

Australian Plants Society

Grampians Group Newsletter

Gari-Word

September 2022

NEXT MEETING

7:30 20th September Pomonal Hall

Catherine Pye: "Tasmania off track walking - a botanical journey"

Preparation for flower show.

Show 2022 Preparation

Our September meeting leads us into the preparations for the upcoming annual **Pomonal Flower Show**.

Please, put your name down on the roster for the big weekend and hear about what's planned.

September Thu. 29th-Fri 30th Flower show preparation .. all hands on deck to make this a ripper after 2 cancelled shows

October Sat 1st - Sun 2nd Flower show!

August Meeting Report by Neil and Wendy

Our August meeting highlight was a wonderful presentation by Bill Aitchison, the APS Vic Book Sales Officer and the Acacia Study Group Leader. The talk was certainly not just a list of yellow flower photos! The two most beautiful I recall were *Acacia rossei* from WA, and a scene with reflections in water of the Bendigo Ironbark forest where the flowering understorey was *Acacia acinacea* Gold Dust Wattle.

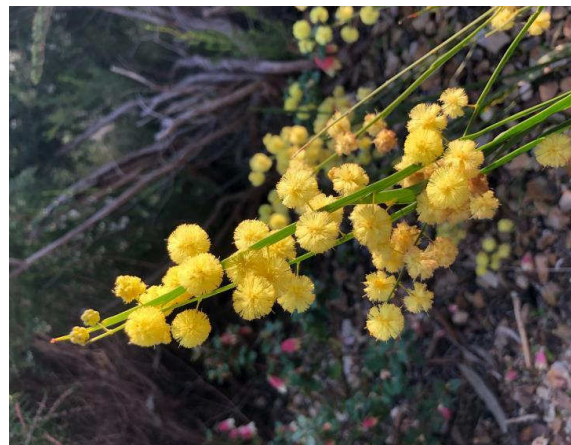
Bill began by telling us that, according to World Wide Wattle, (the fantastic website/ database/ resource on Acacia), there are currently 1071 species in Australia, with the lion's share, 640, in Western Australia and only 21 from Tasmania. Bill's conclusion was that they must prefer the warm, however Victoria has 111 which is pretty impressive for the smallest mainland state!

Bill explained the 7 botanic sections in the genus Acacia: the major differences are seen in the green and the gold: in the leaves and the inflorescence (many joined flowers). His photos began with species in the Acacia section *Botrycephalae*, (named after *Acacia botrycephala* the Sunshine Wattle which is now known as *Acacia terminalis* and common east of Melbourne and into NSW). These are



Acacia boormannii ssp gibba a very rare Victorian endemic species in our garden

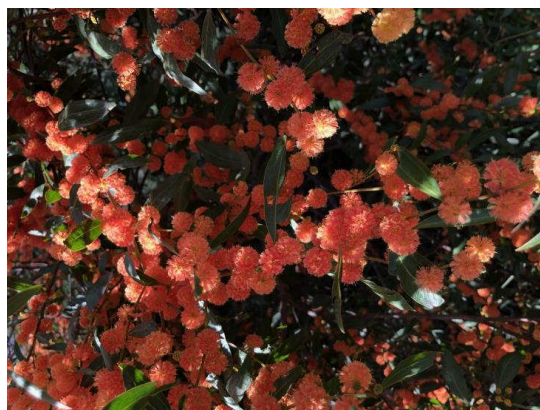
the ones with bi-pinnate (ferny) leaves and round ball flowers in racemes, like our local Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii* and Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*. Section *Pulchellae* is very similar, with bi-pinnate leaves, but the round ball flowers grow individually. The most common species we know in the Grampians region would have to be *Acacia mitchellii* Mitchell's Wattle. Section *Acacia* is the largest section being all the species with one nerved phyllodes and ball flowers. The other four sections depend on whether the phyllodes are alternate, or whorled or winged? with how many nerves? Then whether the inflorescences are rod shaped or round, single or in racemes? There are only 27 species with the beautiful miniritchi bark and they all are in section *Juliflorae* (with phyllodes and rod flowers).



Acacia wildenowiana in our garden

We were shown some local species, several from WA and islands, and there were witty photos that explained the names, like plunging dolphin! Interesting to know that only *Acacia myrtifolia* occurs naturally in all states. We know that all legumes add nitrogen to the soil, but I loved Bill's gorgeous photo of the Native Swamp Rat that eats the Nitrogen nodules. We were also shown some topical aspects of Acacia: have you noticed some recent postage stamps featuring three different wattles, *Acacia leprosa* Scarlet Blaze, *Acacia alata* the Winged Wattle, and the Purple-flowered Wattle *Acacia purpureopetala*, and the one on our \$20 note?

The next morning Bill led members around Wendy's Wattle Wander where we admired about 100 beautiful species, with most in bud or in flower. Bill took copious notes and specimens to try and help me identify a number of species, and we finished up admiring the spectacular bright orange



Acacia 'Orange Blaze' in our garden



Acacia consabrina, a lovely low shrub in Wendy's garden

Acacia 'Orange Blaze' that we have bred. We were cut a little short so as not to frighten a

nesting pair of Little Wattle birds in my little wattle! This *Acacia exudans* is only a metre high, lucky we have a predator-free enclosure. It was fascinating to see our wattles with friends, and with new eyes- having learnt about the seven sections that Bill's talk explained on the previous evening. We then headed back to the house for coffee and bikkies thanks to the members who brought a plate the previous evening! yum.

Special thanks must go to Bill Aitchison for coming all the way from Melbourne to talk to our group, not once, but twice, when he should have been at home preparing his garden for the Open Garden Scheme the following weekend! It was very disappointing to see the very low attendance for such a wonderful talk.

Fiona sent these pictures of our fabulous Acacia specimen table from last meeting. Also a pic of her *Acacia* Scarlett Blaze which is only two years old. She has already cut some for the local florist who was thrilled to have a new flower to work with. Some members braved the cold wind to wander round Wendy's extensive wattle collection the morning after the meeting



VicFlora Update

Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria has re-launched its plant biodiversity website, VicFlora. The new portal features upgrades that allow users to identify Victoria's plants more easily. It is based on a new, open-source core that allows Gardens botanists to easily add new usability and accessibility features to continually improve the user experience.

First launched in September 2016, VicFlora provides identification tools and information for all known native and naturalised Victorian plants, with over 4,400 different plant entries. Today, VicFlora contains more than 33,000 images that document 80% of Victoria's plants - a figure which increases each season. It is the organisation's most used scientific resource with 189,000 users and over 2.1M pages of data delivered per year, and 1,600 users per day during the peak flowering season.

As such, VicFlora is one of the most visited sites in Australia for native plant identification. Significant milestones were attained in 2020 and 2021 when Eucalyptus and Acacia 'exemplars' were respectively added to the flora. Exemplars are very high-resolution images of perfect reference specimens, in this case covering Victoria's many Eucalyptus and Acacia species, including close-ups of key diagnostic characters needed for identification.

Spring Has Sprung by John King

I suppose it's natural for us to align the seasons with specific dates. In earlier days, I used to think it more appropriate to align them with the solstices and equinoxes. After all, mild spring weather (as this year is showing), doesn't kick in until well after the 1st of September, and summer's scorches usually don't hit until January. Indeed I have read works written in the 1800s that mentioned the 21st of September as the beginning of spring. On consideration, though, I think the dates we currently use are a good compromise, for a season is not just about the temperature, and from nature's viewpoint, spring is well and truly underway, what with flowers in bloom, the lengthening days, the arrival of migratory birds, nesting and, of course, weeds popping up everywhere!



Hovea heterophylla

The original people who settled here were the ultimate observers of, and intimately connected to nature, and thought more of six seasons. The Gariwerd peoples considered September to November the wildflower season, or Petyan.

For me, the main wildflower season stretches from August until December at higher elevations (such as Mt William & the adjoining Major Mitchell Plateau). What a delightful time it is. The wattles on our place are just beautiful now and it is difficult to resist heading their way on a walk, with the Golden Wattle flowers just starting to go over, but the Spike Wattles and Blackwoods in full bloom and the Hedge Wattles and Prickly Moses yet to arrive at their peak; and the scent!

On our winter walk I mentioned that we'd had only 3mm up until mid July, but good falls since then have ensured our creek is flowing strongly and it is such a pleasure to follow it along its banks. Greenhoods have long been out and now Bitter-pea and Hovea are making an appearance, along with the very lovely Scented Sundew. I am annoyed to spot weed orchids in new places. I'll dig them up now if they're somewhere I don't normally go, otherwise I'll wait until they push up a flower stalk, so that the task is not too overwhelming. I have also been pulling up Capeweed, but will mostly give that up as a lost cause once it becomes a sea of yellow. Stop press: first Capeweed flowers spotted!



Drosera aberrans Scented Sundew

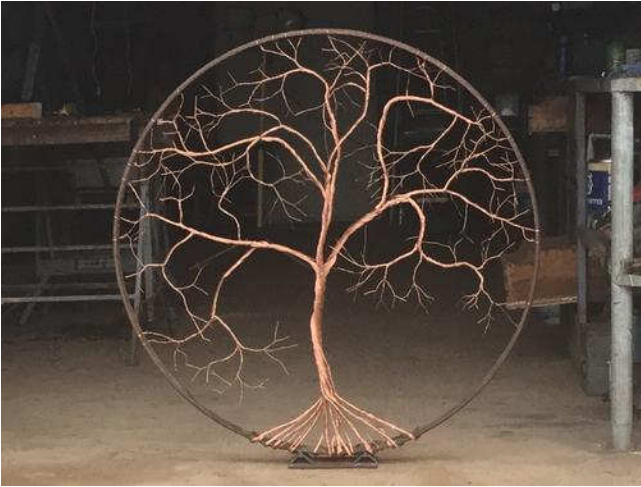
It was still winter when I took these shots of *Hakea orthorrhyncha* in my garden!
Phil



Inspiring Recycling!

What do you do with all that stuff cluttering up your shed that might come in handy sometime? Here's what someone with skill and artistry like Neville Collier can achieve!

A tree of life to replace a dead plant



Rushes sculpture for a water course.



Members' Pictures

Two extremely rare Grampians endemics that we are growing for the WAMA garden at Phil's nursery, precociously flowering in their tubes.



Platylobium alternifolium



Pultenaea patellifolia

Members' Pictures

Kevin and Sandy are back home now but kept in touch with contributions to the newsletter while they were away. Kevin sent us this challenge. Can anyone identify this tree from Hervey Bay? If you can you go first in the supper queue at the next meeting.

You can give your answers to Kevin and claim your prize at the next meeting!



The newsletter will only continue if it has material to include. If you value the newsletter and enjoy reading it please consider making a contribution.

Contributions in any form, physical or digital are welcome. Items submitted on paper, for example photos, will be scanned and returned. subject matter need not be limited to native plants, but can also include anything you think members may find interesting.

Email: <mailto:grampiansnewsletter@apsvic.org.au> or by phone: 0438 566 250 or by post to: Phil Williams P.O. Pomonal 3381

Thanks to everyone for their contributions to this issue.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/APS-Grampians-Group-960723023989990/>

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