



eNewsletter No. 21 March 2024

Northern NSW Branch

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

Larger images are available from the editor on request

Cupressus funebris, the Chinese Weeping Cypress is a medium-sized tree growing to 20–35 m tall, with a trunk up to 2m in diameter. Specimens were planted many years ago throughout New England especially in parks but the species is now rarely available in the nursery trade. There are a couple of fine trees in Central Park in Armidale.

This species has had a long history of cultivation in China. It grows naturally in forests but was typically planted around monasteries, tombs and temples.

The tree is characterised by dense pendulous sprays of bright green, very slender, slightly flattened shoots. It has scale-like leaves and globose seed cones which shed seed approximately 24 months after pollination. It prefers well-drained, slightly acid soils and can tolerate drought. Seeds need stratification for several weeks before germination can occur.

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



Chinese Weeping Cypress at 'Brandon'.
Image: M. Hitchcock

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

Many of us enjoyed a wonderful day out in Glen Innes when we visited three beautiful gardens on Sunday 25 February. Thanks to Lexia Nielsen for her immaculate organising, and to the wonderful owners who generously shared their gardens, time and expertise with us. We came home feeling very happy and certainly very well fed.

We're now looking forward to our weekend in Coffs Harbour, from Friday 5 April to Sunday 7 April. Helen Wilson is once again putting together the details of what promises to be a fascinating weekend of coastal gardens, great company and good food. Further information about the weekend is to be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

We're also looking forward to the annual AGHS conference, this year in Bunbury, Western Australia. If you are intending to attend, please make sure your accommodation bookings are made soon. Conference registrations also open early, on **Monday 8 April**. If you'll be away during this time, please ask a friend to register on your behalf to ensure you don't miss out.

AGHS Membership

You have received this newsletter because your email details are held in the Northern NSW branch contact list. We assume you are still a current financial member of AGHS, as we know you have been in the past. Could you please check your membership status to ensure your membership is current? This can be done by logging on to the members' area on the AGHS website, or by emailing Sarah in Melbourne on info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au. If you have any questions or difficulties checking your details, please give me a call or send me an email and I'll investigate.

Kind regards

Helen Oates

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Drone image of the Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez

Image: Paul Webster

Claudia Nevell's Garden

Text and images by Kim Woods Rabbidge

Designer Claudia Nevell's garden, a stone's throw from Coffs Harbour's CBD, has been developed over thirty years. Set on 2500 sq m, with views to the mountains, it's featured in several books and magazines. The sloping site, which drops 12m over its 60m length, has been cleverly divided into flat areas and banks rather than hard terraces. Large trees provide habitat for myriad birds that live in, or visit the garden. In the lower section a billabong captures runoff and provides habitat for aquatic life.

German born Claudia came to Australia via England and New Zealand 34 years ago and settled in Coffs - her husband's home town. She's has been running Garden Expressions, her design business, since 1994. One of the gardens she designed was a favourite in the ABC Dream Gardens series.



Heritage Rose Garden Workshop

Text and image: Lynne Walker

Thank you to those of you who worked so effectively at the Heritage Rose Garden on Saturday. The lovely cool start to the morning certainly helped and it was great to be together again. We had six people from Corrective Services working hard too and thanks to them and several Back Track teams over the last few months, all of the rose garden is now gravel mulched and it is amazing the difference it has made already to plant health and weed suppression. Although Saumarez is now closed indefinitely while the National Trust start their tourist development the roses of course still need our attention.

The next scheduled working bee will be Saturday 13th April, 8.30 – 11.30am (the first weekend in the month 6-7th April - sees us on our long awaited excursion to Coffs Harbour visiting some marvellous gardens). Hope to see you at one or both of the above.

Helen, John & Lynne

Right: Owen The Thistle Slayer in action



Another drone photo of the Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez

Image: Paul Webster

Glen Innes Gardens

Sunday 25th February

Text and images: Maria Hitchcock

About 24 members drove north on a beautiful Sunday to visit three large country gardens in the Glen Innes district. Many thanks to Lexia Nielsen for her excellent organisation which involved both morning and afternoon teas and a boxed lunch. First stop was **'Brandon'** where the owner's long time friend Margaret Leahy spoke to the group over morning tea on the verandah.

'Brandon' homestead was built in 1870 using Glen Innes Blue bricks in an unusual Flemish Bond construction. It has had several owners since then. The second owner planted many of the older trees and was well known for planting trees around Glen Innes. The garden was developed initially as a cottage garden which was the fashion at the time. Cottage gardens are usually very colourful, featuring mostly perennials and annuals. They tend to be somewhat labour intensive requiring frequent dead-heading of spent flowers, cutting back in Autumn and replanting with annuals in Spring. As women entered the workforce in the 1950s and 60s, gardens had to be less time consuming and were now characterised by large shrubs and small trees. Perennials and annuals were mainly confined to small areas near the house and so it was with 'Brandon'.

The current owners Andrew and Fiona McIntosh have lived at 'Brandon' since 1985. Inspired by gardens she saw on her travels, Fiona decided to remodel the garden into the showcase that it is today featuring the most sensational hedges that I have seen in New England. The garden was featured in Australia's Open Garden Scheme in the 1990s and has an internet presence on ouraustraliangardens.com

Andrew and son Fergus were called upon to do much of the structural work such as building the dry stone walls, a shed and tennis court. Although most of the rocks came from another property they fitted in perfectly. The major maintenance in this garden has to be hedge trimming and mowing which Fiona takes charge of with the help of a retired farmer neighbour who likes trimming hedges!

The garden features repeat plantings of some tough, reliable species such as hydrangeas, acanthus and iris. There are no vegetables or fruit trees, no annuals and a limited number of roses and perennials. Sadly the garden suffered badly during the last major drought. Their poplars died as well as 100 Birch trees in a grove. Since then the garden has recovered beautifully.



Bryan and Robyn Jackson & Will Todd at 'Brandon'



Dry stone wall topped by a hedge.



Wisteria Walk



The magnificent hedges leading from one garden room to another with the borrowed woodland landscape in the distance.



Looking back toward the homestead.



Perfectly clipped shrubs

Our second garden was '**Lilburn**' owned by Tim Hughes and Sal Molesworth. The property dates back to 1842 and was originally called Rangers Valley East. The house itself was built in 1890 using four rooms which were moved from Rangers Valley. It sits on a granite ridge but the property has rich basalt soil making it very productive for raising merino sheep. Frost is not a real problem because of the elevation of the house and garden.

There are now only 2 trees left of the 130 yr old *Pinus radiata* windbreak. A hawthorn hedge, Oleanders and Pampas Grass were planted years ago and have survived both wet and dry years. Tim and Sal moved here in 2000 and set about to restore the house and garden.

A very large old Privet tree dominates the front section of the garden and it is planned to replace it with a magnolia. The timber pergola which was covered by a Banksia Rose dating back to 1900 was replaced. Sal marvelled at the condition of the very old gateposts which are still standing. A Yucca and Chinese Windmill Pine was introduced and a Bunya Pine is growing well in the paddock.

The last major drought was not kind to them and they lost Plane trees and Birches. The wet period that followed saw the demise of some Red Oaks. A running bamboo hedge has created a huge problem with suckers emerging all through one section of the garden. When the Bamboo hedge was removed it opened up the wonderful vista.

Over the years Tim and Sal brought in plants from Salisbury Court as they were trying to match the garden to the period of the house. It was entered in the Australian Open Garden Scheme in 2009. The garden now features a quadrant shaped rose garden with plantings of *Rosa Quatre Saison*'. Dahlias feature with their large blooms in Autumn.

Tim and Sal believe the garden may have been laid out by Chinese gardeners who were employed by Rangers Valley. The original owners however were not good gardeners and made many planting mistakes. A game changer was the sinking of a bore in 2002 which now ensured a permanent water supply for the garden.

Sal told us that the May hedges need a fair bit of clipping as they put on growth quickly. This is a very personal garden reflecting Sal's love of experimentation with a wide variety of plants, some of which like a large Wollemi Pine, she keeps in pots.



Dahlia above and Pampas Grass below



Views of Lilburn gardens



The third garden visited was '**Rosecroft**' owned by Mike and Belinda Norton. As you enter the main gate what strikes the visitor is the line of majestic Canadian Elms with their trunks that reach up to the sky. These 96 year old trees were planted in 1930 by the Digby family which built the house. They selected this species because they don't sucker nearly as much as other Elms.

Since then the property has had several owners including the Crothers family which expanded the size of the garden three times, built the stone walls, planted many hedges and developed the park across the drive with its rows of deciduous trees such as Golden Elms, six to eight different Oaks and Claret Ash. The 'park' was designed to feature long driving ranges for a golf enthusiast.

Since the Nortons moved in they have made a number of modifications to the garden such as the establishment of lawns and the planting of a range of Buddleas and Oak leaf Hydrangeas. Mike Norton told us he had spread 38 tons of manure and 42 large bales of hay on the gardens to improve soil fertility.

As well as the gardens there are several buildings. The oldest building on the property is the gatehouse dating back to 1860. Sadly it has been damaged by white ants and needs restoration. There are also shearers' quarters which were turned into a guest cottage and one of the previous owners had turned the stables into a venue for community events.

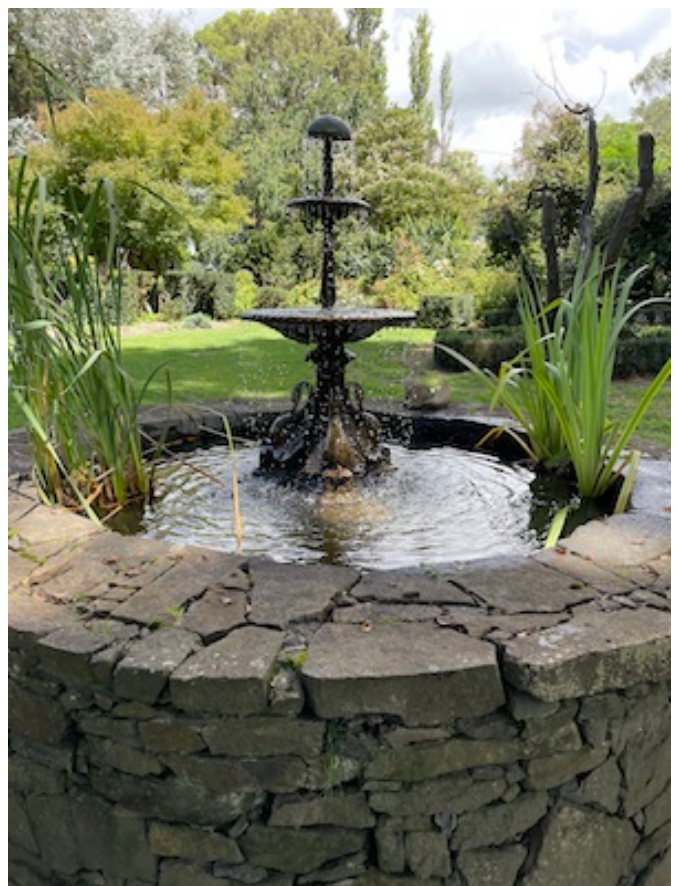
During the wet years the garden was flooded resulting in several plant deaths. The Nortons employ a gardener for two days a week and have had to call in an arborist to check the health of their Canadian Elms.

Some of our members had visited this garden years ago and remembered the front yard being heavily shaded. The Nortons have now opened it up to much more light allowing the lawn to develop and ensuring the central fountain stands out as a feature.

The garden has a plentiful supply of water being fed by a large dam at the rear.



Canadian Elms above Central Fountain below



Views of Rosecroft



Robyn Jackson, Robyn Bradford and Lexia Nielsen having a rest.



Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Notes
April Friday 5th Saturday 6th Sunday 7th	<p>A self-drive weekend visit to three wonderful Coffs Harbour private gardens, and two Woolgoolga gardens. Book your own accommodation.</p> <p>Friday 3.00 pm Nevell Garden \$15 to pay at gate Dinner at Pacific Bay Resort</p> <p>Saturday Brian Thomas and Scott Carter Garden Korora Lunch Coffs Harbour Botanic Gardens Graeme Brindley and Graeme Bassett Garden Dinner Pacific Bay Resort</p> <p>Sunday Two Woolgoolga gardens Lunch: Jetty Beach House Prue & Peter Young Garden - Bonville</p> <p>Organiser: Helen Wilson</p>	<p>Friday 5th April make your own travel arrangements to Coffs and we will meet at the Nevell Garden at 3pm. Cost \$15pp. Please bring cash to pay at gate. It's an exceptional garden.</p> <p>We then meet at Pacific Bay Resort restaurant for dinner – time to be advised. Order and purchase your own dinner and drinks. This venue also provides us with a dinner venue and car parking.</p> <p>Saturday 6th April – Meet at Pacific Bay Resort and car pool, taking largest vehicles to the garden of our AGHS friends, Brian Thomas and Scott Carter. You will be amazed at before and after photographs. Parking is limited, thus the need for car pooling. Morning tea will be served at this wonderful site with fabulous views. This garden has been built into the steep site with amazing effect.</p> <p>Proceed to Coffs Harbour Botanic Gardens for a leisurely visit and a simple sandwich lunch. (Cost to be advised) Coffee, tea and cool drinks can be purchased at the kiosk.. After lunch, visit the amazing garden of Graeme Brindley and Graeme Bassett. Again, you will be astonished at the development of this coastal garden. Drinks and nibbles will be served here before we adjourn to Pacific Bay Resort for dinner – same arrangements as Friday evening.</p> <p>Sunday 7th April - visit a garden in Woolgoolga followed by lunch at the Jetty Beach House. Grazing plates of meats, cheeses, dips, bread and fruit will be served at \$25 per head. Purchase your own drinks.</p> <p>Following lunch, we proceed to the beautiful garden of Prue and Peter Young at Bonville. Unfortunately for us they will be overseas but their friends, Helen and Phil, will be our hosts.</p> <p>Please let Helen W (g.wilson42@bigpond.com) know soon if you are likely to attend.</p>
April Saturday 13th 8.30 - 11.30am	Working Bee in the Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez	Everyone welcome. Bring hat, gardening gloves and some morning tea. We have lots of tools but if you have a favourite set of secateurs bring those along as well.
October 18,19,20 Registration opens Mon 8th April	AGHS National Conference Bunbury WA	Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre Accommodation: Bunbury Hotel + other options Flights: Jetstar direct from Sydney to Busselton Make sure you register early as there will be a big demand for this conference and you could miss out.