided group sizes are limited to a maximum of 16 people. For more information or to book please contact Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens at foundation.friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au.



Red domes of the Bungle Bungles

WALKING IN THE KIMBERLEY

30 April–14 May 2021

Grade: Introductory to Moderate*

Activities: guided walks, swimming, 4WD-ing (in an air-conditioned coach)

Accommodation: luxury camping (12 nights), hotel (two nights)

Considered one of the world's last wilderness frontiers, the Kimberley, in Australia's north-western corner, is home to prolific wildlife, majestic canyons, beautiful freshwater swimming holes and vast outback stations. This 15-day tour includes the Gibb River Road gorges, El Questro Wilderness Park and glorious sunsets from Purnululu (the Bungle Bungles). The walks are relatively short and punctuated by plenty of opportunities to relax.

Price: \$5,490 pp twin share (land content only)

Escort: Sandy Pratten has run her own landscape design business for more than 30 years and guides tours at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. She is an experienced escort having led trips to India, Sri Lanka, China, Mexico, Myanmar, Cuba, Kakadu and Morocco for Foundation & Friends.

WILDFLOWERS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

22 August – 5 September 2021

Grade: Introductory to Moderate*

Activities: guided walks, swimming, 4WD-ing (air-conditioned coach)

Accommodation: motels and resorts (14 nights)

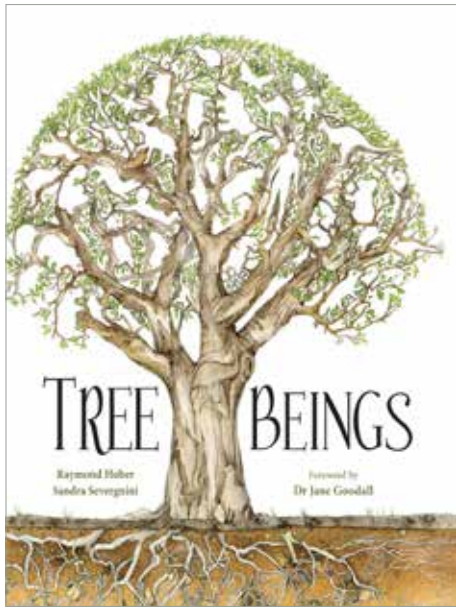
An exclusive 15-day Foundation & Friends' tour on which Dr Peter Weston will lead members to the home of the Queen of Sheba orchid *Thelymitra pulcherrima* at Mount Lesueur, enroute from Perth to the great wilderness treasure of Shark Bay (some 800km north). This region includes the Northern Sandplains, an area of exceptional botanical diversity and the habitat of some of Australia's most spectacular native plants. Expect to encounter black kangaroo paw (*Macropidia fuliginosa*), the wreath lechenaultia, the scarlet featherflower, the huge blossoms and gumnuts of the mottlechah, and massed displays of pink everlasting daisies, to name just a few of the hundreds of species that will be blooming. The tour will also take in the limestone pinnacles of Nambung National Park, Murchison River gorge, the stromatolites of Hamelin Pool and the red cliffs of Francois Peron National Park.

Price: \$6,670 pp twin share (land content only)

Escort: Dr Peter Weston is a former Senior Principal Research Scientist with the National Herbarium of New South Wales. In late 2019 Peter escorted a trip to the south-west of Western Australia and this 2021 journey north of Perth is Part 2 of an incredible journey.

*These adventures are not suitable for people with limited mobility. They are designed for participants with a reasonable level of fitness and competent swimming ability. Some days may be quite active and involve steep walks. Prepare with some regular moderate exercise.

ONE FOR THE KIDS



HAVE YOUR SAY AND WIN

Share your experiences of Foundation & Friends events, the Gardens, or this magazine for your chance to win *Tree Beings* by Raymond Huber and Sandra Severgnini, with a foreword by renowned primatologist and anthropologist Dr Jane Goodall.

Targeting children aged seven–12 years, *Tree Beings* is designed to inspire young family members to fall

in love with the natural world and act to protect our trees – our best allies in fighting climate change – with a combination of facts and feeling.

Meet some of the scientists, explorers and pioneers who helped uncover the mysteries of the world's oldest living things, including young Australian Tony Rinaudo whose work in Africa, has seen more than 200 million trees regrown from stumps, improving soil quality and doubling the yields of farmers in communities regularly devastated by famine.

Explore tree wisdom from different cultures and some famous and fascinating tree species, brought to life in a vibrant combination of illustrations and text.

We have three copies to give away. Email foundation.friends@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au or write to Letters, Foundation & Friends, Cottage 6, Mrs Macquaries Rd, Sydney NSW 2000 by 23 April.

Congratulations to Sue Meares and Julie Keegan, who have both won a copy of *The Garden State – Inside Victoria's Private Gardens* by Richard Allen, with photography by Kimbal Baker, which was featured in our summer 2020–21 issue.

Foundation
& Friends of the
BOTANIC GARDENS

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B | P | G

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FSC® helps take care of the forests, and the people and wildlife that call them home.

Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens supports the important work and programs across your Botanic Gardens – the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan and the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden Mount Tomah. Our mission is to grow a strong, supportive community to advocate and raise funds for our Botanic Gardens and their vital horticultural, scientific, education and conservation work.

Join our vibrant community of members today by phoning (02) 9231-8182 or visiting rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/Join-Support/Foundation-and-Friends-of-the-Botanic-Gardens

SHOP
ONLINE



BOTANIC GARDENS GALLERY

Botanic Gardens Gallery items are seasonally updated to ensure we continue to offer exceptional, high-quality artworks from talented and trusted artists. Our hand-picked range includes a selection of seasonal offerings – from cards and candles, to original artworks, prints, sculptures, ceramics, jewellery and so much more. botanicgardensgallery.com.au

FUNGI X BOTANICA

An exhibition unearthing the intriguing world of Art x Science in the Gardens

24 APRIL – 9 MAY

Open 10am–4pm

Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney

rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/botanica

All artworks for sale

Mycelium #1
by Jo Victoria



The Royal
BOTANIC GARDEN
Sydney

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