

Jubaea

Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Inc. Newsletter

February 2026 Volume 26 Issue 1



FRIENDS
OF
GEELONG
BOTANIC
GARDENS



R.Madame Lauriol de Barny – France 1868, in the Heritage Rose Garden

EARLY SUMMER IN THE ROSE GARDEN

This Spring the rose garden provided a wonderful display. The first view for visitors, the top two beds, was of *Carabella*, bearing large trusses of small apple-blossom pink blooms (photos overpage) This rose replaced the original planting of *Icebergs*, as being more fitting for display in a botanic garden and has been spectacularly successful. It's a modern floribunda rose, bred by the noted Australian rose breeder Frank Riethmuller, in 1960. It blooms profusely on an almost thornless bush all Summer. A formidable task to deadhead to keep it blooming!

Another group which was outstanding this year were the Bourbon roses, further down in bed 4. This group have an interesting history. They are thought to have originated from a chance seedling found on the French island of Bourbon (now known as Reunion), where ships carrying roses from China often stopped enroute to France, and where local farmers had planted hedgerows of china roses and damasks. Seed from this was sent to Paris to the Duc d'Orlean's gardener, where further selections

were made, and the group became known as Bourbons. They have been used extensively in breeding ever since, the combination of a long flowering season from their Chinese parentage and an alluring scent from the Damasks resulting in wonderful roses. They have large cupped double flowers, on large spreading bushes from late Spring to Autumn, with a damask fragrance.

As always, the Tea roses in the third beds thrive in our warmer climate, and they were especially beautiful this year. Mrs Dudley Cross, adjacent to the centre path and a reasonably new planting here, delighted with her generous large floppy flowers. Typical pointed yellow buds unfurl to flowers somewhere described as "lemon meringue pie roses". Petals are pale creamy yellow typically but in warmer weather show a carmine pink. She also blooms from early Spring into Autumn. The Rugosas in the lowest beds are flowering as this is being written but by Autumn visitors will be able to enjoy the developing hips.

EARLY SUMMER IN THE ROSE GARDEN

Continued



Above: '*R. Carabella*' a floribunda rose bred in Australia in 1960.

Right: '*R. Variegata de Bologna*' a striped Bourbon introduced in Italy 1909.

Article by Marg Ward, Coordinator of the Heritage Rose Volunteers

MAN OF VISION

George Francis was a multi-talented man of vision who travelled collecting seeds and plants, was competent in French and Latin, skilled in drafting and surveying and had an ambition to become a director of a botanic garden.

'George William Francis first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden' is a biography written by Barbara J. Best, his great granddaughter. First published in 1986, this fascinating read on the origins of the Garden was reprinted in 2023 as more information about his life and times had come to light.

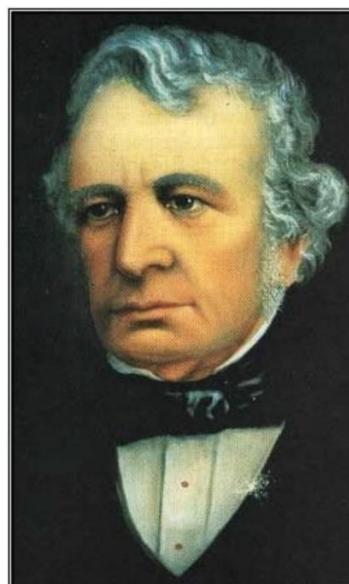
George's descendants have also been instrumental in following in his footsteps in horticulture, botany and science as George's great-great granddaughter Judy Fyfe, currently Treasurer of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens and one of the family members who helped update the book explains. "Other family members have studied horticulture at Burnley and forestry, and George's granddaughter Blanche Francis was an artist and woodcarver."

Blanche was winning prizes in her teens for watercolour and flower-painting at the Port Pirie Agricultural Show in 1887. In 1891, she made her operatic debut in Mélesville's 'The Windmill', and in the late 1890s began exhibiting her paintings with the Adelaide Easel Club.

George William Francis (1800-1865) was born in London. In his twenties he travelled to Italy, Sicily and Spain on a botanical collecting tour. As well as lecturing on botany and other areas of science, he had an impressive writing career, publishing numerous scientific books, including a Dictionary of Arts and

Sciences illustrated with over 1100 of his engravings, as well as editing a monthly Magazine of Science and School of Arts.

In 1838 George unsuccessfully applied for the positions of Director at the new Royal Gardens in Regent's Park, and later the Chair of Botany at King's College, London before moving his family to France in 1844. He returned to England in 1848 before migrating to Adelaide in 1849 with his wife and children, still with an ambition to become the director of a botanic garden.



George William Francis,
first director of Adelaide Botanic Gardens

George became involved in various activities, becoming an original member of the Adelaide Lodge of Friendship and a

committee member of the Floricultural and Horticultural Society. As a member of the South Australian Library and Mechanics Institute, he lectured on various subjects such as 'Wonders of the Vegetable Creation' and 'The effect of Vegetation on the Climate and Constitution of the Globe.' He was also the first valuer appointed by the Adelaide City Council.

In 1855 George achieved his goal and was appointed inaugural Superintendent of the new Adelaide Botanic Garden on North Terrace. Rapid progress was made in garden design and layout with the garden formally opening in 1857. It featured flower beds along the main walk with sections dedicated to medicinal and textile plants, bulbs and grapes. Aviaries of exotic birds, along with enclosures for native animals, increased visitor numbers intrigued by the attractions.

In 1860 George Francis became the first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, an office he held until his death in 1865. In 1864 George designed a detailed layout for the Garden which became known as the 'Francis Plan' and proved to be the pinnacle of his decade-long career as Director, establishing the foundations of the Botanic Garden as it is known today. He established the first herbarium and botanical library in Adelaide and is credited with popularizing the peppercorn tree *Schinus molle* var. *areira*, commonly associated with schoolyards throughout southern Australia.

George developed a strong friendship with Ferdinand von Mueller, Colonial Botanist for Victoria and later Director of the Melbourne Botanic Garden, who assisted him with information, plants and seeds. Ferdinand von Mueller also gathered unidentified specimens, sending those from South Australia to Francis for him to study or to add to the herbarium collection. One newly discovered plant from the Spencer's Gulf area von Mueller named *Hakea francisiana* after Francis.



Hakea francisiana, commonly called the emu tree

Interestingly, Daniel Bunce, the first curator of the Geelong Botanic Gardens also collaborated with von Mueller and was one of fourteen applicants for the position of Director of the Adelaide Garden after Francis' death.

George Francis diversified his interests by journeying further afield in 1861 to visit the Melbourne and Sydney Botanic Gardens, returning with extensive collections of plants and animals for Adelaide. In the same year he made detailed studies of our native reptiles, animals and birds, submitting articles on them to 'Farm and Garden'.

George Francis made the first olive oil in South Australia, which won an honourable mention at London's Great Exhibition in 1851. He also wrote on food preserving and recipes, highlighting the uses of apples for drying, making wine and cider, biscuits, jelly, marmalade, paste and cheese – along with many uses for lemons and oranges. Another article featured 'how to polish boots, make beetroot sugar, and preserve butter'. Others included 'How to rear calves without the cow', improving tallow for candles and how to make blood cement by mixing gum from trees with blood, which, 'when dry resists both hot and cold water and fire, and is not apt to crack under any circumstances'.

George Francis is remembered for a diverse legacy of interests, from seed and plant collecting, design and other sciences. An Obelisk erected in 1866 to his memory in the Garden to the right of the main gates features an oval brass plaque with the inscription: "In remembrance of the late George William Francis Esq., F.L.S., F.H.S., First Director of this Garden by whom it was planned and laid out in the year 1855."

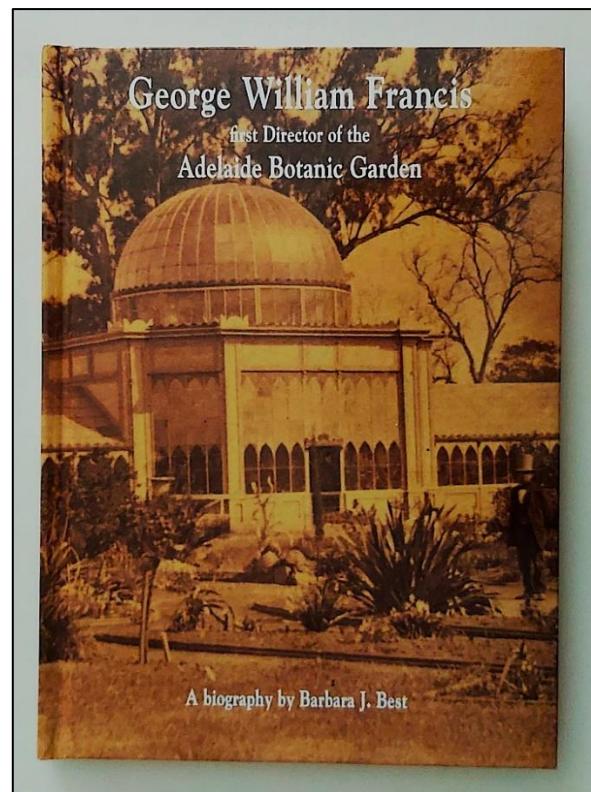


Image of Book Cover

'George William Francis first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden' is available at the Gardens, or by post contact: judy.fyfe@bigpond.com

Gail Thomas

FRIENDS 40TH ANNIVERSARY VOLUNTEER EVENT

On Friday 4 November, Friends' Volunteers past and present as well as a group of staff, gathered for morning tea in the Visitor's Centre at the Geelong Botanic Gardens. This event was to celebrate any member of the Friends who had worked as a volunteer during the past 40 years. It included those who had volunteered in the Teahouse, perennial border, rose gardens, nursery and as weeders. It was an opportunity to thank them all and enjoy catching up with old friends. There was a display of photo books and scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings, which provided discussion and some laughter as people viewed the history of the Friends' relationships with the GBG over so many years.

The weather was mild and a delicious morning tea, courtesy of the Lady and the Fox, was laid out in the Centre for guests. Commemorative mugs have been designed for the 40th Anniversary, with an image of the plant *Kennedia prostrata*, "running postman" by Botanic artist and teacher, Amanda Blake-Sutterby, which were for sale as a memento.

Jayne Salmon spoke of her continuous relationship and some of the highlights in which she had been involved. Our current president, Jan Cheyne spoke briefly to thank everyone and look forward to our continuing ability to support the Gardens, both as volunteers and fundraisers. We all agreed that the people involved made all the difference and many friendships have been formed along the way.

Luanne Thornton



Volunteers Past and Present



Rossy Jablonsky and Margaret Ward

BECOME A FGBG MEMBER

The Friends support and celebrate the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park by providing the volunteer Guiding Program, the Friends' Plant Nursery Sales, the Geelong School of Botanical Art, the FGBG Library, and an annual program of events for members and the public. The Friends' Gift Fund is used to support special projects and programs within and initiated by Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Members have the opportunity to meet Friends from the region with similar interests and to enjoy the many activities associated with the gardens.

- Learn more about the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park
- Join social activities, guest speakers, film nights and tours to other gardens and places of interest
- Use the Botanic Gardens Reference Library and Friends' Lending Library
- Receive the *Members' Update* (monthly) and *Jubaea* Newsletter (3 per year) outlining recent news, what's happening in the Gardens and provides a program of events and activities for the coming month
- Receive discounts from selected local businesses (FGBG membership card required)
- Receive a *Member's Discount* on most Friends' events and activities including the Geelong School of Botanical Art program, merchandise and purchases from the Friends' Nursery (current membership card required).

BECOME A MEMBER ONLINE AT www.friendsgbg.org.au

or pop into the Friends' office at the rear of the gardens. 03 5229 0071 info@friendsgbg.org.au

THE STORY BEHIND OUR ICONIC BOLLARDS

Our first Curator Daniel Bunce and a lady visitor to the Geelong Botanic Gardens provide a warm welcome to visitors as they enter the 20th century garden via the Hansen Gates.

Our personable Bollards created by artist Jan Mitchell were originally designed as part of the Waterfront Trail of historic Geelong identities, funded by the City of Greater Geelong. Our Curator and visitor were omitted from the original installations.

The Friends, with assistance and publicity from the Geelong Advertiser, organised a public subscription in 1999 for these significant sculptures to be created for the Gardens.



The Bollards acknowledge the tireless work of the Friend's first President, George Jones, to have Daniel Bunce recognized and the Botanic Gardens promoted. They acknowledge George's 80th birthday (2006) with a small plaque in the adjacent garden bed.

A total of \$13,000 was raised and donations were published in the Advertiser. The project was well supported by our Friends and the local Garden Clubs. With \$8000 in hand in October 1999 we were most grateful to accept a very generous donation of \$5000 from Adrienne & Michael Edgar to enable the Bollards to be finished and launched at our Christmas celebration in December.

Jane Edmanson from Gardening Australia launched the wonderful Bollards. They were received by the Mayor Cr. Ken Jarvis as a gift from the Friends to the City. Over one hundred members of the Friends, donors to the Project and Gardens Staff enjoyed the happy celebration outside the Conservatory twenty-six years ago. The Bollards tell a remarkable story about Bunce, a unique horticulturist who collected Australian plants including Sturt's Desert Pea which was originally displayed in his flowerpot. The lady visitor has a flower press behind her back containing Sturt's Desert Pea.

In Jan Mitchell's Bay Walk Bollards booklet she mentions the Bollard is of Bunce and the sentence: 'There was fierce rivalry among the young ladies of Geelong in collecting rare blooms for their flower presses. The Botanic Gardens was the victim of many thefts, particularly Sturt's Desert Pea.'

The Botanic Gardens are about plants and people and the Bollards project this image. They are much admired and are an integral part of a historic and cultural landscape.

Jayne Salmon

Stay tuned to the CoGG socials for the unveiling of their plans to ensure Geelong's beloved bollards last another hundred years.

FUCHSIA BY JAN MITCHELL

(Pictured Left – framed and hanging in the Friends' Office)

Jan Mitchell's technique for this print is known as 'Pochoir'. There is no plate, screen or original drawing. A form of stencil printing, the artist begins with an idea and uses hand-held stencils to create a background atmosphere, with the final image evolving during the printing process.

The technique is very labour-intensive, only allowing small editions. Jan's prints are personal, full colour and jewel-like in their intensity. Her work is held by the State Library of Victoria's picture collection, Art Bank Australia and in private collections both in Australia and internationally.



EVENTS ROUND UP - 2025

In 2025 the Friends enjoyed a very busy and engaging year of events for members and the public. The unavailability of the GBG Meeting Room for most of our events in 2025 was challenging but the resourceful Events Team sourced some wonderful local venues and the full program rolled out seamlessly.

In February, we held a two-day Chinese Brush Painting workshop, as well as a delightful morning tea, for members only, in the beautiful garden of Helena Buxton. In September a relaxing afternoon tea was held at Anthea and Chris Williams home. Both events offered support and positive reflection on a year that has been difficult for some volunteers. Special thanks to our two members for hosting these special days.

In March we met at the East Geelong CWA Hall to hear Stephen Ryan talk about the Ellis Rowan statue appeal, recognising one of Australia's most significant female botanists and botanic artists. The Friends were happy to provide the forum and audience to assist. Also at the hall, the Friends' Volunteer Day soup lunch was followed by an inspiring talk by former GBG Director, John Arnott. Many thanks to the East Geelong CWA for making available such an impressive venue for our events.



Volunteer Appreciation Day 2025

The colours of Autumn and Spring were enjoyed by those attending our trips and tours, visiting three private gardens in the Macedon area in May, then in October visiting Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, McClelland Sculpture Park and Cruden Farm. The tour of Anglesea Heathland with an Angair guide was enjoyed on a September afternoon.



On the path to the Red Sand Garden

In June the Winter Lunch was held at Mt Duneed Winery. Guest speaker Caroline Davies shared her considerable experience of container gardening and mediterranean plants, gathered over her years as President of the International Mediterranean Plant Society.

Our Movie evening was held on Bastille Day in July, with an amazing French supper prepared by the Events team. By request we will hold the 2026 event on the same day, again at the Newcomb Library, with a movie with a French connection. At the AGM in August guest speaker John Bentley, President of Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens, presented the MBG's new Strategic Plan, with insights into the importance of reaching out to engage the broader community.

We assisted the Friends' 40th Anniversary Committee with the wonderful champagne breakfast in the Gardens in April which launched the Friends' celebrations, and in a November morning tea for members. The launch of a commemorative botanic art mug to mark our 40th birthday was a great way to round off this this very special year.



Red Sand Garden at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens

The Events Team is looking forward to 2026, hoping to see more new members joining us. At this stage we are planning a multi-night self-drive tour to Budj Bim and Western Districts gardens and visiting other special attractions, if there is enough interest.

Denise Feldman and Allison Martland



McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

THE CREATION OF THE ELLIS ROWAN SCULPTURE

Stephen Ryan gave a presentation to the Friends earlier this year about internationally renowned self-taught artist, and extraordinary woman of her time, Ellis Rowan (1848-1922) to highlight plans to immortalize her with a life-size bronze statue. A Mount Macedon resident, Ellis Rowan painted some 3000 works reflecting her exploration of Australia and remote parts of the world hunting for wildflowers, rare plants, insects and birds to paint.



Sculptor Jennifer Mann, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, and Horticulturist and FGBG Patron Stephen Ryan

The Mount Macedon & District Horticultural Society Inc. (MMDHS) have been raising funds as a tribute to her remarkable life and commissioned acclaimed Macedon-based sculptor Jennifer Mann, to create the sculpture. This will be based on an 1888 photograph of Ellis painting outdoors in a meadow of wildflowers at Derrileit Heights in Mount Macedon.



Acclaimed Sculptor Jennifer Mann

In October, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria visited Mount Macedon to learn more about the project. The program for the day included a visit to Jennifer Mann's studio in Barringo to see the life-sized clay sculpture in progress; a visit to the beautiful garden at Viewfield, the property where Ellis Rowan lived for many years until her death, together with the proposed site for the sculpture on public grounds next to the Mount Macedon and District Horticultural Society. This was followed by morning tea at Derrileit Heights, now owned by Paul and Annie Mulkearns, the property where Ellis' family lived for many years and includes a display of original paint boxes, provided by her family.

The sculpture will be set against a backdrop of typical Mount Macedon bushland which Ellis Rowan loved so much. The area surrounding the statue will be planted by the Horticultural Society with her botanical specimen subjects in mind. This public sculpture will ensure Ellis Rowan is remembered as part of our history and to inspire generations to come.

"We've raised over \$100,000 thanks to hundreds of generous supporters and now we are focussed on raising funds to have her cast in bronze. Tax deductible donations can be made through the Australian Cultural Fund. The names of all donors contributing over \$5,000 will be included on the list of patrons (if they so wish) on a bronze plaque on the full-size work." The campaign, headed up by MMDHS President Stephen Ryan, also provides the opportunity to acquire a bronze maquette. A limited edition of the beautiful maquette Jennifer has sculpted for the larger work is being cast in bronze. There will be only twelve made and once the large-scale public version is installed these bronzes will increase in value.

Gail Thomas

GUIDES CONFERENCE in ADELAIDE

Six of our Geelong Botanic Gardens guides participated in the 2025 conference in Adelaide, attended by about 190 guides from Australia and New Zealand. These conferences are hosted, every second year, by a different Botanic Garden. This conference included talks given by Adelaide Botanic Gardens staff and other experts, walks led by Guides of the Friends of Adelaide Botanic Gardens and a range of bus tours from which we could choose. In addition, an optional, three-day bus tour north of Adelaide to the southern Flinders Ranges and the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Gardens at Port Augusta, was offered. Seven days, packed with activities! We all had a great time, were wonderfully informed and hosted by enthusiastic and passionate Guides, and even the weather was (mostly!) delightful.

The Adelaide Botanic Gardens are in three separate locations. The main garden is at the eastern end of North Terrace, becoming "Botanic Road", on the edge of the Adelaide CBD. The Mount Lofty Botanic Garden is cooler with higher rainfall, fern gullies, lovely stands of magnolia, rhododendrons and other cool climate exotics, and was particularly planned to have deciduous trees that give spectacular colour in autumn, all integrated with existing native bush. It also contains the plant propagation facilities for all three sites. The Wittunga Botanic Garden, in the southern suburb of Blackwood, is devoted to plants from Australia and South Africa. All are beautiful, each so different in character, and we enjoyed visits to all three gardens.

The Conference was based in the central Adelaide Garden. Its theme was Visions and Visionaries. In the Adelaide Botanic Garden, its early directors, George Francis (an ancestor of Judy Fyfe!) and Richard Schomburgk, were inspired by early plant discovery and the human connection with the natural world and later built on and extended to become the established and flourishing Garden we found. Everywhere, the plantings were intelligent and considered, to provide the best conditions for the plants, creating a place of exceptional beauty.



Bromeliads

The Conference began in the National Wine Centre with a 'Welcome to Country' by Uncle Mickey O'Brien, a senior Kaurna man. He explained, through an interactive talk, how deep attachment to Country is nurtured by allowing your heart to be influenced by increasing knowledge of its ecological systems. An excellent, enlightening Welcome.

Next, we were addressed by Mr Michael Harvey, Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, whose career has focused on enriching public engagement in science and natural history. It was inspirational to hear "Volunteers are fundamental in the Botanic Garden, a public space which is a combination of many things." He talked about the role of guides: how they provide a team effort to add much to the visitor experience and how they play a role with Botanic Gardens staff. He exhorted us to ask questions, and share our information with everyone, to engage, converse, adapt and learn, and to express curiosity. He confirmed the importance of acknowledging our ignorance if we do not know the answer!

Botanic Gardens need to have a long-term vision, he told us. Spaces need to be planned and planted for the future, as well as paying attention to the past and the present. When people visit Botanic Gardens, 35% come to view plants, 60% come to meet friends and 40% come for relaxation, so it is important to make them as attractive as possible. The Adelaide Botanic Garden is the city's most popular place for leisure.

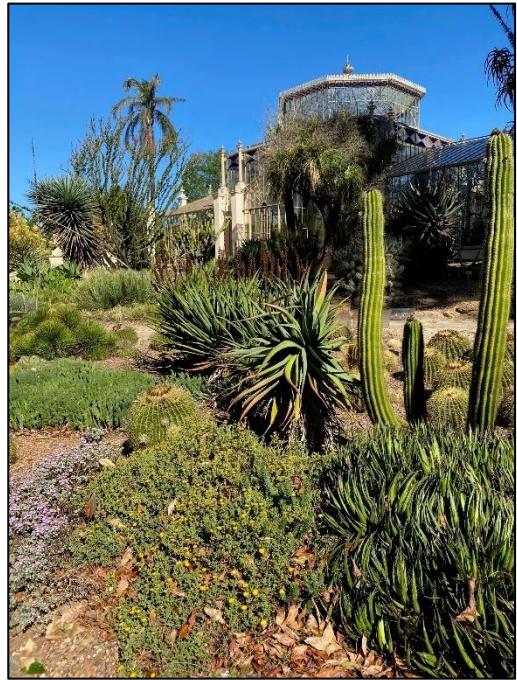
We had plenty of opportunities to discover the Adelaide Botanic Garden for ourselves. There are 30,000 species of plants growing across 51 hectares in the Adelaide Botanic Garden! The layout invites progression, from the striking Ficus Avenue lined with huge Moreton Bay Fig trees supported by their dramatic buttresses, to the two long wisteria arbours. Formal paths through the Economic Garden lead us around plant fibres, oils, herbs and spices in their living plant form. Nearby, the tranquil Garden of Heath displays plants that have been used for thousands of years for healing of body, mind and soul. Sawdust paths through the Australian Forest soften sound as we enjoyed the spectacular diversity of wonderful trees.



Giant Waterlily, *Victoria amazonica*



Maryla making new friends



Cactus Garden in front of the Palm House

Nearby is the recently established exquisite Mallee Garden. It receives no irrigation but was awash with the vibrant yellows of wattles and sennas.

Adelaide is known for its roses, and there is a large area set aside with more than 350 varieties spectacularly displayed. It includes a Rose Trial Garden, where new varieties are tested for Adelaide conditions. The Garden is enhanced by several lovely structures, both ancient and modern!

A key feature is the dramatic Conservatory, nick-named the 'Big Pastie', which was built in 1988 as Adelaide's celebration of Australia's Bicentenary. It was designed to be tall to accommodate tall trees, but they have done so well that some now reach the roof! Its misting and fogging system is designed to hold the humidity above 55% and can raise it to 95%. About 4,000 plants, mainly Australasian, grow here. In 2012, the gardens decided to turn off the heating to reduce energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. As a result of the lower temperature, 25% of the plants were lost. Today the temperature is managed to never drop below 5°C. This is sufficient for many plants from hotter climates.

The exquisite Palm House is a 19th century glass building designed to grow plants from warm climates. It nurtures amazing plants from the large island of Madagascar, off the east coast of Africa. On its northern side is a gorgeous garden of cactus and succulents

Beside the café and nursery sales area, the classical architecture of the Museum of Economic Botany houses a fascinating collection, and the newly built hothouse for *Victoria Amazonica*, one of the largest waterlilies in the world. We were fortunate to see it flowering and saw the short stages from white bud to huge mature pink bloom, before it sank back into the water.

The Garden is set on the banks of First Creek, a tributary of the Torrens, and it has been an important feature, used in many ways. There are integrated bridges, and Main Lake, where a Swamp or Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum* is growing. This is a deciduous conifer that grows in water or very close to it.

When growing in water, it grows structures, called Cypress knees, from its roots. Unlike similar-looking pneumatophores that grow from mangrove roots, they do not take up oxygen from the air. The tree is probably called 'bald' because, unlike most conifers, it is deciduous. It looks similar to the deciduous Dawn Redwood *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, which has neatly arranged opposite leaflets, whereas other conifers with similar foliage do not.



Rose Garden with the Big Pastie in the Background

Enough for now. We will have more to tell you in the next edition or two of Jubaea. In the meantime, if you are heading to Adelaide, don't miss the opportunity to explore and enjoy the Adelaide Botanic Garden in the heart of the city.

Lynne Clarke, with David Johnson, Jayne Salmon, Beverley Stringer, Helen Zournazis and Maryla Lawler.

PLANT IN FOCUS

Schinus molle Peppercorn

Introduction

The generic name is derived from the Greek word for Pistacia lentiscus, Σχίνος (schinos) which it resembles. The word molle in *Schinus molle* comes from mulli, a Peruvian word for the tree.

Common names: Peruvian pepper, American pepper, Peruvian peppertree, escobilla, false pepper, rosé pepper, molle del Peru, pepper tree, peppercorn tree, California pepper tree, pirul, Peruvian mastic, Anacahuita or Aguaribay and Pepperina.

Description

Schinus molle is a quick growing evergreen tree that grows up to 15 m tall and wide. It is the largest of all *Schinus* species and potentially the longest lived. The upper branches of the tree tend to droop. The pinnately compound leaves are made up of 19–41 alternate leaflets. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants (dioecious). Flowers are small, white and borne profusely in panicles at the ends of the drooping branches. The fruit are 5–7 mm diameter round drupes (stone fruit like cherries, distinct from berries that have seeds with a thin coat) with woody seeds that turn from green to red, pink or purplish, carried in dense clusters of hundreds of fruit that can be present year-round. The rough grayish bark is twisted and drips sap. The bark, leaves and berries are aromatic when crushed.



Left: Alternate leaves with several inflorescences. Photo: DJ CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Right: Female flowers, each with 2 stigmas above the ovary and reduced, infertile stamens. Photos: US National Park Service Public domain.

The tree reproduces through seed, suckers and cuttings. Germination rates are greatly improved after seeds have passed through the gut of birds or other animals. The seeds easily germinate in the existing leaf litter of the mother tree and can easily be transplanted.

Distribution

Schinus molle is native to the arid zone of northern South America and Peru's Andean deserts. It has, however, become widely naturalised around the world.

It is a drought-tolerant, long-lived, hardy evergreen species

that has become a serious invasive weed internationally. In South Africa it has invaded savanna and grasslands and become naturalized along drainage lines in semi-desert. It is also invasive throughout much of Australia in a range of habitats from grasslands to dry open forest and coastal areas. In California, in the late 19th century, *S. molle* was planted abundantly and became known as the "California pepper tree". However, it fell out of favour as a street tree in the early twentieth century, in part because it hosts black scale, which threatened the Citrus groves of Southern California. The roots tend to heave up sidewalks, produce suckers, and interfere with buried wires and pipes.

In Australia, Peppercorn has been widely grown as a garden and street tree. Through our transfer and trading relationships between botanic institutions and scientific institutions, we had strong ties to South America to Brazil and Argentina in particular. Many plants came to Australia via this strong trading link.

Its dispersal across Australia was mainly via Adelaide's Botanic Gardens. The peppercorn tree's immediate success in Adelaide's alkaline soils saw George Francis, the director of Adelaide Botanic Gardens, enthusiastically promote the species to other dry parts of the nation. They were grown and traded them up the rivers before the arrival of rail. They were planted in parks, streets, railway stations and schools, especially in the 1890s.



Left: When the flesh has dried, the hard stone seed is visible. Photo: Marianne Guarena, iNaturalist.org, CC BY-NC. Right: ripe fruit on tree. Photo Liz Upton, Wikimedia commons

Seeds are spread by animals, and it also spreads from suckers. It has been assessed as moderately invasive in Victoria.

Uses: Culinary

Although not related to commercial pepper (*Piper nigrum*) the pink/red berries are sold as pink peppercorns and often blended with commercial pepper. The fruit and leaves are, however, potentially poisonous to some animals and some young children have experienced vomiting and diarrhoea after eating the fruit.



Main image: Alternate leaves and inflorescence, 1. Flower bud with 5 petals 2. Male flower, 3. Female flower. Botanical drawing by P. Bessa, 1801, in *Trait. des arbres et arbustes que l'on cultive en France en pleine terre*. Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

Medicinal

In traditional medicine, *S. molle* was used in treating a variety of wounds and infections due to its antibacterial and antiseptic properties. Recent studies in mice provide possible support for its antidepressant effects.

Timber

Its strong wood was used for saddles in the Spanish colonies.

Other uses

Fresh green leaves in bunches are used shamanically in Mesoamerican traditional ceremonies for cleansings and blessings.

The leaves are used for the natural dyeing of textiles in the Andean region. This practice dates to pre-Columbian times. The Incas used the oil from its leaves in early mummification practices to preserve and embalm their dead.

S. molle's insecticidal properties may make it a good candidate for use as an alternative to synthetic chemicals in pest control. It is also used as a raw material in perfumery.

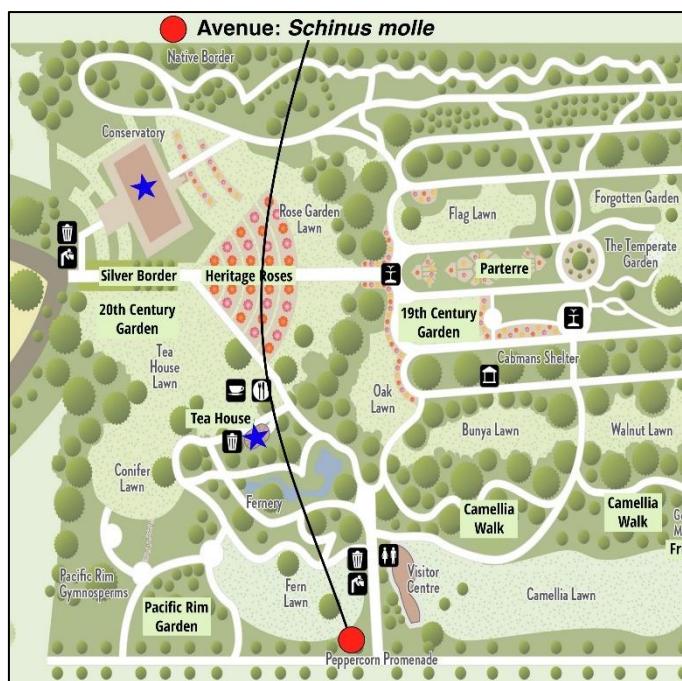
Historical use

There is archaeological evidence that the drupes were used extensively in Peru (600–1000 AD) for producing chicha, a fermented alcoholic beverage. Seeds from the vilca tree (*Anadenanthera colubrina*) produced an hallucinogenic drug which was combined with the chicha.

The Inca used the sweet outer part of ripe fruit to make a drink. It was also boiled down for syrup or mixed with maize to make a nourishing gruel.



Avenue: *Schinus molle* at the back of the Pacific Rim Garden



Order: Sapindales

Family: Anacardiaceae [80 genera, including *Anacardium* (cashew), *Cotinus* (smoke bush), *Mangifera* (mango), *Pistacia* (pistachio), *Rhus* (sumac) and *Toxicodendron* (poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac)]

Subfamily: Anacardioideae

Genus: *Schinus* (35 species are accepted, including *Schinus molle*)

In Eastern Park and Geelong Botanic Gardens

Eastern Park has many avenues which bordered traditional carriageways in the 19th Century. Some of these are Peppercorn avenues. One has been incorporated at the top of the Pacific Rim Garden and extends out east of the wire fence into Eastern Park. Another runs north from the barbecue shelter towards the waterfront. There are several other single specimens in the Gardens and Eastern Park.

Liz Bennetto

RETIRING AFTER 14 YEARS

In 2012, after a review of the Friends' office, Tracey Tilbury was appointed to an administration position. The skills required by the Friends included taking on more of the tasks undertaken by volunteers, particularly in the financial area as it had become clear that our reporting and other tasks required greater attention. At the end of January 2026 Tracey will retire after 14 years. Bob, her husband, has retired and they plan to travel more, see more of the grandchildren in rural Victoria and practice her art and photography.



Tracey and Bob at the Opening Night of the GSBA 'Inspired by Nature 9' Exhibition

In 2015 Tracey was joined in the office by Sally-Anne Bird and together they have managed the office ever since, working in their own areas of responsibility as well as together. Tracey began by managing our documents, setting up a digital filing system and maintaining both our digital and paper copies.

As time moved on, so did our digital footprint and new computers, photocopiers and telephone system were updated and improved. She set up a template for our marketing and produced advertising material for walks, talks and events run by the Friends. She liaised with the GBG management on a regular basis and staff regularly dropped in for a chat and to pass on information, pertinent to the Friends. Another large part of the job is overseeing classes, and assisting students and tutors in the Geelong School of Botanical Art.

When we brought the publication of *Jubaea* in-house, rather than pay an external company, Tracey took on the challenge and has produced the colourful editions for a number of years. In 2016 the Geelong Friends hosted the AAFBG conference in Geelong. This was a huge project and Tracey and Sally supported the committee wholeheartedly with their communication and organisational skills.

Both Tracey and Sally have provided friendly faces for members, new members and inquiries about the Friends and their activities, when they called in to the office.

Tracey has always showed enormous professionalism, poise, diplomacy, wisdom and maturity. She is task focussed and delivers outcomes and makes things happen. This has been particularly evident during our recent Botanical Art Exhibition at the Gordon Gallery *Inspired by Nature 9*.

Trace, we will miss you and thank you for all your work and friendship. Enjoy your retirement with lots of travel and good health.

Luanne Thornton

SNAPSHOT OF THE GARDENS



The Pacific Rim Garden: it's a great time to come and see how the collection has grown over the last couple of years



A blanket of red thanks to the glorious Brachychiton, with the flowering Jacaranda in the background., just in front of the Café.

REMEMBERING WIRRUNA 1963 - 1997

'EDNA WALLING you'd have loved us! We specialise in rare and old-fashioned plants for gardens of yore, building over thirty years, a reputation of knowing and growing plants for gardens in the 1800's.'

Many will have fond memories of this advert for Wirruna Nursery at Wallington on Victoria's Bellarine Peninsula. Founders Judy and John Bailey were highly respected for the expertise and professionalism, with their involvement and valued contributions to professional horticultural groups, local tourism, schools and education. They generously shared their knowledge, training apprentices who have gone on to create their own successful careers and also assisted and inspired home gardeners. The Baileys sold Wirruna in 1997 and, following prolonged drought and industry pressures in Victoria the nursery finally closed in 2007.



John and Judy Bailey at Wirruna Nursery. Photo by Gail Thomas

The Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens held a farewell lunch at the Geelong Club for the Baileys who then retired to Raeleigh near Coffs Harbour. In more recent years the couple lived at Coolum Beach. John sadly passed away in December 2021 and news has recently come through that Judy passed away peacefully at a hospice in a beautiful floral bushland setting which she appreciated, in October 2025, aged ninety-one.

Judy and John both came from rural backgrounds and in the early years of their marriage lived in a house that belonged to Judy's grandparents at Wallington. In 1957 the couple purchased a seven-hectare almost bare block, with just two native trees, next door to where they were living.

They planted an organic apple and pear orchard, selling the produce to Melbourne's Victoria market as well as in Geelong, with the nursery starting out as a hobby. They bought their first professional 'Waldor' greenhouse in 1961, and in around 1964 moved into their west-facing house positioned on a hill looking into gully to capture the sunsets. They called the property 'Wirruna', Aboriginal for setting sun.

The business began in 1963 with Judy selling indoor plants and a plant hire service. In 1967, with three children, John was employed as a quarantine officer and horticulture inspector with the Department of Agriculture, and the couple joined the Geelong Field Naturalists Club, acquiring a shelter licence to care for orphaned and maimed birds and animals.

With the house being situated on the edge of a limestone quarry, in the 1970's they created a sunken garden. Wirruna developed an extensive collection of old-fashioned plants, setting up a relationship with various National Trust gardens. Unfashionable plants such as *Wigandia caracasana* lost to the nursery trade were reintroduced by Judy after discovering them in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. She also contributed to the establishment of the Gardens perennial border, and the influence also spread to the replanting of the Heritage rose beds. The Baileys also grew trees in tubes, supplying Alcoa for their afforestation program at Point Henry and Anglesea as well as to local Shires and the general public.

In 1982, the couple decided to sell the nursery and retire to Queensland due to Judy's ill health. Their son Phillip who was



Wirruna Nursery. Photo by Gail Thomas

a horticulturalist and landscape designer stayed on to manage the nursery but following problems with the sale settlement and the failing of the new owner's management, they bought back the business and returned in 1985, with the following years heralded as a great success for the Baileys.

The nursery and picturesque display garden boasted comprehensive array of rare and hard-to-find plants, a small creek was dammed to provide a home to birdlife while the garden became a popular setting for marriage ceremonies.

Wirruna participated in the Australian Open Garden Scheme in 1994 and 1997, in 1996 the inclusion of a Japanese designed garden highlighted a style of landscaping with plants, Japanese lanterns and water features. The nursery featured on Burke's Backyard TV show, Judy was a foundation member of the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens and also served on the Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park Advisory Committee in 1996.

The spirit of Wirruna Nursery lives on today in the memories of many gardeners as do those special and rare plants originating from their nursery, that thrive in the grounds of both public and private gardens far and wide. Judy and John Bailey created a wonderful environment at Wirruna. Their dedicated enthusiasm, knowledge and contributions to so many aspects of the horticultural community over many years will never be forgotten, and it has left us with a rich and wonderful legacy from having known this amazing couple.

Gail Thomas

Botanical Art classes are among the most popular activities held by the Friends. Experienced teachers conduct small classes of students at levels varying from beginners to semi-professional. The teachers and a number of past students have received recognition at significant botanical art exhibitions and in private collections, both locally and internationally.

Location: All classes are held in the Geelong Botanic Gardens' Meeting Room at the rear of the Gardens.

2026 CLASSES:

MONDAY CLASSES - fortnightly 9.30 am - 4.00 pm

LARGE SCALE FLOWER STUDIES with tutor **AMANDA BLAKE SUTTERBY**

These classes are suited for beginners and more experienced artists who would like to learn the art of painting botanical subjects on a large scale using both gouache and watercolour on illustration board or large sheets of paper.

The aim will be to achieve realistic works of botanic specimens to a high standard that would satisfy the student and be of a standard appropriate for exhibition if desired. The painting will achieve the same level of detail required for traditional botanic art but magnified. The finished works have a distinct contemporary feel and combine the traditional elements of botanic illustration with a more modern presentation.



FRIDAY CLASSES - fortnightly 10.00 am - 3.30 pm

BEGINNERS BOTANIC ART with tutor **AMANDA AHMED**

Structured classes, suitable for beginners.

This beginner-level watercolour course focuses on painting from observation, using a range of techniques, along with some graphite drawing, to support and deepen your learning. Students will learn to paint realistic, botanically accurate subjects while developing skills such as tonal variation, mark-making techniques, and the ability to recognise and translate geometric shapes found in nature. The course also covers basic colour theory and various watercolour applications. This workshop is perfect for beginners with little to no experience in botanical art and is presented in a friendly and supportive environment.



FRIDAY CLASSES - fortnightly 9.30 am - 4.00 pm

INTEMEDIATE BOTANIC ART with tutor **CRAIG LIDGERWOOD**

Structured classes, suitable for participants who have a basic knowledge of botanic art. This class will continue to expand participants knowledge and skill level which will increase their ability to observe, compose, draw and paint to develop a botanic artwork using a variety of materials and techniques.

You will be encouraged to increase your skill level techniques to create a 3-dimensional artwork that is both illustratively realistic and artistic expanding your appreciation of shade, tone and colour development. During this class, we will develop techniques, discuss approaches and increase our understanding of the materials utilised to create a finished finely detailed botanic artwork. The skills achieved will encourage you to expand your confidence to further develop your own techniques and style.



SATURDAY CLASSES - fortnightly 9.30 am - 4.00 pm

ADVANCED TO SEMI-PROFESSIONAL BOTANIC ART with tutor **JOHN PASTORIZA-PINOL**

Structured Master Class, teaching methods suitable for experienced and advanced students. The structure of the class involves a painting project; John assists each student with composition, painting techniques, colour theory which will be offered in class and assigned for homework. During the class, John will assist you in painting the chosen class subject, show how masking fluid can be used to achieve very fine detail and will instruct students how to use the NeEEF 1/4 comb; an invaluable tool for contemporary botanical art.



[Class Descriptions and Materials Lists – Press Here](#)

or go to www.friendsgbg.org.au/ botanic art

FGBG GIFT FUND

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens Gift Fund is registered with the Australian Taxation Office to receive donations, which are tax-deductible. The Gift Fund currently has \$430,248.00. The Fund may only be used to support special projects and programs within Geelong Botanic Gardens. It may not be used to support the Friends or Friends activities.

With distributions made this Financial Year so far:

\$393 for plants for Perennial Border,

\$6,519 for development of the Food Bowl Garden – expansion for school groups.

And commitment to provide \$8,000 for the Cultural Heritage Due Diligence Assessment to enable progress for approval for the proposed Gate 3 Development.

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens are very appreciative of your generous donations to the Gift Fund and would like to thank you.

To make a donation: [GIFT FUND online](#)

Or contact the Friends' Office info@friendsgbg.org.au



Both Photos Above: The Food Bowl Garden at the rear of the Gardens is used primarily for educational programs, especially for early learning and school students and to grow produce, which is then sent to Geelong Foodshare (Geelong Food Relief Centre). The Friends contributed \$6,519 from the **Gift Fund** for the development of the Food Bowl Garden.



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Luanne Thornton, Anne Bourke, Tracey Tilbury.

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Gardens or those of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Neither the FGBG nor the GBG accepts responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed, although every effort is made to publish reliable information.

DIARY DATES AT A GLANCE



JUBAEA SUBMISSIONS for the next Edition are due by 4 May 2026.

All articles including mid to high resolution photos (jpeg) can be sent to the FGBG Office

FEBRUARY

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'PERENNIAL & SILVER BORDERS'

Sunday 8 February, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Join your Guide at the entrance of the Gardens as we explore both the Silver and Perennial Borders from their original creation to how they have evolved to today. Discover ways to adapt them to your home gardens in order to add colour and texture and to encourage important insects to visit your garden. Gold coin donation appreciated.

GUEST SPEAKER – HELEN BOTHAM 'LA TROBE THE PLANTSMAN'

Monday 9 February, 5.30 – 7.30 pm

Large Meeting Room, Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Our Guest, Helen Botham has extensively researched the contribution of Victoria's early Governor, Charles LaTrobe, to the development of many of the glorious heritage botanic gardens that grace our state. Join the Friends for a light meal, followed by Helen's fascinating talk. \$30 members \$35 non-members. Bookings Essential

WELCOMING SENIORS TO GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS

Thursday 19 & 26 February 2026, 9.30 to 11.30 AM

Free Event including GUIDED WALK & MORNING TEA

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens will host a special guided walk for Geelong Seniors. You will be in the hands of trained Guides offering an introduction to Geelong's garden jewel, Geelong Botanic Gardens. This will be followed by a professionally catered morning tea. Maximum 50 people each date. This event has been supported by a City of Greater Geelong Positive Ageing grant. An itinerary will be supplied upon booking.

MARCH

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'THE FERN GLADE'

Sunday 8 March, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Join your Guide to be introduced to the wonderful collection of ferns and discover more about these special plants and the conditions needed to grow them successfully. Hear how fern fashions have changed in our botanical garden. Gold coin donation appreciated.

BALLARAT GARDENS COACH TRIP

Thursday 12 March, 8.00 am to 5.30 pm

Join the Friends for a coach tour of four wonderful gardens in the Ballarat area. We will visit Lambley Nursery in Ascot; the glorious begonias at Ballarat Botanic Gardens with guided tour and picnic in the gardens and Ballarat Friends nursery; a beautiful private garden and Avalon Nursery, both at Haddon. Bring your own picnic lunch. AM and PM tea included. Arrive by 7.45am, leaving from car park opposite Gate 3 Eastern Park Circuit. \$100 members and \$110 non-members. Capped at 48 people.

APRIL

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'PLANTS FROM GONDWANA'

Sunday 12 April, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Gondwana is the name given to the southern supercontinent and ancient land mass attached to Antarctica. Many plants have survived Australia's 45 million years of separation from this supercontinent. The Geelong Botanic Garden has a good collection of plants from this period of time, and this walk will introduce you to some of them. Gold coin donation appreciated.

FLOWER ARRANGING DEMONSTRATION & HIGH TEA

Monday 13 April, 1.30 - 4.00 pm

The Friends are hosting a Floral Arranging Demonstration, followed by a sumptuous High Tea, to inspire your creativity and use of beautiful seasonal flowers. Enjoy a delightful afternoon with good company and exceptional flowers and food. Bookings essential. \$30 members \$35 non-members. Bookings essential.

MAY

THEMED GUIDED WALK 'AUSTRALIAN TREES'

Sunday 10 May, 2.00 pm at the Front Gates

Learn about the importance of trees in the landscape. Explore the wonderful diversity of the tree canopy in the Geelong Botanic Gardens with a Voluntary Guide. Many of the older trees are on a Significant Tree Register while younger plantings make bold statements. Gold coin donation appreciated.

FRIENDS VOLUNTEER WEEK SOUP LUNCH

Wednesday 20 May, 1.30 – 3.00 pm

Large Meeting Room, Geelong Botanic Gardens

All our wonderful Friends Volunteers are invited to come together for what has become something of a tradition for the volunteers – a delicious soup lunch crafted by our own catering team. It's a chance to unite and enjoy each other's company for a few hours of friendship and recognition of a job well done. Heartwarming soup and bread following by a guest speaker.

FREE EVENT. Bookings essential.

FREE DISCOVERY WALKS

Every Wednesday at 11.00 am and Sunday at 2.00 pm

Meet your guide at the front steps of the gardens.

DISCOVERY TABLE in the Gardens

Third Sunday of Every Month, 1.00 – 3.00 pm

Meet the Friends' Guides for interesting information and direction to key plants and seasonal change.

WEEKLY PLANT SALE

Every Wednesday at the Friends' nursery at the rear of the Gardens 9.30 am to 12.30 pm.