

BRANCH CUTTINGS



Issue 78 – Nov 2025

This branch is affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society & National Trust of Australia (NSW).

We acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional owners and custodians on whose land we walk, work & live.

AGHS Sydney UPCOMING EVENTS

December

Sydney Branch End of Year Party

Date: Saturday 6 December 2025, 12 – 4pm

Venue: 6 Tessa Street Chatswood

Cost: AGHS Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$5

Join us for a relaxed end of year gathering at the lovely home and garden of Sydney branch committee members Gina Plate and John Pagan.



Image source: Gina Plate

February 2026

Growing What Matters: Chinese Vegetable Growers in Parramatta and Beyond – talk by Christopher Cheng

Date: date to be advised

Oral historian Christopher Cheng will share insights on the legacy of Chinese market gardeners, who nourished local families in Sydney, fuelled the post-war flourishing of Chinese restaurants, and contributed to the enduring presence of the flavours and vegetables of Chinese cuisine in NSW.



Market garden West Botany Street.

Image source: Christopher Cheng

March 2026

Chinese Garden of Friendship – guided tour by Oi Choong and Julian Siu

Date: Weekend day - date to be advised

Branch members enjoyed a visit to the Chinese Garden of Friendship during Winter, last year. Here is an opportunity to revisit the gardens in their late Summer presentation, with the Lake of Brightness covered in lotus blooms and the fragrance of Osmanthus and Chinese Ixora in the air.



Image source: Tripadvisor

Conference Report

Beyond the Garden Fence – AGHS National Conference 2025 Mount Gambier *Stuart Read*

I was chuffed to join some 140 members in Mount Gambier for AGHS's 45th conference. About 30 enjoyed the pre-conference tour from Adelaide south along the Coorong, sampling landscapes from city grid to hills, towns and plantations. Then on to flat coastal plains stretching south and east to the Victorian border. Limestone country. Its 'ridges' or low hill lines are in fact old (ancient) shorelines; the 'bedrock' was once a sea floor. Between are lagoons and wetlands, rich in life, supporting grazing and croplands.

Tour highlights were visiting *Moorakyne*, an historic garden in coastal Robe, with c.1910 Norfolk Island pines framing its 1853 stone house, and a young but entirely appropriate coastal garden around it. And *Wagner's Rose Farm* at Tantanoola, which specializes in unusual, 'heritage' and old roses, among others. Brian Wagner was a font of information and enthusiasm for his game.



Moorakyne, Robe. Image source: Stuart Read

The spacious Barn Palais at Mt Gambier gave plenty of character for our gathering, spilling out into lovely gardens ablaze in bloom. Coaches shuttled 'town-stayers' to and fro, blasting off for afternoon tours. First, *Cave Gardens* beside the town hall - first glimpse of the world underneath the limestone 'cap' – staircases descend into the abyss... My kiwi eyes went straight to NZ cabbage trees in full bloom – with competition from fragrant native frangipani trees. Boandik Elder, Uncle Ken Jones of *Bush Adventures* gave a terrific introduction to the Aboriginal peoples of the region's long occupation and attachments. Geologist and cave diver Ian Lewis spoke in plain English, bringing to life its rock plates, their slow drift north, tilting, volcanism (the world's 3rd largest volcanic plain is from here to Melbourne, albeit dormant), erosion creating sinkholes and legacy soils suiting agriculture and horticulture.

Trevor Nottle's keynote talk surveyed AGHS's achievements since we were last here (1999) and thoughts on what might come next – not least, challenges of climate change to 'adapting' historic gardens. His career studying Mediterranean climate gardens to enrich South Australia's gardens in dry and generally warm climate made this apt. Richard Heathcote showed how artists and others recorded and responded to landscapes over time, evolving our 'seeing'. Glenys and Barry Mulligan introduced their garden at *St. Mary's Wines*, Penola, which we later visited: created in 1937. Our second 'crater' visit was *Balumbul / Umpherston Sinkhole*, on to sup at *The Apple Farm* and our first real crater: *Warwar / the Blue Lake*, with forestry and ornamental plantations cloaking it.



Blue Lake, Mount Gambier. Image source: Stuart Read



Umpherston Sinkhole. Image source: Stuart Read

Sue Bell of *Bellwether Vineyard* explained vividly how vine growers and vigneron make the most of regional terroir and terrarossa soil, crafting distinct wines from the Coonawarra. Matt van Schank from Bio Gro explained how regional (Monterey pine) forestry ‘wastes’ are reused as resources - compost and a range of potting mixes, from seedlings to orchids. We later visited a forestry museum and Bio Gro at Wandilo - both illuminating.

Susan McCormack, Director of *Carrick Hill house and garden* in Adelaide’s Hills outlined plans for *the Museum of Australian Gardening*, seeking ideas on what it should comprise. It builds on a generous donation of a tools collection from ‘The Old Mole’ Richard Bird. Its ‘The Blade’ exhibition on lawn mowers was on display for us to enjoy. Yours truly summarized all the papers and Helen Wilson (Northern NSW branch and new national chair) invited us all to the 2026 conference in Orange, with pre- and post-tours to & from the mountains.

Our conference dinner in the Barn Palais was enriched by after-dinner speaker, AGH journal editor Francesca Beddie, giving a ‘bouquet’ of flowers reflecting her varied career(s), as diplomat (Jakarta, Moscow, Berlin...), in international development, adult learning, vocational and educational research.

Visits also included Sunday's to Penola's Petticoat Lane cottages and kitchen gardens, *St. Mary's vineyard and garden, 1878+ Yallum Park homestead and garden, Monbulla* (all at, or near Penola), 1991+ *Lake Millicent Wetlands* rewilding project beside Lake McIntyre and the astonishing, huge *Holla-Fresh herb farm*, all under glass, at Tantanoola – growing thousands of herbs supplying South Australian and many Victorian supermarkets. Eye-opening.

I managed to muck up bookings and miss out on the Optional Day tour to World Heritage List-ed *Naracoorte Caves National Park, Gum House and garden* and *Moy Hall*. That'll have to await a report by someone else!



Petticoat Lane, Penola. Image source: Stuart Read



Holla Fresh herb farm. Image source: Stuart Read

Message from the Chair, AGHS Sydney

Stuart Read

Hello from Chair's chair – I'm just basking in how much fun it was on our recent branch visit to Ken Lamb's *Hidden Orient* nursery and base, in Belrose – an event anticipated for quite some time. He'd agreed to host us and talked generously and humorously about his consulting business, *Imperial Gardens Landscape*, which has done works across Australia and advised beyond. It was most interesting.

You'll have noticed that gardens Oriental, be they in Australia or in Asia, have been a bit of a theme for talks and visits. Such as October's talk by Hisashi Nakahara on Tokyo's *Meiji Shrine Outer Garden*.

So they'll remain into early 2026, with February and March events lined up, only recently. With oral history researcher Dr Chris Cheng to give us a talk on his work documenting Chinese Australian market gardens and gardeners in Parramatta (February) and a repeat visit, this time not in winter, but in summer, to Darling Harbour's Chinese Gardens of Friendship, with expert guides Oi Choong and Julian Siu. Don't miss out on either – two beautiful events.

Also very much looking forward to some relaxing catching up with members informally and a bit of pre-Christmas eating and supping, at the lovely Chatswood garden of committee members, Gina Plate and John Pagan. Do join us for this - some welcome down time in relaxed surrounds... (just what gardens should be).

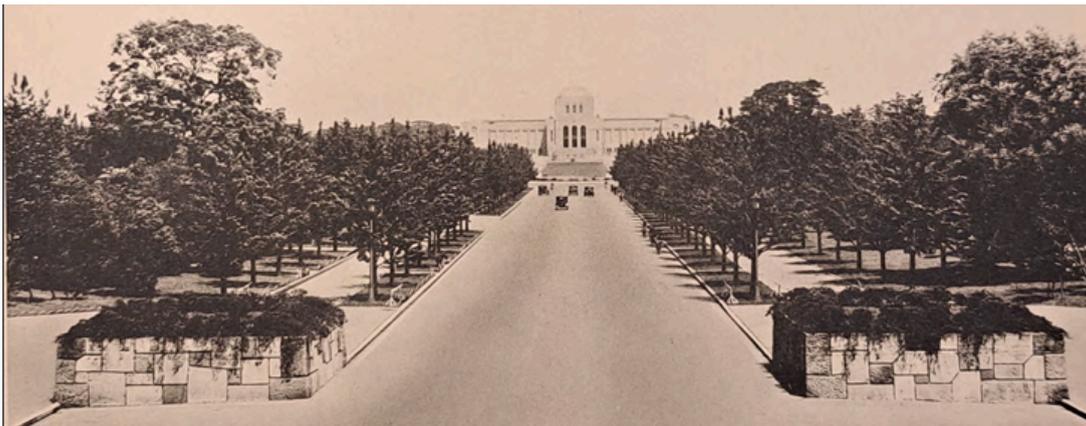
Your branch vice-chair, Steve Halliday, has served two 3-year terms on the national management committee, as our branch representative. He's had to stand down (likely welcoming a rest!) and yours truly is branch representative.

Welcome and thanks to Christina Kanellaki Lowe who's kindly agreed to be our branch newsletter editor – she, I'm sure like me, would welcome your ideas for future articles short or long, as well as visits and talks. Do get in touch!

Email: stuart1962@bigpond.com

RECENT EVENTS

Central Tokyo's Meiji Shrine Outer Garden



Heritage Specialist Hisashi Nakahara took us through the early development of landscape planning in Japan, and the influences in the development of the Outer Garden of the Meiji Shrine in central Tokyo.

Views from within the Gardens have been compromised by the 2020 stadium development. Further development is now proposed that has the potential for considerable intrusion into the curtilage and setting of this place. Members who would like to support a petition against these proposals, may contact Hisashi at hisashi@edwardsheritage.com.au or speak with him at our end of year party.

Property visit – Hidden Orient Garden, Belrose

Ken Lamb, a designer and advisor for Japanese and Chinese gardens, led members through the Hidden Orient garden, and the Imperial Gardens nursery.



Imperial Gardens Nursery. Top images by Graham Smith, bottom images by Stuart Read

ADVOCACY

The Sydney branch made submissions on the following:

The NSW draft Heritage Strategy - The response called for greater focus on landscape, park and garden heritage.

Eryldene, Gordon - The submission drew attention to the impacts of nearby apartment proposals exploiting 'Traffic Oriented Development'. It highlighted effects on the visual setting and impacts the growing environment of the garden.

Greater Sydney Parklands - Callan Park Draft Plan of Management 2025-2035. Concern was raised that the Plan is open to interpretation and does not effectively quantify maximum extent and intensity for landscape uses and permissible activities.

Greater Sydney Parklands - Draft Callan Park Access, Movement and Parking Strategy. AGHS Sydney noted that the proposed new traffic regime does not quantify increases in vehicle parking spots and lacks investigation of multiple variants.

In October, we brought our members attention to concerns with the **NSW Planning System Reform Bill**. As it wasn't open for public comment, the Branch shared analysis from the Environmental Defence Office legal team and suggested members contact their representatives directly.

Advocacy requests to the Sydney Branch should be accompanied by an outline of succinct points about the required support.

See also, the advocacy pages on the AGHS Website.

https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/garden-history-now/#filter=.iso_4

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Botanic Gardens of Sydney

<https://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/what-s-on>

Guided walks led by volunteer guides 10:30am-12:00pm daily.

Growing Friends Plant Sales: Sydney: Monday to Friday 11am-2pm, Weekends 10am-2pm.

Mount Tomah: Daily 9am-5:30pm, Mount Annan: 9:30am-4:00pm

National Trust of Australia (NSW)

See National Trust website for details of properties including the ones below:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/whats-on-nsw/>

Experiment Farm Cottage 9 Ruse Street, Harris Park – open first and third Friday and Saturday of each month, 10.30am- 3.30pm. Entry Fees: National Trust members -FREE, Adults -\$12, Concession/child >5yrs- \$10, Family- \$34
Experiment Farm Cottage is part of an historical Parramatta precinct which includes Hambledon Cottage (1824), Elizabeth Farm (1793) and the Queen's Wharf, all within easy walking distance of each other.

Everglades House & Garden, 37 Everglades Avenue, Leura – open Wednesday to Monday, 10am – 4pm.
Entry Fees: National Trust members – FREE, Adults - \$17, Concession - \$15, Family- \$49

This newsletter was collated and edited by Christina Kanellaki Lowe.