



**eNewsletter
No. 36
August 2025**

Northern NSW Branch

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

Larger images are available from the editor on request

***Diospyros kaki* Oriental Persimmon**

D. kaki is the most widely cultivated species of persimmon. Trees may reach a height of 4.5 to 18 metres and are often round-topped or have a willowy appearance. The leaves are 7–15 centimetres long, and are oblong in shape with brown-hairy petioles 2 cm in length. They are leathery and glossy on the upper surface, brown and silky underneath. The leaves are deciduous and bluish-green in color. In autumn they turn to yellow, orange or red.

Persimmon trees have male and female flowers produced on separate trees. Some trees have both male and female flowers. Male flowers are pink and appear in groups of three. Female flowers are creamy-white and appear singly.

Persimmon fruit matures late in autumn and can stay on the tree until winter. The ripe fruit of the cultivated strains range from glossy light yellow-orange to dark red-orange depending on the species and variety. The varieties may be spherical, acorn-, or pumpkin-shaped. The flesh is astringent until fully ripe and is yellow, orange, or dark-brown in color.



Persimmon tree in fruit
Image: Courtney Wilson ABC Landline

Join AGHS Northern NSW Branch

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

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

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

From the Chair:

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry
(with the greatest respect to Robert Burns and John Steinbeck)

Hello everyone,

The last couple of weeks have shown us just how unpredictable life can be. While most of us watched in awe as the snow fell and marvelled at our Winter wonderland, little did we understand just what the repercussions would be. From the immediate postponement of our Winter Speaker event with Tim Entwisle, to the damage to our trees and gardens, we felt the impact. On the upside, though, I have seen great community support for those who needed help, with neighbours pitching in to provide labour to remove debris, mend structures and offer encouragement. As always, our many valued emergency service personnel have been tireless.

Disappointingly, both our Winter Speaker events have now been postponed. With disrupted flights and closed roads, Professor Tim Entwisle's presentation could not proceed as planned, and has been postponed until Sunday 26 October. We know we have some competition with other events on this date, but hope that we will gain some more community participants as the weather will be warmer and the days longer. Revised advertising for the event will be ready soon, so please help promote the event to your family, friends and community groups.

Our *Day with Camellias* with Dr Stephen Utick on 24 August has also been postponed until August next year. Stephen advised that he would not be able to attend for unforeseen health reasons, and Nan Robertson also reported that her garden suffered some snow damage. Anticipating that the camellias will again be at their best next year, we have postponed this full day event until August 2026. Refunds have now been processed through TryBooking so we can start afresh next year.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the many weeks of planning both Sandra Welsman and Lynne Walker have put into these events. Their attention to detail and stoic perseverance are to be admired, and I know our members will enjoy the fruits of these labours when the events are held.

I spoke in our last newsletter about the upcoming Annual General Meeting for our Branch to be held on Sunday 28 September. To date, we know four committee positions will be vacated; Chair, Deputy Chair, Events Coordinator and National Management Committee Representative. I will send out nomination forms at the beginning of September to all members and I encourage you to step forward and nominate for one of these positions or to begin discussions with someone you feel would fit the bill. I will also be talking to the committee members about the structure of the leadership group and seeking views on how it can best meet the needs of the Branch into the future.

Kind regards,
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Chair | Northern NSW Branch
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The BIG Snow in New England 2025

Text: Maria Hitchcock

Images: As credited

It started snowing on the morning of the 2nd August - first with a light shower of corn snow which melted as it hit the ground. This followed soon after by flakes of snow which gradually settled turning the garden and surrounding landscape white. It got heavier during the day settling on branches and turning the area into a winter wonderland - the sort you see on postcards from Europe. In the past we've had snowfalls that lasted a few hours - everyone gets excited and people go crazy with snowball fights and snowmen building contests. The tourists start driving up the range to enjoy the spectacle and it's all gone by the next day.

Not so this time. Reminiscent of the big snow of 1984 the snow just continued to fall settling into dramatic drifts which covered small shrubs and garden infrastructure. Social media went crazy with photos of snow scenes swamping the internet. Back in 1984 the snow hung around for a few days - the roads became dangerous and police actively discouraged drivers from making any unnecessary journeys. I don't remember the amount of snow that we experienced this time.

It just continued all day and by now people became stranded in their vehicles on the Waterfall Way and the New England Highway as one road was closed after another. Emergency Services were kept busy and soon the news outlets were reporting on the crisis developing in New England. A busload of travellers was forced to bunk down on the floor of a pub in Uralla - good samaritans were out assisting where they could.

The power went out in the early hours of Sunday morning in our area and stayed out for the next three and a half days. The snow which had settled on branches froze overnight turning into ice which created a loading many trees were not able to withstand - one by one branches gave way tumbling to the ground. Most of this occurred on Sunday night. Much of the snow had disappeared by Monday as the devastation revealed itself. Everywhere one looked there were branches on the ground or hanging from trees. People started to talk about the massive clean up ahead. The council opened the tip to green waste with a free deposit if people could provide photo evidence.

Essential Energy posted maps of the blackout areas - it was extensive. They said on the radio that urban areas would be given priority. The Golf Club offered free showers, Council offered



'The Beauty' - Tom O'Connor's garden
Image: Tom O'Connor



'The Fallen' - Tom O'Connor's garden
Image: Tom O'Connor

charging of devices at the Library. People called on the generosity of friends and family in areas with power to enable showering and washing.

We pulled out the old camping equipment - the gas stove, lanterns, thermos and billy. I also had a power pack to charge my phone. We had a wood fire but no fan to distribute the heat. We had water in two large jerry cans - our emergency supply. We also had portable radios run on batteries to listen in to emergency services. There was no internet for two days. We sat around reading books and magazines which had been put aside for a rainy day. We were lucky - our neighbour had no camping equipment and the town was quickly sold out of anything useful. Fortunately we were able to help out.

One of the problems with restoring power was the sheer difficulty in getting machinery into the paddocks. We've had such a wet winter that everything is saturated. There are just so many helicopters they can use. Then there were the fallen power poles. I think the electricity people did a magnificent job under trying circumstances. Let's see how many people jump off the grid after this. It's very tempting.

I believe this event is far worse than 1984 because of the tree destruction and power outages which I don't remember from that time. Our local members are trying to get emergency declarations which allow for compensation. Our small generator kept the fridge and freezer cooled so we didn't lose anything. We were lucky but then we prepare for outages which occasionally happen in the summer but never for this length of time. many people would have been caught unawares especially in the middle of winter.

People will remember the big snow of 2025 for years to come. It's a story for the grandchildren.

Thank you to the members who contributed their photos.



The 'Aftermath' - Tom O'Connor's garden
Image: Tom O'Connor



Robyn Jackson's garden - Guyra
Image: Robyn Jackson - up to 50cm snow fell in the Guyra district.

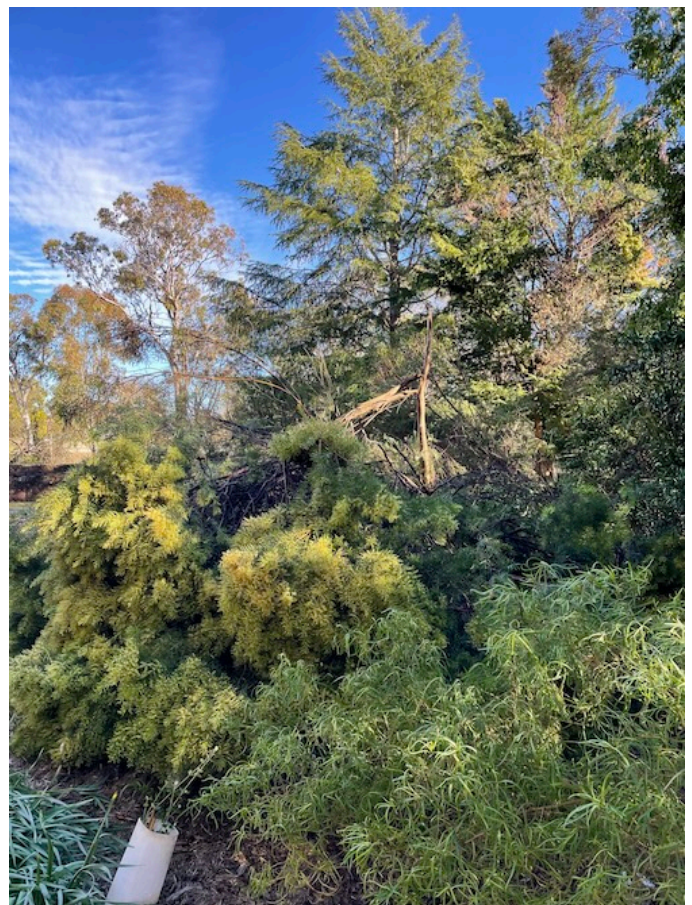


The persimmon tree
Image: Lynne Walker





Maria Hitchcock's Garden
 Images: Maria Hitchcock
 Many branches broken off - weeks of pruning and
 cleaning up ahead.





Banksia serrata 'Superman' has brittle branches. The tree ferns weren't damaged and have bounced back.
Image: Maria Hitchcock



Image: Sandra Welsman



Here are some views of our courtyard in Power Place, Armidale. The Cornus alba Sibirica looked especially striking. Elton and I took a walk late Saturday afternoon and the trees in Marsh Street were like fairyland.

Images: Elton Squires and Liz Chappell

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
September Sunday 28th	3.15 Committee Meeting 4.00 NNSW Branch Annual General Meeting Dinner to follow.	Details to come
October Sunday 26th Book now!	<i>'Evergreen, a life in botanic gardens'</i> 3pm Speaker: 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.
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?	'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.
August 2026	'A Day with Camellias'	Visit to Nan and Roy Robertson's magnificent garden 'Wanderriby' at Wollomombi.

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>.