

# FRIENDS OF WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS



## NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 94

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December 2020

Maintaining and developing Warrnambool Botanic Gardens as an outstanding Guilfoyle garden

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In mid November the committee was able to meet together for the first time in more than half a year. We sat around outside the rotunda, masked and suitably distanced. It did feel good.

Thank you to all our members who have remained connected throughout this year of virtual life.

The Gardens have been a haven for so many people over the last seven months and now that the Nature Play Space is open the northern boundary is very busy all day.

One of the victims of the corona virus was the conference of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens scheduled for Brisbane in May, but cancelled. That was when the inaugural Handbury Awards were to be presented. Geoff Handbury, who died last year aged 94, is well known as a philanthropist who generously donated to many causes including gardens. The awards were named in his honour. We are delighted that our Secretary, Mandy King was recognised for her exceptional contribution to our Gardens and beyond. The presentation by Dr Philip Moors AO was made via Zoom at the Associations AGM

Our Gardens are well loved and generally respected, but on rare occasions vandalised or pillaged. When two rare and valuable palms were stolen the community reacted with disbelief and disgust. The trees have not been recovered. More recently the well dome has been scratched and initialled which is so disappointing to the many visitors that enjoy that precinct. The Friends have agreed to meet the cost of a security camera and lighting as a deterrent.

We still plan an official opening of the Nature Play Space, an opening for the well and celebration of 30 years (now 31) of the Friends' work. This will now take place in 2021. However we still need to celebrate so..... note December 17th in your diary and come to the Gardens from 5.00pm.

Let's finish the year with a shout not a whimper and Best Wishes to all.

*Pat Varley*



## Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens

The AAFBG is a not-for-profit incorporated association. It involves the community and supports the growth of Friends groups interested in the well-being and public appreciation of botanic gardens through their conservation and development, scientific, educational, historical, cultural and recreational functions. Members represent a range of botanic gardens and parks in regional and metropolitan areas throughout Australia. Friends groups located in botanic gardens overseas are welcome to be affiliate members.

## National Award

Mandy King, secretary of the Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, was presented with a national award, the Handbury Award, at the AGM of the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens. Named in honour of Geoff Handbury, a generous benefactor of the Association the award recognises exceptional contributions by individuals to a Botanic Garden.

This is the inaugural year of the awards which were to be announced at the Brisbane conference of the Association in May, but were eventually presented via a teleconferencing meeting 19<sup>th</sup> October linking groups across Australia.

Mandy has been a 'Friend' of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens for more than 22 years and Secretary for 21 of them. In presenting the Award, Dr Phillip Moors, A.O. Deputy Chancellor Latrobe University, said;

Mandy has made an outstanding contribution...to the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, volunteering using her broad experience to volunteering and representation at a National level, it is a pleasure to acknowledge her work.

That work included compiling a data base for the Gardens, designing and producing informative brochures, establishing and maintaining a website, using her photographic skills to design and produce cards featuring the Gardens, championing the introduction of a fully automated irrigation system, in addition to the thousands of hours involved in keeping minutes, producing a quarterly newsletter and recently, facilitating work on the Natural Play Space.

In responding Mandy said;

We don't volunteer to receive praise, but I have to say I feel very honoured, humbled and special. I have found that being on both the committee of the Friends and the Association has brought many rewards. I realised the value of skills learned from wise, talented and passionate people could be transferred between the two groups.

My involvement has enabled me to enjoy not only my deep passion for the continuing development of our Botanic Gardens, but also working with the people that make it happen, and ultimately for the benefit of our community.

From Pat Varley President FOWBG

## Adventure Awaits at Nature Play Space

The Warrnambool Botanic Gardens has always been a popular spot for families and now it's even better.

That was the headline in 'Promenade' magazine of the Warrnambool City Council (Nov 2020)

It is almost two and a half years since Kim White from WCC spoke to the committee of Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens on the process of applying, under the Pick my Project guidelines, for a nature play space in the Gardens. The Friends were not enthusiastic at first, but agreed to support investigating a grant on the understanding The Friends would work together with WCC.

Once committed they worked energetically to promote the idea and were successful in gaining a grant of \$198,000; the play space being a popular choice for the Victorian Government's Pick my Project.

They moved swiftly to secure the services of Laidlaw and Laidlaw, leading designers in children's play spaces and Guilfoyle Gardens. A public consultation was held during the WUNTA Festival in February 2019 and the project was widely advertised.

At this stage the project lost momentum. Plans had not arrived as expected, the Curator was on work experience in Kew Gardens London, the President was away and Heritage Victoria indicated they were not happy with the plans or location. A long and frustrating period of negotiation followed. Curator John Sheely returned and Paula Gardiner of WCC joined us in August, but it took a further six months to gain approval from Heritage Victoria to commence work on the project. Within six months of that, the work was completed.

One of our number, Neil McLeod, volunteered to be project manager and together with John Sheely and Paula Gardiner made up the Project Team. They chose Garry Drake as contractor and reported weekly to the steering Committee, which was in effect, the executive of The Friends. More than 2500 hours were donated by The Friends and 1800 by WCC. The Nature Play Space is a tribute to their hard work and dedication, supported by our members and the wider community.

The Corona virus has delayed an official opening, but the fence came down on October 28th when Project Manager Neil and the children of Beamish Street Kindergarten broke through the ribbon and delighted in the space. Once they could contain their excitement teacher and 'Friend' Donna Lumb read to them the story of the construction of the play space from a book she has written entitled 'For the Love of Nature'.

From daylight to dark there has been a steady stream of families with young children enjoying the challenge of the climbing logs, basalt tunnels and the water feature.

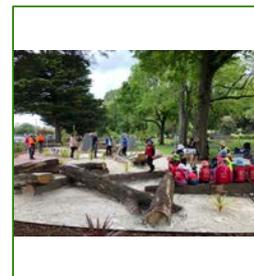
A great outcome by a great team.

*Pat Varley President*

### Foot note

Secretary Mandy King (Me) repeated to Pat on several occasions when this project was put to us 'walk away'. For ones that can't see an opportunity pass us by we pushed on.

I have had so many people stop me and express their enjoyment and gratitude. It uplifts my life every time. So pleased I wasn't listened to.



# WBG TEAM UPDATE NOVEMBER

Hard to believe we are entering December 2020 already!!!!

Despite a very trying year a lot has been achieved in WBG which is a credit to the teams.

The BIG ticket item this year has been the successful delivery of the Nature Based Play Space (NBPS). Fortunately, many opportunities to participate in this project was presented to the teams who wholeheartedly embraced it.

The success of the NBPS was never in doubt but the acceptance and use has been phenomenal which further endorses the approval of the project by Heritage Victoria.

Significant plantings have been undertaken in the various garden beds and further significant tree plantings have been completed.

Irrigation upgrades continue with more lawn sprinklers being installed and automated which continues to allow for efficient use of our bore water.

The rotation of staff through WBG continues to be a great success with the following 3 team members each contributing significantly to the development of the gardens:

Rhonda Mitchell  
Jason McSwain  
Tom Lynch

Plant of the week, an initiative implemented this year, has been prepared and embraced by each team member and this task has resulted in a significant

collection of plant information for WBG. Also, despite municipal wide demands, the WCC Tree Team continue to assist with the development of the gardens and many thanks to:

Paul Lamb  
Doug Grieves  
Michael Thompson

COVID-19 appears to have resulted in increased visitation to WBG as people embrace open spaces and in particular the heritage gardens.

Swan Reserve continues to deliver amazing native flowers for the public to view.

The volunteers led by Kevin Sparrow do an amazing job of maintaining and managing these significant water wise gardens.

Thanks to all those involved.

The continued support of the Friends of WBG (FOWBG) is greatly appreciated and publicly acknowledged as it is easy to take all their work and generosity for granted.

As I enter my 15th year as Curator of WBG I look forward to further developing my teams working relationship with FOWBG.

Wishing you all the best for the remainder of 2020 and successful gardening in 2021.

John Sheely  
On behalf of the WBG team



This **Puya** was purchased from Roraima Nursery Lara and planted in the gardens in 2016. This is its first flower spike which started in early October 2020 and should finish mid December. It is in the bed on Cockman Street near the Fernery.

Puya is a very large genus of bromeliad, both in number of species and in size of plant. The genus includes the world's largest species of bromeliad the Puya Ramona which grows up to 30 feet tall and 9 feet across. There are about 199 species within the Puya genus. Native to the Mountains of South America and southern Central America

## PLANT OF THE WEEK

As John has explained in his report the Garden Team members are compiling 'Plant of the week' reports. An initiative implemented this year, has been prepared and embraced by each team member

### Plant of the week – 16 June 2020 – Jason

#### McSwain

Botanical Name:	Choisya ternata 'Sundance'
Common Name:	Mexican Orange Blossom
Family:	RUTACEAE
Origin:	Mexico
Description:	Choisya ternata Sundance is a rounded, bushy plant with abundant shiny, rich green leaves.  The leaves start as yellow and change to a yellowy green as they age.  The Choisya has clusters of small, very heavily scented, white, star shaped flowers that appear in late spring and again in summer and autumn.  They can reach a height of 3 metres and grow 1 metre wide.
Growing conditions:	Grow in a well-drained soil in a sheltered position in full sun.
Propagation:	Semi hardwood cuttings.
Pest and Disease:	Can get glasshouse red spider mite and damage by snails.
Maintenance:	Fertilise in spring. Trim after flowering to keep tidy and shaped. Keep well watered, especially in hot conditions.
Location in WBG:	Bed 7, 14, 16, 19, 21 (photo)
Uses in WBG:	Planted for its striking bright colour, excellent fragrance and easy maintenance.

### Plant of the week – 21/9/20 – Rhonda Mitchell

Botanical name:	cedrella sinensis or Toona sinensis
Common name:	Chinese Cedar
Family:	Meliaceae
Origin:	Eastern and southeastern Asia
Description:	Deciduous tree, with a narrow upright shape and stunning bright pink spring foliage which then turns cream then finally to a which soft green for summer. It can reach a height of 10m and a width of 4m.
Growing conditions:	Moist well drained soil and full sun. Prefers a humid climate.
Propagation:	From root cuttings taken from runners coming off the base of the tree. Best done when plant is dormant.
Pest and disease:	Resistant to pest and disease. Very hot days may and soil drying out too much could cause issues.
Maintenance:	No maintenance required. Suckers from underground runners off parent plants may need removing if shooting in unwanted areas.
<b>Location in WBG:</b>	Five cedrella's were planted near the Centre of bed 20 on the 8 <sup>th</sup> of July 2009. They were purchased from Pearson's Nursery Allansford
<b>Uses in WBG:</b>	<i>cedrella sinensis</i> would have been planted in WBG for its eye-catching foliage that contrasts nicely with the plants around it. It looks fantastic at the moment with its bright pink against the green of the bamboo and darker olive and the <i>Arundo donax variegata</i> especially makes it stand out.

## PLANT OF THE WEEK 7/72020 - Tom Lynch

Botanical name: Kniphofia winter cheer

Common name: Red hot poker

Family name: Melianthaceae

Country of origin: Southern Africa

Description: Kniphofia 'Winter Cheer' is an attractive green grass-like, strap-leaved clumping plant valued for its toughness as well as their flowers that grow on a tall stalk. They reach the height of 1.5 by 1m wide in size.

Flowers: The flowers are the main feature of the red-hot poker which are tall bottle brushes in the colours of red and orange. The flowering usually occurs from autumn to spring.

No amount of wind will stop or hurt the flowers, the flowers are really known for their bright glow through winter. Remove dead flower stems and leaves after flowering.

Growing conditions: Grow Kniphofia in well drained soil, but they are tolerant of most soil types, plant in a sunny position. Once they are established they are very drought tolerant. But they really don't tolerate wet soggy conditions.

Propagation: Propagate by division after flowering or from seed, division being the more productive option around spring time.

Pest and Disease: Snails can provide issues for this plant. It can tolerate light frosts but not repeated heavy frosts. Also native birds feed on their nectar.

Location planted WBG: They are located in beds 19, 21 and the north west bed opposite bed 16.

Uses in WBG: With this plant's main feature being able to flower right through winter you could place it almost in any bed to provide some brightness during those gloomy winter months.



Orange Blossom



Chinese Cedar



Red hot poker

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Our newsletter is published spring, summer,  
autumn and winter.

If you would like to contribute to our publication  
please forward material to the above address.

Membership: Payable at/or by the AGM  
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**Payment Information**

**Direct** BSB: 083 957

**Payment:** Acc #: 048 342 632

Your name as reference. *(This is important for our  
record keeping)*

Visit our website for all information. Booking the Gardens  
and following the Friends

**WARRNAMBOOL BOTANIC GARDENS WEB SITE  
AND FRIENDS OF THE WBG**

**GUIDED TOURS**

**Guided tours are on hold until  
further notice**



**CHRISTMAS  
BREAK UP**



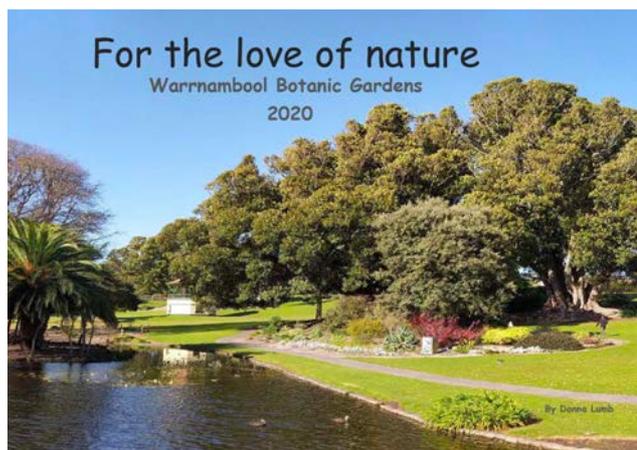
*At the end of this very  
different year we will hold a  
slightly different end of our  
year celebration*

Just a quiet gathering to celebrate a successful  
year and wish everyone good will

We will meet at the Rotunda

**5pm Thursday 17 December**

The Committee hope to see you there



**CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

This delightful little children's book on the creation  
of the Nature Based Play Space would be a great  
addition to Santa's stocking.

Cost \$20. Proceeds support the Gardens.

To order ring Pat on 0400138836 or email the  
Friends