



AUSTRALIAN
GARDEN
HISTORY
SOCIETY

VICTORIA BRANCH NEWS: JULY 2020



Image: © Chuyu | Dreamstime.com

Hello everyone. Welcome to our July lockdown edition. As we enter into the depths of winter, perhaps feeling a little deflated by the situation Victoria finds itself in, we hope you can find some joy in the parks and gardens nearer to home. At the moment if you look around, there are some wonderful winter-flowering shrubs with fantastic scents that are guaranteed to lift the spirits. Daphne and viburnum are easily recognised, but are you familiar with the wintersweets and witch hazels? The shrubs themselves are not noteworthy, but when the flowers emerge at this time of year – what a treat!

Many of us are restricted to metro Melbourne and not able to visit the regions for a while so this month the Quiz will focus on some of the important properties around town.

In August, if you are looking for entertainment at home, you will be able to attend our AGM from the comfort of your own living room, online. The meeting is scheduled for August 24th at 7:00 pm and we will be sending a reminder email with a link to join the meeting before that date.

If you have an interest in promoting, conserving or becoming more familiar with our significant garden landscapes, please consider nominating for our Committee. We currently have vacancies and would welcome members with experience in heritage landscapes or horticultural knowledge.

Stay safe and warm.

MEDLOW WORKING BEE CANCELLED

Due to restrictions, the working bee at Medlow scheduled for Sunday 16th August, is now cancelled.

MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN GARDEN QUIZ



Image: © Matko Medic | Dreamstime.com

In earlier editions of this Quiz we have focused on the attractions of regional botanic gardens. This time, acknowledging the limited opportunities available to Melburnians to explore beyond their municipality, we will test your knowledge of the history of some significant gardens around the metropolitan area. Answers on the last page of the newsletter.

THE QUIZ

1. The first owners of this property, which features an Italianate style mansion, established the garden with delivery of black soil from Point Cook. Remodelling and restoration of the gardens was subsequently undertaken by students of the next owners, a Catholic seminary. Today it features sweeping lawns, shrubberies, paths and an ornamental lake. There is a grotto on an island in the lake which still contains some of the original seashells, pebbles and animal teeth that were used to decorate it.
2. The story of this garden began in 1901 when Mr J M Watson purchased 1.4 hectares of land for a private garden in Balwyn, in which he planted a collection of Australian and New Zealand natives. It was purchased by the City of Camberwell in the 1920s and expanded in the 1960s to 2.6 hectares. It currently supports approximately 4,000 native plants laid out along an attractive circular walk, in Australian habitat zones.
3. These gardens have the distinction of not only being Melbourne's first gardens but also its first burial site. In the early days of the colony from this high point you would have had panoramic views of the bay. Now it is surrounded by buildings but city workers can enjoy their lunch under its shady trees.
4. Back in the 1890s, George Woolrich commenced clearing his land of giant Eucalypts and then grew raspberries and cherries. His elder son established a nursery on part of the property after WWI, and then in the 1920s, a younger son started a 'cut flower' business. Set on the deep volcanic soil of the Dandenongs this garden is now famous for its series of garden rooms, 80-year-old European beech, magnolias, maples and a collection of fabulous Himalayan tree rhododendrons. The herbaceous borders include two very fine Japanese weeping maples.
5. This former nursery is one of the few to be listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, and is now public parkland. It was operated by the one family for 70 years from the late 1800s and in its heyday supplied fruit and ornamental trees to other parts of Australia and overseas. The current park features many trees listed on the Victoria Heritage Database.

Note: If thinking of visiting any of these places, please check if open under the current restrictions.

THERE'S MORE TO A GARDEN THAN PLANTS



Image: Helen Page

As many of us have discovered when digging in the garden, they don't only contain plants and soil. We are often surprised by what else we dig up. Some objects are commonplace, some unusual, some rare and valuable. The older the garden, the richer the trove of non-horticultural objects is likely to be. Bishopscourt in East Melbourne, the residence of the Anglican Archbishops of Melbourne since 1853, is an example.

Since 2001 when the AGHS took on responsibility for the garden maintenance with the assistance of other volunteers, the garden has yielded some unusual finds. In 2012 during the planting of a weeping elm to the east of the house, a water cistern was discovered, just below the surface of the lawn. It had been built as the water storage for the house but became redundant after water from the Yan Yean Reservoir was connected to East Melbourne in 1857. Solidly built of brick and measuring approximately three metres by two, it is high enough to stand up in. Since falling into disuse it had become the receptacle of all sorts of unwanted material which today would be dealt with by hard rubbish collections – garden and building waste, broken glass from the green houses, a child's pram and a wind up gramophone which eerily began to turn when left in the sun. The most interesting item was the original hand pump used to raise the water. Since then the cistern has been emptied and cleaned and the access hatch secured. The pump, now restored to working order, has been installed nearby.

The garden plan has remained largely unchanged since 1853 and from time to time early features like terracotta drains and gutters are uncovered, as well as fragments of china, mainly dating from the nineteenth century, ranging from dinner plates to chamber pots. By far the most valuable discovery was an Archbishop's ring which was unearthed in the vegetable garden. How it came to be there is still a mystery, but it is now worn by Archbishop Phillip Freier, the present Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne.

Unexpected inhabitants can also be discovered in gardens. A sudden plunge into the shrubbery by the normally placid dog Paddy owned by one of the gardeners resulted in a flash of red across the lawn and into the garden on the other side. It may have been the same fox photographed years earlier as it sat cheekily on the garage roof and later in a tree.

Even the most mundane items turned up in a garden are reminders of those who came before us and by whom the garden was nurtured and enjoyed. Even if not as obvious as the horticultural aspects of the garden, they are all part of its fabric and useful tools in interpreting its past.

By: Tim Gatehouse

IN MY GARDEN - TREE TAMARILLO - BY DIANA ELLERTON



Image: Diana Ellerton

In late autumn, the tamarillo tree bears its fruit which hang like red Christmas baubles from the tree. They look tempting to eat but the fruit is very sour and needs to be bought inside to ripen over ten days. Then, the fruit can be cut in half and eaten like passion fruit.

I have also made a fruit cobbler pie with apples and tamarillo poached before making the pie. These fruits are rarely for sale and quite expensive.

Commonly known as the 'tree tomato', its botanical name is *Cythodendra betacae* and is found in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. It is a short lived, small tree and needs protection from the wind but is quite drought tolerant. Nursery stock will probably be grafted onto wild tobacco stock to prolong its life.

JULY QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Werribee Park 2. Maranoa Botanic Gardens, Balwyn 3. Flagstaff Gardens
4. Cloudehill Gardens 5. Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald

Victorian Branch Committee

Chair: Robyn Robins

Treasurer: Anne Aston

Secretary: Robyn Robins

Committee Members:

Working Bee Coordinator: Diana Ellerton

Advocacy & NMC Representative: Wendy Dwyer

Garden Histories: Tim Gatehouse

Oral History: Wendy Dwyer

Newsletters: Lynda Entwisle

Rep. Landscape Reference Group/Deputy Secretary:

Anthony Menhennitt

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Catering Coordinator: Annie Woodside

We meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month, 3.30pm - 6pm at Burnley Gardens, except for October when the meeting will be held on 3rd Tuesday of the month. We welcome members to join committee meetings at any time. If you wish to discuss opportunities to get involved please contact Robyn Robins robynrobins2@gmail.com, or contact a committee member.

Go to our Webpage www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/branches/victoria/ for more news and updates. Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome and should be addressed to lynda.entwisle@gmail.com with **newsletter** in subject line.