

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Friends,

Here we are again at that busy time of year, when we have a number of events happening to keep us entertained and out of mischief.

Our show is looming also. The paperwork is done, the prize-cards are ready and only waiting for the winner's names to go on them. We are now waiting on the exhibits to be entered. Its Wednesday night before the show and already we have 84 entries, it's a good sign for Saturdays show.

Our hanging basket has been delivered to Carlton Gardens for the MIFGS Great Hanging Basket Competition, once again planted and cared for by Robert Strugnell. This year the basket has grown but not a lot of colour. With Easter being earlier and MIFGS starting today (16th) and a cooler February, has not helped.

On April 2nd we have a stall at the Sustainable Darebin Expo in the Town Hall. Here we will be promoting the club, maybe gain some new members.

The Autumn bus trip, is fully booked, takes off on Sunday 10th April. I am sure that it will be a most enjoyable day, as they all are. Cheers, Bill.

CLIMATE OUTLOOK

The Bureau of Meteorology issued its monthly and seasonal climate outlooks for March to May 2016. March to May favours above average rainfall in parts of southeast Australia but below average rainfall in the tropical north. March favours below average rainfall in both northern Australia and the southeast mainland. Daytime temperatures more likely to be warmer than average during autumn except in parts of the southern interior, while night-time temperatures are very likely to be warmer nation-wide. Climate influences include a very warm Indian Ocean, a weakening El Niño and warm sea surface temperatures surrounding much of Australia.

RARE PLANT IN GRAMPIANS

A plant believed extinct 10 years ago has been found thriving in the Grampians National Park.

Scientists, students and rangers have found 12 new populations of the Grampians bitter pea in the park and at Mt Langi Ghiran.

Researcher Brendan Nugent said wallaby populations had benefited from the plant's re-emergence, because it was one of their staple foods. The state government has listed the plant as threatened under

the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, and its conservation status is vulnerable.



Mr Nugent started studying the species in 2008, dedicating hours to mapping and monitoring the plant and co-ordinating information from volunteers. "The Grampians bitter pea or *Davisea laevis* was thought to be extinct until 2004, when the species was rediscovered at Langi Ghiran State Park. Very little was known about its biology and ecology," he said. "Thanks to resident scientists, Grampians field naturalists, university students, the Wilderness Society, Grampians Bushwalking Club, threatened species officers and Parks Victoria rangers all working together, 12 new populations have been found. "The knowledge we have about this vulnerable species is now far more robust." Mr Nugent said most

of the plants were still young and therefore vulnerable to predators and drought. "The main threats include degraded and fragmented habitat; damage to young plants by birds, wallabies, and feral pigs; fewer emus to disperse seed; altered fire regimes and climate change," he said. "Swamp wallabies particularly like the young foliage of the species and can wipe out entire seedling populations. "Plants also get hedged each year by crimson rosellas, but the species is able to cope with this repeated damage. It is also likely that crimson rosellas help to spread the seed long distances, making their visits particularly important."

Mr Nugent has called for more volunteers to help with his research. "If people are in the Grampians region and see an 'egg and bacon' flower plant that is about two metres or taller, we would love it if they would take photos and co-ordinates and contact Parks Victoria," he said.

"The species isn't included in Elliot's Grampians flora guide, as it was thought to be extinct last time it was printed, so any help from the public in finding new populations is appreciated." The Grampians Bitter Pea research will be published in academic journals later this year.

MARCH IN THE MAY'S GARDEN

As I write this it hardly seems like Autumn but I suppose we have only left Summer behind and what a long dry period it has been since early October when the first heat struck. Every season is different and this one has produced large carrots and parsnips (up to 1kg) from a very early planting I have two other rows one planted in October and the other in December so with a bit of luck we should

have a good supply of these two crops into the Winter.

The tomatoes look terrible with all the dry and diseased foliage nearly reaching the top branches, but I find by leaving the unsightly leaves helps protect the ripening fruit. There must be some sap and nutrients going into the fruit as they seem to be ripening nicely.

I have planted celery and silver beet recently and the plants are establishing well so with the cooler weather and hopefully some rain they will provide good winter eating.

It is still too early for broad beans; May and June is early enough for these hardest of all vegetables. Pumpkins are only just setting so I hope they will have enough time to mature while the days are still warm otherwise we will be reduced to potatoes, onions & marrows for keeping.

A good crop of jam melons have already set, so I will be looking for ideas of how to use them other than making jam.

Keep up the watering and success will come your way.

Geoff May

MEMBERS NEWS



Happy Birthday to you! Happy Birthday to you!

Hilary May, Cathy McMahan, Carolyn Scott & Robert Strugnell

We hope you enjoyed your special day.

Carmen de Silva

Condolences to the de Silva family on the passing of our dear member and friend Carmen. Carmen passed away on 29th February at Warringal Private Hospital.

A Requiem Mass for The Repose of the Soul of

Carmen de Silva



15 January 1927 – 29 February 2016

In Our Hearts Forever

AUTUMN BUS TRIP

SUNDAY 10TH APRIL 2016

Private garden- Ainslie (Kyneton)
Mica Grange private garden &
sculpture exhibition (Castlemaine)
Woodend Nursery.

Coach leaving Preston Town Hall
9.00am sharp. Byo lunch, &
folding chair or stool.

On way Two or Three games of
free bingo (prizes to winners)

Board Coach at 4.30 pm for a
relaxing journey home, arriving at
5.30pm.

**If between now and the day of
the bus trip you are unable to go,
notify John ASAP. We do have a
waiting list.**

John Mathie phone 94581632.

GOD AND ST. FRANCIS DISCUSSING LAWNS

GOD: Francis, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colourful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it-sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough. I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have they scheduled for us tonight?"

ST. CATHERINE: "Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a really stupid movie about.....

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

PERFUME PRINCESS

The fragrant hybrid Daphne, Perfume Princess (Daphne odora x bholua), is Plant of the Year for 2016. The award was presented by the Nursery and Garden Industry Association in mid February. The plant was commended for its long flowering, large, perfumed flowers and disease resistance. Bred by New Zealand plant breeder Mark Jury, it was introduced to Australia by Anthony Tesselaar International in 2015 and will be widely available to garden centres for spring 2016.



During springtime, pretty pink flowers stem from the robust shrub and scent the garden with a perfume, hence the nickname: the Perfume Princess. It grows best in frost-free conditions, in sun or

semi-shade. Once the plant is established, it requires only occasional attention and should only be pruned lightly.

Large blooms - up to 4 times the size of traditional Daphne blooms; Intense perfume with citrus undertones; And clusters of blooms that progress down the stem like no other Daphne. Daphne Perfume Princess™ is a unique and enchanting Daphne that should be on everyone's list of 'must have' Daphnes.

It's the earliest and longest flowering of all Daphnes, with one of the sweetest fragrances that is enhanced with its soft citrus undertones. Clusters of blooms are up to 6cm across also begin flowering along the stem like no other once established. It is an excellent performer with upright and slightly spreading attractive evergreen foliage. Positioned in the garden near a window, doorway or path, the sweet scent from all these flowers will add fragrance to your home and garden. Flowers from mid winter to late spring and is perfect for containers and in the garden.



MONTHLY COMPETITION

April 27th One Container of Chrysanthemum, C.V.A. (cut flowers)

MONTHLY MEETING

April 27th Seasol & Powerfeed products and their use – Virginia