

Australian Garden History Society

West Australian Branch

Autumn Newsletter 2024



The Australian Garden History Society promotes awareness and conservation of significant gardens and cultural landscapes through engagement, research, advocacy and activities.

2024 National Conference

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2024 which will be an exciting and busy year for the branch as it prepares to host the 44th National Conference in Bunbury, Friday 18th, Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th October at the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre (BREC). The conference committee has been occupied for the last year meeting regularly to organise an interesting and informative event.

As two hundred delegates attended our Albany conference, this potential number has been taken into consideration when selecting venues and gardens that can accommodate large numbers.

Full details will be sent as an electronic flyer to members in the upcoming monthly E newsletter. The program for the three day conference, optional day and pre and post conference tours, including booking details and accommodation venues will be available and on Monday the 8th of April bookings will officially open.

John Viska Chair AGHS WA Branch

West Australian Branch

Contact: Lynette Petersen (lpetersen@aapt.net.au)

West Australian Branch Committee

Chair: John Viska (johnviska@gmail.com)

Secretary: Lynette Petersen

Treasurer: Sue Davis

Australian Garden History Society Inc. (Inc in NSW)
ABN 97 291 212 843
ARBN 654 108 915

Welcome to the West Australian Branch. Our Branch has approximately 60 members throughout the state. We conduct numerous events during the year, including lectures and garden visits. Members, guests and visitors are welcome to all events. We communicate with our members by newsletter, email and the AGHS website for all events.

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au>
info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

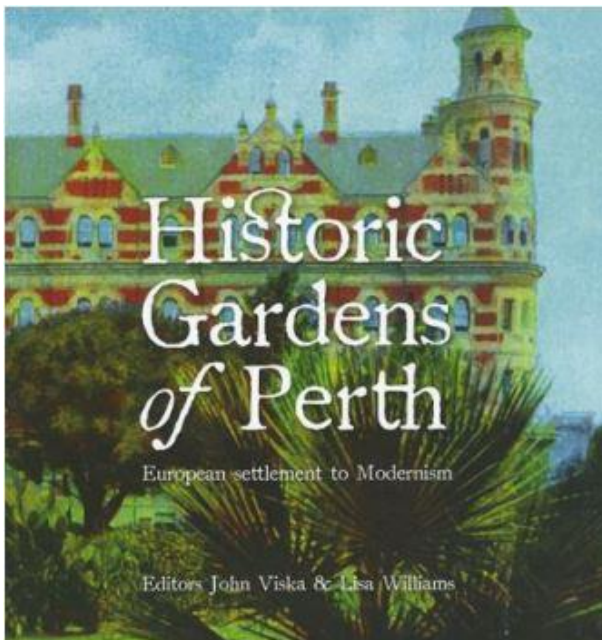


Hesperia: Looking West John Viska

The conference title **Hesperia: Looking West** will provide the opportunity for delegates to hear about the early links between Bunbury, South Africa and India. Over the three days the morning program of talks will explore the cultural landscape of the area including history, botany and geomorphology while the afternoon program will give the opportunity for attendees to visit historic locations and gardens. Sites visited will be in and around the Bunbury region including Australind, Dardanup, Ferguson Valley, Busselton and Yallingup. On the optional day, Monday the 21st October, attendees will travel further afield to view the murals on Wellington Dam before making their way to Balingup's Golden Valley Tree Park and historic Ferndale.

Julie Kinney, branch member and professional garden tour leader, has organised a three day pre or post conference tour, where delegates will spend two nights in Margaret River and visit private gardens in the area. This will include a rare opportunity to visit historic Fairlawn the property established by Georgiana and John Molloy when they relocated from Augusta. Full details will be sent as an electronic flyer to members in the upcoming monthly e-newsletter. The program for the three day conference, optional day and pre and post conference tours, including booking details and accommodation venues will be available and on Monday the 8th of April bookings will officially open.

Historic Gardens of Perth: European settlement to Modernism



Book News John Viska

An excellent book review, advertised on the AGHS website, the Christmas period and invitations to speak to various community groups, have helped in promoting and selling the book. From the original print run of 500 there are approximately 120 left.

The branch's aim is to use the money generated from the sales to encourage garden restoration projects through grants to individuals or societies. Information on the grants program and how funds can be applied for will be on the branch's website and will be sent to relevant societies.

Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issues

*The dire state of **Perth's Tree Canopy** has been gaining much attention recently and our next two articles highlight two different threats. The first article on the Polyphagous Shothole Borer (PSHB) is by Teresa Putland, AGHS member, horticulturalist and Kings Park volunteer. The second is by John Dowson regarding Philip Webster's 135 year old Moreton Bay Fig tree in Fremantle. It was removed from the Significant Tree Register by the City of Fremantle Council but due to public advocacy has since been relisted.*

The Polyphagous Shothole story so far... Theresa Putland

First what does polyphagus mean? Well in Greek it means eating many different kinds of foods. The 'poly' bit meaning 'much' or 'many' and 'phagus' 'to eat'. Well, the destructive Polyphagus Shothole Borer (PSHB) we now have in Perth is described as a minute beetle the size of a sesame seed with its own fungal food supply that is cultivated in tunnels inside the stems and branches of trees. The tunnelling clogs up vascular tissue thus killing susceptible trees within 2 years.

The beetle originates from southern South East Asia where it has caused problems in tea plantations. Around 2007 it was detected in the US (California), Israel in 2009, South Africa in 2012 (where it is very widespread) and 2021 in Australia in Perth. It probably came to our shores on packing cases or in furniture and was first noticed and reported in Fremantle. The main host tree is the soft wooded Box Elder or *Acer negundo* (unfortunately found in my shady garden), then the figs, think Moreton Bay figs, Port Jackson figs, Coral trees and Plane trees found everywhere in our parks and public spaces. Also, mulberries, poincianas, robinias, and willows on the top of the hit list. Avocados are very susceptible.

Have a good look at the Australian host list on the link

[PSHB-WA-Host-List.pdf \(agric.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/PSHB-WA-Host-List.pdf)

In Perth over 26 local government areas are now affected by PSHB and now make up a Quarantine Area from Wanneroo to Cockburn to the foothills. There is an Agriculture Department strategy in place with trapping, monitoring spread and infected trees, removal of trees and containing the spread of plant material to uninfected sites. The movement of plant material bigger than 2cm in width outside of quarantine areas is not permitted.

Kings Park has had over 10 trees removed so far with very strict measures in place with regard to material being brought into the park as well as what happens to material that has to be removed once pruned or felled.

Hyde Park and Lake Claremont are other notable areas that have had to remove infected trees from Moreton Bay figs to a 300-year-old paperbark from Lake Claremont. In Victoria Park there has been recent removal of infected park trees.

My own story is a little sad, in that I will lose two Box Elders in the front and the side of my house that have grown up over 35 years giving me wonderful shade in summer, and being deciduous, lots of lovely winter light.



These Box Elders will be removed from Theresa's garden due to PSHB.

So, what can be done? There is no pesticide or biological solution to the problem because most of the damage occurs protected inside the tree before it can be observed. We need to be on the lookout. Find out if you are in the quarantine area, find out more if you have susceptible trees, check the list, learn about some signs and symptoms and of course report it.

Finding out more about the pest on

[Polyphagous shot-hole borer | Agriculture and Food,](#)

The [tiny adult beetles](#) bore into trees and introduce a fungus that causes the tree disease known as Fusarium dieback (FD). This insect-pathogen complex has been responsible for the death of tens of thousands of urban and riparian trees in Southern California. These include Acer, Plane trees, Liquidambar, Populus, oak weeping willows.

Fusarium dieback symptoms: White powdery exudate either dry or surrounded by wet discoloration of the outer bark in association with a single beetle exit hole. While there is no visible injury to the bark at this stage of colonization, examination of the cortex and wood under the infested spot bored by the beetle reveals brown discolored necrosis caused by the fungus.

Known Suitable Hosts: Box Elder (*Acer negundo*), Castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), Avocado (*Persea americana*), English Oak (*Quercus robur*), California coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Coral tree (*Erythrina coralladendron*), Titoki tree (*Alectryon excelsus*), California sycamore (*Platanus racemose*) and Blue Palo Verde (*Cercidium floridum*).

Spread in California: Both the fungus and the beetle were found on several backyard avocado (cv. Hass, Bacon, Fuerte, Nabal) trees in residential neighborhoods and commercial avocado groves in South Gate, Downey and Hacienda Heights, and several public arboretums in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

It has already caused much damage here and is a big worry as we are in danger of losing valuable tree cover. With infill and development Perth has already lost over 25% plant cover since 2013.

The presence of beetles, wet staining, and frass are good indicators that the entry holes are active. One other way to confirm if there are live beetles within the galleries is painting over selected entry holes with water-based latex paint. If an ISHB female is alive within the gallery, it will re-open the entry hole during the next 24 hours, proving that the entry hole is active.

Biological control

There are no biological controls available for ISHB-FD, but several options are currently being researched. This includes the use of natural enemies (parasitic wasps from the areas where the beetles are native), nematodes, entomopathogenic fungi (fungi that attack insects), endophytes (microorganisms that live within the trees and can provide protection against *Fusarium*), and other beneficial microorganisms. These biological management options must be thoroughly tested before they become available.

[Invasive Shothole Borers Management Guidelines--UC IPM \(ucanr.edu\)](https://ucanr.edu)

Chemical control

Trees that are reproductive hosts for ISHB-FD and that show signs of active infestations (clusters of several entry holes associated with wet staining, frass, or both) can be treated with a combination of insecticides and fungicides. The decision to treat a particular tree depends among other things on the tree's condition, value, and hazard level (Table 2). Trees that are not already infested should be monitored but not treated.

[Unmitigated economic impact of polyphagous shot hole borer in South Africa estimated at \\$18.45 billion \(phys.org\)](https://phys.org)

The shot hole borer was first detected in South Africa in 2012 and has since spread to eight of South Africa's nine provinces, making it the largest current outbreak of this invasive pest globally.

A single virgin female can establish a new colony by producing all-male offspring and then mating with them. This "perfect invader" also carries its own food in the form of the fungus *Fusarium euwallaceae*, an alien species that was co-introduced with the beetle, explains (Professor Francois Roets PhD (Botany) (#2003 in California@0212 in Durban in S Africa). Stellenbosch University, Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology.

The little bit of good news is that the polyphagous shot hole borer can only fly short distances - from 500 meters to two kilometers. Its rapid spread in South Africa is therefore mainly due to people moving wood across municipal and provincial borders.

Research is underway to find a biological control agent for the fungus *Fusarium euwallaceae* and the beetle. However, "it would take at least a decade before the agent [if one can be found] could be released, and even longer before any significant reduction in spread could be expected," the authors write in the article.

PSHB Seminar *Lyn Oliver*

John Viska and I attended the PSHB seminar organised by John Carey, MLA Member for Perth. It was an excellent opportunity to find out more about the PSHB directly from the government scientists managing it and it is a much bigger problem than I had imagined. So far 1.5 million trees have been inspected in the Perth quarantine zone and 150 officers are in the field. Perth is in the eradication phase i.e. where it may be possible to eradicate the PSHB before it becomes more widespread and totally out of control.

During question time, John took the opportunity to present the heritage perspective and promote the Hyde Park Conservation Plan. John was the only member of the audience to receive a round of applause. In summing up, the City of Vincent CEO said that all issues raised will be considered when Hyde Park enters the replanting phase.

To the branch members who tried to book online to attend the seminar and were rejected for living outside 'Perth', please accept my apology. There was no indication at online registration that this was the criterion for attendance. On the night, there were attendees who simply walked in without registering. I have brought these points to the attention of John Carey's office to consider when organising future events.

If you would like a copy of the slides presented at the seminar please email me at laoliver@inet.net.au and I will forward them to you.

Meeting with City of Vincent Mayor *John Viska*

The chairman had an hour meeting recently with the City of Vincent's new mayor Alison Xamon at which the heritage status and history of the park was discussed as well as the impact on the tree canopy by the Polyphagous Shot hole Borer (PSHB).

Following the public meeting on the impact of the PSBH, expressions of interest in a Hyde Park Reference Group was advertised by the City of Vincent. The chairman applied and has been accepted to the group which will meet monthly with the aim of developing a strategy for replacement of the lost tree canopy.

Boorloo Heritage Festival *John Viska*

The 2024 Boorloo Heritage Festival is on Saturday April 13th and Sunday 14th April from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm.

The Branch has accepted the offer to participate in the festival and will have a stall in the grounds of Government House promoting the Society. The aim is to advertise the society and gain members by providing literature, journals and sell our recent publication. An historical tour of the garden, led by the Chair, will be available at 11.30 am and 1.30 pm on both days. Bookings are essential and can be made on the day at the branch's tent.

[Boorloo Heritage Festival | Visit Perth](#)

The Hero “Phantom Tree Planter” from 195 High Street

Fremantle, Philip Webster *John Dowson*

The erroneous decision by Fremantle Council to remove the most significant tree in Fremantle from its Significant Tree Register has resulted in a massive public backlash.

Some of that backlash is confected outrage - the back story being the Greens getting energised and ready for next year's mayoral election and the ousting of the Labor Mayor Fitzhardinge with Cr Lang.

Not only is the tree of supreme importance, but it was planted by the “Phantom Planter” of Fremantle, Philip Webster, and still exists on the same site as his own pre-Gold Rush home, at 195 High Street.

Why the tree is so significant: The Moreton Bay Fig tree can be said to be the most significant tree in Fremantle because it was planted by Philip Webster at the front of his own property 135 years ago, where his house, Cranworth Villa, was built the year before. Both house and tree are still together on the site - remarkable survivors.

Webster was, among other things, a nurseryman whose wide horticultural interests even had the Governor paying him a visit. Webster imported Moreton Bay fig trees in 1885 from the eastern states where they were native. From the 1860s the Norfolk Island pine had often been the trophy tree for landmark plantings, but Webster promoted the super-sized spreading shady fig trees, and it is possible the tree under threat is the oldest one in Western Australia.

Certainly a year later when council was organising events to commemorate Responsible Government (with the biggest budget being for champagne), Philip Webster offered to donate a fig tree, to be the Proclamation Tree in Mayor's Park, Adelaide Street, thus promoting the use of the newly imported tree as a landmark species.

Webster's work as a “phantom planter” of this species around Fremantle was possibly his way of popularising the newly introduced landmark. Some he planted in King's Square were recently chopped down by Fremantle council and now council have just deregistered Webster's Tree!

The process of delisting is disturbing. Mayor Fitzhardinge claimed on 6PR radio that the owners never gave consent, that there is “a principle at issue” and that the tree is “outgrowing its space there.” All of those statements are false.

The house and the tree have been heritage listed for years on various lists and in 2019 when the Significant Tree Register was established, the tree listing was simply migrated there along with six other trees. Cr Lawver in “The Age” (23 Feb 2024) quotes from an officer document which states there was no objection from the owner in 2000, no objection when it was on a different list in 2008, and no objection in 2019. The heritage officer report states that the tree is “an exceptional specimen.”

What the mayor does not state is that there is still in existence since 1995 an agreement that council will help maintain the tree, something her council has not been doing satisfactorily, and the angst of the elderly owner having to do much of the maintenance herself has been galling to see.

When the value of the tree and its planter, the “Phanton Planter” is considered with the rare pre-Gold Rush house adjacent together, it paints a picture of a stellar potential tourist attraction, which any historic city would rush to protect and enhance.

While trees in urban environments average a 40 year lifespan, this magnificent tree is already 135 years old and the recent arborist report says it has 40 plus years left.

Philip Webster barely lived for 5 years in his new house Cranworth Villa, but as Chairman of the Reform Movement, a group holding council to account, he would have fought to save his tree. As he said in 1884: “As long as I have breath I will raise my voice in defense of right, and to expose wrong.”

Philip Webster’s Tree:

- *Ficus macrophylla*
(Moreton Bay Fig)
- 135 years old
- Most important tree in Fremantle
- Possibly the first Moreton Bay fig planted in WA
- Australian Native
- 20 metres high
- 29 metre canopy spread
- 350 sqm approx. canopy cover
- Maintenance costs: Significant.
Owners need urgent help.



Philip Webster’s Moreton Bay Fig

Image: City of Fremantle

Additional Points Lyn Oliver

Tree Saved

Fortunately Fremantle Council voted to protect the 130-year-old Moreton Bay Fig tree on 29th February. This vote rescinded the previous motion passed at the Council meeting on 14th February which had removed the tree from the Significant Tree Register.

[Fremantle Council votes to protect Moreton Bay Fig tree | City of Fremantle](#)

2013 AGHS & UWA Tree Forum

We’d also like to remind you of the 2013 AGHS & UWA Tree Forum. The article Challenges to Establishing Urban Tree Cover in the 21st Century by Peter Ciemitis is of particular interest and is available on the West Australian Branch web page at the following link:

[WA-Tree-Forum-2013-papers-Edited-2020.pdf \(gardenhistorysociety.org.au\)](#)

Western Australian Tree Canopy Advocates (WATCA)



If you're wondering what to do about Perth's dwindling tree canopy you may be interested in having a look at WATCA, The Western Australian Tree Canopy Advocates, a community-driven organisation established to address the Canopy Crisis happening in Perth and other WA cities. WATCA is the state umbrella for a growing network of local Tree Canopy Advocacy groups representing 25 Local Government Areas across WA and more than 20,000 community members who want the state government and councils to take urgent action.

According to WATCA Perth has the lowest tree canopy of any capital city in Australia, the hottest summers and no tree protections. Their target is to have a 30% tree canopy for Perth by 2040.

[WATCA - Western Australian Tree Canopy Advocates](#)

WA Tree Festival



The WA Tree Festival is an event run from 6th April to 5th May to bring local councils and community groups together to help share the value of trees collectively. You can find a variety of family events to attend in different locations.

[School Holiday Activities | WA Tree Fest | Western Australia \(watreefestival.com.au\)](#)

National Management Committee Felicity Farrelly

NMC Representative Felicity Farrelly represented the WA Branch at the two day NMC Meeting over the weekend of the 3rd and 4th of February. A summary of the issues of cybersecurity, website, Bunbury conference and future directions was emailed to members on the 28 February 2024 from Lynne Walker, AGHS Chair. In particular, the NMC Chair gave assurances that credit card details are not kept online and the payment platform, Stripe, is one of the largest international platforms for automating financial processes therefore all online purchases do not expose members' financial details. Membership fees will remain unchanged for 2024/2025. There is a proposal for a slight but more modern name change – the AGHS will still be the signature and the logo definitely stays – but you will be asked your opinion of the proposal in the near future.

Further the Website working party met for a further day initiating a Website Refresh Project and should you as a member wish to raise any issues on the website give Felicity an email, text or call which will be added to the review by the national working group. Felicity's contact details are as follows: fwfarrelly@yahoo.com.au / 0407170090.

There are many members wishing to come west for the conference in Bunbury. Next NMC meeting is on the 8th of April by zoom. Don't hesitate to send Felicity your queries.

AGHS Website Tips Lyn Oliver

There is a Communication preferences page in your account on the AGHS website where you can select a variety of interesting email updates from the AGHS by simply ticking the box on the topics listed below:

Your lists

- AGHS National Newsletter (E-News)
- Book Updates
- Climate Updates
- Project Activity Updates
- Landscape Australia Newsletter

If you are not receiving the updates and would like to, log into your AGHS account and tick the topic you are interested in. If you need some help please contact me at laoliver@inet.net.

Recent Branch Events

2023 Christmas Party

The 2023 Christmas Party was held at historic Buckingham House on 3rd December 2023. It was so relaxing sitting and chatting in the cool shade until the annual Chairman's quiz livened up the atmosphere. As usual, there was a delicious array of tasty treats brought by members to share and sparkling wine was on hand if desired.



Buckingham House

Photos: L Tang.



WA Branch Event Diary

Wirra Willa Gardens Walk

Thursday, 28th March

Guided by City of Armadale Project Officer, Grant Nixon

Afterwards please join us for lunch (at own your cost) at historic **Ye Olde Narrogin Inne**

Meet at Ye Olde Narrogin Inne Car Park, Corner of South West Hwy & Albany Hwy, Armadale at 10am so that you have plenty of time to walk across the road for 10:30am.

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 11th August

Further information will be provided.

Christmas Function 2024

Sunday 1st December

Further information will be provided.

AGHS National Events

2024 Annual National Conference, Friday 18th / Saturday 19th / Sunday 20th October. The optional tour day is on Monday 21st October 2024. Venue: Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre (BREC), Western Australia.

2025 Annual National Conference, Alice Springs, Northern Territory

WA Events of Interest

History in the City Talks

- Wednesday 3rd April: Eve White, Kings Park Volunteer - Monuments and Statues in Kings Park.
- Wednesday 1st: Chris Holyday, author and historian - Lady Margaret Elvire Forrest 1844-1929: A Premier Position.

Time and Place: 2pm at Citiplace Conference Room, Perth Railway Concourse. Entry \$10 at door includes afternoon tea. (Enquiries to The Royal WA Historical Society on 9386 3841.)

History West Book Sale



2024

*Friday 5 April – 4pm to 6pm
Saturday 6 April – 9am to 5pm
Sunday 7 April – 9am to 4pm*

2pm Sunday – All books HALF PRICE

49 Broadway, Nedlands (corner Clark Street)
Additional Parking at 55 Broadway

We've saved loads of secondhand books. You, please, save the dates. We're sure to have bargains to suit you: fiction, history, drama, children's, whatever.

It's a fund raiser and a fun raiser. We love to see people browsing and buying. Do join us.

Our Bookshop is **OPEN** during this sale

Cash, Visa, Mastercard and EFTPOS accepted



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WEST**

THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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