



Spring Newsletter 2020



Daffodils signal that Spring has arrived!

The Corona virus, COVID-19, continues to bring us challenges and testing times in many aspects of our lives – including our plans to open gardens for the public to visit and enjoy. We hope you are remaining positive and have been able to spend quality time in your own gardens. Spring brings a welcome change to the weather, particularly as we seem to have had a very cold winter! The gradual lengthening of the days, some warmth in the sunshine and the emergence of spring blossom and bulbs will help lift our spirits and brighten our days. We hope you enjoy our spring Newsletter!

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Spring Open Gardens

October 10 - 11

Casuarina, Mylor
Working Person's Garden,
Burnside

October 17 - 18

Alta Mira, Belair
Berkeley Vale, Stirling

October 24 - 25

The Chestnuts, Stirling
Seaview, Stirling
Fiddlestix, Coffin Bay

31 October – 01 November

Ashgrove Iris Garden,
Gumeracha

7 – 8 November

Chez Nous, Birdwood
Drouin, Littlehampton

14 – 15 November

Sheriffmuir Garden, Mount
Gambier

21 – 22 November

Nick Mount Glass Studio &
Garden, Leabrook

In these uncertain and variable times, it is important to confirm garden openings by checking our webpage: <http://opengardensa.org.au>

Annual General Meeting and Election of Management Committee Members

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Open Gardens SA was held on the evening of Tuesday 4th August 2020 at the CWA Headquarters, Mary Potter House, Dequetteville Terrace, Kent Town.

The Open Gardens SA Management Committee was re-elected unopposed and no new members joined the Committee, which currently has 14 members, but can have up to a maximum of 18 members.

Following the conclusion of the AGM a Management Committee meeting was held on the same date and the formal Committee positions were declared vacant. The Committee elected the following members to these positions:

David Hancock – Chairperson.

Rory McGregor – Deputy Chairperson.

Rob Andrewartha – Treasurer.

Jane Knowler – Secretary and Public Officer.

Meet your OGSA Committee Members – Marg Wilkinson



I grew up in Melbourne and have wonderful sensory memories of lily of the valley, daphne, gardenias, freesias and violets from my Mother's garden. She was a very keen gardener and as young children we

were taken to the Royal Botanic Gardens in South Yarra to feed the ducks and explore the beautiful gardens on a regular basis.

My interest in gardens began after I was married and moved to Adelaide where Tom and I bought a 'Handy Man's Special' where both the house and garden needed work. In 1984 we moved to 'Gable Ends' in Mitcham which was another Handy Man Special. This fabulous old house was built in 1842 with wonderful dry stone walls suitable for providing a stage for a cottage garden at the front of the house and a rambling garden at the back. I love to have something flowering in the garden all year round. In the 2000

drought and water restrictions the garden struggled and was slowly replaced with more sustainable Mediterranean plants. It was a challenge to begin all over again however the garden needed to be able to cope with our long dry summers and low rainfall. As an added bonus, I have found that Mediterranean plants do not have to be replaced nearly as often.

Gable Ends was opened in the Australian Open Garden scheme in 2012 and again in 2015 with Open Gardens SA. It is a wonderful experience to be able to share your garden with so many people and the gratitude you receive is quite overwhelming. It is also a wonderful way to raise money for a charity you believe in and support.

I joined the Australian Open Garden committee in its last year of operation and continued on when Open Gardens SA was launched five years ago. I coordinate Events with the help of a very supportive and generous sub-committee where we cater for functions, run workshops, arrange visits to productive gardens not opened to the public and other garden related activities. Also we have very successfully combined with Blue Sky Theatre each summer where Dave Simms, the Director, presents a delightful and very entertaining play in various gardens in Adelaide during the month of January.



Plant Profile – Reticulata irises

By Trevor Nottle

As Spring draws near gardeners sense it with growing anticipation, anticipation that is familiar and mostly well rewarded with a wealth of flowers that are so well known by their long association with our past. Anemones, ranunculus, daffodils, hyacinths, jonquils, Dutch irises – a veritable bouquet handed down from the great Dutch flower painters to us; a 400 year long transmission of culture that has brought a strong influence to our gardens.

Recently gardeners have been encouraged to try others from this floral heritage. Tulips, in particular, have grown in popularity as gardeners have become more confident about growing them. This is good because there is more treasure to come.

Below: *Iris reticulata Eye Catcher*



From the stony heights of the mountains and plateaux of the central Asian states – Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kurdistan and Turkestan, comes a very special group of bulbous irises.

Dwarf, colourful and enjoying a dry Summer climate these are the reticulate irises. ‘Reticulate’, meaning netted refers to the netted fibrous skin of each bulb. When these lands are deep in snow the irises are dormant, but they grow quite well in places where no snow falls. What they do need is a dry Summer rest though it must be understood they will not tolerate a hot resting period.



Left: *Iris reticulata Alida*.

Since they are very small these bulbs are best treated as pot plants. Given a potting medium with extra grit to promote sharp drainage and fed

after flowering with a tomato fertilizer (*i.e.* low nitrogen, high potash and phosphorus content) the bulbs should flower for years. As with many mountain plants the bulbs, though small, go deep in the stony ground where they grow. Take this as a hint of how best to please them: plant them deep – 3-4 times the height of the bulb or

about 10cm is about right for longevity and flower production. When siting pots and bulb pans of these plants bear in mind their high altitude environment; they need a free flow of air, good bright light but keep the pots where they will not get overheated by exposure to direct sunshine.

Varieties to look for are ‘Katherine Hodgkin’, ‘Alida’, ‘Natasha’, ‘Spot On’, ‘Eye Catcher’, ‘Cantab’, ‘Harmony’, ‘Clairette’, ‘J S Djit’ and *Iris danfordiae*. There is a slow trickle of new varieties bred by Alan MacMurtrie of Canada coming onto the Australian market. These include many unusual new colour forms including shades of green.



Above: *Iris reticulata Spot On*.

Bulbs are usually available late February to early April from Red Earth Bulb Farm, Lambley Nursery, Table Cape Bulb Farm, Vogelvry’s Bulbs, J N Hancock & Co, Bryan H Tonkin Bulbs.

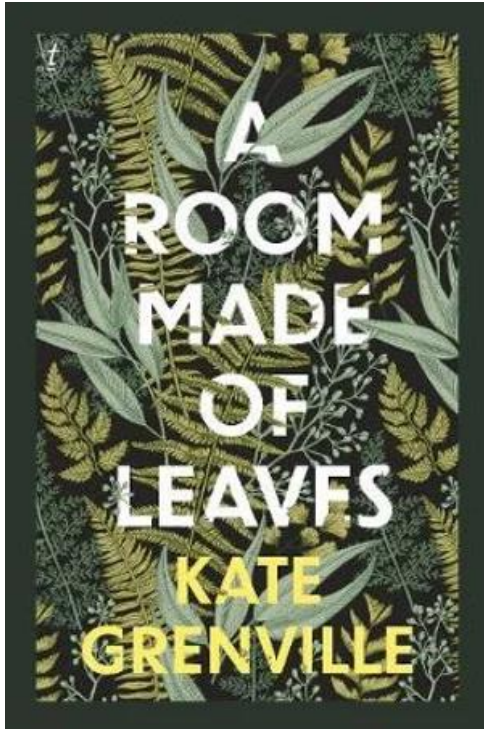
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Book Review - A Room Made of Leaves

Kate Grenville Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2020.

Review By Trevor Nottle



During the virus lockdown I have done more reading than usual and have turned to novels as a haven to my usual solid fare. In particular I have sought out and enjoyed books which are based on real characters and real history but which look beyond the main players to the lesser characters in the background. To develop a decent story in this format authors have to imagine a more rounded person than the one formally recorded in the biographies of their more famous associates.

And this is where I find my pleasure; the fictionalised filling out of real but not noted people.

Kate Grenville's book "A Room Made of Leaves" is about Elizabeth Macarthur, wife to the famous John Macarthur, the Father of the Australian Wool Industry. Elizabeth married young and came to Australia with John in the First Fleet. He was a tempestuous and very assertive man who was intent on making his way in the new colony. On many occasions he rubbed the wrong way with the authorities and officials of the fledgling administration, and he was much inclined to make threats of violence against those who stood up to him, and several times went so far as the challenge those whom he considered had insulted or affronted him to duels. Being a man-about-town and a man-of-affairs John Macarthur spent little time at home with his wife at 'Elizabeth Farm' near Parramatta. It fell to Elizabeth to manage the convict labour assigned to clear the land, engage farm hands and generally manage the business of making the farm prosperous and profitable.

His inclination to take offence at the least provocation resulted in numerous law-suits, tumultuous rages and a constant feeling that he was being done down by persons no better than himself, an officer and a gentleman. One of his duels saw him recalled to England to face charges – a very long and drawn out event. Macarthur used much of his time there to set up his eldest son in business and to build a network with London wool-traders. All the while Elizabeth

kept the home fires burning. John stayed away for 10 years during his first sojourn.

Grenville uses this big absence to question and imagine what happened while he was away. Who was really responsible for buying the sheep, grazing them, multiplying the flock and increasing the clip? How was the quality of the wool improved? Who decided to get out of breeding sheep for meat and into breeding for better fleeces? Who else played a part and how did Elizabeth feel about it all, especially her loneliness and her losses?

There is ample room for the development of quite a story in such a background and this is done with skill and a fine imagination. The desperate first years of the colony and its slow growth towards a transition from being a penal settlement to a proper community allow, encourage in fact, a story to be woven with many possibilities. The author takes full advantage of these and turns them into a history that is alive and plausible.

The thing about reviewing works of fiction is not to give the plot away. I haven't done this, I hope, but can recommend this book as great reading. For any gardening references the reader need go no further than the fact of 'Elizabeth Farm' and its gardens that may still be visited – once the pandemic has passed.



OGSA Recommends...

We recommend you always check our website for garden opening details. The website is an up-to-date, reliable and informative site which lists each open garden with a description of the garden, address (including a map), photographs, the availability of refreshments etc. The official Garden Notes written by the garden owner are also provided which you can read in advance or print and take a copy with you for your garden visit. Importantly, our website will always list any late additions or cancellations to our garden opening program.

<http://opengardensa.org.au/>

Open Gardens SA 2020 Spring Calendar

Entry Fee \$8 per Adult, Limited Concessions available, Under 18 free.

PLEASE NOTE:

In these uncertain and variable times, it is important to confirm garden openings by checking our webpage. Garden openings will adhere to Government directions applicable to COVID-19.

October

10 - 11

Casuarina, 52 Sheoak Road, Mylor

Working Person's Garden, 11 Ringmer Drive, Burnside

17 - 18

Alta Mira, 1 Alta Mira Crescent, Belair

Berkeley Vale, 30 Sturt Valley Road, Stirling

24 - 25

The Chestnuts, 46 Waverley Ridge Road, Stirling

Seaview, 32 Waverley Ridge Road, Stirling

Fiddlestix, 58 Holly Rise, Coffin Bay

25 Sunday only, 3pm to 5pm

SPECIAL EVENT - *Indoor Plant Afternoon*, Mitcham

31 October – 01 November

Ashgrove Iris Garden, 53-55 Albert Street, Gumeracha

November

7 - 8

Chez Nous, 12 Talunga Street, Birdwood

Drouin, 12 Mossop Court, Littlehampton

14 - 15

Sheriffmuir Garden, 166 Hawkins Road, Mount Gambier

21 - 22

Nick Mount Glass Studio & Garden, 2 The Parkway, Leabrook

29 Sunday only, 2pm to 5pm

SPECIAL EVENT – *Gumnut Wreath Workshop*, Mitcham



Casuarina, Mylor



Working Person's Garden, Burnside



Berkeley Vale, Stirling



Ashgrove Iris Garden, Gumeracha



Chez Nous, Birdwood



Sheriffmuir Garden, Mount Gambier

Commonwealth Points of Light – Award Recognition for BlazeAid.

We all understand, appreciate and value the amazing contribution of volunteers to our communities and society overall. Open Gardens SA established a Bushfire Fund a few years ago and we felt that it is important to use these funds to assist in rebuilding our communities. Following the devastating bushfires last summer, Open Gardens SA donated these funds to BlazeAid to assist in the recovery work in South Australia. BlazeAid takes a very practical, hands-on approach in this process. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. Working alongside these families, volunteers help to rebuild fences and other structures that have been damaged or destroyed. Equally important, volunteers also help to lift the spirits of people who are often facing devastating losses through bushfires. BlazeAid volunteers work in a disaster-affected area for many months, not only helping individuals and families, but also helping rebuild the local communities and repair the local economy by their very presence in supporting local shops and businesses.



We were delighted to recently learn that BlazeAid founders Kevin and Rhonda Butler have been awarded a **Commonwealth Points of Light** Award. Rhonda and Kevin Butler are the founders of BlazeAid, which has brought together an army of volunteers to clear ground and

rebuild fences following the devastating bushfires.

Points of Light are outstanding individual volunteers – people who are making a change in their community. First established by President George H. W. Bush in 1990, the UK Points of Light was developed in partnership with the USA programme and launched at 10 Downing Street in London in April 2014.

The Commonwealth Points of Light is a continuation of the Prime Minister’s Points of Light programme, with a special series of awards recognising inspirational volunteers throughout the Commonwealth to coincide with the UK hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, April 2018. These awards have been made by Her Majesty The Queen, as Head of the Commonwealth, to thank inspirational volunteers across the 53 Commonwealth nations. Following the success of this programme, Her Majesty The Queen decided to continue this work and award one volunteer from each Commonwealth country every week.

Kevin and Rhonda said: “We started BlazeAid in Australia after the fatal Black Saturday fires in 2009, pledging to help – with local volunteers – a few dozen of our immediate neighbours to rebuild their burnt fencing over 14 days. The idea caught on and in the ensuing 10 years, volunteers have poured in from all over Australia and the world to physically help others impacted by our country’s yearly recurrence of fires, floods and cyclones.

After almost 250 natural disasters, hundreds of thousands of volunteers, farmers, donors and local communities have teamed together to rebuild 14,000 kilometres of new fencing, 400,000 working days on 9000 devastated farms. The value of work done by BlazeAid volunteers who make such a difference to the lives of others – who have lost almost everything they hold dear – is in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

BlazeAid is almost totally volunteerism with just one paid bookkeeper. Today, BlazeAid has 26 base camps running over three states from Kangaroo Island in South Australia, throughout New South Wales and right up to the Queensland border following the 2019/20 Australian mega fires last Summer. Volunteers have been working shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of farming families daily, seven days a week non-stop, to rebuild what fires destroyed in just minutes. We wake up every morning being so grateful to the thousands of BlazeAid volunteers who selflessly make a massive difference to the physical, and mental health of hundreds of vulnerable country families in these devastated communities.

We salute all BlazeAid volunteers who enrich the lives of others every day and it is them we humbly accept the award on behalf of – for these wonderful and dedicated volunteers have made BlazeAid a most loved and respected Australian charity.”

Congratulations!

Theatre in the Garden - *One Man, Two Guvnors*



Two bosses, two paydays, two meal tickets.

This January *Open Gardens SA* and *Blue Sky Theatre* are presenting an outdoor performance of one of the most successful comedy adaptations ever – *One Man, Two Guvnors*.

Richard Bean's madcap revamping of *Carlo Goldoni's* 18th-century comedy, *A Servant of Two Masters*, is set in Brighton England in 1963.

It tells the story of Francis Henshall, a failed skiffle player, who finds himself working for two guvnors. One, Rachel Crabbe, is disguised as her dead gangland twin; the other is a snooty toff, Stanley Stubbers, who not only killed Rachel's brother but is also her secret lover.

Neither boss is aware the other is in Brighton, as Francis bounces like a shuttlecock between his two bosses trying to please them both. But how long can he keep them apart?

Award-winning director *Dave Simms* is bringing together a live skiffle band to join the *Blue Sky Theatre's* regular ensemble. It'll be another colourful and energetic experience under the stars.

"The play is a laugh-out-loud mix of satire, songs, slapstick and sparkling one-liners, and we're taking on the challenge of staging it in the open air," explains Dave. "It's a fast-paced dive into gangland families during the swinging sixties, gut-bustingly funny with plenty of British verbal and physical humour. I can't wait."

One Man, Two Guvnors will be staged at gardens in *Victor Harbor* on January 8, 9 and 10, *The Cedars in Hahndorf* on January 15, 16, and 17 and *Wittunga Botanic Garden in Blackwood* on January 22, 23 and 24.

There is a COVID-19 Action plan to keep everyone safe. As performances are outdoors, there's plenty of room to enjoy a picnic and a drink from the bar. The auditorium has been modified to allow for physical distancing.

Tickets will be available from 30 September 2020:

<http://www.blueskytheatre.com.au/creative/stand-by-for-a-night-of-gutbsting-giggles/>



SPECIAL EVENT - Indoor Plant Afternoon

**Sunday 25th October 2020,
3pm to 5pm, in Mitcham.**

Kirrily Hurst from Suci Potted Plants in Goodwood will explore the world of potted plants. Kirrily will be assisted by well known gardening identity David Hurst who is her father. They will talk about choosing the right plants and containers for your home or office and the care and maintenance of indoor plants. Pots and plants will be available for sale.

Cost \$50 per person. Limited to 20 attendees.

Wine and Cheese included.

Please visit our website for bookings:

<https://www.opengardensa.org.au/events>

Participants will be notified of any changes due to COVID-19.

Visit Kirrily's website:

<https://www.sucipottedplants.com/>



SPECIAL EVENT - Gumnut Wreath Workshop

Sunday 29th November 2020, 2pm to 5pm, in Mitcham.



A second workshop has been scheduled as the first workshop on the 28th November has sold out.

Cost \$80 per person. Limited to just 10 attendees, so book early to avoid missing this fun event!

Gumnuts, cones, seed pods, dried berries, wreaths, and glue gun will be provided. Please bring your own secateurs.

Afternoon tea will be provided.

Please visit our website for bookings:

<https://www.opengardensa.org.au/events>

Participants will be notified of any changes due to COVID-19.



Managing bushfire risk in gardens in Mediterranean climate regions (Part 1).

By Trevor Nottle



Bushfires, wild fires, brush fires and just plain fires are a common feature of all Mediterranean climate regions of the world; such events being part of the ecosystem as the means of dispersing seed, cleaning away accumulated dead plant growth and generating renewal by regrowth, flowering and seed germination triggered by heat and smoke. It does seem that

these events are becoming more frequent, more intense and more wide-reaching than in our experienced past. Coupled with a drying climate the risks of the fire season are starting sooner and finishing later too, thus giving property owners a shorter season in which to prepare for such fires and a longer period over which fire-fighting resources and personnel have to be stretched. To gardeners and home-

owners it is a very worrying scenario for the future. What can individuals do to take defensive action against such potentially devastating events as a bushfire or a wild-fire?

Before getting in a panic and rushing about doing 'something about it', take a while for a little thought, if only to save doing things which later prove to be a waste of time. Everything depends, as it so often does, on everything else – exposure of the site, prevailing wind directions; the garden being new or old? What does the Law say about the obligations of property owners in regard to fire prevention? What can you manage to do by yourself or with your partner in tandem to get the work done? How is the flammable dross and overburden to be dealt with? Where do neighbours come into it? How can plant choices impact on the spread of fire? What about hard surfaces and hard landscaping?

Should you have a newly purchased house on a brown-field site i.e. a brand new house in a real estate development you can start with an almost empty palette. Even if your new property included a landscape package that would set you up in your new home with a turf lawn rolled out back and front, and a foundation planting of several small trees and shrubs. You can pick up on the fire-proofing and retardant aspect of garden planning later as you rework what the contractor has planted.

PRIORITY ONE

The first plan is to have a plan. So, plan one.

If there is a bushfire what will you (and your family) do? Evacuate or stay and defend?

Good advice is available from a variety of sources including the web but sometimes it is possible, just possible, that the information found there may not be



especially useful to you in the area where you live so a better approach is to go to a local source – your municipal offices, community centre, local fire station, emergency services office or even the local office of your member of Parliament. From these resources it is easily possible to draw a few understandings:

- How to make an emergency evacuation plan tailored to you and your family.
- What is involved in defending your property and guidance in how to assess if you are prepared, physically, mentally and equipment-wise to defend your property.
- What to take if you do decide to evacuate – or are told to by the police or fire officers.
- What to have ready and near at hand before you go.

Trying to keep things simple, there is no need to go into more detail here. Suffice it to say it involves a battery-powered radio, a torch and batteries, a list of contact numbers, bottled water, medications, and prescriptions, and much more.

PRIORITY TWO

Minimising flammable risks. Put simply this means getting rid of as much flammable stuff on your property as you can.

The big issue here is taking timely action; action taken well before the onset of the fire season. This means making a determined effort not to acquire an excess of flammable stuff to start with. And if flammable stuff must be kept, it must be stored well away from buildings and from access and escape routes.

- Negotiating the reduction in acquisitions between partners in a relationship is easily the most contested ground for males and females. Territorial issues and personal pride, self-esteem and the role of tradition come into play. How much second-hand wood stored in a shed is too much? Of what real use are metres of plastic irrigation pipe in short lengths? How many years have passed since this tin of paint was last used? These objects may seem small, but there can be much bigger pieces of stuff stored away too: old car engines, broken lawn mowers, caches of tins and cans of oil and petrol, cupboards filled with garden chemicals. The basic issues at heart are thrift and prudence; you never know when any of this stuff could come in handy, or it could definitely be worth some cash, or no-one makes this thing any

more, or it will be used in a project that is brewing at the back of someone's mind, so I need to keep it.

- Determination and ruthlessness are required to get rid of almost everything that can burn, or explode, or ignite, smoulder, or otherwise combust. Disposal can cost too now that many local government recycling centres charge for waste dumping. Not only that, it has to be sorted prior to delivery too. Rubbish dumps won't take just any old junk anymore.

- Trade-off's can be tolerated but the final goal of ridding your property of most of the accumulated flammable stuff that has collected in sheds, on verandas and under decks, and in heaps against the fences must be firmly adhered to by both partners, and children too. How many adult children have moved out and left behind suitcases and boxes filled with things that might come in useful some day? If they haven't retrieved it to use it in 5 years they do not truly need it. Give it back to them, re-gift it or get rid of it. No excuses tolerated, no recriminations or sulking accepted.

- Most local government regions have free hard-rubbish collections for rate-payers at least once a year which can be used to get rid of much accumulated junk that poses a risk. Asbestos (which doesn't burn anyway), home and garden chemicals, old paints and solvents, petrol, grease and oil will most likely need to be taken to a special disposal station but don't be deterred should you have to pay for the

service. You are getting rid of dangerous materials that pose a threat that is so easily eliminated.

- Plastic shade-cloth is highly flammable. Its use in gardens and patios should be carefully considered as a potential danger and vector for the spread of fire.
- Maintain a sense of urgency about getting your property sorted, cleared and cleaned up within 9 months, preferably just in time for the fire season to be declared.

PRIORITY THREE

Having gotten rid of needless hard rubbish and dangerous substances focus can now turn more keenly on dealing with the dry, green waste that builds up on every property, even those that do not know the caring hands of a gardener. This means some kind of maintenance schedule – even for rental properties. Would you burn while waiting for the landlord to do it, or do it yourself? Common sense really, but just look around your own suburb or town to see how many people put it off, or simply don't do it.

- Green rubbish bins and regular free collection means that most house-holders can get rid of flammable green waste quite easily. Leaves, twigs, gum-nuts, small branches, dry weeds and grasses, vine prunings, tree trimmings, rose prunings, raked autumn leaves etc can all go into green bins. Get your money's worth from council rates and land taxes by filling your green bin at every possible opportunity. Don't be afraid to compact the contents by jumping on them in the bin, or ask a young garden helper to do it for you.
- Free dumping days are held at recycling depots by most councils and are usually advertised in rates notices and community notice boards. Limits on load sizes are common so check them out before loading up your trailer.
- Local governments can access Commonwealth funds to pay for services that help elderly citizens stay in their own homes. Garden maintenance is one of the home services that is often available so check out with your local council to see if you are eligible and make an application. That should take some of the worry about preparing for the bushfire season.
- Some service clubs will help if requested.
- Good neighbours can act collaboratively to help clear fire hazards and take it to the dump. Maybe this is the time to declare a street party or picnic – afterwards; a BBQ might seem a tad reckless.
- For some property owners a goat or two might solve the problem of keeping weed growth under control.

Article to be continued in our Summer 2021 Newsletter.



Australia's Wattle Day

Extract from the Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library

https://www.aph.gov.au/About/Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib9596/96cib1

The national floral emblem

Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), the national floral emblem, is a beautiful plant which grows in south-eastern Australia, notably around the ACT, in southern NSW, in the Adelaide Hills and widely in Victoria. Golden Wattles are variable in size and take the form of large shrubs or small trees depending on their location. There is also some variation in leaf width across the natural range of the species. In the Adelaide Hills, for example, the leaf is much wider than on the ACT variety (although note that mature wattles do not have true leaves; they are flattened leaf stalks). Large flower size, on the other hand, is a characteristic of all Golden Wattles.



The flowering season is late winter to early spring and so can be suitably associated with 1 September. Like many other members of the family, Golden Wattle has delicately scented blossom. Lifespan for the species is not long, only about ten years.

Wattle-like plants found overseas are often spiny, they tend to have less spectacular flowers and are known as mimosas. In Australia the *Acacias* are our largest plant genus with about 750 species. The Australian name *wattle* is an early colonial term which relates to the use of the springy stems as wattles (i.e., interlaced rods) in wattle-and-daub huts.

The first official move towards recognising wattle as a national symbol took place on 19 April 1984, when the Governor-General proclaimed Australia's national colours to be green and gold. This was an important step, because blue and gold had also traditionally vied for this status and there had been some confusion and personal preference involved. Blue can still be accepted as an unofficial national colour because blue represents a clear Australian sky as the background to flowering wattle.

On 1 September 1988, Golden Wattle was declared officially as Australia's national floral emblem. While Golden Wattle had long enjoyed that status informally - note its prominent place within the Commonwealth Coat of Arms dating from 1912 and on the insignia of the Order of Australia - it had taken strong supporters of the emblem, notably Maria Hitchcock and also the Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP), to persuade the Federal Government to grant official recognition in the Bicentennial Year.

Another aim of Maria Hitchcock and her fellow enthusiasts was to revive Wattle Day, which traditionally had been celebrated on the first day of Spring in several States although 1 August was the accepted date in NSW. At her urging, and with growing support from others, the Commonwealth and the States agreed in 1992 that Wattle Day would henceforth be the same in all States and Territories, that is, the first day of September. This was a necessary step towards reviving Wattle Day as a national celebration.

A brief history of Wattle Day

Although wattle was associated with Australia from very early days, its significance increased around the time of Federation. The first celebration of Wattle Day was held on 1 September 1910 in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Plans in 1913 to proclaim the wattle a national emblem and celebrate Wattle Day nationally were interrupted by World War I, but wattle remained a strong symbol of patriotism during the war years. Sprigs of wattle and colourful badges were sold on Wattle Day to raise money for the Red Cross. NSW changed the date to 1 August in 1916 because that allowed the Red Cross to use the earlier flowering and more familiar Cootamundra Wattle rather than Golden Wattle. Wattle was sent overseas in letters during the war and was presented to homecoming

service men and women at what must have been an emotional moment.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Wattle Day continued to be celebrated, still associated with raising money for charity but also featuring special activities for children and ceremonies to mark the occasion. Maria Hitchcock states in her book (*Wattle*, AGPS 1991, held in the Parliamentary Library) that Wattle Day was an annual event in NSW, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania but does not seem to have been recognised in Western Australia or the Northern Territory. Wattle Day was apparently a strong event in NSW schools. Unfortunately, the tradition was virtually lost after World War II. It was only in the 1980s, in prospect of the Bicentennial and in sympathy with rising national concern for Australian flora and the environment generally did a suggestion to revive Wattle Day receive attention.

It has been fortuitous that, just when the revival of Wattle Day seemed to be losing its way, the ACT Division of the Red Cross decided to take it on for fundraising purposes. The initial ACT Red Cross Wattle Day campaign launch was in 1994. Another welcome decision has come from the State and Territory cancer societies and councils to hold Daffodil Day on a Friday in late August, not on Wattle Day as previously.



Early Spring Blossom –Wattle photographed in the Adelaide Hills.

Open Gardens South Australia is a not for profit organisation
opening private gardens to the general public.

The purpose of Open Gardens SA is to educate and promote the enjoyment, knowledge
and benefits of gardens and gardening in South Australia and to build strong public
support for the development of gardens.

Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening.

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