



eNewsletter No. 38 October 2025

Northern NSW Branch

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

Larger images are available from the editor on request

Cornus - Dogwoods

There are over 30 species in this genus of woody plants. The various species of dogwood are native throughout much of temperate Eurasia and North America, with China, Japan, and the south-eastern United States being particularly rich in native species. The genus is also known from South America with members such as *Cornus peruviana*.

Dogwoods have simple, untoothed leaves with the veins curving distinctively as they approach the leaf margins. Flowering dogwood trees have tightly clustered flowers, lacking showy petals, but surrounded by four to six large, typically white petal-like bracts. The fruits of *Cornus kousa* have a sweet, tropical pudding like flavor in addition to hard pits. Dogwoods are widely planted horticulturally, and the dense fine grained and beautiful wood of the larger-stemmed species is valued for certain specialized purposes such as cutting boards and fine turnings.

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



Cornus kousa Chinese Dogwood

Image: <https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/cornus/>

Join AGHS Northern NSW Branch

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

Send articles & photos to: Reports/Newsletter Editor Maria Hitchcock
maria.hitchcock@gmail.com

From the Chair:

Hello everyone and greetings from your new Chair. I have very big shoes to fill taking over from Helen Oates and I thank her again for the incredible hard work and unfailing good humour she brought to the position. Huge thanks also to Graham Wilson and Sandra Welsman for their work as Deputy Chair and Events organiser. Hats off to new committee members for stepping up and I assure you that we will be working hard to put together an enjoyable program for next year.

We still have exciting events left in the 2025 calendar including Tim Entwisle's talk which promises to be both informative and entertaining. If you have friends who would like to come along, please book them in. Many of us will soon be gathering in Mt Gambier for the annual conference which has a wonderful program. It is always good to be meeting up with friends from other branches, attending lectures, visiting diverse landscapes and gardens and of course enjoying the odd party.

Please keep Sunday 30 November free for our festive lunch at Peterson's Winery. I am waiting on a price for this but as soon as it is finalised a Trybooking site will be available with details including the time; so watch this space.

Until the next newsletter, keep enjoying this sublime Spring weather and the beautiful colour in the gardens.

Cheers

Helen Wilson

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AGHS NNSW Committee for 2025

Chair: Helen Wilson

Deputy Chair: Liz Chappell

Secretary: No nominations - held over to next meeting

Treasurer: Tom O'Connor

Newsletter Editor: Maria Hitchcock

Events Co-ordinator: Lynne Walker

Oral History Co-ordinator: Liz Chappell

NMC Rep: Maria Hitchcock

Advocacy: Bill Oates

Fundraising: Lexia Nielsen

How Victorian Flowers were Brought to Our Gardens

In the early decades of the nineteenth century gardeners cultivated vegetables and herbs. There was little time or energy for flower gardening since most of the population lived on farms where working the soil took up most hours of the day. That all changed in the second half of the century. Then people began to move to cities and suburbs. Leisure time became available. A wealthy middle-class developed who believed gardening played an important role in daily life. Then cultivating a flower garden became essential for the middle-class Victorian household.

The choice of flowers however came largely from the English garden tradition. There are three English garden books from both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that listed many of the flowers that were included in the Victorian garden of both England and America.

The first was *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1735), a plant directory by English botanist Philip Miller. The second was garden writer Jane Loudon's *The Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden* (1846). The third source was gardener David Thomson's volume called *Handy Book of the Flower-Garden* (1868). Popular blooms included roses, symbolizing love; violets for faithfulness; daisies for innocence; and pansies, resembling faces. Geraniums, phlox, and petunias were common in gardens, while flowers like orange blossom and myrtle were used in wedding arrangements

James Vick (1818-1882), seed company owner from Rochester, New York, opened his business in the early 1860s. He grew flowers and at the beginning sold seeds from his own attic. Vick's customers wanted to plant a flower garden and he did his best to provide quality seeds. His company became one of the largest in the country. Vick found that he needed to travel to Europe to get more and different flower seeds. There was not enough of a quality seed variety available in America at that time. His catalog, like that of his contemporaries in the business, offered seeds from the traditional English garden. They were flowers that had been part of the English flower garden for decades but also included exotics from Africa, Asia, and South America. England had been sending plant hunters around the world in search of flowers that would grow in the English climate. Many of them became part of the home flower garden.



Dahlia rosea - painting by Honore Blanc 1715
<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/dahlia-rosea-honore-blanc.html>

Dahlias originally came from high altitude regions of Mexico and were brought to Spain in the sixteenth century. They were cultivated by the Aztecs for food and medicine. They didn't appear in English gardens until the 18th Century. Today there are over 57,000 varieties of this flower. Named for Swedish botanist Anders Dahl, extensive hybridization in countries like Britain led to the vast array of forms seen today. The dahlia was officially declared Mexico's national flower in 1963, recognizing its cultural significance. *Dahlia pinnata*, *D. rosea*, and *D. coccinea* were the first forms cultivated in Spain. The first double forms arrived in Europe in the 19th Century.

Ref: <https://ngb.org/ten-victorian-flowers>

Ref: <https://dahliasocietyofvictoria.org.au/History-of-the-Dahlia>

Victory Trees

At our last meeting Graham Wilson introduced us to the planting of Victory Trees following World War I. They were a program implemented around 1920 under a **Methodist Youth Program** in NSW that planted 200 trees across NSW in church grounds. The purpose was to honour those who served (and died) in the war. J. H. Maiden, as Chief Botanist at the Botanic Gardens, helped supply the trees and was involved in establishing the program.

Refs: [Monument Australia+3NSW War Memorials Register+3Pittwater Online News+3NSW War Memorials Register+2VWMA+2](#)



Holly Oak (*Quercus ilex*) planted in 1920 in the grounds of the then Mona Vale Methodist Church. One of 200 trees planted across NSW under a Methodist Youth Program to honour those who served in the First World War as part of a statewide Methodist Youth Program to honour the supreme sacrifice of Australian servicemen.

The Victory Trees were supplied with the assistance of Mr J. H. Maiden, Chief Botanist, Sydney Botanical Gardens. The Victory Tree in Mona Vale is one of only a few which remain today. The tree is in good health and its canopy has a span of approximately 16m.

The trees were supplied conditional that they be planted in church grounds, in this case in front of the Mona Vale Methodist Church, with a commemorative service to be held around the tree "each anniversary", as near to Anzac Day as possible. Despite the size of the original program, it appears that very few of the Victory Trees remain, and if they do, few are identified as such.

Image: Northern Beaches Council (North)

Ref: https://www.war memorials register.nsw.gov.au/content/victory-tree-mona-vale?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Armidale Victory Tree

Text and Image: Graham Wilson



In April 1920, a unique Anzac Memorial was created by the Methodist Young Peoples' Department in co-operation with the Government Botanist Mr J.H. Maiden. It was arranged to present every Methodist Sunday School in the state with a tree for planting to be known as the Victory Tree. It was also determined that once a year near Anzac Day, a ceremony shall be conducted round the tree when thanksgiving shall be offered to God for Victory. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1920)

On 14 July 1920, Mr W. Curtis, Mayor of Armidale and an expert horticulturist planted a Himalayan cypress, *Cupressus torulosa*, behind the Armidale Methodist Sunday School. He explained the story about the tree. Following the planting, the National Anthem was sung and a short prayer was offered.

The Methodist, 23 April 1921 published details of a brief service that would be appropriate to the Anzac Day Service. This publication also listed the centres that had agreed to conduct services according to the agreement with the Young People's Department.

My research shows that the Botanic Gardens forwarded 200 trees to the various centres in 1920 with a further 100 to be sent in the following year. In tracing war memorials in the New England Region, Victory Trees were also planted at Uralla, Glen Innes and Tenterfield.

Annual General Meeting 28th September 2025

Dinner at the Grand Hotel

Images: Lynne Walker



Bill Oates, Fran Cawford, Robyn Jackson, Owen Croft, Richard Bird, Elton Squires, Maria Hitchcock. Lexia Nielsen, Mary Dwyer



Above: Committee members: Treasurer Tom O'Connor, New Chair Helen Wilson, New Deputy Chair Liz Chappell



Left: Helen Oates, Liz Chappell, Elton Squires, Moira Lloyd, Sandra Welsman, Fran Webb, Helen Wilson, Graham Wilson

Beyond the Garden Fence:

Looking at gardens and the wider cultural landscape

45th AGHS Conference, 31 October - 2 November 2025

Optional Day: Monday 3 November
Pre Conference tour: 28 and 29 October
Mt Gambier, South Australia

Mount Gambier offers a fascinating landscape situated on a limestone plain, honeycombed with underground channels, caves and sinkholes. The limestone volcanoes erupted about 4000 years ago, creating a unique patchwork of soils that support beautiful gardens, vineyards, pine forests and farms of all kinds. The Boandik people have lived here for thousands of years fishing the productive wetlands and hunting the drier plains. Early explorers recognised the rich grasslands and came with their animals to settle and change the landscape forever. We will visit many geological features, some historic houses and cottages, a museum, several vineyards and an orchard as well as gardens great and small. We will also investigate where all the green waste goes. The Program on Friday and Saturday includes presentations with excursions in the afternoon. Sunday is a full day excursion and Monday's tour to Naracoorte Caves has now extended bookings to allow more members to participate.

Registration: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1352302>

Conference Brochure: <https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025AGHS-Conference-brochure.pdf>

Conference Venue

The conference is being held at [The Barn](#), 7-8 kms from Mt Gambier town. The Barn also offers accommodation and is the venue for the conference dinner. AGHS has booked all the rooms which are priced from \$145.00 per night to \$350.00 per night (5 persons). You should have received a notification from AGHS National Office with details of all the rooms. Bookings for accommodation are **open now. It is advisable you book as soon as possible. Make sure you ring this number and tell them you are with the AGHS.**

08 8726 9999 or 0418 851 471 to make a booking.

The email address is info@barn.com.au

Flights: Rex and Qantas fly from Melbourne and Adelaide to Mt Gambier. Rex has a daily flight to and from Melbourne. Check their websites for details.

Train/Coach from Southern Cross Station, Melbourne. Train to Ballarat, then coach to Mount Gambier (travel time about 6-7 hours). Self-drive takes ~ 5 hours. A bus will be available, at a cost, to transport delegates from Adelaide to Mt Gambier on **Thursday 30 November**, and from Mt Gambier back to Adelaide on **Tuesday 4 November**. This is a direct trip with a stop for lunch, not an AGHS tour. There will be an opportunity to indicate your intention to use this service when the booking form becomes available on Thursday 1 May.

Alternatively, there is a less direct **Stateline bus** from Adelaide to Mt Gambier return.

Mt Gambier to The Barn (and back)

A shuttle bus will transport delegates who don't have their own transport between The Barn and Mt Gambier accommodation venues. If you will have a car during the conference, you may wish to carpool. When registrations open on 1 May, please indicate if you will have a car.

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Notes
October Sunday 26th Book now!	<i>'Evergreen, a life in botanic gardens'</i> 2.40 Arrival and seating 3.00 pm Tim Entwisle 4.30 pm drinks and light snacks Members' dinner to follow.	WINTER SPEAKER PROGRAM Guest speaker: Professor Tim Entwisle (AGHS patron) See see below for bookings. The Armidale Playhouse 309 Beardy St. Armidale Cost: \$45 or \$50 per person. Try Booking: https://www.trybooking.com/DARUF
October 31st - November 2nd Book now!	AGHS National Conference Beyond the Garden Fence The Barn, Mount Gambier, S.A.	Bookings are now open. Optional Day tour Monday 3rd November Pre and post tours will be available The theme this year is <i>Beyond the Garden Fence</i> which means that we will be looking not only at beautiful gardens, but at the geology of the area and at land uses. See previous page for details.
November Sunday 30th	NNSW Annual Festive Lunch	Peterson's Winery Palmerston
May 2026?	<i>'On the Road to Grafton via Ramornie'</i> 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.
August 2026	<i>'A Day with Camellias'</i>	Visit to Nan and Roy Robertson's magnificent garden 'Wanderriby' at Wollomombi.
September 25th - 28th 2026	AGHS Annual Conference	Civic Theatre, Orange NSW

Sunday 26th October 2025 'Evergreen: A life in Botanic Gardens' - Professor Tim Entwisle

Tim Entwisle is Patron of the Australian Garden History Society. Tim has been director of Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and NSW Government Botanist, a director at Kew, London and recently retired as chief executive of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria with focus on planning for the gardens under climate change. Tim is a skilled communicator. He is a radio and TV presenter and author of 'Evergreen: The Botanical Life of a Plant Punk' 2022.

In October, Tim will also outline his forthcoming book on dispelling plant and garden myths
'The Sceptical Botanist - Separating Fact from Fiction'.

Tim Entwistle's Oral History interview is to be found [here on the AGHS website](#).

When: Sunday 26 October 2025. 3pm start, please arrive around 2.45pm.

Where: The Armidale Playhouse 309 Beardy St Armidale.

Cost: \$45 per person including a friendly glass of wine and light snacks after the talk.

Please book online for 26 October using this link: <https://www.trybooking.com/DARUF>.

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

gardenwalker@bigpond.com