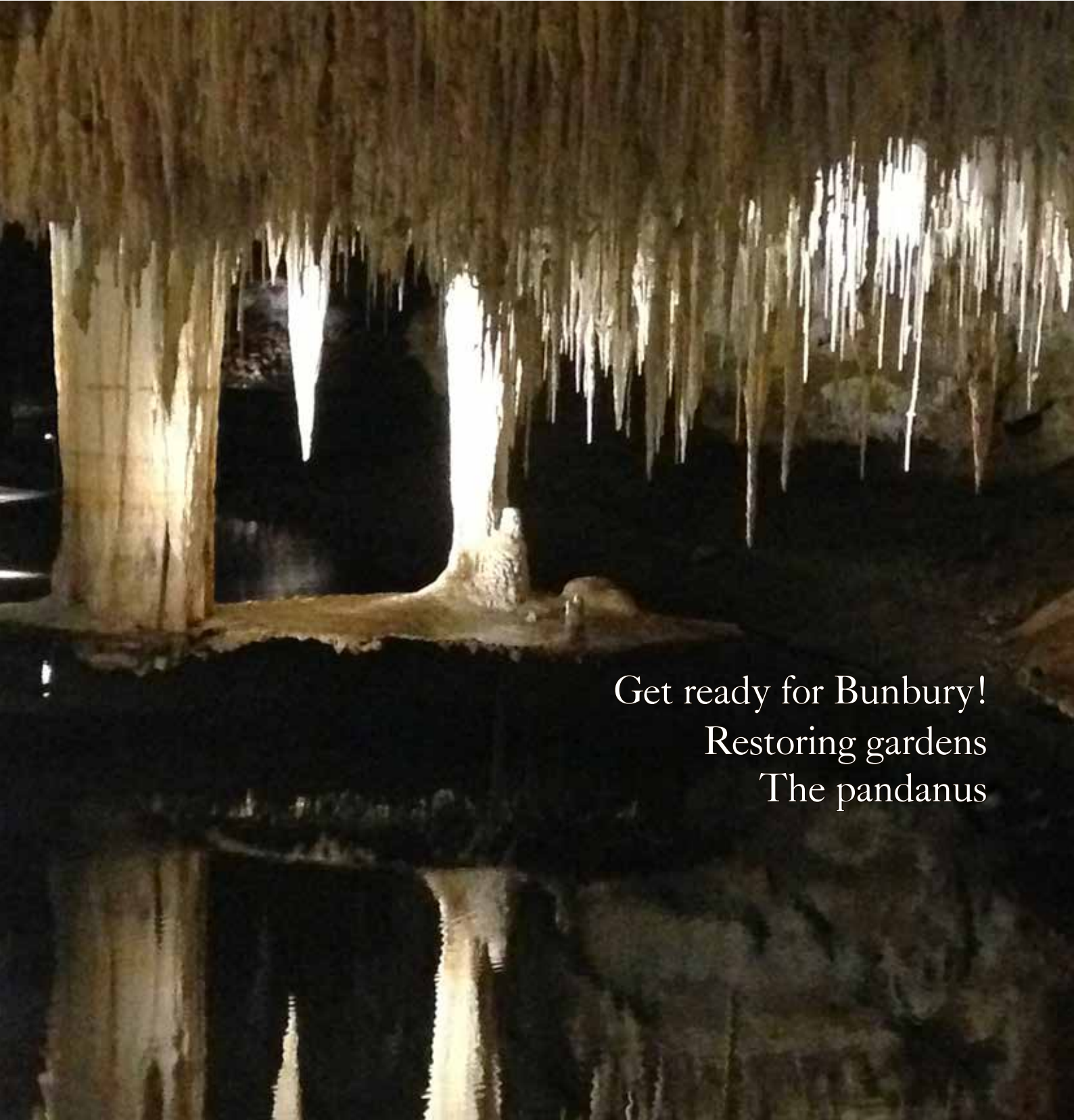
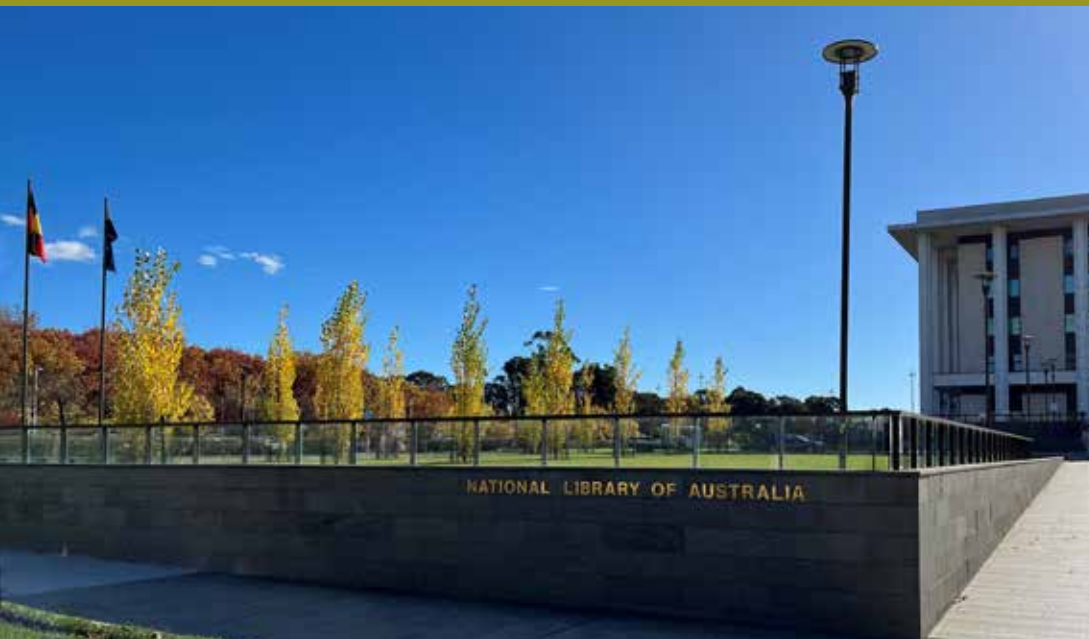


Australian Garden HISTORY

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Get ready for Bunbury!
Restoring gardens
The pandanus



AGHS ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch successfully lobbied the National Capital Authority to ensure that two double rows of Lombardy poplars planted in 1967 by Richard Clough, NCDC landscape architect and AGHS member, were replaced by the same species, notwithstanding Lombardy poplars now being prohibited under the ACT's Pest Plants and Animal Act (2005). The Branch argued that the trees' suspect weediness could be controlled through active maintenance of the site and was not sufficient reason to ignore the trees' heritage significance.

Photo Anne Claoue-Long

From its beginning, the Australian Garden History Society set out to be a group concerned not just with enjoying but also protecting and caring for Australia's historic gardens to ensure their survival. This goal informs much of what we do nationally and regionally, through talks, conferences, tours, visits, letter-writing and protests against threats.

Over time, AGHS has 'jumped the garden fence' and expanded its interest in, and concern for, wider landscapes. These tend to be larger than gardens and can be:

- **designed**, for example, a city park or streetscapes
- **evolving**, that is modified over time by human action, such as orchard areas and farmland
- **cultural**, such as apparently 'natural' or 'wild' landscapes that have in fact been actively managed over millennia.

Some members might be anxious about the word 'advocacy' – please don't be! Many good outcomes for gardens and landscapes only come about through active support for the cause, resulting, for example, in legislation that includes protections for gardens and landscapes. Doing this advocacy work doesn't need be difficult.

Anne Claoue-Long, with suggestions from Stuart Read and Juliet Ramsay, and encouragement from the National Management Committee, has developed an

AGHS Advocacy Toolkit to help members approach and deflect direct and indirect threats to gardens and landscapes. This comprehensive toolkit is a step-by-step guide to running an effective campaign. The toolkit contains:

- suggestions for research resources that may help
- a summary of heritage listings and what they mean
- ways to describe the special values of gardens and landscapes, including the benefits of green space
- examples of threats that can occur
- ways to work out solutions for a 'win:win' outcome that conserves gardens and landscapes and their special features.

Each place and case is different and needs a specific approach, which is why the document is designed for you to dip into and use whichever part helps. Please mix and match the relevant information and tactics in the kit's sections that are relevant to the issue you have.

Historic buildings tend to receive most attention when it comes to advocacy campaigns. The Society is working on having gardens and landscapes seen as a type of heritage which has equal value to other historical places: the Advocacy Toolkit can help AGHS members achieve this goal. Give it a try and encourage your Branch to consult and use it. We would also value your feedback on the document – maybe it has gaps or could be improved: please let us know.

A topical issue at the moment is the replacement of grass with plastic turf. Section 4.2.5 of the Advocacy Toolkit addresses lawns and artificial turf.

Artificial turf...has a larger carbon footprint than real grass lawn, creates a sterile environment with no wildlife value, impacting the soil biome, gets dangerously hot in summer, contributing to urban heat, and creates microplastics. When used excessively artificial turf can contribute to urban runoff as much as paving. At the end of its life artificial lawn is neither biodegradable nor recyclable and contributes to plastic pollution in landfill.

To find the AGHS Advocacy Toolkit, members need:

- first to log into the website
- then go to the Committee Resources section under the home icon

Please send any feedback you have about using the toolkit to: info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

We encourage you to share the results of your advocacy work, so that we can inform others about issues that may need attention or wins you have had: editor@gardenhistorysociety.org.au

The dangers of plastic turf Roslyn Burge, AGHS Sydney Branch

I started to research plastic turf when the Inner West Council mooted its use for fields in the heritage-listed landscape of Callan Park in Sydney.

Plastic turf is made up of 'forever chemicals', which include PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHS). These can leave a toxic legacy on human and animal health, on terrestrial and marine environments.

The proliferation of plastic grass sports fields (euphemistically described as synthetic fields) has been driven by growing urbanisation and need for open spaces, and 'sportification', the term coined in Sweden to describe the role of organised sport in propelling this demand. These have been shown to have detrimental environmental effects; moreover, they are completely out of place on a heritage site.

In October 2022, the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer's *Independent review into the design, use and impacts of synthetic turf in public open spaces* identified a paucity of data about all aspects of plastic turf. The report cited 192 synthetic fields (covering more than a million hectares) but did not include playgrounds, childcare centres, retirement homes or private spaces, all of which use plastic grass. Further, there are no Australian Standards for the manufacture or use of this material. The report did note the problem of shedding, identified by another investigation that sampled two plastic sporting fields in Queensland in April and May 2021.

It found these had shed more than 25,000 pieces of rubber per square metre. This causes unfathomable damage to marine and terrestrial environments.

Between 2019 and 2021, another study measured the heat generated by turf in 10 Sydney playgrounds. It showed the maximum and average surface temperatures of rubber and plastic grass were above skin contact burn thresholds, while the temperature of natural turf was similar to ambient air temperature and always the coolest surface.

In October 2023, the UK Society of Garden Designers issued a manifesto – Say No to Plastic Grass and Plants – and the European Union issued a regulation to restrict microparticles. Josh Byrne of *Gardening Australia* has also made a plea not to replace nature-strip lawns with artificial turf.

The Friends of Callan Park (FOCP) have taken a stand against the proposed installation of a synthetic field within the park. This opposition stems from a commitment to preserving the park's natural environment and maintaining its role as a sanctuary for both wildlife and the community. The Friends argue that the installation of plastic turf will undermine Callan Park's ecological integrity and its historic and aesthetic values. FOCP have joined with the [Natural Turf Alliance](#) to advocate for the use of natural turf and using best practice design and maintenance techniques, which can result in much healthier and still cost-effective open spaces in our cities.

By harnessing multiple voices in a campaign, we can increase the impact of our advocacy work.