

Australian Garden History Society

West Australian Branch

Winter Newsletter 2025

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

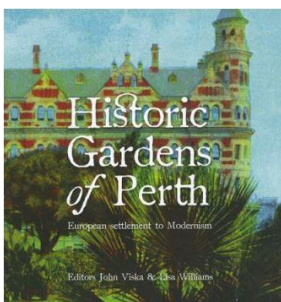


Welcome to the WA Branch's second newsletter for 2025.

Chairman to stand down

A motion to extend the Chairman's term was raised at the 2022 AGM. The usual maximum is 9 years, but an extension was requested to help plan the 2024 conference. The National Management Committee granted this until the 2025 AGM, so I will step down then and the Chair position will be open to a new candidate. Sue Davis vacated the position of Treasurer due to relocating to Albany in December and the Secretary has now taken on the role. Ursula Sharman who was co-opted onto the committee, following the 2024 AGM, will have her position, as a committee member, ratified at the AGM on Sunday 10th August.

John Viska Chair AGHS WA Branch



Historic Gardens of Perth is now sold out; all copies have been purchased.

West Australian Branch

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

West Australian Branch Committee

Chair: John Viska (johnviska@gmail.com)

Secretary/Treasurer: Lynette Petersen

NMC: Felicity Farrelly

Newsletter: Lyn Oliver

Social Media Liaison: Ursula Sharman

General: Sue Medalia

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

Mt Barker's horticultural wonderland.

One man's vision. Sue Davis (text and photos)

Four years ago the Mt Barker Primary School site came up for sale. The 13-acre site ticked almost every box for Phil Tunstall, lecturer in horticulture at Albany TAFE.

Situated on Albany Highway, Phil hopes to attract passersby and Mt Barker and Albany locals to what will be an extensive and complex horticultural extravaganza. Currently the site is significantly degraded with poor soils, extensive areas of asphalt and vandalised buildings. But serious restoration is underway.

Sue Davis joined a group of Albany gardeners at a presentation and tour of the site hosted by Phil. He has broad horticultural interests which he plans to develop along commercial, educational, sensory and community lines. His garden will

- become the home of one million plants among 40 different themed gardens providing an environment for human enjoyment.
- educate the community about the importance of plant diversity and contribute to the conservation of the flora of our world.
- provide a quality offline experience for families. Art therapy and horticulture therapy is planned. The site will also contribute to Mt Barker's short term accommodation problems.
- replace 30% of the asphalted areas to reduce excessive rainwater runoff.
- support multiple charities.



The establishment of 13 themed gardens is already under way. These include a Japanese/Chinese/Korean garden, rare and endangered plants, cottage garden and a Red Centre garden. A prunus garden of flowering peach, plums, cherries and crab apples is under way as is a sunken formal garden. A Japanese tea garden and zen garden are planned. Phil readily admits the difficulty of finding suitable plants for the Red Centre and Tropical gardens given the Mt Barker climate.

Phil's shortlist for completion includes gathering hundreds of cubic metres of soil and landscaping rocks, over storey and under storey plantings, fencing, lawn areas, extensive propagation of thousands more plants, a rose garden and a proteaceae garden.

Now two years into development, our group felt privileged to be seeing the early stages of an enormous visionary enterprise in the heart of the Great Southern district. We look forward to a commercial plant nursery, a wholefoods cafe, a place to rest on long journeys and a successful project for Phil Tunstall and Mt Barker.



Robyn Dovey, left, convenor of the Two Rivers Garden Group and Sharon Waideman, convenor of the Napier Garden Group both of whom are very active locally in garden activities. Sharon represents the old historic area of Napier north of Albany. Rugged up and clutching hot coffee. It was around 8 degrees.



The Red Centre Mural



The headmaster's house



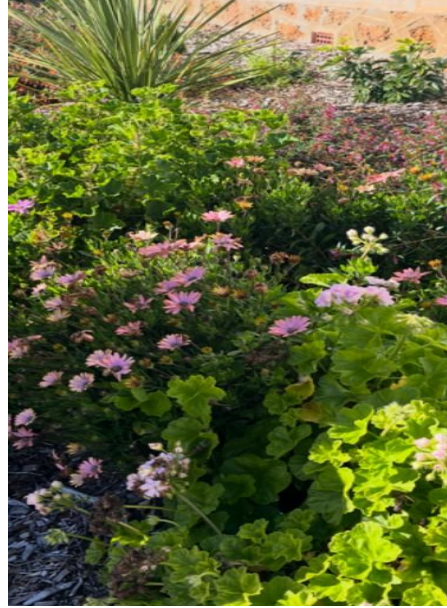
Vandalised buildings



Old Mt Barker School. Windows boarded up.



Japanese garden is developing.



Cottage garden plantings



Mediterranean plantings



Tropical garden mural

Exciting Horticultural Ephemera Find *John Viska*

Branch member, Helen Martin-Beck, contacted me recently to say that a country resident near York, had purchased a collection of nursery catalogues at one of the Saturday morning markets, and was willing to sell them. After expressing my interest in viewing the items with the possible intent of purchasing them, I arranged to meet the owner in York. To my delight, there were 27 items in the collection that included specialist nursery catalogues for chrysanthemums, dahlias, herbaceous perennials, bulbs, fuchsias, trees and shrubs. Also included were two early copies of the Horticultural Council of Western Australia's Classification and Standards handbook. Copies of orders and a letter lodged inside the items indicated that they had formerly belonged to the Sargent family.

Oswald Hewlett Sargent, (1880-1952), was a pharmacist in York, as well as a keen amateur botanist. Sargentii used as a specific name in some WA plants, commemorates the contribution he made to plant collecting, especially orchids in the York area.

The two-storey building that he ran his business from, continues to be a feature in Avon Terrace, the main street. As he was also the agent for Yates seeds, the pressed metal advertising sign, that for many years was affixed to an outside wall can now be seen in the Residency Museum. He and his wife belonged to the York Horticultural Society and the catalogues provide an insight into the plants they were cultivating, as the majority were for chrysanthemums and dahlias. The chrysanthemum catalogues from Pockett's Victoria based nursery, range from 1940 to 1955 and the dahlias from Kongarra Gardens, Magill, South Australia date from 1936 to 1948.

A 1938 and '39 catalogue in the collection, were for plants offered by E. Harrison, Leake Street, Belmont, WA. Harrison partnered originally with Dawson to form the nursery Dawson and Harrison in the early 1900s, which is still operating at Forrestfield. Additional information about Thomas Pockett is available in the society's journal, volume 27, number 1, published in July 2015.

Social Media - Facebook Reminder

Don't forget to check your 'socials' for updates and information about what is happening in our Branch. If you're a Facebook user just type in 'Australian Garden History Society West Australian Branch' into the search area. At the moment Ursula has posted a beautiful video of Wirra Willa Garden that shows the progress made. As they say, please like and share. It really helps get the message out there.

AGHS NMC Meeting Sydney 12th & 13th July 2025 *Felicity Farrelly*

The meeting opened on a fine and brisk Saturday morning with most of the National Management Committee in attendance. Four members zoomed and the Editor, Francesca Beddie was an apology.

Membership decline was the main topic of conversation throughout most branches and within the AGHS. There was a very collegiate



discussion on ways to retain and interest new members to be involved in their branches around Australia. Prue Slatyer, who is the current chair of AGHS mentioned that Tasmania continues to attract members although in the winter they do physically lose members going north. The age group of members are the retirees who do travel overseas and towards the warmer states in winter. A positive outcome of this discussion was the enthusiasm of finding interesting topics with members inviting friends and branches and making events more possible for non-members to attend at little cost. We were reminded that there are podcasts and webinars that provide interesting discussions for members, one group being the UK's Garden Trust which is the initial Garden History Society.

AGHS has not sat on its hands. The editor of the magazine, Francesca Beddie has recently released our first Podcast. Francesca has developed and finalised *Ticket to Ryde*, the pilot podcast using the AGHS national oral history collection. Patsy Vizents, as Chair of the Oral History group also provided wonderful support for this. The podcast is a compilation of voices talking about the place of Ryde College of Horticulture in the careers of several members of the AGHS. Patsy highlighted the amount of professional technical in house support that Francesca gave to this project which meant the production costs were far less than expected. The host is Jennfier Stackhouse. The producer is Francesca Beddie, with assistance from Patsy Vizents and Roslyn Burge, and some professional advice from Jane Curtis. The podcast and explanatory text have been posted on the website:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/podcast-ticket-to-ryde>

The NMC allocated a budget of \$20,000 to the podcast project last year. The inhouse support for the development of this podcast meant that \$18,000 is still available to spend. The podcasts will be funded from the Kindred Spirits fund and we are asking for ideas for the next podcast.

This year the AGHS is developing a refined membership online access which will mean that members can easily access their membership details and payment can be easy. The TidyHQ system has been chosen following a review and although the migration of our current data has been slower than expected, it is anticipated that it will be up and running by late September. Should members have any concerns about finding their membership details the Executive Officer will be available to support this changeover to the new system from late September.

Our new Vice President, Lisa Nutting has taken a keen interest in the new membership system and with the Executive Officer Sarah Edwards will ensure all the details to get this finalised will be addressed. Lisa is also part of the Finance Committee, as is our Treasurer Stephen Hathway and Prue and myself. In the last round of discussions it has been highlighted that our operating budget depends greatly on membership and Conference funds. This means that Conferences will continue to be an important part of the membership options and the Mt Gambier Conference (October 31 -2 Nov 2025) is already showing an attendance of 130 people.

The Conference in 2026 will be at Orange in NSW from September 25-28. The pre and post Conference tours will be from Sydney and return. The NMC members were asked to support the planning of this Conference, and this may be the way the branches can ensure that they have additional NMC members on the organising committees for each future Conference.

Canberra will be the destination in 2027 on the 14 - 17 October, the 100th anniversary of Old Government House and there will be an endeavour to link it in with the Canberra Floriade.

Another aspect of informing the public of our existence is the preparation of brochures on the Society which can be available at functions. AGHS WA is ahead of the game as we have already distributed an A5 publicity leaflet with a QR code for the public to access the national website. A similar page document was proposed by the Southern Highlands branch, and this will be produced for distribution with each branch details.

The Advocacy Toolkit has been placed on the website and has been made more easily available to branches and members as an interactive tool found under membership passwords. The discussion centred on the possibility of making this available behind a 'paywall' such that others organisations could access it once a payment was made and a run through had been given via zoom. This is still in discussion. It is proposed that branches be given the option to have an interactive zoom discussion on how this works. The toolkit is available currently. Branches have been asked to appoint an advocacy officer to support each branch.

Patsy Vizents has reviewed all the interview and interviewee templates for the Oral History Committee and ensured that the funding is available for projects, primarily being undertaken on the East Coast. Should you have recommendations please do contact Patsy and although the next 12 months a number of oral histories have been budgeted, there may be opportunities in the next round of budget monies.

The one failure of assessing further funds for the AGHS is the lack of following up the previous MOU that AGHS had with ASA Travel. As Chair of the Partnership Committee, I have been researching reigniting such MOUs and other partnerships that operate at Branch levels to be additional options for all branches. This report is still being finalised, but a big disappointment is recently reading in The West Australian in the 'Gardening Column' by Sabrina Hahn, that ASA tours to New Zealand this year, which are currently NOT under an MOU with AGHS, will be run by our patron Professor Tim Entwisle. Sabrina Hahn will be taking tours to Tasmania, which our Tasmanian branch was not aware of as they have expertise in this region. We hope to rectify this and be an avenue for tours such as ASA to not only employ members as tour guides but also enabling us to advertise such tours to our members and friends, with a 'finder's fee' given to the AGHS.

A lot of reinvigoration within the AGHS this year and opportunities to move our membership forward. A very worthwhile 2 days of discussion and getting to know what is going on in all branches. Delightful and enthusiastic group on the NMC however due to budgetary constraints it may be reduced to one face to face meeting next year.

Landscapes at Risk – AGHS Advocacy Issues

Polyphagous Shothole Borer (PSHB)

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website states the following:

Current situation

The National Management Group - responsible for directing eradication programs for exotic pests and diseases – met on 18 June 2025 and determined it was no longer technically feasible to eradicate Polyphagous shot hole borer from Western Australia.

A national Transition to Management (T2M) plan is now being developed to transition from the eradication response to a management phase from 1 July 2025.

The National Management Group's determination considered the latest scientific data and advice from plant biosecurity experts - highlighting the difficulty in early detection, control before reproduction and the lack of proven effective chemical treatments.

The department will lead the transition to management in WA to minimise the impact of shot-hole borer on Perth's tree canopy and help protect the State's horticultural industries. Over the next 18 months, the department will work with industry, community and local government partners to build capacity to manage the pest.

Work will be undertaken to build upon the WA Agriculture Research Collaboration research projects to explore improved surveillance and treatment options to support the long-term management of the pest.

[Polyphagous shot-hole borer | Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development](#)

Polyphagous Shothole Borer (PSHB) Information Seminar

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the event had to be cancelled but will be rescheduled at a later date.

Recent Branch Events

Boorloo Festival

The branch again participated in Perth's Boorloo Festival on April 13th and 14th this year. Committee members, Lynette Petersen, Felicity Farrelly and the Chairman were rostered and distributed information about joining the AGHS as well as providing journal back copies. A guided walk of the grounds, highlighting the historical plantings, was conducted at 11.30am and 1.30pm each day from the society's stand by the Chairman. At each of the sessions approximately twenty members of the public took advantage of the walk. The informative list below has recently been received from Government House.

Significant Tree List Government House Gardens- Updated 2025		
Trees estimated 130- 191 yrs old (1829-1894)	Trees estimated 110-130 yrs old (1895-1915)	Trees estimated 80-109 yrs old (1916-1945)
<i>Araucaria cunninghamii</i> <i>Araucaria heterophylla</i> <i>Eucalyptus rudis</i> <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> <i>Olea europea</i> <i>Pinus halepensis</i> <i>Quercus cerris</i> <i>Quercus ilex</i> <i>Quercus suber</i>	<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i> <i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> <i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i> <i>Phoenix canariensis</i> <i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> <i>Phoenix reclinata</i> <i>Washingtonia robusta</i>	<i>Agathis australis</i> <i>Agonis flexuosa</i> <i>Syzygium smithii</i> <i>Ficus microcarpa hillii</i> <i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i> <i>Phoenix canariensis</i> <i>Quercus robur</i> <i>Quercus suber</i> <i>Sabal palmetto</i> <i>Washingtonia robusta</i>

Royal Trees	
1834 Governor Sir James Stirling	<i>Olea europea</i>
1920 HRH The Prince of Wales	<i>Agathis australis</i>
1927 HRH The Duchess of York	<i>Ficus microcarpa</i>
1945 HRH The Duke of Edinburgh	<i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i>
1958 HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother	<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>
1969 HRH The Duke of Kent	<i>Hymenosporum flavum</i>
1972 HRH The Princess Margaret	<i>Corymbia citriodora</i>
2002 HRH The Earl of Wessex	<i>Agonis flexuosa</i>

Recent Significant Trees	
1989 Air Chief Marshall Sir Wallace Kyle GCB KCVO DSO DFC Governor, 1975-1980	<i>Spathodea campanulata</i>
2015 Her Excellency The Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO	<i>Pinus brutia</i>
2022 The Honourable Kim Beazley AC and Ms Susie Annus	<i>Quercus ilex</i> for the Queens Platinum Jubilee
2023 His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM 34th Governor of Western Australia, Mrs Darrilyn Dawson and family	<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i>

Floreat Park, Garden Suburb *John Viska (text) Sue Davis (photos)*

This year, the Town of Cambridge is celebrating the centenary of the design of Floreat Park. Based upon the concept of Garden Suburbs, the branch, in conjunction with their Local History Centre organised an historic walk. This occurred on Sunday 18th May, when 18 participants met at the corner of Selby Street and The Boulevard, adjacent to the Floreat Park Tennis Club where an interpretive sign, installed by the Town, provided information on the laying out of the section north of The Boulevard.

After hearing about the design concept of The Boulevard and its official planting in 1929, the group proceeded on foot to explore one of the hidden recreational spaces. These being part of the original design, were areas of bushland retained at the rear of houses bordering The Boulevard and Selby Street. Today, these green spaces are maintained by the Town with some of the original indigenous trees extant. The group then progressed along The Boulevard and observed the first houses built. Although, many of the residences have been enlarged, original elements of the garden layout could be discerned. These included rose beds with their hybrid teas in the middle of a buffalo grass lawn, or behind a low brick front fence. The mature tree and shrub specimens gave a good indication of plants that were available at the time. Other elements included laid coloured cement paths from the front gate to the porch, decorative sundials, and garages setback on the block. From Winmarley Park, on the crest of The Boulevard, it could be seen how the designers used to advantage, the topography in the street layout by following the natural contours. This was in contrast to the grid design of the southern section, which was laid out prior to 1929.



English Arts and Craft style house on The Boulevard.



Typical Floreat houses. Pre-war substantial. Post war minimal, struggling for building materials

Few of trees from the commemorative planting of The Boulevard have survived. The Monterey pines, *Pinus radiata* that gave a sense of scale, have senesced and have not been replaced. The Canary Island palms, *Phoenix canariensis* that alternated with red flowering gums, *Corymbia ficifolia* are now the dominant plants and the introduction of jacarandas has

weakened the original design concept as have median strips and other road modifications. These changes have lessened the impact of the original design concept which incorporated the principals of The International City Beautiful Movement formulated in the early 20th century.



Massive growth in the secluded reserves is left undisturbed.



Phoenix canariensis planted on The Boulevard.

WA Branch Event Diary

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 10th August, 2pm to 4pm, at the new premises of the Royal WA Historical Society, 109 Stirling Highway, Nedlands

AGM guest speaker, Elizabeth King, on Wirra Willa, Armadale.

Our first event for the year was a revisit to the property on Wednesday 27th March to gauge the progress made since last year. Elizabeth King, a former TAFE lecturer, who specialised in plant identification, cultural practices and design as well as a former gardening volunteer at Araluen, will present a talk on the progress of Wirra Willa's Garden in Armadale.

AGHS National Events

2025 Annual National Conference, Mt Gambier, South Australia

Beyond the Garden Fence

The 45th AGHS Annual National Conference 2025 will be held at The Barn, Mount Gambier from Friday 31st October to Sunday 2nd November. Early registration will be available on Thursday 30th October and the optional day tour will be on Monday 3rd November. A pre-

conference tour will operate from Adelaide on Wednesday 29th October to Mount Gambier Thursday 30th October, with an overnight stay in Robe.

The theme this year is *Beyond the Garden Fence* which means that we will be looking not only at beautiful gardens, but at the geology of the area and at land uses.

We have put together a great team of speakers and have planned some amazing bus trips. The accommodation is plentiful, the food will be first class, the wines local and the company, as always, very enjoyable.

For more information please visit the following link:

[**2025 Annual National Conference - Australian Garden History Society**](#)

WA Events of Interest

Sabrina Hahn will be giving a talk at the Cambridge Library on Saturday, 2nd August 2025, 11:am to 12:30 pm titled Update Your Garden.

For more information contact the library on (08)9383 8999 or Email library@cambridge.wa.gov.au

