



**eNewsletter  
No. 40  
February 2026**

## **Northern NSW Branch**

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

Larger images are available from the editor on request

*Alloxylon flammeum*, known as the **Queensland tree waratah** or **red silky oak**, is a medium-sized tree of the family Proteaceae found in the Queensland tropical rain forests of northeastern Australia. It has shiny green elliptical leaves up to 18 cm long with terminal bright orange-red flower clusters that appear from August to October, followed by rectangular woody seed pods that ripen in February and March.

The species is pollinated by birds and is adaptable to cultivation, *Alloxylon flammeum* prefers a site with good drainage and responds well to extra moisture and low phosphorus fertilisers. It is listed nationally as *vulnerable* under the EPBC Act as most of its natural habitat has been cleared for agriculture and logging.

In nature, this is a rainforest tree that can reach 33 m in height although in cultivation 10 m is more likely. The trunk has light grey bark.

*Alloxylon flammeum* is found on the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland at altitudes of 700 to 820 m above sea level. Its range is from Danbulla to the upper Barron River, though most of its rainforest habitat has been cleared for agriculture, and it is found in protected remnants such as Mount Hypipamee National Park, Danbulla National Park, Crater Lakes National Park, Curtain Fig National Park, and Hallorans Hill Conservation Park. It is found on basalt- or granite-based soil.

Ref: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alloxylon\\_flammeum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alloxylon_flammeum)



*Alloxylon flammeum*

Image: [www.australianplantsonline.com.au/waratah-qld-alloxylon.html](http://www.australianplantsonline.com.au/waratah-qld-alloxylon.html)

**Join AGHS Northern NSW Branch**

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/membership/>

Send articles & photos to: Reports/Newsletter Editor Maria Hitchcock  
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## From the Chair:

Welcome to our 2026 Newsletter which promises to be just as informative and interesting as it was last year. Thank you, Maria. Please be assured that Maria would welcome any gardening stories you have and especially photos and stories after last winter's spectacular snow fall.

While it seems but a faint memory, we had a wonderful end of year celebration at Peterson's winery amongst friends.

I am about to embark on my second trip to Orange with our indefatigable National Chair, Helen Oates where we will be meeting with more garden owners, venue providers and caterers so make sure that you keep the end of September free for the Conference. You can make bookings now at the Mercure which is an easy stroll to the main venue. Of course, there are many accommodation options in Orange.

Please see our calendar of events for the year which is filling up with interesting outings which will be well organised by our events co-ordinator Lynne Walker. Thank you, Lynne. I look forward to seeing many of you on Sunday March 1<sup>st</sup> for our first local excursion.

Cheers  
Helen Wilson

Chair | Northern NSW Branch  
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Helen Oates (NMC Chair), Carolyn Grant (WA) Dorothy Evans (SA), Eleanor Dartnall (Vice-Chair), Maria Hitchcock (NNSW) Francesca Beddie (Editor), Susan Reidy (VIC), Robyn Oates (ACT), Felicity Farrelly (Secretary), Brian Thomas (Public Officer)

## Annual Festive Lunch Peterson's Winery 30th November



Ian Brookes, Lexia Neilsen, Linda Skipper, Rick Wright



Above: Barbie Wright, Tom O'Connor, Robyn Bradford, Peter & Moira Lloyd

Below: Helen & Graham Wilson, Caroline FitzRoy, Fran Webb, Robyn Jackson



Helen Oates: AGHS National Chair



The party sat at a long table in the marquee. It was a lovely day. We had shared platters with a variety of meats and salads. Peterson's produces their own range of wines.



Moira Lloyd, Maria Hitchcock, Helen Oates

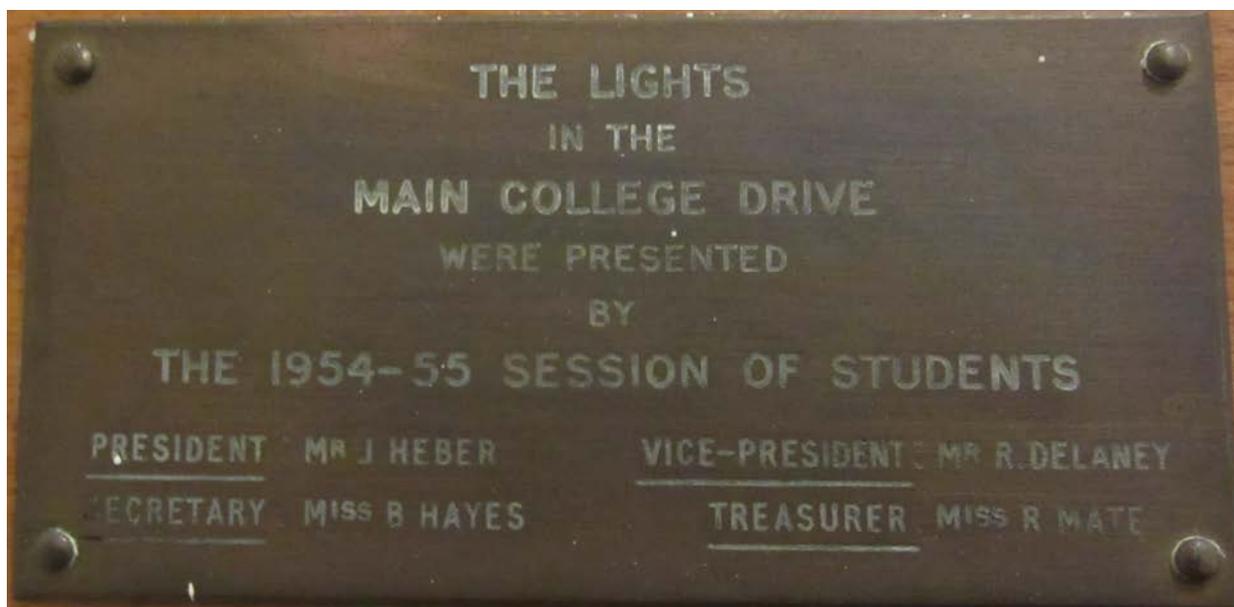


Richard Bird and Lynne Walker

## Heritage Matters

Images: Bill Oates

Our Advocacy Officer, Bill Oates has just provided details of the light posts (illustrated below) to the Department of Education in the grounds of the State Heritage listed Armidale Teachers College. This information is to be added to the State Heritage listing. The posts were installed by alumni of the college in 1955, not the department. A plaque on site (also illustrated below) explains the project. The posts were sourced from commercial premises in Beardy Street Armidale and repurposed by ex-students. The lights still illuminate the main drive of the College at night.



## AGHS Conference Mt Gambier

30th October 2025

Images: M. Hitchcock

### Umpherston Sinkhole

Mt Gambier is situated on the Limestone Coast which is characterised by sinkholes, caves and large deposits of limestone laid down 15 - 40 million years ago when the area was covered by sea. Volcanic activity in the area left a series of craters and uplifted dune ridges which hosted a number of waterways, many of which have been drained for agriculture.

Water is always a scarce resource in Australia and Mt Gambier is aware of the need to monitor water levels in the local aquifer. Pivot irrigation is tightly regulated to maintain levels but the large number of pine plantations (an important local industry) tend to stop water from entering the aquifers. Sinkholes are fairly common and were once used as rubbish dumps.

This sinkhole was developed by James Umpherston (a member of State Parliament) in the late 19th century on his property called 'The Caves'. It was laid out in a Victorian English tradition with entrance gates on the main road. The long driveway to the house (now demolished) was bordered with oaks and elms. Box hedges separated lawns from the vegetable garden, orchard and olive grove. The sinkhole was developed along the same formal lines but that design has largely disappeared today.

James Umpherston who had no heirs wanted the garden to be enjoyed by visitors and townspeople so it is now managed by the City Council. Many of the sinkholes in the Mt Gambier region are characterised by a complex arrangement of caverns and some are filled with water attracting cave divers.



View from the rim of the sinkhole to the bottom. Originally the lower part was covered in water and a small boat was used to show visitors the grandeur of the sinkhole. Over time the water level sank and disappeared. The sinkhole gardens fell into disrepair. The sinkhole was acquired by Woods and Forests Department and in 1976 they began the restoration. New plantings included palms, pines, deciduous trees, acanthus, cacti, hydrangeas, fuchsias, acacias, banksias, grevilleas and eucalypts. The garden was listed on the Register of Heritage Places in 1995.



## The Blue Lake

This is the most significant feature of Mt Gambier. It is a crater lake. A layer of limestone lies just above the level of the lake and extends well below the surface. About 4000 - 5000 years ago, lava flowed over the land surface and into fissures in the limestone. The lava cooled to form a layer of basalt about 20m thick. It can be seen as a dark layer above the limestone. Further eruptions resulted in gas rich molten rock being thrown out around the rim and cooling to form blocks of basalt and limestone. Groundwater stabilised in the crater after the eruptions ceased. We were told that there is no life in the lake apart from some 5000 yr old stromatolites.

The Boandik people occupied the area before British colonisation of South Australia.

There is a pumping station beside the lake and access is restricted as this is the town's water supply.

Each November, the lake turns to a deep turquoise colour, gradually returning to a duller blue colour in late February to March. The exact cause of this phenomenon is believed to be due to the warming of the surface layers of the lake during the summer to around 20 °C, causing calcium carbonate to precipitate out of the solution and enabling microcrystallites of calcium carbonate to form affecting the blue wavelengths of sunlight.

Refs: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue\\_Lake\\_Warwar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Lake_Warwar)

Interpretation Board by Mines and Energy Resources South Australia



## National Management Committee Report

7-8 February 2026

Melbourne

The meeting was well attended by a majority of Committee members who travelled to Melbourne from all branches. The main issues discussed covered:

- the future of the AGHS Journal
- membership fees
- a common date for when memberships are due for renewal
- marketing of the Society
- communications
- the Orange Conference

**Future of the AGHS Journal** - it was decided that the Journal is an excellent publication which needs to remain available in print. The major cost is in the editing and design which is benefited by both digital and print subscribers. Attempts have been made to market the magazine commercially with little success therefore the Society needs to rely on subscription sales. A large number of members prefer to receive a print copy.

**Membership fees** - there has not been a rise in fees for several years and due to many cost increases it was decided to increase fees by a modest amount across all categories.

**Common renewal date** - most organisations have a common date when renewals are due and it was decided that AGHS follow this trend. The common date will be February or March. There will be a sliding scale of renewal amounts in 2026 so that all existing members will be asked to renew each year at the same time. This will help with accounting and membership management.

**Marketing the Society** - Eleanor Dartnall (Vice-Chair) has produced an excellent document outlining all the methods that we can market the Society and build membership. An analysis has been done of what the members read, where they go and how they spend their money. A target group has been identified (recent retirees) and the marketing strategy will seek to reach those potential members. This will include assisting the branches to develop campaigns. One aim is to encourage people listed as 'Friends' to become members. A range of merchandise was discussed and it was agreed to get a quote for a tea towel design.

**Communications** - the committee looked at content on the website and how it is organised. Each branch has their own method of communicating with members - most have newsletters and send out emails. Social media like Facebook and Instagram require dedicated moderators prepared to give time. YouTube is another avenue of reaching a wide audience and potential members but may target a younger cohort.

**Orange Conference** - This is progressing well. It will be titled Fruits of Orange and take place from 25-27 September with pre and post conference tours. Registrations will open on 13th April and costs will be similar to our previous conferences. A conference venue has been booked as well as Austwide Coaches. A children's writing competition for Yr 6 students is being organised in association with the conference.

The 2027 conference will be held in Canberra.

Best wishes

Maria Hitchcock (NNSW Representative)

National Management Committee

**Australian Garden History Society**

[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

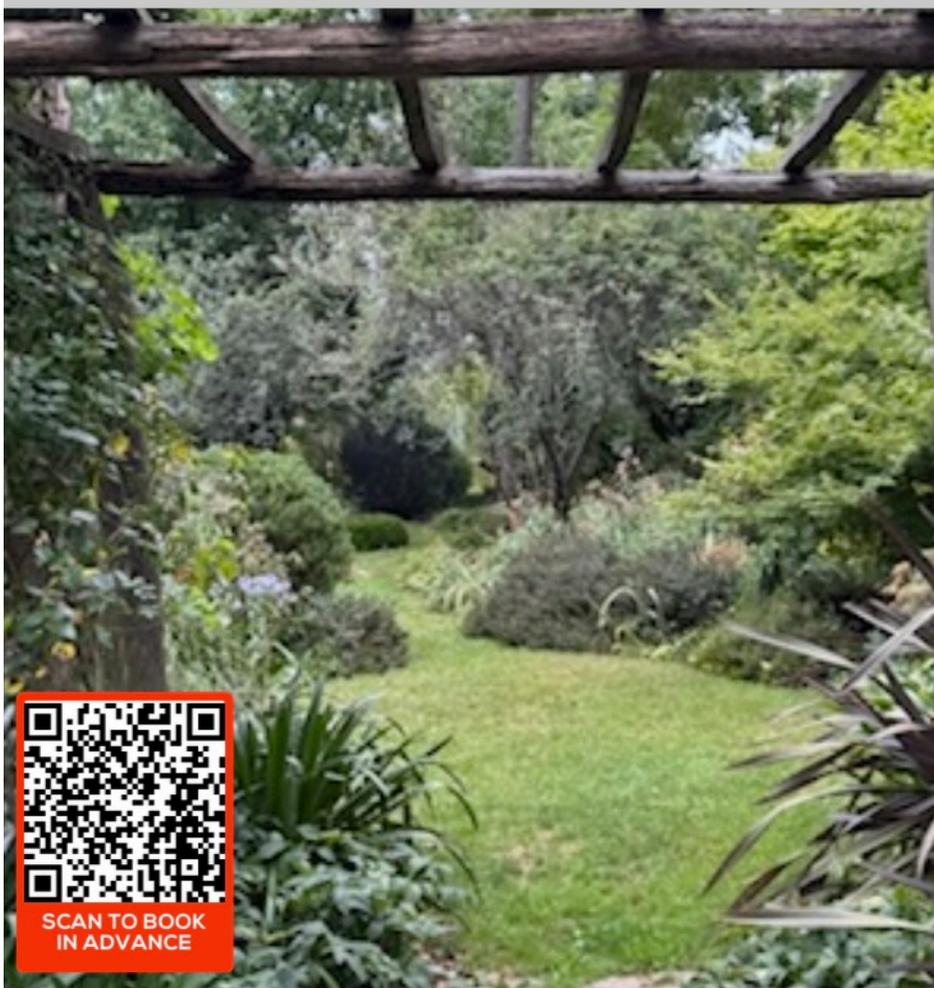
# ART IN THE GARDEN

"Auchinlea" 28 Tanglewood Rd North, Dumaresq

**14th & 15th March, 2026**

10.00am to 4.30pm both days

**\$10 Adults - \$8 FON Members • U16 Free**



**Devonshire Teas • Lunches • Sculpture Sales  
• Watercolour & Oil Artwork Sales •  
Pottery Sales • Silversmith Sales Autumn  
Harvest Stall • Plant Stall Baubles & Bangles  
• Raffle**

### Directions

Follow Queen Elizabeth Drive past UNE, Handel Street, turn left over railway, then right to Old Inverell Road, proceed 3.3km, left Tanglewood Road North.

Look for Friends of NERAM signage.

GPS use "28 Tanglewood Road North, Armidale, NSW".

A fundraising event by

Friends of NERAM Inc. 9885144

email : foninvitations@gmail.com

Friends of  
**NERAM**



## Calendar of Events

Date 2026	Event	Notes
<b>March 1st Sunday 2.30pm</b>	Tree walk around the parks in the Central CBD with Graham Wilson and Bill Oates as guides.	Start at the extraordinary development behind the park at the rear of the swimming pool, then walk around behind the Belgrave Cinema to Civic Park and on to Central Park where will hear about and see the most recent plantings and where guides Angela & Ian Sole will talk about their involvement in returning the park to its original Victorian era splendour. As usual we will end our afternoon with dinner and this time it will be at the Armidale Bowling Club.
<b>March 14th - 15th Saturday - Sunday</b>	NERAMble  10am - 4.30pm	"Auchinlea", 28 Tanglewood Rd North  Friends of NERAM Fundraiser See poster on the previous page
<b>March 21st Saturday</b>	Day trip to Armidale Gardens	To be confirmed. Details to come
<b>April 26th Sunday</b>	Lunch Meeting Guyra	Speaker: Graham Wilson Topic: Mother of Ducks Lagoon Possible garden visit
<b>May Saturday - Sunday</b>	'On the Road to Grafton via Ramornie' to be confirmed	Possibly a coach trip, Saturday morning Armidale to GI to Ramornie Station, lunch, afternoon to Grafton. Stay locally 1-2 motels. Sun morning Heritage tour with Schaeffer House, return Armidale via Ebor.
<b>June</b>	Tree Walk at UNE	Walk around Trevenna/Boooloominbah Graham Wilson will talk about the feature trees.
<b>July 26th Sunday</b>	AGM	U3A Details to come
<b>August 23rd Sunday</b>	'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
<b>September 25th - 28th Friday - Sunday</b>	AGHS Annual Conference	Civic Theatre, Orange NSW Registrations open 13th April
<b>October</b>	On the Road to Walcha	Hope to visit four gardens. Details to come.
<b>November 28th Saturday</b>	Annual Celebration Lunch	Peterson's Winery

Inquiries and ideas - please send to Lynne Walker (Events Co-ordinator)  
[gardenwalker@bigpond.com](mailto:gardenwalker@bigpond.com)