

# Australian Garden History Society

## West Australian Branch

## Winter Newsletter 2024

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



### *Rain finally arrived...*

and I hope, that your gardens have been resuscitated after the State's record breaking summer drought.

Our first event for the year was a visit to Wirra Willa Garden, Armadale, a property that in the past the Branch had brought to the attention of the Heritage Council and City of Armadale regarding its deterioration. See Caroline Grant's article in this Newsletter. The last time we visited was in 1989 shortly after the branch was formed.

Activity within the Conference Committee is building as the National Conference in Bunbury is only three months away. The different strands of work are now all coming together.

We were pleased to have been contacted by the Heritage Council to make comment on the draft Guidelines for the Management of Significant Trees on which we have commented and submitted.

*John Viska Chair AGHS WA Branch*

#### **West Australian Branch**

**Contact:** Lynette Petersen ([lpetersen@aapt.net.au](mailto:lpetersen@aapt.net.au))

#### **West Australian Branch Committee**

**Chair:** John Viska ([johnviska@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)



## ***Hesperia: Looking West***

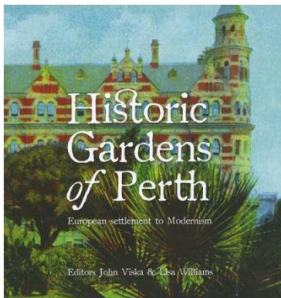
### ***Conference update John Viska***

Bunbury, Friday 18th, Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th October at the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre (BREC).

In early April, members received the electronic flyer containing the conference details. Bookings opened on April 8th and 157 delegates have registered for the full conference that is capped at 200. The Monday Optional day is booked out but places are available on the pre and post conference tours. See website for booking details.

On May 24th and 25th, the secretary and myself spent two days in Bunbury revisiting the various venues to discuss with owners coach parking areas, payment arrangements as well as collecting information for the delegate's conference booklet.

## ***Historic Gardens of Perth: European settlement to Modernism***



### **Book News John Viska**

This year, eight talks have been requested by community groups and societies on the branch's publication *Historic Gardens of Perth* which has resulted in further book purchases. An article on the publication that appeared in the May issue of the *Have a Go* newspaper also prompted sales.

## ***Welcome to New Members***

The WA Branch welcomes back Margie Lundy and two new members Ursula Sharman and Patricia Worrell. We look forward to seeing you at our events and possibly the Bunbury Conference. We hope you enjoy your membership.

## ***AGHS NMC Meeting Sydney 6–7 July 2024*** *Felicity Farrelly*

Lynne Walker, Chair, opened the meeting acknowledging the traditional owners and also informing us that our Deputy Chair, Prue Slatyer, was an apology as her partner, Peter was suddenly seriously ill. It is with sadness we were told of his passing the following week and condolences were sent to Prue.

Francesca Beddie, Editor of the Journal, is encouraging branches to contact her with ideas for possible articles. The new format of 40 pages means there is more opportunity for articles, book reviews and also some advertising can be now incorporated into the journal. The AGHS recent publication of the Antipodean Historic Gardens and Climate Change which went to all branches recently is available to all members and will be available at our AGM and the national Conference. I asked Tim Entwisle, our AGHS Patron, who was instrumental in the publication content, if this could be more inclusive next time and include WA issues. Francesca was congratulated on the final publication, and we may see this as a three yearly publication of 'Climate Change' updates with our Society raising awareness of Climate change impacts and remediation in Australia.

Other matters in regard to membership and finance were discussed and agreed that membership remain as is as well as the Treasurer informing us not to forget the Nina Crone Writers Fund was an avenue to support branch projects. The Society is still pushing for DGR status for this fund.

The Advocacy Toolkit which has been placed on the website will be made more easily available to branches and members as the AGHS has asked for an interactive tool to be placed on the website. The proposed changes to the website are also continuing to make it more easily accessible and we have been asked for branch photos to include on the new website 'tiles'. Please send to Lynette Petersen at [lpetersen@aapt.net.au](mailto:lpetersen@aapt.net.au) our secretary, if you would like one of your AGHS event photos on the website noting that permission of anyone in the photos are required.

John Viska highlighted the Conference buzz in Bunbury and the NMC were extremely interested. The AGHS NMC agreed to advertise separately to support further attendance as the funds from the Conference have a direct impact on the viability of the national office and John explained there were now more seats available on the pre and post tours and the Conference venue is able to accommodate more attendees.

The opportunity to meet and discuss each other's branch activities during the proceedings of the NMC highlights the interest and participation of all in this country. There were robust and insightful discussions, and a face-to-face meeting really makes a wonderful connection between all our branches and our editor and patron.

## *Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issues*

### **Hyde Park**

The Chairman has attended two meetings of the Hyde Park Reference Group since the last newsletter. Discussions on a schedule for replacement plantings including priority areas and tree selection have taken place.

### **Polyphagous Shothole Borer (PSHB)**

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development have provided a statement on the current status of the PSHB. Public Information Officer, Katelyn Fox, advised that at this point, they are about two years into the PSHB Response. The pest is only present in the Perth metro area, with hot spots of activity in the Western suburbs and East Fremantle. Field Surveillance Officers have inspected more than 1.8 million trees at over 51,000 unique premises (both inside and outside the PSHB Quarantine Area), so a huge undertaking so far!

Interested groups can put through an enquiry for a presentation to:

[pshbpublicinformationmanager@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:pshbpublicinformationmanager@dpird.wa.gov.au)

### **Kings Park – Trial Accommodation**

You may have noticed in the media that a trial accommodation is taking place. The information below is from the Friends of Kings Park management committee and there is an online survey where you can put forward your view if you wish to do so.

*The Friends of Kings Park management committee is opposed to the*



*trial of short-term accommodation within Kings Park.*

“The Friends of Kings Park is an advocate for Kings Park, so that it continues to be an inspiration for biodiversity conservation in the face of environmental challenges and to be an exceptional place to visit.

The trial of short-term accommodation within the Western Australian Botanic Garden precinct is inconsistent with the primary purpose of botanic gardens, which is to cultivate, conserve and display flora and to connect people to our natural environment.

Kings Park is known as the People's Park. It is a place where everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty and connect with the environment. Restricting sections of the botanic garden to provide high-priced accommodation for a select few does not align with this vision.

There is no shortage of accommodation options in Perth city and other areas nearby Kings Park. There are also regular, free buses into Kings Park every day from the city. Accommodation within Kings Park is not necessary or appropriate.

Kings Park is also an A Class Reserve. We are deeply concerned about the potential environmental impact of accommodation being provided within the botanic garden and close by to the natural bushland, and what this trial could mean for the future of our beloved Kings Park.

**We only have one Kings Park. Let's keep it a natural experience and open for all.**

The Friends of Kings Park President Chris Olney has written a letter voicing her concerns to Minister Reece Whitby, Minister Rita Saffioti, and the Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority Executive and Board.

If you are concerned about how this accommodation impacts Kings Park, then make your voice heard. Write to the Minister's offices and contact BGPA Enquiries & Comments to express your views.

Email: [enquiries@bgpa.wa.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@bgpa.wa.gov.au) / Phone: (+61 8) 9480 3600

The Friends of Kings Park would also like to understand and document the views of our membership, volunteers, and the wider community. Please fill in the below form. We plan to compile all responses and share them with the Ministers and BGPA contacts listed above.” To complete the online survey click on the following link:

[Trial accommodation in Kings Park - Friends of Kings Park](#)



## ***Recent Branch Events***

### ***The AGHS goes to Kings Park*** *Felicity Farrelly*



Judy Burn

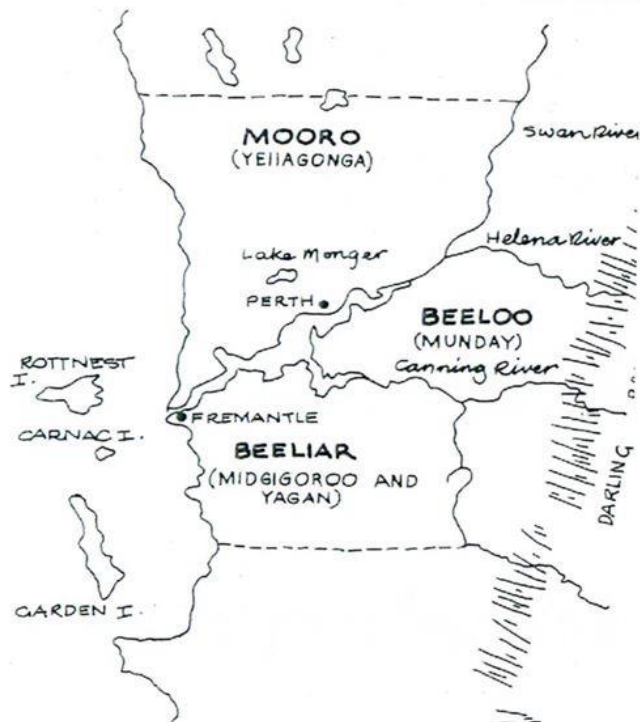
AGHS members were welcomed by Judy Burn who has been a guide at the Park for 15 years (photo inset) and by our member Theresa Putland, who arranged this opportunity for us. Theresa is also a Kings Park guide.

We met at their headquarters on Fraser Ave, near the entrance of Kings Park Road on Thursday 23 May 2024.

We were told the volunteers provide free guided walks twice a day through the park at 10am and 1pm. Judy informed us of the varied questions a Park guide replies to and how she has found out not only the history of European settlement and botanical direction but also the importance to the local Noongar people.

Judy began the talk with the written history of what was initially Perth Park which was established in 1895. Initially the Park was smaller, jarrah was milled in it to 1871 and it was not till John Septimus Roe's successor, Malcolm Fraser, petitioned Governor Weld in 1871 to set aside a reserve of 175ha that it became an official park. When John Forrest became Premier he, with strong support from his wife, Margaret Hamersley, extended this to over 1000acres (440ha) in 1895. It was renamed King's Park during the visit of the Duke of Cornwall and York in honour of his father, Edward VII who ascended the throne in 1901. The apostrophe was dropped from Kings Park soon after.

Judy guided us through the last 130 years of the role of the Park and its botanical focus. The debate of the exotics versus the natural plants of Kings Park is initially one of a gradual progression, with the early settlers wishing to plant the trees they were familiar with and promenade through this 'pleasure garden'. There was a debate in the 1930s about the management of the Park concerning this. By the time the Botanic Garden was formally established in the 1960s, the native flora and fauna were being propagated particularly by Bob Lullfitz. In the 1990s Steve Hopper became the Director of Kings Park and native species were not just the main focus, there was also a desire to discover the genetics and opportunities for breeding difficult species of natives. Steve Hopper as a conservation biologist had completed a PhD on the hybridisation of the kangaroo paws and cats paws and was extremely interested in forging ahead with Kings Park becoming a world renown research centre for native plants. WA has 50% of all plant species in Australia. He achieved this as well as continuing links with UWA PhD students and corporate sponsorships were introduced which continue to support the Park. The blue kangaroo paw came out of the research at Kings Park.



Map of Aboriginal regions.

Judy concluded her review by returning back to the time of the indigenous people and the important role of this land and its lower reaches. Prior to the Colony being settled by Europeans, the Wadjuk people had respected it as an important place for fresh water - the spring at the base of the park opposite the old Swan Brewery - and for its many medicinal plant species. This prehistory of the Park highlights the importance of preserving this wilderness and Judy gave us some of the information she has obtained by speaking to the indigenous owners.

The group thanked her for her talk and members walked to the Kiosk for a coffee and chat.

## ***Wirra Willa Gardens*** *Caroline Grant*

In fine autumn weather we drove out to visit *Wirra Willa Gardens*, located near the intersection of Albany Highway with South Western Highway. Passersby will have noticed above the fenceline the unusual and interesting trees on the southwest flank of Mount Nasura, and wondered what the garden was like. At times it contained a treasure trove of horticultural specimens rarely found in Western Australia, some of which survive on the site. In 2021 *Wirra Willa Gardens* was placed on the Heritage Council of Western Australia's Register of Heritage Places, having narrowly escaped development into apartments when purchased by the City of Armadale.

The Heritage Council's assessment notes that the present garden is 1.3 hectares (3.5 acres) in size, situated on the Neerigen Brook, and had the first restrictive covenant placed on a garden in Western Australia, in 1972 although the covenant was later lifted. Its name was *Catamara* when it was first developed by Leah Barbara Whitehead and Evelyn Broadley during the 1930s. They planted exotic shrubs and trees near the brook, which was the main water source for the garden.

It was then sold to William Gilbert and Jeanette Constance Marsh (owners 1954 to 1961) who developed the garden further in the 1950s, notably with plantings of bulbs, and making a barbecue area. Little documentary evidence is known for this period.

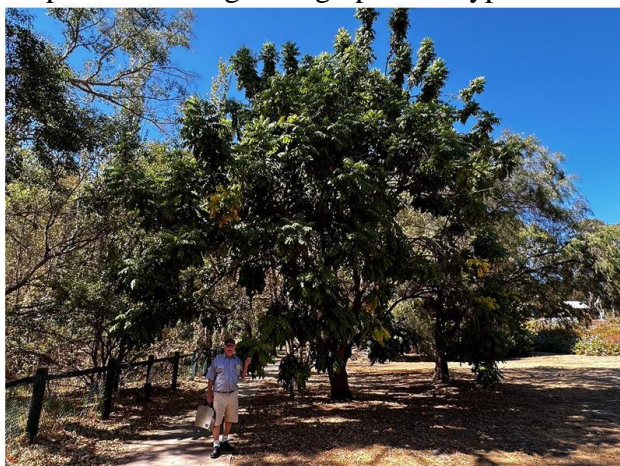
Mary and James Douglas Hargreaves (owners 1961 to 1977) named the site *Wirra Willa* for its meaning "place of green trees". They developed the top section of the garden for native Australian plants, and added Golden Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior aurea*), Rhus and Persimmon trees for autumn colour. Also added were *Luculia gratissima*, Azaleas, Rhododendrum and *Magnolia soulangeana*, *Magnolia stellata*, *Kalmia latifolia*, Blue Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica glauca*), and Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens glauca*), Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), white fruiting Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii*), Port Wine Magnolia (*Michelia figo*), Snowdrop Tree (*Halesia carolina*), Purple Butterfly Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*), Chinese Cedar (*Toona sinensis*), Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), Chinese Hat (*Holmskioldia sanguinea*) and Dove Tree (*Davidia involucrata*), although the latter two did not survive through until 2006. In addition many rose bushes, hydrangeas and thousands of bulbs were added.

From 1977 until 2005 the owners were Ron and Joy Barrett, and they developed the garden further into "rooms" with sinuous pathways. They undertook more intensive planting, including over 300 camellias, and more bulbs. Trees added included Pride of Bolivia (*Tipuana tipu*) and jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) along the driveway. They added extensive stands of different varieties of bamboo, and added mock orange (*Philadelphus sp.*) and May (*Spiraea sp.*) to Mary Hargreave's "white garden" at the rear of the house.

*Wirra Willa* was entered into the Register of the National Estate in 1980 and in 1995 it was adopted into the City of Armadale's Municipal Inventory. By 2005 the property had become too much for the Barretts to manage, and the City of Armadale's Town Planning Scheme had identified the garden as an area where additional uses could be permitted. In 2006 the property was transferred to a development company called Bobsyouruncle, and apartment complexes were planned for the site.



Over seventy years, many hours were spent on creating and beautifying the gardens before the last gardeners, the Brooks, sold it. Few private gardens in Western Australia have been cultivated so intensively at that scale and over that period. During our visit, members noted a large local native flooded gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*), a Moreton Bay Chestnut (*Castanospermum australe*) and camphor laurel tree along with camellias and rose bushes. Camellias did not fare well, nor roses, since they require more horticultural attention than other survivors noted, including the large stands of bamboo and the philodendron growing up a eucalypt.



John Viska and Moreton Bay chestnut (*Castanospermum australe*) with pods (inset).



Grant Nixon and philodendron climbing up a eucalyptus tree.

Many of the AGHS visitors had connections with Mary and James Douglas Hargreaves. Members recalled Mary as a wonderful hostess and plantswoman, and an enthusiastic gardener who was a member of the Camellia, Rose and Wildflower Societies, as well as the International Dendrology Society. As a rosarian, Mary had relationships with nurseries in the eastern states such as Hazlewood (camellias, NSW), Chandlers (roses, Tas) and Dean Ross (roses, SA) and allowed local nurserymen to take buds from her roses and graft them on to Fortuniana rootstock suited for local conditions. She donated roses for the renovation in the 1970s of the garden at Strawberry Hill Farm in Albany. The Hargreaves apparently took separate holidays so that someone could look after the garden and the bandicoots which frequented the garden.

Unfortunately, during the period in which the property languished with minimal horticultural attention from 2005 until 2022 while awaiting development decisions, many plants did not survive. It was known as a significant heritage site during the 1970s and listed on the National Estate in 1980. It continued to be cultivated by its owners until 2005 when sold by the Barretts. Although horticultural standards of care vary from one owner to another, it is to be regretted that the garden suffered the heritage architectural equivalent of “demolition by neglect” between 2005 and 2022.

Fortunately, local people and others who appreciated the significance of the site, including the WA Branch of the Australian Garden History Society led by John Viska, lobbied for



*Wirra Willa Gardens* to be conserved. The City of Armadale purchased the property in 2022, following it up with conservation and renovation actions.

Although the Society may have played only a small part in the conservation of *Wirra Willa's* gardens, our visit highlighted the importance of its role in advocacy when called upon by local groups. The recent advocacy tool developed by Anne Claoué-Long, member of the AGHS National Management Committee, will assist in this process.

Fortunately, since the City of Armadale took over *Wirra Willa*, a Conservation Management Plan has been developed and Grant Nixon, a trained horticulturist and landscaper formerly employed at Araluen, has been assigned to lead the renovation of the gardens. Already he has organised a tree survey with a maintenance plan and regular monitoring of tree health, and he is considering the best of use of paths for public access in the formal part of the garden.



Formal area of Wirra Willa garden.

One serious problem identified while we were there was the volume of traffic which made it dangerous crossing the Albany Highway from Ye Olde Narrogin Inne on the south side where we parked, and the loud sound which distracted from the serenity of the gardens.

Some of our group enjoyed lunch at the Inne afterwards.

## ***Boorloo Heritage Festival - Government House Gardens*** *Felicity Farrelly*

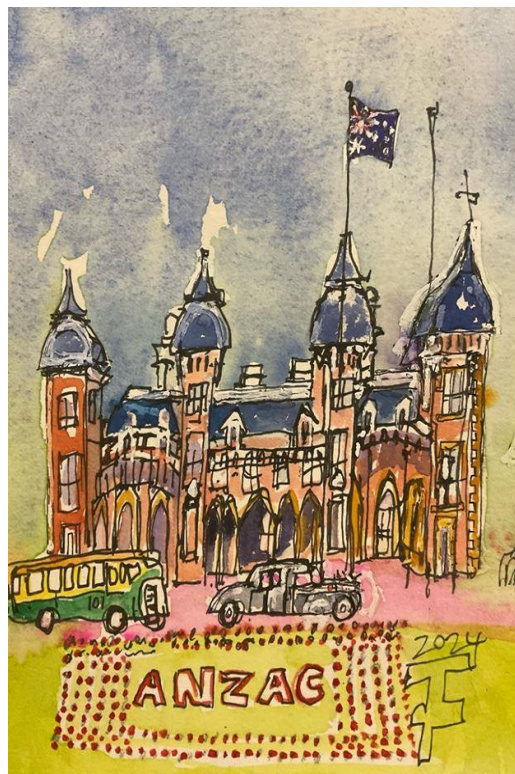


Believed to have been planted in 1835 by WA's first Governor Sir James Stirling, the 'grand old lady of the Gardens', the nearly 200-year-old Olive Tree, *Olea Europa*, became the neighbour to our marquee for the City of Perth Boorloo Heritage Festival held on the 13-14 April 2024 from 10am-3pm both days.

Over 7000 visitors came to the event at Government House. Chairman John Viska led over 60 people through the gardens in two guided tours on both days. We were also kept busy with enquiries of not only 'The Historic Gardens of Perth' book sales

but also enquiries about the WA branch of AGHS, and a number of old friends dropped by. We sold 15 books, leaving 40 to take to the Conference in October.

The following sketch was a reminder of the uniqueness of the day especially as I looked up and acknowledged a fellow walking casually by who then came over to talk to John and myself and a friend of mine as we packed – the Governor! John gave him a signed copy of the book 'Historic Gardens of Perth' as he stated it had a special section for the Governor's current abode! We had a lovely chat with the Governor who was very happy with the weekend in the grounds.



Art by Felicity Farrelly



## ***Herbarium Visit*** Sue Davis

On the 19th June a group of members were guests of Dr John Huisman, Director of the State Herbarium in Como. The Herbarium is responsible for the description and documentation of WA's exceptional botanical species diversity. It houses a collection of more than 845,000 dried specimens of plants, algae, bryophytes, lichens, fungi and slime moulds gathered from 1770 to the present day throughout WA and from across the globe.

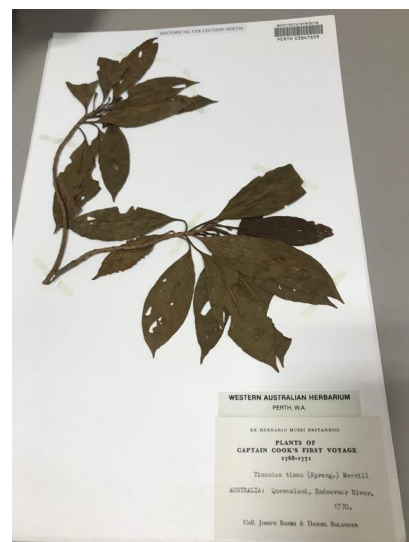


Photographs of the scientific storage facility at the State Herbarium.

These collections and their data which includes collection notes, photographs and tissues are a permanent record of the occurrence of a species at a particular place and time. It forms an irreplaceable source of information and is invaluable research infrastructure for managing and understanding WA's diversity. New species are documented each year, often arising from research using the collection or as a result of botanical field surveys.

Members were shown the Threatened Flora Seed Centre, a seed banking facility for rare, threatened and poorly known native plant species. The centre houses more than 5000 collections. We were taken to the vaults where plant specimens are stored after identification, drying, mounting and labelling. Members were amazed to see a specimen collected by Banks and Solander in 1770 at Endeavour River whilst journeying with Captain Cook.

Anyone interested in volunteering at the Herbarium can do so through membership of the Wildflower Society of WA or through the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Volunteers assist with identification of collected samples and mounting of specimens prior to their inclusion in the vaults.



Banks and Solander 1770 specimen.

Sincere thanks to Dr John Huisman and to Andrew Crawford at the seed bank for the generous gift of their time to show us the facility and to answer the many questions asked by a very curious audience.

## ***WA Branch Event Diary***

### **Annual General Meeting**

Sunday 11th August 2pm to 4pm at Royal WA Historical Society, Stirling House, 49 Broadway, Nedlands.

This year's guest speaker will be Phil Palmer who is currently working for the National Trust of WA. He worked from 2016 to 2023 as a gardener at Baddesley Clinton, an English National Trust property in Birmingham. His illustrated, talk "Moats, Murder and Marigolds; A short Walk around Baddesley Clinton" will feature the garden and interior.

### **Christmas Function 2024**

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December

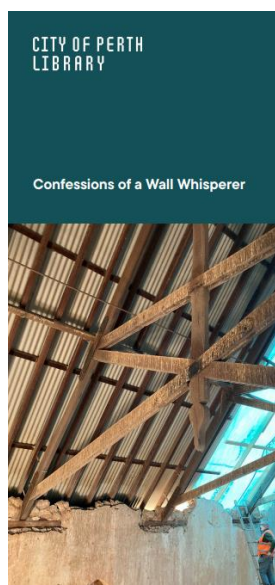
The secretary and I recently visited Leda in the Medina locality to gauge Sloan Cottage as a suitable venue for the December Christmas function. A new kitchen garden, that has been developed in an area of the grounds was doing well and the range of older specimens of exotic and native trees is interesting. The site is managed by The Museum of Perth as is the Pensioner Guard Cottage in Bassendean, where we had the 2022 Christmas event.

## ***AGHS National Events***

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

## ***WA Events of Interest***

### **Heritage Skills Association Winter Warmer Talks**



The Heritage Skills Association Winter Warmer Talk series showcases local heritage professionals to talk about Western Australian heritage and provides a meeting opportunity for all those interested in heritage work.

July 24	Peter Baxendale
August 28	Marc Beattie
September 25	Alana Jennings

More information is available at:

[Heritage Skills | Heritage Skills Association \(hsawa.com.au\)](https://www.hsawa.com.au)



## History in the City Talk on the History of Roses



**Stirling House, 49 Broadway, Nedlands**

**Wed 14 August, 10 for 10.30-11.30am**

**The History of Roses of WA**

**John Viska**

An illustrated talk on the history of roses in WA from early settlement to the present day, describing the rose varieties that were fashionable in the different periods, how they were propagated and the rose-growing industry.

Tickets are \$25 each / Bookings essential / Tel: 9386 3841 / Email: [admin@histwest.org.au](mailto:admin@histwest.org.au)

Royal Historical Society WA, Stirling House 49 Broadway, Nedlands

Wednesday 14 August 10 am for 10:30 am start

## Plants by Denise Nursery Plant Sale

Plants by Denise Nursery is holding a plant sale on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August from 8am to 4pm and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August from 8am to 12 noon at 15 Turner Road, Carmel.

Feel free to enjoy complimentary tea, coffee, and chocolates as you explore the nursery. The time between plant sales has been extended to 42 days. Because of the cold weather, it is taking longer to harden off the new baby plants, however, the conditions have been perfect for seed sowing, taking cuttings and dividing perennials. Visitors are very welcome to take a leisurely walk through the gardens and observe the ongoing section-by-section redesign. All the weeds and bushy growth has not been cleared as they provide food and a natural habitat for the numerous birds and bandicoots that share this garden.

I'm looking forward to catching up with you soon. If you're interested in sowing seeds to easily create a beautiful spring floral display, a great selection of seeds are available at just \$3.50 per packet, or three packets for only \$10. Pot recycling is available: please place your clean pots in the green trailer located near the entrance gate.

