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NEWSLETTER

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY, MITCHELL GROUP INC.

aps.mitchell@gmail.com

PO Box 541, Kilmore, Victoria 3764

Inc# A0054306V

July news...!

Hello and welcome to our mid winter edition!

The shortest day has come and gone, the coldest weeks of the year are now with us but the Wattles out in my paddocks are budding up beautifully to remind me that spring really isn't all that far away.

With a number of members away at the moment there is a brief lull in committee activity. Barbara has lined up another great speaker for us this month and full details can be found on page 2. The majority of our guest speakers donate their time, services and sometimes travel reasonable distances to get to our meetings so it is great when we see a good turn out come along and support these very kind, generous, knowledgeable and informative speakers.

Along with the new financial year also comes renewal time... Memberships fees are now due (see back page) and can be paid by Cheque, direct deposit or cash at a meeting direct to our



Acacia dealbata - Silver Wattle in bud.

Photo: J Petts

treasurer.

Lastly our August newsletter is due out on the 2nd Monday (the 10th). Remember: please keep all the great photo's, articles and items of interest rolling in :-). The dead line for contributions is August 3rd (1st Monday) and can be sent to me at: wattlegum@southernphone.com.au or

Mailed to PO Box 381, Pyalong Vic 3521

Cheers till our next edition,

Jeanine

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Wattle Day...

Wattle Day is coming! September 1st 2015 will be the 105th National Wattle Day since it's inception in 1910. So... How will you celebrate this year's National Wattle Day and show off our National Floral Emblem? Some ideas are:

- WEAR a sprig of wattle or Australia's colours of green and gold
- GREET each other with 'Happy Wattle Day'
- ORGANISE a picnic, lunch, morning/afternoon tea, BBQ or dinner for your family & friends
- DECORATE the house with wattle
- PARTICIPATE in a Wattle Day event or celebration

For more National Wattle Day ideas and information visit the website:

www.wattleday.asn.au

July 2015

Volume 2, Issue 6

Mitchell Diary Dates..

- **JULY 20th**
7:30pm MEETING
Guest Speaker:
Geoffrey Lay- "The Larapinta Trail". Come along and hear from Geoffrey about walking the trail from Alice Springs through the spectacular MacDonnell ranges (more details page 2)
- **AUGUST 17th**
7:30pm MEETING
Guest Speaker to be advised
- **SEPTEMBER 21st**
7:30pm MEETING
Guest Speaker to be advised
- **SEPTEMBER 27th**
Proposed Euroa Arboretum Visit. Car Pooling may be available.
- **OCTOBER 17th APS MITCHELL ANNUAL SPRING PLANT EXPO & SALE**
Kilmore Memorial Hall
14 Sydney St, Kilmore
See page 14 for further information.
- **OCTOBER 19th**
7:30pm MEETING
Guest Speaker:
Bill Aitchison on *Acacias*
- **NOVEMBER 16th**
7:30pm MEETING
Guest Speaker to be advised



Standard of the Month, July...

By Brian Weir

Grevillea humifusa

This was my first standard Grevillea, the plant that got me hooked on standards, it was grafted in Wallan by Bruce Blackmore, a man that many grevillea lovers and collectors will remember grafting plants here in the 90s.

The plant is now 13 years old and still flowering wonderfully well, it suffers frost damage every year with flowers burning off at around -1c and outer branches dying at -4c. I prune off the dead branches in October, give it an occasional drink on the hottest summer days and it bounces back. Honey eaters love it, a black bird nests in it, I can recommend this plant as very rewarding and easy to grow.

Grevillea humifusa Standard
Photo: Brian Weir



**MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE
3rd MONDAY OF THE MONTH
(February to November)**

**In the John Taylor room at
Kilmore Library**

12 Sydney Street, Kilmore

Entry \$2.00 Gold Coin

Guest Speaker

Door Prizes

Plant Sales

Fertilizer Sales

**(APS Mitchell Slow Release
fertiliser \$5.00 per 500g)**

**Use of the APS Mitchell free
Library (See Barbara)**

Supper & Chat

VISITORS VERY WELCOME

Members & Visitors are
encouraged to bring along
exhibits for our Flower
Specimen Table

Please label plants



July Meeting Monday the 20th 7:30pm...

By Geoffrey Lay

Geoffrey Lay is joining us this month to present his talk "The Larapinta Trail"...

In the heart of Australia's red centre lie rows of ancient sculptured, mountain chains. These are the MacDonnell Ranges. The Larapinta Trail starts at Alice Springs and winds its way west along these ranges for 231 km. The trail alternates between high, rocky ridges with extensive views, numerous gorges that dissect the range and grassy plains in between.

Despite the harsh conditions of this arid land, the ranges are home to more than 600 species of plants ranging from elegant, white ghost gums to ancient cycads and ferns. I was fortunate to walk the trail after good rains so many of the wildflowers were in full bloom, including wattles, peas, Grevillea, Hakea and Ptilotus.

Come along for a spectacular view of the rugged beauty and spectacular colours of Central Australia.



MacDonnell Ranges

Image: <http://www.outback-australia-travel-secrets.com/image-files/alice-springs-pictures-4.jpg>

Memberships...

2015-16 renewal time is here :-). Membership fees are now due and our renewal form can be found on the back page or downloaded from our website. For membership/renewal enquiries please contact: Bill Barker: Phone: 5783 3838. Alternatively visit APS Mitchell's website:

http://www.apsmitchell.org.au/?page_id=18

June Meeting Report “Native Grasses for Landscaping and Turf”

By Jeanine Petts

A reasonable size group braved the early winter cold turning out to hear Dr Ian Chivers speak on Native Grasses for Landscaping and Turf. Ian also brought along some potted specimens, a range of Native Seeds Pty Ltd seed products, brochures and a book on Australian native grasses for our perusal.

Ian began his talk by warning us that he could “talk underwater with a mouthful of marbles about grasses” and started by asking: What usually comes to mind when thinking of native grasses? One of the audience answers was dry, brown & dead looking. We were then shown some images of lawns and grasses and asked to choose which were native. A surprise to some was that the lovely, green, lush looking lawn images were in fact native grasses. When we think of the large tall growing tussock grasses like *Poa labillardierei* which have so often been used in landscaping and then compare them to low growing grasses like *Microlaena stipoides* it challenges preconceptions as to how native grasses can be used.

Why use native grasses? What characteristics make them good for lawns?

Native grasses are adapted to:

- Low rainfall
- Poor shallow soil
- High summer temperatures
- Low pH
- Low soil nutrition
- Frequent Fires

And have developed over millions of years.

There are 1200 species native to Australia of which 45% are endemic. Prior to colonisation the Australian landscape was predominately grassy woodlands and grasslands. There are now more trees in the landscape than prior to colonisation. A book by Professor Bill Gammage (*The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia* (2011)) cites evidence that native peoples had long used fire as a tool to create a managed landscape. The changed practices since colonisation have lead to a very different looking landscape today.

The adaptation advantages of native grasses also give management advantages in that they:

- Have low water requirements
- Are suited to poorer soils (but still do benefit from fertiliser)
- Have no lime requirement
- Can require less mowing

For the purposes of this talk Ian covered five types of native grasses which are found across our region.

Cool Season Grasses

- Wallaby grass – *Austrodanthonia* spp. (recently re-classified to *Rytidosperma*)
- Weeping grass – *Microlaena stipoides*
- Tussock grass – *Poa labillardierei*

Cool season grasses are best established in autumn.



Poa labillardierei

Photo: Lawrie Conole

www.natureshare.org.au



Mown Weeping Grass

(*Microlaena Stipoides*)

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au



Full height Weeping Grass Lawn

(*Microlaena Stipoides*)

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

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June Meeting Report “Native Grasses for Landscaping and Turf”

By Jeanine Petts

(Continued from page 3)

Weeping Grass – *Microlaena stipoides*

- Widely Distributed grass
- Can establish a full thick cover that is competitive with weeds
- High acid soil tolerant
- Can be mowed regularly
- Shade tolerant
- Soft texture

Maximum growth height 200mm, the root system is predominately superficial but some roots can go down 1-1.5m. *Microlaena* has interesting subsurface nodes and regenerates from rhizome nodes. It is good to use in agroforestry due to its shade tolerance. When mowing cutting no lower than 50mm is best and it will need fertiliser on sandy soil.



Microlaena stipoides var. *Griffin*

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

Wallaby Grasses- *Austrodanthonia* ssp. (recently re-classified to *Rytidosperma*)

- There are a number of species in the group
- Wide spread genus throughout Southern Australia
- Tolerant of mowing
- Low water requirement
- Negligible fertiliser needs

Hume wallaby grass - *Rytidosperma richardsonii* var. *Hume* was bred by CSIRO for revegetation and is suitable for roadside usage and lawns if sown at a high density. *Rytidosperma geniculatum* var. *Oxley* is a dry-land grass which happily grows as a lawn and doesn't need much water.



Rytidosperma richardsonii var. *Hume*

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

Tussock grass – *Poa labillardierei*

- Found in Southern Australia in moist areas
- High dry matter producer
- Slow to establish
- Large plants
- Poor drought tolerance
- Fire susceptible

Commonly used as a well spaced plant in out of use areas. It is hard to get a lawn response (sow heavily on good soil & fertilise) but in the right place they go very well.



Poa labillardierei

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

(Continued on page 5)

June Meeting Report “Native Grasses for Landscaping and Turf”

By Jeanine Petts

(Continued from page 4)

Warm season grasses

- Kangaroo grass – *Themeda triandra*
- Redgrass – *bothriochloa macra*

Warm season grasses establish best in spring, are dormant in winter and actively grow in summer.



Themeda triandra

Photo: Giorgio De Nola

www.natureshare.org.au

Kangaroo grass – *Themeda triandra*

- Wide spread and emblematic of Australia
- Occurs from alps to coast
- High/tall (green up high)
- Good fodder (var. *Burrill*)
- Widely used in landscaping
- Low viability rates combined with low seed production means this is an expensive species to produce in quantity.

Var. *Tangara* has short leaves at its base and is very “floral”, low maintenance, needs no fertiliser and can be mown to make a lawn.



Red Grass Lawn (*Bothriochloa macra*)

Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

Red grass – *Bothriochloa macra*

- Survives on very little
- Warm season perennial
- Drought tolerant
- Grows on clay
- Makes a great lawn

Not high quality turf but gives adequate cover and can be mixed with *Microlaena*.

Native Seeds Pty Ltd has an “All-Year Green Lawn Mix” which is a combination of Wallaby, Weeping and Red grasses. Ian has also co-authored the book “*Australian native grasses a manual for sowing growing & using them*” available to purchase through Native Seeds (at \$15.00). (APS Mitchell has purchased a copy for our reference library.)

When sowing native grass seeds it is best to create a “niche” to hold the seed in the soil for best “recruitment”. This simply means raking the seed lightly into the soil (no more than 1cm deep) so the seed doesn’t wash away and gives good germination.

Ian moved on to his next topic with the question: Is seed provenance relevant for native grasses?

Florabank restoration guidelines recommend the use of locally sourced seed in the belief that this seed will give the best results. Some of the assumptions surrounding seed provenance is that it is assumed: cross pollination is needed for genetic integrity, what occurs now has always been, evolutionary change is slow. While this may be true for trees and shrubs is this actually relevant for grasslands?

The reality is that in Australian native grasses self pollination is the normal means of pollination. Essentially they are “all show, no go” and pollination occurs before the awns open so native grasses don’t throw so much pollen (unlike the introduced Rye grasses which do cause allergic reactions due to the volumes of pollen they throw out).

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June Meeting Report “Native Grasses for Landscaping and Turf”

By Jeanine Petts

(Continued from page 5)

Australia's isolation and lack of glaciation (glaciation ceased 160 million years ago in Australia but in the northern hemisphere this was only 16 thousand years ago) has led to “line breeding” with self pollination being the most successful method for our native grasses to maintain vigour. This is because Australian native grasses are tetraploid- they have more than two sets of chromosomes within their genes giving them diversity and a high degree of variability within the genes.

In 2011 a genetic study was done (Fitzgerald et al) on Weeping grass which produced interesting results. A broad collection of plants were sampled stopping at intervals of 10km from Melbourne right across to the coast via Mount Baw Baw. The study showed that where the plants were sourced from more environmentally variable areas they had greater genetic variability than those taken from more consistent environments. The grasses actually diversified due to differing environments. There was less genetic diversity within the populations locked away in the National Parks. So the study showed that in native grasses diversity comes from mutation and not hybridisation. Another study (Waters et al (2003)) on common Wallaby grasses in Central West and North West NSW found that where plants come from was actually a poor indication of genetic diversity. Distance again was not a reliable indicator and local environment also proved to be the more predictable indicator.

Another reality about grasses is that they can move at the rate of 17km per year and can move rapidly in and out of localities and over substantial distances, the spread of Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle grasses show this. Long term monitoring of grasslands has shown that dominant grasses in an area change readily.

A further fact is that evolutionary change is not slow in native grasses. It can in some cases only take one to two generations for change to show, particularly in response to environmental conditions and pressures. Basically the more stress equals faster change. Grasses which were present when Europeans arrived will have changed significantly since then.

In summary, breeding had been occurring within our native grasses for millennia and breeding helps establishment by developing types that are faster and easier to germinate and establish. For landscaping, garden and pasture uses a local provenance requirement can be quite extreme and even unnecessary. In areas and situations where grassland conservation values are not of major concern perhaps we need not get too hung up about what is and isn't local.

In closing some additional tips on establishing a native lawn...

A key factor in successful establishment is to make sure to reduce the seed numbers of weeds and other unwanted species. In an area of just 1 square metre there can be 2000 existing seeds. When you are sowing out only 300 seeds to the same area to establish a lawn the competition really needs to be well controlled. If you have the preparation time remove the current vegetation, then remove the next flush of unwanted weeds etc. to help cut the seed load down. Some control methods are Herbicide spray, cultivation, solarising the soil (covering with plastic to heat the soil and kill seeds/weeds) and scalping the soil surface to remove seeds and weeds. The depth of scalping needed depends on the soils fertility- up to 100mm may need to be removed in deep fertile soils and on shallow soils this can be down to as much as only 20mm.



Wallaby Grass Lawn-Full height
Rytidosperma geniculatum var. *Oxley*
Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au



Microlaena stipoides var. *Burra*
Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au



All-Year Green Mix
Image: www.nativeseeds.com.au

Reminders, APS Victoria Diary Dates & Other Events

Thank you

- For various contributions of articles, event information, photo's, feedback, proof-reading, hunting up & providing other information as needed and general support.

A BIG THANK YOU TO:

Neil Humphreys,
Geoffrey Lay,
Barbara Mau,
Maureen Runge,
Lorraine & Brian Weir

APS VIC DIARY DATES...

July 19 - Friends of RBGC

Afternoon Talk: Why Botanists Need Geologists. Assoc Prof John Webb of Latrobe University will talk on how geological history determines vegetation distribution across the Victorian landscape. 2pm, Auditorium Australian Garden, RBG Cranbourne. \$15 for Friends RBGC or \$20 for non-Friends RBGC members.

Contact Roger Elliot
Ph 8774 2483

September 5 - APS Wilson Park Plant Sale, Wilson Botanic Park, Princes Hwy, Berwick. 9am - 4pm.

September 5 & 6 - Bendigo Native Plants Group Flower

Show, Rotary Gateway Park, 26 High Street, Kangaroo Flat.

September 12 & 13 - APS Yarra Yarra Native Plants Expo at Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road Eltham (Melways 21 J6). 10am - 4pm both days.

September 19- & 20 - APS Colac/Otway Group hosting quarterly and APS Victoria AGM.

September 19 & 20 - Angair (Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Wildflower and Art Show), Anglesea Memorial Hall, McMillan St, Anglesea. 10am - 4:30pm. Small entry fee.

October 3 & 4 - APS Grampians Group Pomonal

Native Flower Show, Pomonal Hall. 9:30am - 5pm.

October 17 & 18 - South Gippsland Native Plant Sale & Flower Show, Gippsland Historical Automobile Club Pavilion, Leongatha. 10am - 4pm. Enquires: Coral 5664 2221

October 24 - APS Echuca Moama Native Flower Showcase. Echuca Uniting Church Hall, Hare St, Echuca.

November 15-20 - 28th ANPSA Biennial Conference, Canberra. "Bush Capital, Garden City". Website: anpsa.org.au/conference2015/.



Committee & Contact Information

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY, MITCHELL GROUP INC.
PO Box 541, Kilmore, Victoria, 3764 No. A0054306V
Email: aps.mitchell@gmail.com
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Committee Members

President:	Neil Humphreys	0439 563 057
Vice President:	Barbara Mau	
Secretary:	Maureen Runge	
Treasurer/Memberships:	Bill Barker	5783 3838
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Group Librarian:	Barbara Mau	
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Newsletter contributions:

Contributions should be sent to Jeanine Petts
Email: wattlegum@southernphone.com.au

Post: PO Box 381, Pyalong Vic 3521

For inclusion in the next Newsletter please forward contributions prior to the first Monday of each month.

Apology...

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances Barbara has been unable to provide her regular Garden Guide article this month and extends sincere apologies. Fear not... for she assures us her regular feature will be back in time for the August issue :-)



Acacia dealbata in full bloom

Photo: Jeanine Petts

APS Mitchell
Annual Spring Plant Expo & Sale
October 17th, 2015



9 am - 3 pm

Kilmore Memorial Hall

14 Sydney St, Kilmore



Native Plant & Flower Displays



Kilmore Art Society Display

Art by Local Artists:

Themes of native fauna, flora and Aussie landscapes



Plant, Book & Art Sales

APS Mitchell - Assorted Native plants

APS Victoria - Books

Joan & Peter Broughton, Ironstone Park - Assorted Plants

John Forrester - Assorted plants

Kilmore Art Society - Art by local artists

Lorraine & Brian Weir - Low graft & Standard grafted Grevilleas & Correas

La Trobe indigenous plant nursery - Indigenous tube stocks

Mike Williams - Assorted Plants

Russell Waite - Assorted Plants



Volunteers will be needed to assist with: Set up on Friday October 16th, also on Saturday October 17th with Ticket Sales/Entry, Plant Sales, Catering (Tea & Coffee), Pack up & Clean up etc. Please speak to a committee member if you are able to assist.



Dillwynia speciosa

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY, MITCHELL GROUP INC.

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Incorp A2054306V

2015/16 MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM – July 1 to June 30

This is a combined membership form for APS Vic and APS Mitchell

Please use this form instead of the form sent out with the APS Victoria newsletter

For insurance purposes people who join APS Mitchell must also join APS Victoria Inc.

(Please ☒ whichever applies) **Application** ☐ **OR** **Renewal** ☐

Title:	Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss
Surname/s:	
Given name/s:	
Postal Address:	
Town/Suburb:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	
Email Address:	

(Please ☒ whichever applies)

Membership Type:		Fees: Note: Membership Year = July 1—June 30		
		APS Victoria	APS Mitchell	Total
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	\$32.00	\$10.00	\$42.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Couple/Family (2 adults & 2 dependents)	\$35.00	\$12.00	\$47.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student	\$24.00	\$10.00	\$34.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisation	\$40.00	\$10.00	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Members who joined at the 2014 Expo pay only APS Mitchell Fees Include only applicable APS Mitchell Fee:		<input type="checkbox"/> Single \$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$12.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10.00	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have paid/pay my APS membership when joining/renewing with another district group. Which Group? : Include only applicable APS Mitchell Fee:		<input type="checkbox"/> Single \$10.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$12.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10.00	
Total Due:				\$

I/We agree I agree to be bound by the Rules and Bylaws of the Society.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____

I agree to my name being included in a membership list circulated for members' private use: Yes ☐ No ☐

Payment by: (1) Bank Transfer to BSB 083-644 Account No. 17-010-5884 NAB

Please include your surname and post code as reference/transaction details

Or (2) Cheque made payable to: APS MITCHELL INC.

Posted to: APS Mitchell Treasurer, P O Box 541, Kilmore Vic 3764

Enquires: Bill Barker ph: 5783 3838 or email: bee.barker@bigpond.com