



**eNewsletter
No. 42
April 2026**

Northern NSW Branch

**Newsletters are sent out monthly
except for December and January**

Larger images are available from the editor on request

Salvia rosmarinus, **Rosemary**, is a fragrant evergreen shrub with narrow leaves and purple or sometimes white, pink, or blue flowers. It is a member of the mint family, Lamiaceae. The species is native to the Mediterranean region. It has a number of cultivars and its leaves are commonly used as a culinary flavoring.

Rosemary has become closely identified with the Battle at Gallipoli and sprigs of Rosemary are worn on Anzac Day. This is due to the shrub being common along that coastline as it thrives near the sea. It has a fibrous root system, is long lived and blooms for long periods.

In 1338, cuttings were sent to England and planted in the garden of the old palace of Westminster. Since then, Rosemary can be found in most English herbal texts. It arrived in the Americas with early European settlers in the beginning of the 17th century, and was soon spread to South America and distributed globally. It is reasonably hardy in cool climates, can withstand droughts, surviving a severe lack of water for lengthy periods.

It is considered easy to grow and pest-resistant. Rosemary can grow quite large and retain attractiveness for many years, can be pruned into formal shapes and low hedges, and has been used for topiary. It is easily grown in pots. The groundcover cultivars spread widely, with a dense habit. Rosemary was considered sacred to ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks. Several Shakespeare plays refer to the use of Rosemary in burial or memorial rites.

Ref: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>



Salvia rosmarinus - Rosemary

Image: <https://www.herbalreality.com/herb/rosemary/>

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From the Chair:

I hope you are all enjoying the spectacular autumn colours as we are in the New England. Like many of you, however, we are desperate for rain. The “Party Branch” convened recently at Tatts Hotel in Armidale to say thank you and farewell to our 2025 Events co-ordinator, Sandra Welsman, who will be swapping her Winter woollies for beach gear as she moves to the Sunshine Coast. We trust she is settling into her new abode and enjoying being closer to family.

Hopefully many of you have booked for the Maitland/Newcastle visit at the end of May. No doubt you have read the excellent article on Cintra House in the latest journal. It promises to be a wonderful visit with both Newcastle and Maitland art galleries on the itinerary.

Remember that registrations are open for the Orange conference and what a fabulous and inviting brochure it is. Cheers from me until our Guyra ramble and dinner on April 26th and do check the calendar of events for any date changes and be sure to put them in your diaries.

Cheers
Helen Wilson

Chair | Northern NSW Branch
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Farewell to Sandra Welsman

Thursday 31st March 2026

Member and former Events Co-ordinator Sandra Welsman has left Armidale to be closer to family on the Sunshine Coast. Our Group arranged farewell drinks and dinner at Tatts Hotel.

Text and Images: Maria Hitchcock



Sandra Welsman and Liz Chappell



Robyn Jackson makes a speech on behalf of Guyra Garden Club. Sandra is a former President of the club.



Carolyn Fitzroy and Newsletter Editor Maria Hitchcock attended the farewell.



AGHS NNSW Chair Helen Wilson makes a speech thanking Sandra for her commitment to the group and wishing her well on her new adventure.



Fran Webb, National Chair Helen Oates and husband Bill attended the farewell dinner.



Left: Owen Croft, Helen Nancarrow and Graham Wilson

Below: Robyn Jackson, Lexia Neilson and Helen Wilson.



Bookings are now open for the
2026 AGHS Annual Conference
Orange NSW
Brochure is attached

Mt Gambier Conference 2025 Visit to Yallum Park

Text by Andrew and Annie Clifford

Images: Maria Hitchcock

The homestead (right) was built in 1880. It replaced the earlier houses which were built of stone collected on the property. In 1890 over 1000 acres were subdivided to grow grapes later to be named Coonawarra and now Wynn's. In 1906 17,182 acres were sold to the government for closer settlement. In 1912 more land was sold and in 1914 June Clifford bought the house block along with the remaining 2258 acres. Today 1100 acres are being used for beef breeding and cropping.



The house was designed by E. Twentyman of Melbourne. It was constructed by T. Haig and the stone mason employed was T. Hall, both from Mt Gambier. The roof tiles are Welsh slate and inside £500 worth of gold leaf was used with the English wallpaper. The doors are Hoop pine and the skirtings and architraves are Australian cedar, combed to look like oak. A border of English elms, dating back to 1856 stand on the western edge of the large garden. The property was sold in 1861 to John Riddoch who laid out the grand garden that one can see today featuring many rare and exotic trees and a fruit garden. Around that time Riddoch employed a head gardener, John Warner and a team of 6 gardeners. Warner planted many trees sourced from all over the world.

The oldest shrub dating back to the 1860s is the Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) along with lochroma (A South American genus with narrow trumpet shaped flowers, Jacaranda acutifolia, Olea europea, The Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), Swamp She-oak (*Casuarina obesa*) and Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*). The very thorny Fortunes Double Yellow Rose also dates to this time. Many of the significant trees are labelled with their name, date of planting and country of origin.



English Yew (*Taxus baccata* - Ireland) planted in 1880. This evergreen woodland tree is noted for being poisonous especially to livestock but not it seems to rabbits and deer. The wood was prized for making longbows. It was often planted in churchyards and cemeteries because of its longevity but also because it had an association with death. They are small to medium sized trees with flat leaves arranged spirally on the stem.

The Yew is dioecious meaning there are male and female trees but occasionally you find both flowering structures on the one tree. It is widespread throughout the northern hemisphere but is sensitive to hard frost. It grows best on rocky slopes and prefers well-drained soil. Yew forests were decimated in many parts of Europe largely to protect livestock. The "Yew Conservation Hedge Project" in Britain was established to maintain the DNA of the Fortingall Yew. Conservation programmes have also been run in Catalonia and Northern Portugal. The oldest Yew artifact (the Clacton spear) has been dated at about 400,000 years old.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taxus_baccata

Lilly Pilly *Syzygium smithii* E. Australia 1880
(*Eugenia smithii*)

Evergreen coastal tree with white to maroon edible fruits and flushes of pink new growth. The trunk is sometimes buttressed, bark flakes off easily. It has creamy white flowers over the warmer months followed by small round fruits in winter.

Lilly Pilly grows naturally in rainforest from North Queensland to Wilson's Prom in Victoria. The berries are a food source for a wide range of birds and possums. Sir Joseph Banks introduced the species to Kew Gardens, it has become an invasive species in New Zealand and it was introduced as a garden species in the 1950s in San Francisco. It has been classified as a fire retardant species on the Central Coast and it adapts well to Bonsai. The species is also moderately frost hardy. The timber was used for flooring, frames and fittings being a member of the Myrtaceae family.

Botanist Joseph Maiden wrote in 1889 that 'The fruits are eaten by the aborigines. They are acidulous and somewhat lacking in taste'. Today they are used to make jam.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syzygium_smithii



Austrian Pine (Black Pine) *Pinus nigra* 1880

Occurs naturally across Southern Europe from the Iberian Peninsula and Lower Austria to the eastern Mediterranean, on the Anatolian peninsula of Turkey, Corsica and Cyprus, as well as Crimea and in the high mountains of Northwest Africa. This large tree is moderately fast growing and can live to 500 years or more. The oldest tree estimated to be 1000 years old is in Türkiye. There are several subspecies named after their habitats such as ssp *dalmatica* - native to Croatia where it mostly grows on the islands. It is found at elevations ranging from sea level to 2,000m, most commonly from 250–1,600m. It needs full sun to grow well, is intolerant of shade, and is resistant to snow and ice damage. It is resistant to wind and drought.

The timber of European black pine is similar to that of the European Scots pine (*P. sylvestris*), being moderately hard and straight-grained. It does however tend to be rougher, softer, and not as strong, due to its faster growth. It is used for general construction, fuel, and in paper manufacture. Recently however, serious problems have occurred with red band needle blight disease, caused by the fungus *Dothistroma septosporum*.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinus_nigra





Aspen *Populus tremula* 2013

Species of poplar native to cool temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere from northern Russia to Japan and south to Türkiye. Deciduous tree growing to 40m tall with pale greenish-grey bark and almost round toothed leaves with flat petioles which allow the leaves to 'tremble' in the breeze. The male and female catkins appear on different trees and are wind pollinated. Seeds are enclosed in downy fluff which allows the seed to disperse with the wind.

Aspens spread extensively by suckers allowing the species to form dense colonies. Suckers continue to appear long after the trees have been cleared. Aspens are a very hardy species which tolerate long, cold winters and short summers. It is resistant to browsing pressure by fallow deer owing to its unpleasant taste.

The wood of aspen is light and soft with very little shrinkage. It is used for timber and matches but is also valued in the pulp and paper industry, being particularly useful for writing paper, plywood and different types of particle boards.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populus_tremula

Yellowwood (*Afrocarpus falcatus*) 1996

Native to the montane forests of southern Africa, where it is distributed in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, and Eswatini. It is grown as an ornamental tree, especially in South Africa where it is protected, and occasionally abroad.

Yellowwood is an evergreen conifer often growing up to about 45m tall, but known to reach 60m. At higher elevations and in exposed, coastal habitat it rarely exceeds 25m. Leaves are arranged in spirals on the branches. They are small and narrow, up to 4.5cm long by about 6 mm wide. They are green to yellowish, hairless, leathery and somewhat waxy in texture. It is a dioecious species, with male and female structures on separate plants. The main agents of seed dispersal are fruit bats, which eat the fleshy covering but discard the hard, woody seed.

The wood, often called yellowwood, is good for construction, particularly shipbuilding. It is also made into plywood and used to make many products, including furniture, boxes, vats, toys, farm implements, musical instruments and railroad ties.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrocarpus_falcatus





Canary Island Pine *Pinus canariensis* 1860s

Large, evergreen tree, native and endemic to the outer Canary Islands of the Atlantic Ocean. The green to yellow-green leaves are needle-like, in bundles of three, 20–30cm with finely toothed margins and often drooping. The cones are 10–18cm long, 5cm wide, glossy chestnut-brown in colour and frequently remaining closed for several years. It is a subtropical pine and does not tolerate low temperatures or hard frost, surviving temperatures down to about –6 to –10°C.

This is one of the most drought-tolerant pines. The tree's long needles make a significant contribution to the islands' water supply, trapping large amounts of cloud droplets as fog drip. The aromatic wood, especially the heartwood, is among the finest of pine woods, being hard, strong and durable. It is now becoming popular as a tonewood for soundboards for guitars and other string instruments. In mainland Spain, South Africa, Sicily, Australia, and California, it has become a naturalised species.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinus_canariensis

Italian Cypress *Cupressus sempervirens stricta* 1880

Species of cypress native to the eastern Mediterranean region and Iran. It is well-adapted to the environmental conditions that it lives in due to its ability to survive in both acidic and alkaline soils and withstand drought. It is a medium-sized coniferous evergreen tree growing up to 35m tall, with a conic crown, level branches and loosely hanging branchlets.

It is very long-lived, with some trees reported to be over 1,000 years old. Italian Cypress has been widely cultivated as an ornamental tree for millennia outside of its native range, mainly throughout the Mediterranean region and in other areas with similar hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters, including California, southwest South Africa, and southern Australia.

In Jewish tradition, cypress is held to be the wood used to build Noah's Ark and Solomon's Temple. In classical antiquity, the cypress was a symbol of mourning, and in the modern era, it remains the principal cemetery tree in both the Muslim world and Europe.

Ref: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cupressus sempervirens>





Bunya Pine *Araucaria bidwillii* 1860s

Large evergreen coniferous tree which is endemic to Australia. Its natural range is southeast Queensland in particular the Bunya Mountains. The branches are produced in whorls at regular intervals along the trunk, with leaf-bearing branchlets crowded at their ends. The branches are held more or less horizontally – those towards the top of the trunk may be somewhat ascending, those on the lowest section of the trunk may be somewhat drooping. This arrangement gives the tree a very distinctive egg-shaped silhouette. The leaves are small and rigid with a sharp tip which can easily penetrate the skin.

The female (or seed) cone is very large, reaching up to 30cm long and 20cm wide, which is roughly equivalent to a rugby ball. When mature they fall to the ground, releasing edible seeds which were highly sought after by Aboriginal families who 'owned' and managed a group of trees that were passed down to the next generation. Bunya feasts were an important tradition allowing tribes to settle disputes, arrange marriages and trade goods. The bunya nut has become popularised as a 'bushfood' by indigenous foods enthusiasts.

Ref: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Araucaria_bidwillii



One of the original stone cottages



FAREWELL GIL TEAGUE (1943-2026)

The gardening community lost one of its icons with the recent passing of Gil Teague. Members will be familiar with Gil for his Florilegium bookshop in Glebe, Australia's only specialist gardening bookshop for over twenty years. Gil also brought books to garden lovers across regional areas, travelling as far as Stanthorpe every year for their annual Winter Workshop as well as Australian Garden History Conferences across Australia's eastern states.

The annual Florilegium catalogue in the post, and in later years also online, was an introduction to new garden book releases and a listing of rare and precious books from the past. Gil delighted in matching books with potential owners and would go to great lengths to source out of print titles. He found me both of Beatrice Bligh's pioneering Australian gardening books and reprints of Gertrude Jekyll. His knowledge was encyclopaedic: "A book on clematis? Its Bridget Gubbins you want." Gil also drew on his previous experience in the publishing industry to encourage aspiring garden authors, including me, to fulfil their ambitions.

Gil was farewelled at a memorial service in Sydney in late March. Colleen Morris spoke on behalf of AGHS on Gil's outstanding contribution to Australian gardening knowledge. Her tribute will be published in the next issue of the Journal.

Dr Liz Chappell

Calendar of Events

Date 2026	Event	Notes
April 26th Sunday	Guyra Ramble Blind Chef - 126 Bradley St, Guyra NSW 2365 0432 633 733	2.30pm: Meet at Mother of Ducks Lagoon Graham Wilson and Bill Oates to talk about the history. 3.30pm: Guyra Memorial Park and Showground - focus on trees 4.30pm: Visit Robyn Jackson's garden 5.30pm: Dinner at Blind Chef with briefing on coming activities. Wine to be supplied by AGHS local branch.
May Saturday 30th Sunday 31st	Trip to Newcastle and Maitland gardens Event shared with our AGHS Sydney branch friends. Bus from Maitland to Newcastle Gallery and return \$35.00 per person	Leaving Armidale by car pooling on Saturday morning, we'll travel to Monte Pio Accommodation in Maitland. 1.30pm Bus leaves for the newly expanded Newcastle Art Gallery where Francesca Beddie will share the delights of the collection with us. We then return by bus to Monte Pio. Group dinner to be organised. On Sunday morning, we'll visit historically significant <i>Cintra House</i> in Maitland, owned and loved by our AGHS member Catherine Blanch, where we will discover over an acre of garden to explore. We will also catch Judyann Moule's exhibition at the Maitland Regional Gallery after the garden visit.
June Sunday 28th	Tree Walk at UNE	We will walk through the grounds of UNE looking at significant trees. Herbarium visit (depending on permission) Details to come
July Sunday 26th	AGM	U3A Details to come
August Sunday 23rd	'A Day with Camellias'	Winter Speaker Program Visit to Nan and Roy Robertson's magnificent garden 'Wanderriby' at Wollomombi. Lecture by world renowned Camellia expert Dr Steven Utick
September Friday 25th to Sunday 28th	AGHS Annual Conference	Civic Theatre, Orange NSW Registrations open 13th April
October Sunday 18th	On the Road to Walcha	We will be visiting four Walcha gardens. Details to come.
December Saturday 5th	Annual Celebration Lunch	Peterson's Winery

Inquiries and ideas - please send to Lynne Walker (Events Co-ordinator)
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