

Dear Friends

Just recently, one very cold Tuesday morning, it was heart-warming to see the Friends' logo displayed on the new bus and on the Working Bee trailer parked up near Adam's Forest; not to mention the Friends hard at work clearing pink tree guards and making Adam's Forest spic and span. He would be very pleased with the 'tree huggers' as he called us!

Only a few days ago, ACT sign maker Michael Deren sent me an email donating the cost of the wrapping of the trailer because he said.... 'It's a gift from our family for all the wonderful experiences we have had at the NAC'. A wonderful gesture from Michael, Lili, Charlie and Ruby. Thank you very much. Your generous support is much appreciated.



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Discovery Kitchen Garden Update p.7 The Atomic tree p.7 Mulching the Silver birches: Working bees part 2 p.11 Trees in Focus: *Forest 7, Magnolia p.9* **The Bus** got some very special attention recently when local Aboriginal elder of the Ngambri clan, Matilda House performed a smoking ceremony in and around the bus. This ceremony is an ancient aboriginal custom that involves burning and smouldering of various native plants, and in this case, gum leaves. The smoke has cleansing properties and the ability to ward off bad spirits from the people and the land and makes a pathway for a brighter future.





Smoking ceremony with Matilda House, Ngambri elder.

Andrew Barr, MLA and Chief Minister, enjoyed a very informative and informal bus tour recently along with some other dignitaries and with Scott Saddler AM Tour Guide and driver extraordinaire. Lots of 'off the beaten track' views and sights...in amongst the mulch piles for example. I hope Scott is on the tour guide roster!

Both the bus and the billboard advertising the Nulla Tours in the Visitors Centre are causing much interest. The tours will be very popular, daily Wednesday – Sunday (and every public holiday) leaving the Village Centre at 1.30pm.

The Arboretum Book is selling well at \$20.00. The Working Group for the new Arboretum Book is making great progress. The time line has a launch in September next year...in good time for Floriade and Christmas sales. I will keep you posted on progress. L to R: Scott Saddler AM, Executive Branch Manager, National Arboretum Canberra and Stromlo Forest Park; Andrew Barr, MLA, Chief Minister; Trish Keller OAM, Chair, Friends

Wattle Week has just ended and I hope you were able to enjoy many of the activities advertised at the Arboretum. Dr Suzette Searle, ACT Wattle Day Association President, led walks at the Arboretum and workshops at STEP. There was great coverage for Dr Suzette Searle and her passion for the Australian wattle in The Canberra Times and other media. She set up a beautiful display of wattles in bottles in the Village Centre – did you see them?

The National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia recently announced the **Bonsai Volunteer of the Year** award as selected by the Collection Advisory Committee (CAC). This recognition would usually have been made during Bonsai Week, however it took place during a socially distanced volunteer meeting due to Covid restrictions. This year, CAC saw fit to recognise the contribution of two volunteers, Mike and Vicki Woolley for their contribution to NBPCA. Congratulations and thanks to them both!

See you at the Arboretum soon. Kind regards Trish

Dear Friends,

A number of projects and activities have been progressing at the National Arboretum Canberra with some exciting milestones around the corner. The carpark is nearly finished, sealing has been completed and landscaping is now underway. Within the carpark 600 crepe myrtle "Fantasy" are currently being planted and will be mulched in the coming weeks which will complete the *Lagerstroemia fauriei* 'Fantasy' forest. The exciting new concrete pedestrian path from the main carpark, around the overflow carpark to STEP has enabled Forest 20 to be much more accessible from the Village Centre. And finally the much anticipated water allocation project was recently completed providing for 200ML of water from Lake Burley Griffin to future proof the success of the Arboretum's Forests and Gardens.

The Arboretum is showing its gratitude for the welcome winter rain, with water in dams and a return to green rolling hills after a challenging summer. This is perfect timing with the horticulture team recently restructured and split into two distinctive teams. The forest team is focused on the ongoing maintenance and health of the forests, while the garden team is dedicated to the care and maintenance of the many gardens. Having a full horticultural staff compliment with the support of forest working bee volunteers has enabled the mulching and major pruning of forests, garden and landscape detailing. The forest team is now focusing on selective forest tree replanting prior to spring, and in the coming months the garden team is undertaking major enhancements of the gardens and landscapes.

The planting and landscaping of Forest 15 is almost complete! The Australian native *Xanthorrhoea Glauca* (Grass Tree) have been planted in clusters to conceptually represent dripping tree sap and set amongst boulders. This forest will be an aesthetically impressive addition to the Arboretum landscape.



The new "Nulla" tourist bus generously sponsored by the Friends of the National Arboretum, will launch on Wednesday 9 September 2020. These bus tours will be available to the general public from Wednesday to Sunday and Monday public holidays daily at 1.30pm. Friends are entitled to \$5 concession rates for the tour, with tickets available in advance online through Sticky Tickets. If bus seat spaces remain available you can purchase online tickets at the information desk. Thank you to the many volunteer guides and bus drivers offering their time to take these exciting new 40 minute tours. Please let your friends and family know about this exciting new addition to the Arboretum!

September also brought a return to the Arboretum's free introductory talks which have been reimagined to compliment the new tourist bus. Free 'Welcome Walks' are available at 10am, 11am, 12noon every day and will introduce visitors to the Arboretum, nearby gardens and even some hidden treasures. These accessible walks are suitable for wheelchairs and strollers and take visitors to places near the Village Centre including the Discovery Garden and Gallery of Gardens. There is scope to increase the frequency of these experiences in line with demand and as COVID19 restrictions ease.

There is a wonderful range of activities in store over the coming Spring school holidays including Culture Craft, Children's Beginner Bonsai workshops and a full day Nature Play day program. Bookings for these as well as Forest Walks and Nulla tours via Sticky Tickets: <u>https://www.stickytickets.com.au/nationalarboretumcanberra/events</u>

Also to let you know Stromlo Forest Park (SFP) and the National Arboretum Canberra have joined under the one management team. The two venues are now connected not only by tracks and trails but also by staff and a mutual vision of outdoor recreation and conservation management. New mountain bike trails at SFP were launched last weekend by the ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr MLA along with stakeholders from the mountain biking community including professional athletes.

Applications for an Artist in Residence opportunities for Spring and Autumn 2021 at NBPCA are open until December. Further information here: <u>https://</u> www.nationalarboretum.act.gov.au/top-stories/bonsaiand-penjing-artist-in-residence-program

Thank you for your continued support, and while we are super keen to meet face to face again with volunteers for meetings, training and talks will be waiting on further COVID19 restrictions ease before undertaking.

Meanwhile please let me know if you have any feedback, concerns or questions!

Cally Earnshaw Community Engagement Officer cally.earnshaw@act.gov.au



WATTLE DAY 2020



Wattle Day Association president Dr Suzette Searle

The golden stands beaming from the bush in and around Canberra are a reminder spring is almost here, as is National Wattle Day, a celebration of Australia's floral emblem.

Wattle is in bloom and the golden Aussie icon was feted on the national day, September 1. Wattle Day Association president Dr Suzette Searle, said there was a common perception that wattle was celebrated on August 1, but the National Wattle Day on September 1 was first held in 1910 in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

World War I broke out in 1914 and that prompted some changes to the national day.

"In 1916, the NSW branch of the Wattle Day League asked if they could change it back to the first of August, because that was the time the Cootamundra wattle was flowering around Sydney and they wanted to sell fresh sprigs of wattle for the war effort," Dr Searle said.

"It stayed that way in NSW up until 1992 when the Governor-General proclaimed it across Australia on the first of September. But, obviously, people in Australia have been celebrating whenever the wattle was in full bloom. So, from north to south, people have been been celebrating from July, August to late September, down in Adelaide."

Dr Searle, who is writing a book about wattle and its significance, said it was a unifying symbol, its diversity reflecting Australia as "a nation of Indigenous peoples and colonists, settlers, immigrants and refugees from across the world".

The unifying force was more important than ever during difficult times such as bushfires and COVID-19. And it was impossible to resist the sheer sunniness of wattle.

"It just lifts my spirits, I just can't help it," Ms Searle said. "Every time I see a wattle in full bloom, I just feel happy."

There are more than 1000 species of wattle in Australia, each with its own unique scent.

"There are more wattles than eucalypts in Australia. We really are the land of the wattle."

And in one of the more bizarre wattle anecdotes, the famous comedy troupe Monty Python is thought to

have co-opted a ditty about the wattle for its infamous *Bruces Sketch* from none other than Canberra journalist and lobbyist, Richard Farmer.

Mr Farmer is credited with writing: '*The great Australian wattle is the symbol of our land, you can put it in a bottle or hold it in your hand.*' A slightly reworked version made its way into the *Bruces Sketch* in which Monty Python lampoons macho Australia: *This here's the wattle, the emblem of our land. You can stick it in a bottle, you can hold it in your hand.*

Mr Farmer, 77, said he wrote the wattle ode while at the Public Service Board in the mid-1960s. "It was a frosty morning, the wattle was out and I just wrote the ditty as I walked to work," he said.

It was only some years later that he realised Monty Python had used his words when someone walked into his bottle shop in Manuka wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the Wattle in a Bottle words.

"I said to him, 'I wrote that'. And he looked at me as though I was mad. He said, 'No, it was Monty Python'. And I said, 'Oh, well'. And that was it. I'd love to have one of the T-shirts," Mr Farmer said.

In honour of the ditty, there were many kinds of wattles in bottles at the National Arboretum this weekend, as well as wattle walks on Saturday and Tuesday.

(Edited version of an article in The Canberra Times Saturday August 29, 2020. Copied with permission)



Wattle Day Association treasurer Judy Tunningley and president Suzette Searle. Landmarks including Telstra Tower lit up in yellow for National Wattle Day. Picture: Karleen Minney



And if you want to revisit the the Monty Python sketch you can do so here.

News from STEP

It's wonderful to have had all that rain so now our ephemeral wetland is full of water and everything, including the weeds, are growing fast.

We are looking forward to the lower sealed car park, so close to us, being open.

There is a path directly to Forest 20 and we are preparing a new entrance with signage. In the past bicycles have damaged our gravel paths so we welcome the decision to exclude riding in Forest 20. Signs indicating that have been placed at each entrance.

On 30 August the NAC with Suzette Searle from the Wattle Day Association organised Acacia propagation workshops under the verandah of our shed. With COVID 19 safe rules, two groups, totalling 18 were guided in planting *Acacia pycnatha* seeds and then taken on a tour of Forest 20 to see the many wattles in flower. Each participant took home 5 planted seeds and a young seedling prepared earlier by Suzette. Many thanks to Suzette Searle, Wattle Day Committee, Terry Murphy and Wal Kelman from STEP.

Lainie Shorthouse



David Shorthouse and Dr Suzette Searle

Harvest Group and Discovery Kitchen Garden Update

Spring is here. Hooray! With all the lovely rain during last month and the warm weather of recent days, plants in the garden are growing rapidly.



Alyssum, borage, broad beans, calendulas, climbing snow peas, cornflowers, Iceland poppies, marguerites and violas are all flowering well. Soon the sweet peas will be adding their old-world charm and intoxicating scents to the garden as well.



Other visual delights are the bright splashes of pastel colour of the ornamental kales; the soft, feathery foliage of fennel; the unmissable and majestic grey leaves of globe artichokes; the dark green leaves of Tuscan kale and the many clumps of wonderful

red-veined leaves of French sorrel (all

from just one plant, so easy to propagate).

Vegetable, herb and flower sowings of basil, beans, chillies, climbing spinach, eggplants, gourds, French marigolds, mini pumpkins and tomatoes are being done this month as well as salad greens,





Bunnings already has seedlings of tomatoes for people who have greenhouses or a sheltered position to grow them until the danger of frost is over when they can be planted out, usually around Melbourne Cup Day in the ACT. It



could be sooner though, due to the warming climate and experience of the previous year.

Visitors often ask about obtaining seeds for warrigal greens and climbing spinach which should be sown this month. The Harvest



Group does have packaged seeds of these plants for sale however, due to the Covid-19 virus restrictions, market stalls have not been held this year to sell our produce. Ideas are currently being canvassed to see if produce can be sold in other ways, for example, online which does not involve the use of cash. Detailed notification about this will be posted on the website so keep watching.



There are now four people maintaining the garden including Cynthia Kimlin, who rejoined the team from 4 September. As summer approaches more volunteers will be needed, particularly during weekends. The working conditions are excellent as the ground is level and the garden is at a good height so no backache from stooping. If you are a Friend of the National Arboretum and want to get closer to nature and spend a few hours per week in one of the best locations in Canberra, contact Colette or Ange through the Arboretum to be placed on the roster. You will be given training and, depending on your preferred day, you could be teamed up with a very experienced volunteer which always makes for lively conversation. Happy Gardening and hope to see you soon at the Arboretum!





(Article and photos by Ange McNeilly)

MEMORIES WITHIN THE RINGS OF A TREE.

August 6 was the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

In recognition of this you might be interested in the video linked below which celebrates the memories of one of the most revered trees in the world—a 400-year-old Japanese white pine bonsai that witnessed and survived the atomic blast in Hiroshima.

The Atomic Tree: <u>https://youtu.be/P2tOCbbjPYU</u>

From Japan's ancient cedar forests and Buddhist temples to the family home in Hiroshima where the pine was nurtured for five generations, this VR experience explores the unbroken chain of living stories held within the rings of this tree. The delicate shape of this bonsai contains sacred forests, human family, and deep time, inviting us to



reflect on the living strands of kinship that are woven between human and nonhuman worlds.

Japanese white pines are fairly uncommon in Australia and there are not currently any in our Bonsai Collection, although there have been in the past. Japanese black and red pines are represented and are well worth checking out.

Mulching the Silver birches (Working bees part 2)

The Arboretum working bees are held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for 2 hours and attract between 15 and 20 participants per session. The working bees resumed on Tuesday June 16 after the Covid restrictions were eased to allow such group activities.

The first scheduled task was the remulching and general maintenance of Forest 44, the Silver and Spanish birches. The mulching technique chosen for the forest was strip mulching, a continuous line of mulch between 1 and 1.2 metres wide and about 20 cm deep, that followed the rows of trees along the contours of the site.



NAC staff separately estimated that they delivered 600 cubic metres which is a nice alignment of the calculation above.

To break the task down a little further ... The wheelbarrows used to transport the mulch from the piles dumped at various points within and beside the forest, were 100 litre tub capacity. That means between 5700 and 6000 instances of barrows loaded, wheeled, dumped and then spread. And if that's hard to picture, it equates to about 6 km of barrows lined up end to end.





After 2 months of sessions the task was completed, taking a bit longer than was anticipated. However, when the task is broken down, it becomes clearer why it took the time it did.

There are between 1550 and 1600 trees in Forest 44, in three groups, each adjacent to the Forest and Totara Road intersection. As the task involved spreading the mulch in a continuous strip, a rough calculation of the cubic metres of mulch spread can be made – if the length of the strip can be determined.

The journey up and down the rows of the forest amounted to about 3.7 kilometres after allowing for a little back-tracking. So, a <u>conservative</u> calculation of the volume of mulch spread using 1 m and 15 cm as the actual width and depth after some settling



Mighty Magnolias Forest 7

"No group of trees and shrubs is more favourably known or more highly appreciated in gardens than magnolias and no group produces larger or more abundant blossoms" according to the renowned botanist and plant explorer, Ernest Wilson in the early 19th century.



Henri Matisse. Still life with a Magnolia 1941

As we see the Port Wine magnolias (*Magnolia figo*) blooming around Canberra it is hard to believe we have not yet featured this ancient and fascinating genus in our tree portraits. You will have to wait until late spring early summer to see the trees in Forest 7 flowering, but it will be worth it.

The Magnolia was named by the Swedish botanist Carl Linneaus in 1737 in honour of the French botanist Pierre Magnol (1638-1715). The plant which Magnol had described is what we now know as *Magnolia virginiana,* an evergreen American species which was already growing in Europe by the mid eighteenth century.

The earliest western record of magnolias in cultivation is found in Aztec history at the time of Montezuma where there are illustrations of what we now know to be the very rare *Magnolia dealbata*. This plant survives only in a few places in the wild and, although climate change is largely to blame, the natives cut the flowers for festivals and this prevents the plants seeding. It was found by a Spanish explorer called Hernandez who was commissioned by Philip II of Spain and whose work was published in 1651. Magnolias have an interesting evolutionary history. They are an ancient lineage of plants: fossil specimens of magnolia relatives have been found dating back to 95 million years ago. Not quite as ancient as gingkos, though, which have fossils dating back to 270 million years ago. Fossil records show that they once existed in Europe, North America and Asia. Today they are indigenous only in Southern China and the Southern United States. There are about 80 species of magnolia of which roughly half are tropical. Fossilised specimens have been found dated to 20 million years ago, which means they appeared before bees and butterflies, so the theory is that their flowers evolved to encourage pollination by beetles, and the carpels evolved to be tough enough to avoid damage from the beetles. Beetle pollinated flowers are characterised by their large size, white or pink colour, lack of nectar and abundance of pollen. Beetles feed on pollen and most magnolias do not have nectar although they do have scent.

Some of the earliest references to magnolias in literature refer to their purported medicinal properties. The flower buds of *Magnolia salicifolia* are used in Asia to treat headaches and allergies. A 1985 study reports on the potential use of this drug in the treatment of cancer. Another recent study found that tonics from the bark of *Magnolia officinalis* lessen tremor in patients with Parkinsons disease. Who knows what may yet be discovered.

Magnolias at the Arboretum

Now take a short walk to Forest 7, which is easily accessed from the Cork oaks carpark and stroll around the two species growing there: the Chinese evergreen magnolia, *Magnolia delavayi*, and the Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Exmouth'.



Magnolia delabayi (foreground) and Magnolia grandiflora 'Exmouth'

Magnolia grandiflora



Southern magnolia M. Grandiflora at ANU

This 'elegant aristocrat of American trees' (commonly known as southern magnolia or bull bay) is a large, handsome tree of the southeastern USA. It grows only within a few hundred miles of the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico. It can be found along the bluffs of the Lower Mississippi River and on the borders of river swamps and ponds, where it grows in association with *Quercus nigra* (water oak), *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweet gum) and *Nyssa sylvatica* (tupelo, sour gum).

It can be seen growing as a large forest tree, but is also found as scrub amongst the sand dunes overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. It was commonly planted in front of early homesteads in the American South, often with the lower branches pegged down so that they rooted as layers. This practice not only provided replacement plants, but also made the tree virtually impregnable against the prevalent hurricane-force winds.

This magnolia is regarded as a symbol of the American South, being the state flower of Mississippi and Louisiana, as well as a symbol of the Confederacy.

It is thought that the first introduction of *Magnolia grandiflora* into European gardens was during the early eighteenth century, when the English, French and Spanish first introduced the species. However,

the northern French city of Nantes claims to have introduced it first, in 1711. The species has since become one of the most popularly planted evergreen plants around the world in warm temperate and subtropical areas.

Magnolia delavayi

The Southern magnolia acts as a host forest for another magnolia, the Chinese evergreen magnolia or Magnolia delavayi, which are slow growing and frost sensitive. When it was selected for the Arboretum it was classified by the IUCN as Endangered because of its fragmented populations (five or fewer sites) and continuing degradation of habitat. The most recent assessment, in 2014, now rates it as 'Least Concern' due to its large distribution in China and the lack of any known threats to the species'.

This species is native to southern China, and specifically in mountain forests in Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces. It is found at altitudes between 1500 and 2800 metres, where it grows in forests and also in limestone areas and on wet slopes.

It has been cultivated in Buddhist temples in Southwest China for hundreds of years because its attractive lotus-like creamy flowers are regarded as the flowers of 'Udumbara' in Buddhist culture. In recent decades, more and more plants of *M*. *delavayi* have been used for local urban greening.



Chinese evergreen magnolia flower. Photo R Hnatiuk.

Unfortunately the flowers are very short lived, but according to a New Zealand Magnolia website the flowering habit is quite unusual, lasting over 2 nights, with the first evening opening female just on dusk, then the following evening opening half an hour earlier in the male phase. The flowers are quite perfumed when opening and you can smell them before you see them. The Arboretum trees have flowered in March and April, but may have a flowering season starting as early as December. It is definitely worth looking out for them.

Another distinguishing feature of this tree is its exceptionally large tough leathery leaves, which may grow to 30 cm. They have a pale green underside, in contrast to the coppery colour beneath its American cousin. The photo below, taken at the Arboretum clearly shows the difference in leaf size between the 2 species.



The trees appear to be slow growing but are forming a distinctive attractive grove in the middle of the Forest.

Friends on the (Sustainability) map

Community organisation, SEE-Change, has featured us on their Canberra Sustainability Map! The map has info about hundreds of sustainability-focused organisations, groups and activities in Canberra. Check it out at <u>Canberra sustainability map</u> or go to <u>see-</u> <u>change.org.au</u> and type *sustainability map* into the search window.

The Canberra Sustainability Map (formerly known as the Canberra Transition Towns Map) is a mind-map style resource that contains information about hundreds of sustainabilityfocused organisations, groups and activities in Canberra. It's the go-to reference point to see what other sustainability action is happening in our city, and find others to collaborate with. You can find The Friends and STEP in the purple Biodiversity and Conservation category

SEE-Change are keen to hear any feedback, as well as suggestions of groups that may be missing from the map.

An essential element to achieving sustainability in our communities is the ability to collaboratively work together and access reliable resources. This map is a great way to make connections with other like-minded community groups, and achieve great things together.



How to join the Friends

Visit **arboretumcanberra.org.au** to join online or to find out more about the benefits of being a member

OR

Email your details to: contact@arboretumcanberra.org.au and pay by funds transfer or cheque

OR

Complete the Application Form and mail it to:

The Secretary, Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra, PO Box 48, Campbell, ACT 2612, and pay by funds transfer or cheque.

Bank details for funds transfer:

Westpac, Petrie Plaza, Canberra, ACT: BSB 032 719. Account: 375379 – please include surname in description.

Cheques payable to: Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc.

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Membership type	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$45	\$80
Household	\$55	\$100
Concession *	\$25	\$40
Club/Association **	\$100	\$180
Business **	\$500	\$900

* Pensioners, health card holders & students ** See website for details

Membership Application Form

Membership type:	
Title: First name:	
Last name:	
OR	
Club/Association/Business na	me:
Address:	
State	e:
Email address for newsletter a	and updates:
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Phone: Number of parking passes: Total amount payable (include amounts): \$ Signature:	Mobile:
Phone: Number of parking passes: Total amount payable (include amounts): \$ Signature: Date:	Mobile:

For a parking pass, please include your vehicle's registration number.

Note: An Individual Member is entitled to apply for one Parking Pass at the Friends' rate and a Household Member is entitled to apply for two Parking Passes at the Friends' rate.

Parking passes are issued for one year from the date of purchase.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Many thanks to the people who have contributed articles and photos for this and previous issues of the Newsletter, and given generously of your time to write, read and proofread. I could not do it without your help.

If you have ideas for articles, or items that might be of interest to the Friends such as stories or photos from the Arboretum or further afield, please contact me Mary Arnold, <u>maryarno@gmail.com</u>.



Calendar 2021

Arriving soon at The Curatoreum in the Village Centre, in plenty of time for Christmas. If you haven't already done so, also get your collectors' copy of the first edition of The Arboretum Book.



