



Campsis radicans Trumpet Flower
Beverley Graham 1994

Campsis

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Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (Victoria) Inc.
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From the President

THE 2005 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held in Melbourne on 28 April. Those elected to serve until the next Annual General Meeting were:

Janet Thomson as Vice-President (Melbourne)
Annie McGeachy as Secretary (Geelong)
David Baumgartner as Treasurer (Melbourne)
Judith Bailey (Ballarat), Catherine Drew (Hamilton), Amanda King (Warrnambool) and Denise Payne (Karwarra), as Ordinary Members of the Committee, and myself as President (Cranbourne).

Lawrence Cohn, Joan Garner and Tommie Siekmann retired from the Committee and were thanked for their contributions to the work of the Association.

The 2006 AFBG Conference

Plans are well advanced for the Biennial Conference of the Association, which will be conducted at Cranbourne, Victoria, during the weekend from Friday 15 September to Sunday 17 September 2006. The theme for the Conference is 'Our Role in Evolution, Ecology and Environment'. An excellent group of speakers will cover subjects of interest to everyone involved with Botanic Gardens.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne will feature in the Conference activities. Of the 363 ha of the Gardens more than one-third is high-quality indigenous bushland, which will be at its best at the time of the Conference.

Tours will be conducted of the 'Australian Garden', which is being constructed in a former sand quarry. This first stage covers 11 ha at a cost of \$13 million. The results are stunning, combining brilliant landscape design, with 1500 species of Australian plants blended with impressive art installations.

Mark the dates in your diary:

Friday 15 September: Evening registration.

Saturday 16 September: Lectures and tours of the

Sunday 17 September: Lectures, workshops and possibly an optional tour of another Botanic Garden.

Alex Smart

Friends of Orange Botanic Gardens

THIS YEAR FRIENDS' ACTIVITIES started with a musical flourish. Together with the Orange Regional Conservatorium, we sponsored a series of six twilight concerts in the Gardens on Friday evenings, taking place from February until mid-March.

The musicians played at various open-air stages around the billabong in the centre of the Gardens and the music ranged from brass to strings, with the highlight being the final evening which featured a full symphony orchestra.

The concerts have helped raise the profile of the Gardens, with over 600 people attending each night, and the number of regular visitors wandering through the Gardens has steadily increased.

The Guided Walks in the Gardens on the first Sunday of the month continue to be popular. We start with an early Bird Walk, then morning tea, followed by the Garden Walk. A stall with some interesting plants propagated by our Growing Friends is a bonus.

The Wednesday Workers are delighted that the Glass House is fully functional for propagation of plants, with power and irrigation connected. Benches set up in the Shade House have made caring for sensitive plants a lot easier _ no more bending over or down.

The Bonsai Group has attracted more members interested in this specialised field, and additional plants are on permanent display in the Bonsai House.

The Gardens look beautiful at present, decked in their autumn splendour. Even the piles of leaves

of the season, and one of the reasons why Orange is known as Australia's Colour City.

Margaret Weaver, Secretary

Friends of Portland Botanic Gardens

ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF APRIL, which by rights should have been a lovely warm day, we had our annual open day. The wind howled, the skies dumped lots of water on us and all in all it was a dismal day, weather-wise. To our surprise, lots of people dropped by the Gardens to hear the city band play and our local choral group sing. They also enjoyed the barbecue and the Devonshire Teas and tried their hand at croquet on our famous croquet lawns.

We are anxiously awaiting the return of our Gardens' gates, as they have been away being restored for the past six months. They will make a grand statement at the entrance to the Botanic Gardens.

Our annual meeting is in May and we have Luki Weatherley (columnist in *The Age*) coming across from Mortlake to talk on the vagaries of her watering system and plumbing, and many other humorous complications of a large Western District garden.

Our Masterplan is up and running and we are about to launch into some of the jobs that Richard Aitken suggested we should start with. These are tree pruning and returning two beds to their original state. This will be very exciting.

Jenn Collett

Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne

HAMPERED BY A WEEK-END of diversely-extreme weather, our Growing Friends were relieved to raise \$22,820 at their autumn plant sale on 2 and 3 April, almost the same as the previous autumn's total. A small increase in the price per pot compensated for a drop in the number of people attending. Yet again we must praise the dedication of this productive group of 30 or so Members. Now they are focussed on spring, with the next sale scheduled for 8 and 9 October.

The most recent *Campsis* noted the opening of the Friends' *Art of Botanical Illustration* exhibition on 5 November. Now I can report that it achieved a record surplus of \$45,835. Of the 86 paintings sold, seven (including a Celia Rosser)

went to a New York collector who chose them from our web catalogue.

The Friends Council granted \$3000 for works to be purchased for the State Botanical Collection, the selected artists being James Hobill, Ruth Jackson, Sandra Sanger and Jennifer Wilkinson. The RBG purchased a work by Robin Gooding.

Dianne Emery, who has conducted classes for the Botanical Illustrators for many years, won her second Celia Rosser Medal for her paintings of peonies and a waratah. A different waratah image, painted by Marta Salamon, graced the Friends' 2004 Christmas card. This initiative of the Botanical Illustrators raised \$3800.

There has been an increasing demand for Botanical Illustrators classes with between 80 and 90 students attending in the first and second terms this year. Dianne Emery and Mali Moir conduct six classes per week on Mondays, Wednesdays (two sessions), Fridays and Saturdays.

Recent honours have underlined the RBG's standard of excellence. The Gardens Shop won the Tourism Retailing Category in the Melbourne Airport 2004 Victorian Tourism Awards. The RBG, together with the Department of Primary Industries and the Nursery Garden Industry of Victoria, won a silver medal at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show in April. Their display highlighted the weed potential of some plants and suggested safer alternatives. As the show attracted record crowds, it was an excellent opportunity for Gardens' staff to network and answer questions on this important subject.

In April the Ian Potter Foundation Children's Garden was announced as the Landscape Industry Association of Victoria's Commercial Landscape of the Year and then Landscape of the Year _ the top award of all categories. Interest in the Garden has exceeded expectations, recording 4800 visitors on a recent Sunday. It consistently attracts between 3000 and 4500 daily at weekends, and school bookings are also extremely heavy.

Overall, the Garden is standing up well to this people pressure, and the planned winter closure in July and August will allow for beneficial rest and refurbishment. In the meantime, access to the main pond has been blocked with natural barriers such as further bog areas; the planners never intended or anticipated that children would go into it. Chlorine has had to be dispensed to treat emerging water quality problems with the other popular water features, and a consultant has been engaged to provide guidance towards a long-term solution.

The RBG is working on a Water Management Plan to build on its excellent irrigation record. It is

and maintenance of its lakes and waterways. The Plant Sciences Branch has begun implementing its five-year Master Plan, with actions concentrating on understanding and documenting Plant Diversity; conserving and using it sustainably, and promoting education and awareness about it.

In March, two years' work by RBG scientists Dr Teresa Lebel and Dr Josephine Milne culminated in the launch of three educational CDs and 10 posters on the so-called 'forgotten flora' – non-vascular plants (bryophytes, liverworts, hornworts, mosses, lichens and fungi).

In the wild storm that struck Melbourne on 2 February, the Gardens lost some significant trees – two Mossy-Cup Oaks, an English Elm, a Maritime Pine and a Manna Gum. The arboricultural team of three was stretched to the limit in clearing the debris and repairing other trees and shrubs that were also damaged.

Our Members are looking forward to learning new skills from RBG horticulturists who will conduct a two-part pruning course in June and November.

The guides have added a lakeside stroll, setting off from the Terrace Tearooms, to their diverse program of walks. Twilight to Moonlight walks were introduced in December as a pleasurable prelude to the film screenings. Planning is well under way for the next national conference of botanic gardens guides, to be held in Melbourne between 26 and 30 September.

A Commonwealth Games cycle event will take place on 26 March 2006 on roads surrounding the Gardens. RBG staff, Friends and Voluntary Guides are yet to learn the extent of restrictions that will affect their access, and that of visitors, to the Gardens.

Briefly, some publications news: The RBG's *Floreo* will in future appear just twice a year, and the Friends' *Botanic News* is now being printed on a lighter stock, only 50 per cent recycled. This has improved photo quality and minimised postage costs.

It has been agreed that members of Friends groups that belong to our Australia-wide Association are welcome to attend functions of Melbourne Friends at the preferential price. Forthcoming events include illustrated talks on 18 May (10.30 am) by Penny Woodward, a noted authority on herbs, and an account on 15 June (6.00 pm) by Jim Fogarty of his award-winning landscape gardening career. This will include his experiences at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Merryle Johnson of Country Farm Perennials has arranged a Friends tour to the Barossa Valley from 15 to 20 November. Phone the Friends' office on 03 9650 6398 if you'd like details.

We record with sadness the death in March of Mrs Eve Brunner, OAM, a much-loved and respected Member. Eve joined the Friends in 1982, shortly after our formation, and served three terms as a Vice-President. She was convener of the Activities Sub-Committee, and was a key figure in the establishment of the Friends' shop by the lake. Eve was involved with the formation of the Association of Friends and was a member of its Committee for three years. She took great interest in the distribution of plants to regional botanic gardens marking the 150th anniversary of RBG Melbourne. She co-chaired the organising committee for the grand ball at Government House, the major social event of the celebrations.

The Gardens has also lost a wonderful supporter through the death of Dr Bob Withers. For more than 10 years he had been actively devoted to the RBG Camellia Collection, which holds the rare Award of Excellence from the International Camellia Society. Late last year he transferred his personal collection of 328 taxa to the Gardens, adding to the 214 camellias he had already donated over the years. The old rhododendron bed will be redeveloped to extend the area devoted to the Camellia Collection.

Heather Ironmonger

Fires at RBG Cranbourne

THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, CRANBOURNE, which is predominantly indigenous bushland, experienced fires in March and April 2005. RBG Cranbourne has a fire management plan that incorporates the controlled use of fire to maintain heathland biodiversity. The plan involves the strategic ecological burning of selected small patches of heathland in spring or autumn. The burns also reduce fuel loads and assist in reducing the risk of wildfires.

On 17 March the Country Fire Authority, in collaboration with fire-trained RBGC staff, conducted an ecological burn on the central-eastern edge of the Garden. The fire spotted beyond the containment lines and burnt several hectares of heathland and dry wetland before being controlled. CFA and RBGC staff managed the fire site over following days to reduce flare-ups.

Despite increased precautions, under the influence of very strong winds and unseasonably hot weather on 1 and 2 April the fire re-ignited. It spotted into grasslands adjoining RBGC and also burnt through woodlands in the south-eastern

area was damaged. A large number of CFA crews attended the fire, assisted by RBGC staff. The fire was contained on 2 April. Rain and cooler weather on 3 April aided blacking out of the fire site.

Of the 363 ha site 28 ha was burnt. Already in the fire area green shoots are contrasting with the blackened fire scene. Property damage was small and importantly there were no injuries.

The Director of the Botanic Gardens, Dr Philip Moors, said 'RBGC staff were outstanding in their commitment and professionalism, attending the fire continuously in shifts over 24 hours. I thank them for their very hard work under extremely challenging conditions. They and the CFA did a great job.'

Alex Smart

Friends of the Gold Coast Botanic Gardens

THE FRIENDS IS AN INCORPORATED organisation made up of enthusiastic volunteers dedicated to the establishment of a Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens. In mid-1998 a small group of like-minded individuals with a common goal met and formed a steering committee, led by our Founder, Kate Heffernan. Regular committee meetings followed, with the first general meeting in May 1999. We must have made a convincing case as Council soon decided it was a great idea!

Rosser Park was selected by Council late in 1999 as the most suitable site, based on criteria of international standards. Rosser Park is on Ashmore Road, Benowa, east of Royal Pines Resort, and contains several water features, mature trees and existing infrastructure (toilets, barbecues and picnic tables). A Council Reference Group was then formed, with representatives from the Friends, the community and Council. The Gardens Reference Group helped steer the development of a Master Plan, which was completed in 2002. The planning process involved extensive consultation with the wider Gold Coast community.

In 2003 the first real steps towards establishing the Gardens were taken by the Friends during a number of successful planting days. We now have four regular planting days a year. The Friends have been directly involved in the design, planting and maintenance of the Mangroves to Mountains section of the Master Plan, which contains local native species that can be found in the various vegetation communities on the Gold Coast. In

was formed – the Australian Plants Group. This group will focus on the propagation and conservation of the Australian plants in our Gardens. We hope that this will be the first of many such groups.

Our future involvement with the Gardens will extend to Guided Walks, providing environmental education and interpretation. We will also be involved with the proposed Visitor Centre (2006), which will house visitor information services, public amenities, conference room, herbarium, café and retail outlet. So there are exciting times ahead for the Friends and Gardens visitors!

Caroline Kelly

Friends of Bendigo's Botanic Gardens

BENDIGO IS AN UNUSUAL PROVINCIAL town as it has four very separate historic gardens. The Botanic Gardens at White Hills (also known as the White Hills Botanic Gardens or the Bendigo Botanic Gardens), Rosalind Park (this title includes all gardens that are within the old Camp Reserve, the Conservatory Gardens, the Lansell Gardens, the Fernery, the Queen Victoria Gardens and the Upper Reserve) and the Canterbury Gardens in Eaglehawk are all heritage-listed. The Lake Weeroona Parkland Reserve is not heritage-listed, but it was established in the 1880s and is greatly loved by the people of Bendigo as a place to walk and socialise and the Friends included it as part of Bendigo's botanic gardens.

All these gardens were established during Bendigo's boom-time when the wealth from gold-mining appeared to be endless. In the 1850s the largest diggings were at White Hills and a township was surveyed. Land was set aside for a Botanic Gardens, and it was gazetted in 1857. But White Hills never developed as expected and the city grew around the administration area known as the Camp Reserve. Nevertheless the White Hills Botanic Gardens are still with us, and now the city has grown to surround White Hills. The Friends is active in reminding the City of Greater Bendigo that the city still has a garden that has the word 'botanic' in its title and that a 150th birthday is too big to ignore.

The 1850s must have been a boom-time for the establishment of botanic gardens in Victoria and from 2005 onward there will be many gardens celebrating their 150th birthdays.

Jan Orr, Secretary

Friends of Hamilton Botanic Gardens

THE FRIENDS ARE BUILDING a Sensory Garden in the grounds of The Cottage, which is their 'home' within the Botanic Gardens. We have interest from many groups in the community to use this garden for gardening sessions, to join us in propagation days and simply to visit and enjoy this place. We have designed the garden for access for all. The front garden of The Cottage is linked to the back garden by the creation of a path, leading under an arch. There is a central bed with wide paths around which people can touch and smell the varied plants. One bluestone edge of this garden is raised to 600 mm for easy contact with plants from a wheelchair. An area of paving has a timber raised garden bed and seat. There is a ramped path leading into the garden. The Hamilton Garden Club has donated a raised pond with a small fountain and we have a fine timber seat donated by the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB Hamilton).

The students of the local TAFE built some of this first stage of the garden. The Council has provided much of the basic materials required. A grant from the Department of Human Services is our main source of finance for the project. We have also had enthusiastic voluntary help in construction from the Warrnambool TAFE horticultural students. We are planting the first garden beds now in a series of community planting working bees. The plants that we plan for the garden will be those with strong sensory qualities and have scent, bright and striking flowers, interesting tactile qualities or be ornamental and edible. They will all have a low water requirement. We are propagating some of the species to be used in the Gardens glasshouse. Mulleraterong, an adult training centre, has provided some of the plants and has helped to plant them.

We hope that this modern garden will complement the historic Guilfoyle-designed Botanic Garden, and provide pleasure to all in the district and visitors to the region.

Catherine Drew, President

Friends of the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

MACKAY HAS EXPERIENCED a very hot, dry summer so there was very little activity in the Botanic Gardens for a couple of months. The trees are growing well despite the drought, but there will not be a lot of shady spots for

We are busy planning celebrations for the second birthday of the Gardens at the end of May. The official opening of the new Fernery and Palm Walk will take place then. The Fernery is almost complete, with an innovative design using log piles from the old sugar wharf at Mackay Harbour to form part of the walls. Friends will hold a planting bee shortly to mount elkhorns on the logs, plant vines, ferns, liriopes, dianella and native violets in readiness for the opening. The Matsuura cranes will be displayed permanently in the Fernery as well.

The herbarium is under way at last, with a group of Friends meeting most Mondays. We have undergone a steep learning curve under the guidance of Irene Champion, a local botanist.

So far we have prepared about 15 specimens, and have discovered that there is a special skill in displaying the leaves, fruit and flowers to advantage. We will improve!

Three young horticulture students have been gaining work experience in our Gardens for the last six weeks. Just about their first experience was helping Friends replant a focus garden with daisies and grevilleas. They couldn't get over the heat (we thought it was cool), and have been desperate to see snakes _ there are none in Ireland. The cultural exchange is a very enriching experience for all of us.

MRBG Friends recently held a very successful and enjoyable excursion to nearby Cape Hillsborough, where we were guided round the mangrove boardwalk by Meryl Ritchie. She talked about the plants that grow naturally in that area and have been propagated and planted in our Gardens. We found it hard to relate the spindly uninteresting-looking plants in the wild to the lush hedging specimens growing in our Gardens.

Meryl finds great horticultural possibilities in many of these species. Later we enjoyed a relaxed barbecue in the picnic area, amazed that so few other people were visiting the national park on a glorious day.

Our Visitors Service Officer Dale Arvidsson and Irene Champion have developed a self-guided brochure for the Brigalow area of the Gardens, and Irene took Friends on a walk through the area to test the brochure, an enlightening experience for the authors and the Friends. Irene and Meryl have collected seed and propagated many of the plants in the Gardens, and can tell fascinating stories of collecting the specimens in the wild.

Friends continue to hold monthly general meetings with interesting speakers. Lawrie Smith has given an update of progress of Stage Two construction, and last week Veronique Bosson-Leemrevze spoke about the coco-de-mer. the

grows naturally in only a small area of the Seychelle Islands. Veronique and her husband lived in the Seychelles for two years before migrating to Australia.

Robin McWhinney, Secretary

Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens

THE FRIENDS ARE LOOKING FORWARD to the opening of the new extension to the Gardens in the middle of the year. The extension towards Eastern Beach provides wonderful views across Corio Bay and incorporates a new entrance drive that displays flora from the Geelong region. A new Botanic Gardens entrance is reached via wide steps, which lead to a broad path around a large elliptically-shaped sunken garden.

The new extension almost doubles the size of the existing garden. Planting in the new area began early in the year when large trees from the existing garden were moved into the new area. *Banksia integrifolia*, *Chorisia speciosa*, *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Brachychiton populneus*, *Dracaena draco*, three *Nolinas*, various palms and five *Brachychiton rupestris* were planted near the entrance steps. The trees were dug up with a giant mechanical spade and lowered into their new positions by crane. Green Corps workers have been assisting Gardens staff with mass planting of indigenous species along the new entrance driveway and planting is about to begin on the banks leading down into the sunken garden. Plantings will include plants from the Geelong region (Anglesea, Brisbane Ranges, Bellarine Peninsula), garden plants that are suitable for growing in Geelong, drought-tolerant plants and Gondwana plantings.

The Friends have had a very busy start to the year with various activities being held in the Gardens. A very successful twilight jazz evening was held in mid-February, a lecture titled 'The Charismatic Orchid' was given by Gardens horticulturist Kellee Reissinger at a twilight meeting, and the autumn plant sale was held at the beginning of March. Curator John Arnott has taken a large group of Friends on a behind-the-scenes nursery tour, three of our Friends attended the Victorian Regional Gardens Symposium at Ballarat and funded registration for Gardens staff to attend, and a coachload of Friends attended the recent Gardens Expo in Melbourne.

Friends have assisted Gardens staff with talks to community groups. There is much interest in the new garden and many requests for speakers. Voluntary guides have been busy with booked

Our AGM was held on 22 April and I was delighted to report that the past year was one of excitement and progress, and that there had been great co-operation between Friends and Gardens staff. The year was most successful financially, with plant sales being our greatest source of income.

Jayne Salmon

Friends of Warrnambool Botanic Gardens

THE PAST SUMMER HAS ATTRACTED hundreds of visitors to our Gardens. The usual festivities such as Wunta, the Australia Day celebrations and numerous family picnics show how much the public appreciate spending a day here.

The Friends worked to make the Teddy Bears Picnic day a success, adding Fairies, to the delight of hundreds of little girls. Over 500 children registered, paraded and were judged, winners being given prizes donated by the local business community. It was a colourful day and we were blessed, as with all the other functions, with warm sunny weather.

The labelling of another 80 trees is now under way. Mandy King, who drew up the extensive database, had purchased the labels from the Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens. We are delighted that the labels are to hand and are being used. We are now able to label trees, including newer ones introduced to the Gardens during the last two years. Some of them are *Araucarias*, cedars and oaks, several being gifts from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

The Guiding Friends continue to show people through the Gardens and a new brochure is being designed to encourage more visitors. The Growing Friends held their annual plant stall. Because of poor weather it was held in a covered arcade in Warrnambool and this proved a great success.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants, Warrnambool Branch, is planning to establish a bed of native plants indigenous to this district. An area has been marked out beneath the old Manna Gum, and we look forward to advancing this project.

Our Victorian urns are badly in need of restoration and we are very happy that Heritage Victoria has allocated \$2,500 for this work.

Under Pat Varley's leadership we have arranged activities that have led to our showing many school-children, TAFE students, pre-school children and their carers through the Gardens.

Lifestyle and Leisure day for the elderly and their carers. About 130 people were involved with music, games and guided tours in the Gardens.

Marigold Curtis

Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens Inc. A0026805Z

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