
BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

BICA Newsletter No. 39 August 1997

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What Native's Flowering?

Botanical name: *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* "Hurstbridge Form"

Common name: Rosemary Grevillea (Hurstbridge Grevillea)

Family: Proteaceae



This naturally occurring local *Grevillea* has a very limited distribution within the Melbourne area and is usually associated with the Box Ironbark Forests in the drier rocky areas bearing gold deposits and shallow soils, eg Hurstbridge.

Grevillea rosmarinifolia "Hurstbridge Form" differs from the commonly sold, cultivated variety, which is a threat to the local one as it hybridises freely.

The Hurstbridge *Grevillea* is a low-growing shrub usually less than a metre high by a metre wide. The leaves are stiff, narrow and needle-pointed, about 15mm long and bluish green. The spidery shell-shaped flowers are in short, loose, round clusters drooping from the end of branches. Flowers are cream with pink tonings and appear mainly in winter and spring.

The flowers provide food for nectar-eating birds and the dense prickly foliage gives shelter and habitat for small birds.

The shrub prefers an open, sunny position in a well-rained soil, growing usually on rocky sites with shallow soils. Tolerates moist well-drained soils, semi shade and drought conditions.

Propagates readily from cuttings.

Cric Henry

BICA president's report

Not a great amount of time has passed since the July newsheet but there are always things happening.

Nillumbik has distributed its (our) municipal strategic statement for public comment. It is heartening to see the environmental emphasis of this version as it will form an integral part of the planning scheme that will control and direct development-versus-conservation in our shire.

Read carefully, attend an information night conducted by the shire (July 29 at Warrandyte and July 31 at Panton Hill) and make submissions to constructively revise the document or to actively support its positive attributes. It is important.



The Friends of the Fire Brigade, Cafe Benders, is always a great opportunity for community interaction, but the July coffee morning was a special treat. As well as the normal coffee and cake there was the opportunity to partake of a Kamminga breakfast (or brunch) and a frenzy of activity with Syd and Ona providing the art materials for kids of all ages. The third Saturday of each month sees Cafe Benders.

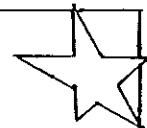


In a previous existence as a suburban dweller I was sucked along by the quarter-acre dream. Now, as I drive through our neighbouring suburbs, I am amused at the amount of effort that people make to achieve so little.

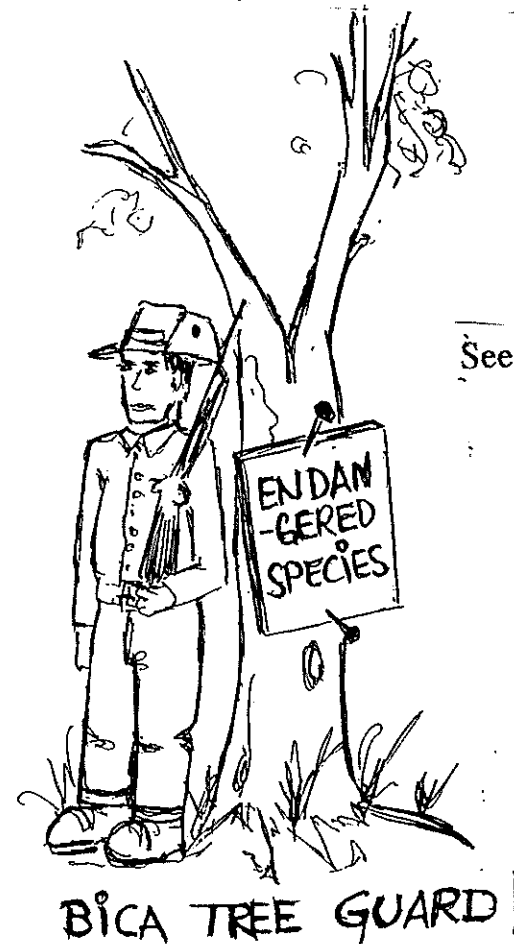
We also see the spread of that urban philosophy into our bushland areas when new residents, recently escaped from suburbia, work so hard to put their imprint on their rural dream. Fences, garden beds, lawns and illuminated driveways are imposed to show who is the master.

It is a pity a bit more patience and thought is not shown to allow an understanding of what is happening around us so we can work with it instead of perhaps destroying something unique.

Next BICA meeting



On August 10 we will have a general meeting which will discuss the ring road and its potential threat to the ELZ. This will be followed by a presentation on the powerful owl by Steve Craig. Bring a chair, a mug and afternoon tea to share. 2pm at the Taylors, 585 Henley Road.



See articles on page 9

All aboard to Antarctica

By Shella Dixon

Many years ago when I was a young teenager I read Scott's Diary. I found it all rather romantic, in a tragic sort of way, and though I thought the final plight of the ponies pretty awful, Scott was quite a hero to me.

A lot of water under the bridge and many years later, the more scientific use of nutrition, cold-weather vehicles and better clothing have made a lot more work and expeditions possible.

When I discovered there were flights to Antarctica and back in a day I knew I would get there at last.

And so it was one early Sunday morning that Barb and I were off. Gate 11 at Tulla was packed with a planeload of people having breakfast, talking excitedly and being introduced to Morrie and Ursa, two huskies and their handler. Lovely, thick-furred Alaskan friendlies. Morrie had prostate trouble and Ursa suffered from arthritis. Both now live out their lives in a back yard in Altona.

Then at last we were off. A very jolly sort of plane load. One was a 90-year-old gent had been given the trip for his birthday. There were also numerous old dears with wheelchairs temporarily parked at the airport.

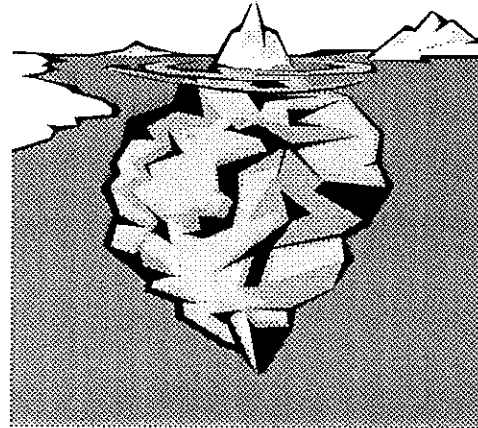
We flew low over Hobart and set off south through the Southern Ocean. After three-and-a-half hours, behold! There were our first icebergs. This was the first thrill of the day, seeing those mathematical shapes with what looked like some very clever stage lighting under the waterline. The sky was an intense blue, the sea even darker, and this glowing aquamarine light shining from below.

Then, soon after, the first of the pack ice that surrounds the continent. As it was summer it was breaking up into flat islands divided by blue passages and cracking like toffee.

We were flying at 5000 metres. Soon we were over the land of Antarctica. It was hard to believe I was here at last. Outside it was sunny and sparkling, and we were just glued to the window. Unfortunately the scratches on the outer plastic of the windows made photography difficult.

We flew over a French base at Dumont d'Urville and noted the black streak of a runway. The French actually blasted a penguin colony to kingdom come to make the runway but something funny happened. A tidal wave came in and ruined their boat. I believe the Aussies had to rescue them. Tsk, what a bit of bad luck for the French.

We were flying along the rim of the ocean and the land, and as we passed over the Mawson glacier we spotted a yacht anchored in a sheltered bay.



Then the best part. We reached these beautiful mountains which were the Transantarctic Range. They were tall, pointed black peaks rising out of the snow. They looked like a magical fairyland. Then the pilot told us to hang on for we were going to fly through and around them. So there we were flying with one wing tipped skywards through this wonderful place.

I must admit I harked back to my flying days in a little Piper Cherokee. Now I

was in this four-engined monster. Very smooth, though.

Wonderful meals all day and any sort of grog free. By the way, it was minus 50C outside. If I ever had the money I'd do it again, but this time business class. It was too crowded in economy.

Barb and I got home about 10.30. I turned to her and said, "Do you realise we've been to Antarctica today?"

The lowdown on the albatross

By Sam Staley

What has Macquarie Island got to do with the Bend of Islands? And why, as the winter chill closes in around us, should our thoughts turn to a tiny colony as far south-east of here as Cairns is due north? On a rainy day in May, one of our first for the year, penguins and albatrosses were the subject of an amusing and interesting talk by Karyn Alexander, who addressed the BICA meeting with the results of her three months spent down at Macquarie Island.

Accompanied by some wonderful slide photographs, Karyn entertained and enlightened us about her research project on albatross pairs, which was carried out in a nesting colony a day's walk from the main base. With an associate, she lived in a tiny hut with all her supplies and only radio contact with civilisation. Rough seas and bad weather made boat trips to her corner of Macquarie very dangerous.

Each day the two researchers tagged and recorded tagged and recorded breeding and nesting. This magnificent, ungainly bird forms mating pairs, mainly for life (with a little extra-marital activity thrown in), takes years to mature and produces minimal progeny.

As adult birds die or are killed, the population is in severe decline, with only 16 to 20 breeding pairs now on the island. Thus, Karyn's research is vital if the colony is to continue.

Macquarie Island is tiny, smaller than Flinders Island, and its rugged and rocky landscape is a backdrop to some of the most violent weather and seas imaginable.

Karyn's brilliant photographs awoke us to the beauty of this place, with its vast number of penguins and seals and other birds. Penguin-laden rocky beaches, with flocks so numerous that every inch of the pebbly shore was covered, reached up into steep, rocky cliffs, with

narrow penguin paths and precipitous overhangs.

We saw penguins of all types, from the small to the very large, the sleek to the very fuzzy (no Latin names have lodged in my memory). Weak or injured penguins were picked off mercilessly by birds of prey circling overhead, as their mates hurriedly abandoned them.

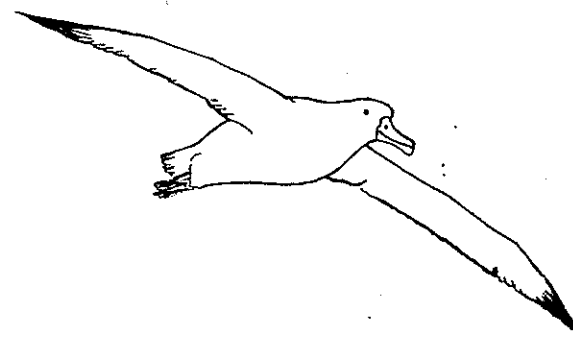
Their fate was akin to that of the albatross in the process of "long-line fishing", needlessly caught up in trails of bait intended for tuna but snaring as well large numbers of albatrosses and other birds. Karyn spoke of the many ways in which commercial fishermen could reduce the incidence of "bycatch" and so help slow the decline in bird numbers.

Many of these were simple, like shortening the gap between the transom of the trawler and the point at which the fishing lines go into the water. Others involved costly modifications to boats and procedures. Yet urgent action is needed to save the albatross population.

One photograph of Karyn's lonely hut showed a bottle of wine upon the mantelpiece. When her talk was over, and Alan presented her with a similar gift from BICA, she remarked upon the pleasure such a bottle could provide someone otherwise deprived of many of the comforts of civilisation.

Likewise, Karyn's talk brought to life general issues of conservation which could pass un-noticed, deep in the Southern Ocean, to those of us caught up in day-to-day matters.

Greenpeace's May newsletter lists some simple ways to help the albatross's chances. Perhaps we could give them our personal support.



A meeting with Neil Douglas

By Norm Linton-Smith

Some few residents in the ELZ may ask, "Who is Neil Douglas?" Neil Douglas, MBE, landscape painter, was one of the founders of BICA and the ELZ. He and Abigail Heathcote (also a painter and versatile country craftsperson) built the house on Henley Road known as "Atunga", where Mike and Annie Skewes now live.

Neil, together with Randell Champion, surveyor and town planner, and our own Tim Ealey, retired director of environmental science at Monash University, additionally founded the Round The Bend Conservation Co-Operative in 1971.

Last May I received a letter from Neil with \$10 enclosed and asking for a copy of Professor Donald Thomson's book, Bindibu Country. He had obviously read my article about the BICA annual general meeting in the April issue of this newsletter.

The letter also contained an invitation to visit him at his seaside retreat at Point Smythe, near Tarwin Lower, as he had "some docos" (as he put it) to show us.

Using the friendly postmaster/storekeeper at Tarwin Lower as a telephone relay I arranged a date and time for early in June. Mick Woiwod, our resident historian, and Carol and Alan Bonny were keen to go, so on June 3 we set off in two cars. We stayed the night in Alan's house in San Remo after sight-seeing around Phillip Island and next day went in my car to the postmaster for directions to Neil's.

Neil lives in a caravan and adjoining shed on freehold land which is surrounded by the Point Smythe Reserve. The caravan is reached by a narrow winding sand track cut through the tee-tree.

Neil met us at the gate marked "management vehicles only" and

unlocked it. He was in his Nissan Patrol which is set up for sleeping, cooking and painting. We followed him to the caravan where he lives by himself. The caravan and shed are closely surrounded by tee-tree and there is just enough space to park two cars.

He has no phone, water or electricity. The caravan is heated by a single burner with a 20-centimetre reflector mounted on a small propane gas bottle. Another bottle and burner are used to boil water for Neil's frequent cups of tea. Surely this amazing bloke, who will be 86 in August, is integrating his life with his immediate environment in a most non-invasive way.

We all sat outside on Neil's chairs around a rustic table where we drank tea, ate lunch and talked, while unafraid birds shared space with us. Of course, Neil did most of the talking, and this went on for more than four hours.


His memory for people, dates and events is remarkable. Hopefully, Mick will in time record Neil's accounts for the edification of us all. Neil's eyesight and hearing are good and he looks much the same as always with his shock of long white hair and beard.

This was the first time that I had seen him wearing shoes AND socks, but he explained that he was recovering from a spider bite on a foot that had nearly caused him to be lost.


We all enjoyed our time with this feisty, legendary man, and a couple of weeks later a letter arrived from him saying how much he had also enjoyed the meeting.

He also enclosed a photocopy of a letter he wrote to residents of the Bend of Islands calling for a meeting to discuss approaching the necessary authorities to retain the 10-acre lot size in the area in the interests of nature conservation and to help keep out people unsympathetic to such interests.

The date on the letter was 11/11/1966. Thus was BICA established. Mick now holds this letter and other correspondence relating to our visit.

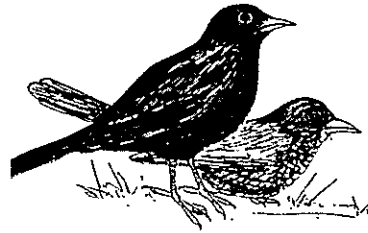


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Bye, bye blackbird

By Mick Woiwod



Of all our fine feathered friends the blackbird is perhaps the most perverse. Whilst most of us have little trouble developing a dislike for sparrows, minahs and starlings, the English blackbird has somehow managed to inveigle its way into our hearts by way of a melodious voice, a chirpy make-up and the childhood nursery rhymes that, despite them seeing it baked in a pie, has it very much a part of our world. Every quarter-acre backyard in the suburbs has its twosome happily feeding on cotoneaster and snails and scratching away in the leaf litter beneath some deciduous tree.

In the bush though the birds are urban terrorists masquerading as everyone's friend while secretively spreading hawthorn and pit-tosporum and god knows what else throughout the district and displacing our native robins and thrushes from their formerly supportive ecological niche.

Our first blackbird arrived some 10 years ago and ever since it has been a case of search and destroy — regardless, they persist — and still I find it hard to actually hate them. Not being a gun-owner on philosophical grounds, the strategy I developed over those first years had been to capture the birds and destroy their nests.

Being a remarkably inquisitive bird always on the look out for something new, the English blackbird is relatively easy to catch in a possum trap by means of a baited cord running from the trigger-end to the front of the trap. Throughout, my problem had been the disposal of the enemy once captured and it was here that I believe I made my first big mistake.

Aware that the suburbs of Melbourne had a couple of million of them already in residence, and believing that one or two more

wouldn't matter that much (and that anyhow only pigeons homed), we bused them back to their former cotoneaster homeland. They probably found their way back to the Bend before us.

All we knew was that we still had blackbirds serenading daily — now much wiser birds no longer easily enticed into a possum trap. By this time it was spring with nest-building busily under way. Realising the threat, we set out in search of these and, having destroyed them, felt that at least we were holding our own. Within a few days though the female who regularly disrupted our vegetable garden each morning had once again vanished.

Out on the trail in the firm belief that man was smarter than beast — instead of destroying the enemy's nests — we garnisheed their eggs. The English blackbird though is a determined creature and within weeks further eggs were being laid. With these too commandeered their window of opportunity in the summer of 1995 closed without their numbers building.

The next bird trapped we dabbed with a spot or two of white paint before releasing into the suburbs. It returned immediately and the lesson was learnt. All further birds were issued with both a dab of paint and a set of primary wing feathers trimmed — none returned. Unable to fly as easily as before they perhaps provide breakfast for some hungry suburban moggie who otherwise might take out a native ground thrush or bronzewing instead.

Incidentally, five years ago a pair of Indian minahs took up residence on our block. Being even more inquisitive than the blackbird these were easily trapped and seeing them as decidedly alien, I had little difficulty in dashing their brains out against the nearest tree. No Indian minah has since been sighted! The question I keep asking myself is 'am I a racist or simply lily-livered?'



As time goes by

By Bob Millington



Until now, time has tended to conform to the “manana” principle in the Bend of Islands.

Geologically speaking, as our own historian, Mick Woiwod, has pointed out, around our way the Plasticene Era melded so gently into the Gellibene Epoch that an observer would have been hard pressed to spot the difference between lava and larva, as indeed was the Herald Sun chap who reviewed the film *Volcano* recently.

This sense of urgency communicated itself to the first inhabitants, who appear to have waited 20,000 years to authorise the Wurundjeri Festival, and then on the other side of the river.

White settlers were not that much better. Arthur Augustus Calwell paid the final installment on the scrub his great-uncle selected some 60 years after the due date.

By that stage, great-uncle Calwell was long under the Astroturf while Arthur A. was on his drawn-out journey to proving that, in Australia at least, being peppered with birdshot on the eve of a national election by a manic teenage poet is, alas, not necessarily to one’s political advantage.

Let’s be truthful. Lethargy has reigned in this wood of the necks. Until, that is, the arrival of the bins. These extruded-plastic sentinels may be Darth Vadars to Alan Bonny, but to others they are a miracle of modern science: a combined clock and calendar, with no moving parts and fewer batteries.

A clock? Certainly. The rumble from next door late on a Sunday afternoon alerts us, better than any quartz timepiece could, that the sun has set and that young Nick Franz is making the most of the fading light to trundle the household garbage bin down to the gate.

We must do the same at once, or else sortie out into the dark later.

This would involve fishing around for a torch and risking stumbling into the puddle that seems to persist year-round in the valley of our drive.

A calendar? Too right it is. In the past, Bend of Islands’ time has been delightfully fluid. We note the passing of the seasons, expect the Night Event to take place in March and are beginning to remember we have to walk to the pub in October. Otherwise, we’ve tended to be as vague about dates as an amnesiac Arab at an oasis.

Not any more. At our place we have the four-week timetable uppermost in our thought.

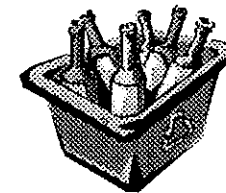
Mind you, Week One can be characterised by complacency. You toss the bottles into the bin willy-nilly. The deep booming sound is reassuring. It reminds you the container is empty. By Week Two you’re worried. You have been making calculations about consumption rates and the level of fill, and it doesn’t take Einstein to draw a conclusion.

Week Three is when you round on the family. “Why can’t you remember to squash those fruit juice containers,” you snarl at smaller people, who then sensibly point out that 93 per cent of the contents of the bin is associated with beer and wine.

Panic sets in at the start of Week Four. The thing is overflowing. You call Neil Taylor and hope he needs empties for a wine bottling; you ask around for the nearest Scout depot; you suggest visitors take their dead marines with them; you wonder whether the neighbours will notice if you top up their yellow-lid.

And then it’s over ... for another 28 days.

Life will never be the same. But at least we’ve learned to tell the time and know the date.



How a visitor viewed us

By Jean Macmahon

It was Thursday, May 22. I was late and tried not to hurry on the wet and unfamiliar roads. The meeting place was the Oxley Bridge on Henley Road in Kangaroo Ground. Too far it seemed from my early morning appointment in Heidelberg. Rounding the last curve before the bridge I could see parked cars and, as I crossed the bridge, to my great relief a crowd of people. Wonderful!

Alan and Carol Bonny, local residents and active members of BICA (Bend of Islands Conservation Association) had agreed to give the "Friends" a tour of this unusual and successful experiment in marrying human needs with those of the natural environment.

Eighteen people had come to enjoy the day. We set off in a north-easterly direction to follow the course of Watson's Creek. We moved beneath a canopy of well-grown Manna Gums; so very tall, and who can say how many decades of living they hide in their growth rings. At one stage we saw on the opposite bank a wonderfully expansive sward of Spiny-headed Matrush. Very restful to the eye.

The creek banks (up to a metre deep) were in places lined with several sorts of ferns. The water was clear, unlike that of the river it would soon join. Perhaps this is why it commanded our attention. Two of our party just happened to be looking at the moment a fish moved by. Ross Coupar felt pretty sure it was a native — a River Blackfish. Wish I'd seen it too. I've never set eyes on one even though I live close to the Yarra and have paddled in it many times.

We turned back when we reached the large, lonely oak tree; all that remains of an old homesite. One wonders what became of those who planted the seed so long ago.

A large mob of kangaroos well up the slope above us gave a jumping and running show.

We ambled back to the cars and drove to the end of Henley Road. From here we had fine views of something we would rather have not seen: heavy, noisy machinery pushing and pulling at the earth for the Heritage Golf and Country Club. Billabongs, precious natural features, with their complements of plant and animal life, disappearing forever. Why? Because some people with too much power and money (they usually go hand in hand) want to make more money.

We retreated to the home of Margaret and Mick Woiwod for a warming banquet of breads, home-made soup and cakes. And what a home! No monstrous modern house this, but a friendly place, built with care (and flair) from recycled materials and mudbricks.

Out on the balcony some family friends were feasting. A party of White-winged Choughs, regular visitors to the feeding tray, were snuggled up together on the handrails. How many do you think there were? I'll give you a hint. There were more than 10 and less than 20. Yes, you're right. I counted 18. Hmmm ...

Alan gave us a talk on the origins and the rationale behind the Environmental Living Zone. It's a fantastic concept, and if more of Australia's bush-dwellers (human variety) followed the guidelines, our natural remnants would be more secure.

Mid-afternoon saw us exploring the Woiwods' river views and riparian vegetation. We also took the time to admire their very healthy-looking vegies, watered by treated sullage.

Finally, we were taken to an area of dry sclerophyll forest. It was a delight to wander among grass tussocks and discover some orchid-rich areas. We came upon some lovely little Tiny Greenhoods. This was a treat, as this orchid is endangered in the State Park.

Thank you to the BICA folk who gave us such a pleasant day.
(Published originally in the Friends of Warrandyte State Park newsletter)

Because so much material was submitted so late in the editorial process, a number of articles have been held over until the next edition (October?). We still, however need more; please start writing now. It would be good to minimise the last minute scramble for publication!

Ed.

Nails and trees

By Peter Gurney

Recently I picked up a copy of *Your Week*, a free local news magazine from the KG Store. This production includes a range of articles of interest to people living in the Hurstbridge district. The May issue contained a story on the damage caused to trees by banging nails into them, ostensibly to hang signs.

Fiona Douglas interviewed an arboriculture expert, Dr Greg Moore, who said that nails (and presumably any other fixing that punctures a tree) can cause serious damage and, over time, lead to the death of the tree. We have local evidence of this.

I can remember when the sign tree at Oxley Bridge was a living tree. It has been killed by many of us, including me, banging nails into it. After reading the article I have noticed other local trees with nail damage and containing areas of rot.

Nails are damaging, according to Dr Moore, because they wound the tree and create the potential for the wood to decay and fungi to enter. Apparently, fungi are the most common problem, followed by bacteria and viruses. The nail penetrates the living circulatory tissue of the tree, thus providing the entry point for disease.

Nails also react electrolytically with the sap. They rust rapidly and release toxic chemicals around the nail site. The toxins enlarge the wound.

Dr Moore points out that if nails are pulled out the trees tend to heal. This applies even to tree punctured long ago.

Something else to consider is removing house numbers nailed to trees and fix them securely to posts. House numbers are very important, especially to allow emergency vehicles to find our homes.

In the past many of us have also nailed up temporary direction signs to show guests the way to parties and the like. We should now go around and remove any old nails we left in the trees. Next time

we need signs perhaps we might tie them on.

Incidentally, BICA is working with the Shire of Nillumbik to eventually replace our poor old now-deceased sign tree with a proper community signpost. This is not likely in the short term, but certainly we should not start to kill another tree with nails when the sign tree eventually falls over.

For my part I am checking the trees at my place and removing any old nails. One old sign, put up in the 1960s, used to promise a fine of ten pounds to wood thieves. It is now faded and unreadable. This particular tree looks healthy but I am taking no chances.

Plastic treeguards: how beneficial?

By Steve Craig

According to the promotional material distributed by the manufacturers of plastic guards (Sure Gro Technical Bulletin No. 4), research findings show that seedling survival rates were lifted from 64% for unguarded trees to 96% by using their plastic guards.

Guarding of plants in certain situations may increase their survival rate but it is only one of a number of factors. These include:

Timing: Natives can be planted at any time, but experience over many years has shown that within the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges the most appropriate time is following the autumn break. Over the colder autumn/spring months plants will not put on much growth but will consolidate their roots during regular rainfall. As temperatures rise during late spring and early summer and soil temperatures increase, the growth rate will begin to rise.

Site preparation: Ensure weeds are adequately controlled to

reduce competition. Consider the use of weed matting. Ensure rabbit burrows are ripped and fumigated and the area to be planted is adequately fenced to exclude grazing stock.

Choice of plants: Obtain indigenous tube stock of local provenance from a reputable nursery. Stock should not be taken directly from glass or polyhouses but should be hardened off outside well before planting.

Correct planting: Many plants do not survive long because they are incorrectly planted. Ideally, holes should be twice as wide and deep as the container and the soil well broken up. Plants should be watered the night before planting and gently removed from the tube. Support the roots and stem while planting and ensure that the base of the stem is level with the top of the hole. Use fine dirt to fill around the roots and firm with your fingertips only. Do not fill the hole with imported soil as this will create a sump effect, waterlogging the root system. Next, water each plant with half to one bucket of water, making sure the soil is not washed away.

Protection: Healthy seedlings correctly planted require guarding during the early stages only to protect them from grazing animals such as rabbits and wallabies. Consider the cost of guarding individual plants compared to erecting animal-proof fences. Also consider the visual impact of plastic guards compared with wire mesh.

Maintenance: Many people are under the false impression that once the plant is in the ground and protected by a plastic tree guard that it can be forgotten. Bamboo stakes are easily dislodged, guards can lift, letting in rabbits and weeds. Wallabies have also been observed pushing plastic guards down to consume young seedlings. Keep checking.



LOCAL FERNS

Common Maidenhair (*Adiantum aethiopicum*)

By John McCallum

Almost everyone is familiar with the pale green lacy fronds of this fern. The stipe (main stem) of each frond is shiny, dark brown or black and gently zig-zagging. It is the thin dark stipe that gives this fern its common name.

The fronds are tufted and can be up to 60cm long, although in this area they are usually smaller. The leaflets are yellow-green to mid-green and roughly D-shaped with the outer edges rounded or with toothed or lobed ends. The veins are forked but, like most ferns, not netted.

Although it is very delicate in appearance, Common Maidenhair is found in a variety of situations including quite exposed positions. It is widespread throughout the country and occurs in New Zealand and Africa, as its specific name suggests.

In the Bend of Islands it is found in moist situations such as gullies and shady hillsides. A commonly-cultivated species not widespread in the wild in this country is *A. capillus-veneris*, another maidenhair, the specific name of which translates directly to the common name.

Common Maidenhair is typical of the members of the genus *Adiantum* in a number of features. The name itself refers to the fact that the pinnules (leaflets) shed water without becoming wet (adiantos means "dry"). The arrangement of the spore-bearing structures is usually diagnostic in ferns and in this species the sori (bundles of sporangia) are clustered under a kidney-shaped indusium.

A. aethiopicum is easy to grow in a pot or in the ground. It does better in a shady, moist situation.

Fascinated with fungi

By Val Himmelreich

Although fungi are included in the plant kingdom they differ from our usual idea of plants. Fungi lack chlorophyll (the compound that gives plants their green colour) and are unable to manufacture their own food. They reproduce by spores, not seeds.

On germinating, the spores develop into filamentous cells called primary hyphae. Compatible primary hyphae of the same species unite to form secondary hyphae which grow to form mycelium or fungus body. Sometimes this is visible as white threads, although usually this occurs within the soil, in rotting wood or litter, or parasitic in living plants or caterpillars.

Different kinds of fungi prefer different habitats, some grow only on dead wood, some around the base of trees, some only among grass or out of moss beds. They can be found between mid-autumn and early winter, when the bush has been soaked by autumn rains but not yet too cold.

There are hundreds of species of micro fungi which are only visible under a microscope. The larger "mushrooms and toadstools" visible in the bush at this time of the year belong to three main groups. Not all species have common names.

1. **Myxomycetes** (slime moulds). Common in damp, sheltered places such as the underside of logs, they are often overlooked because they are so small.
2. **Basidiomycetes** (Basidia-bearing fungi). Produce their spores on microscopic club-shaped cells called basidia. This group includes the agarics or gilled fungi (mushrooms and toadstools), boletes (fleshy pore fungi), polypores (woody pore fungi), telephores (leather and shelf fungi), hydroid fungi (spine fungi), clavarias (coral fungi), gasteromycetes (puff-balls), phalloides (stinkhorns) and jelly fungi.
3. **Ascomycetes** (sack fungi). Produce their spores in microscopic

tubes or sacs, each called an ascus. Included in this group are the ascomycetes (cup fungi and relatives), morels, vegetable caterpillars and such highly economic micro-fungi as yeasts.

The following species can be found fruiting at this time of the year in the Bend of Islands.

- ♦ Gilled fungi from the genus *Cortinarius*. Members of this genus have a cobweb-like veil in the newly-emerged fungi. One of these is *Cortinarius austrovenetus* which is green.
- ♦ Flame Fungus, including *Clavulinopsis miniata* or "Small Tongues of Fire", range from bright red to various shades of pink.
- ♦ *Trametes versicolor*. (Rainbow bracket fungus).
- ♦ *Stereum illudens*. Irregular dark brown to violet patches looking like velvet growing on dead branches.
- ♦ *Trametes cinnabarinus*. Orange bracket fungi commonly found growing on rotting logs and branches.
- ♦ *Pisolithus tinctorius* (Horse-dropping fungus). Occasionally seen on house battens and in cleared areas.

One to particularly look out for is *Phaeogyroporus portentosus*, occasionally seen growing on roadside banks. Yellow and up to a metre in diameter, it's our biggest bolete and probably Australia's largest terrestrial fungus.

Happy hunting.

Special thanks are due to Bob Millington for the appearance of this issue of the BICA Newsletter. Because of a last minute rush of articles Bob readily agreed to do a bit of typing. The usual publisher (Jephrey) then became incapacitated at a crucial stage of production and Bob's original offer grew into a total commitment. It transpired that, because of incompatibilities of computer software, Bob had to type the whole thing again and push it around in a desk-top publishing program that he had. This is despite that fact that either the contributors or the editor had already typed it out once before! (Remember, computers make things easier, don't they?) Thanks Bob and Trish from us all.

Ed.

