

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Friends,
What a sizzling summer we've had!!

I heard on the news weather report one night recently that we had sweated our way through more days of temperatures over 40C this summer than ever recorded before, and my poor garden shows strong evidence to that statement. Many usually tough plants have had their leaves burnt dry on the bushes, and the ground around them is left looking more like autumn with a covering of crisp leaves. I must admit though, that the loss of many plants has been my own fault, because I like to spend a lot of my time in the summer staying by the seaside at Torquay, where I am at present, and have not been there to water and to pamper them through many a hot spell. Not good!!!

Complain as I do however, I do not have the power to change the weather and I suppose facing the challenges which it throws up against us gardeners is part of being a gardener. For instance, whilst we sizzle through an Australian summer, I have friends in the south-west of England, near Wales, who have had their garden submerged under water a number of times over a number of weeks now, and other friends in north-east U.S.A. who have not seen their

garden for weeks at a time because it has been buried under snow. Things are looking up now they tell me – today they are recording their warmest day in a couple of months. The top temperature is expected to reach – 3C, which is much better than – 40C.

The weather will have its way, no matter what we say.

Despite the many challenges, we will soon be staging our Autumn Show. I hope that you have been better than I with tendering your plants and spoil them to championship condition for the show-bench. You will receive your show schedule at the February meeting, read it, understand it, and start to consider your entries. Good luck.

Cheers, Bill.



Perhaps I should stick to a rock garden like this one on The Salisbury Plains in England!!! It was called "Stonehenge"

MEMBERS NEWS

The Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar community is in mourning after its beloved gardener of 32 years died while doing the job he loved.

For those who have not heard the news. On the morning of January 15th, Martin Troy, 76 years old, had a suspected heart attack and collapsed beneath a tree he had planted 25 years earlier on the school grounds.

AUTUMN BUS TRIP SUNDAY

6TH APRIL 2014

COST - \$30.00 includes entrance fee to 2 Gardens. Morning Tea & Coffee supplied.

BYO Lunch & folding chair or stool.

Coach leaving Preston Town Hall-Gower street 9.00AM SHARP.

On way 2 or 3 games of free bingo (prizes to winners)

1. Woodend information Centre. Morning Tea & visit to Bourkies Bakery. (Yummy Vanilla Slices)

2. THE GARDEN OF LIXOURI - Barker's Creek Castlemaine.

Lixouri is reminiscent of a rural property in Greece or Italy. The house and garden look out onto rolling hills and the long established olive grove. The garden is terraced with beautiful stone

walls, steps and gravel paths overlooking a tranquil dam fringed with water iris, willow birch and white gums. In front the mud brick house established wisteria, roses and grapevine provide deep shade from the summer sun and an adobe wall with a superb wrought iron gate by Trefor Prest joins the house to the outbuildings.

A wonderful mixture of softly flowering plants and beautiful formal shapes together with skilful blending of exotic Mediterranean and native species compliment the formal structure of the garden. Open to the public at various times during garden festivals, Lixouri is a must visit garden.

BYO Lunch in the Garden.

3. HEDGEHOGS GARDEN - Barker's Creek Castlemaine.

'Hedgehogs' is a 3 acre garden. The garden comprises many diverse areas, from a Mediterranean style walled garden surrounding a pond with Medlar, Robina, Salvias, Phlomis, Roses, Abutilon Exocordia to a native stone garden with granite boulders and native plants and grasses.

One of the features is a wonderful granite pond built by Gordon Ford which is a melody of frogs for many months of the year. One can amble along the gravel path, take in the sculptures, look at the ponds, the stone walls or the small dam or just sit on the rocks or seats placed within the garden. There is a "Secret Garden" surrounding an old Malus Purpurea, many wonderful sculptures within the garden. Also one finds a considerable use of metal works built by the owners, such as gates tables, seating, arbours and archways.

For the rose lover there are old climbing roses as well as a picking bed and corner plantings in the vegetable area. Within the garden

there is a wood-fire pizza oven besides an eating area situated just above a new in-ground fenced spa. One section of the garden is devoted to food growing including a large enclosed prolific orchard, an enclosed berry house, a grape and iris walkway, a vegetable area, a walled citrus area with eggplants and peppers, a fig tree and potting shed. Other features in this designed garden include a Sedum and Coryline bed, besides all this the beautiful stone walls, the many birds give a sense of the beauty of nature.

Visit a Nursery in Woodend on way home depending on time.

Board coach at 4.30pm and settle back for your relaxing journey home.

ON A VISIT TO

R.H.S. Garden – Wisley, England.

I was fortunate enough to be able to visit this highly acclaimed headquarters of the RHS in the English spring, in the merry, merry month of May.



I could not help but to take inspiration from the colour and scent of the season as I explored these world famous gardens, just twenty-four miles from London.



The Fruit Field was a wonderful experience on its own, with pink and white apple blossom a delight to the eye, its delicate fragrance wafting in the air, with a gentle buzz of pollinating bees. I am told that in the autumn the harvest here will be turned into succulent jams and compotes, crunchy pickles and tangy relishes, to feature on their Taste of Wisley menus in the colder months. The Fruit Fields go on for acres and it was fascinating to see how they prune, espalier and shape the trees in such a variety of ways in order to get the best fruiting results from many varieties of fruit.

In the Model Vegetable Garden you can see the traditional and the more exotic growing side by side. There was seasonal asparagus, salad leaves, radishes, peas, beans and early potatoes. Wisley is a National Collection Holder for Rhubarb, and their rhubarb is ornamental and flavoursome, according those who partook of the tastebud tempting dishes in the café.

These culinary delights are set against a back drop of beautiful trees, shrubs and flowers. You cannot but admire the magnolias, camellias, cherry blossom and glorious rhododendrons.

I wandered through a succession of daffodils, tulips (Oh! The tulips), grape hyacinths, fritillaries and primulas. I marvelled at the orchids, peonies, just breaking colour and alliums as they held court, waiting for the queen of the flowers to unfurl her buds – the roses – hundreds of them.



I could not resist taking a multitude of snaps of the bright, happy faces of the thousands of pansies/violas as they nodded to me in the breeze as I passed, trying as if to attract my attention. Each variety seemed to try to outdo the next with their brilliant make up and lively smiles. I could not choose my Cinderella!!

If you get the chance, you've got to see the Wonderful Gardens of Wisley.

Bill Saunders.

Fruit Field Facts

There are over 2,000 types in the fruit field including 750 different types of apple.



The first trees were planted in the 1940's.

Pruning starts when the last leaf drops. It takes 7 staff, 3 trainees and 5 volunteers to look after the fruit of Wisley.

We produce around 30 tonnes of fruit per year. It is sold in the Wisley plant Centre, used in the café and made into jams, chutney, apple juice or cider.

Twiggy Plant Supports

We support the clematis and other plants in the perennial border with locally sourced birch twigs.



Each January we coppice birch on nearby Ockham Common, for the Surrey Wildlife Trust. We use the twiggy branches to make structures around the plants that will support them as they grow. Before long, the supports are completely hidden by the plants. Birch is ideal because it is easy to work with and is very bushy so it supports the plants well.

In February, when we cut the borders down, the old birch twigs are composted, so it is very environmentally friendly and a good use of local resources.

NEW YEAR IN THE GARDEN

What a start we have had to the 2014 gardening year, after an ideal spring with good rains. The heat and dryness has really hit hard with record spells of 40 deg days. The only positive aspect in all this is that we have plenty of water available to save and nurture our prized plants through this difficult time. If we just hang on a return with the approach of cooler autumn weather and possibly some rain.

I have used this summer to tidy up trees and shrubs and remove as much excess litter as possible. Of course leave all the mulch around your plants and hope the birds will leave it in place. With all the dryness I have noticed the birds are scratching around the base of plants which is annoying but does allow one when watering to direct the flow right up to the base of plants. This although not as good as rain must be the best possible use of water in the present conditions.

In the vegie garden I have just started to pick the tomatoes in the open garden as soon as they start to show colour. The birds really love anything that has moisture in it and along with the possums and foxes have made it difficult to harvest a reasonable crop of fruit. I am still

hanging in with my garden and hope you are doing the same as the good times are just around the corner.

Enjoy your garden.
Geoff May

COMING EVENTS

Saturday 1st March 1pm - 5pm.
Sunday 2nd March 10am-4.40pm. Kyneton Horticultural Society Autumn Flower Show, Watts Pavillion - Kyneton Showgrounds Kyneton.
Enquiries: Hugh 5422 1943

Saturday 8th March & Sunday 9th March, 10am - 4.30pm.
Ferry Creek Horticultural Society Plant Collection Sale & Garden Expo. Ferry Creek Horticultural Hall, Hilton Road, Sassafras.
Entry: \$5.00.
Enquiries: 9755 1882

March 26th - 30th.
Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, Exhibition Gardens Melbourne.
Enquiries: 5367 6363

MONTHLY COMPETITION

March 26th: One Container Marigold, One Variety, C.V.A.

MONTHLY MEETING

March 26th: In an English Country Garden - Bill Saunders



Sender: Preston Garden Club Inc.

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