

# Bend of Islands Conservation Association

Newsletter No 9. October '84



Botanical Name: Solanum laciniatum

Common Name: Kangaroo Apple

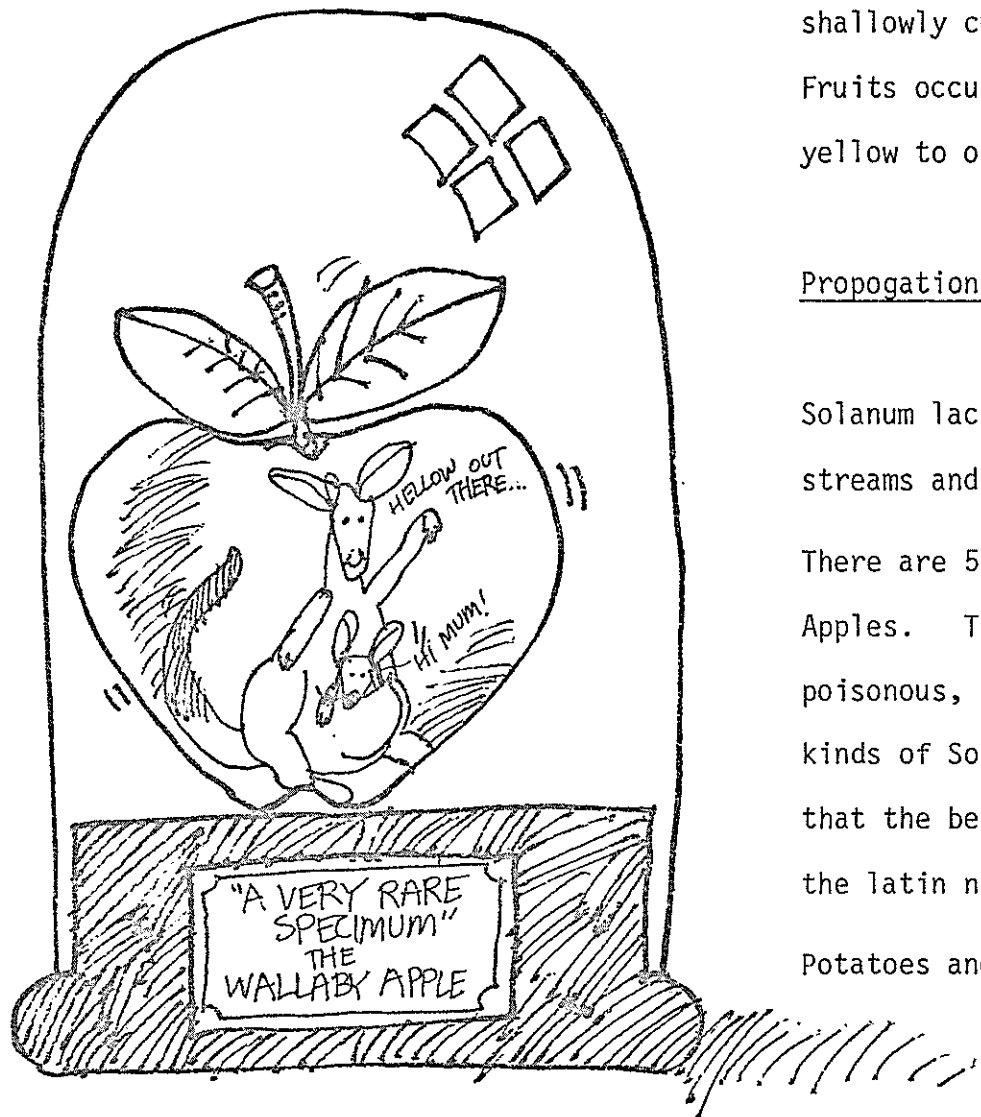
Family: Solanaceae

Main features;

- .large spreading shrub 2 - 3 metres tall
- .soft - woody shrub
- .fast growing
- .hardy in most soils and aspects
- .an excellent screen plant
- .leaves are long and thin, dark green above  
paler green underneath with a prominent midrib  
either with undivided or with several irregular  
lobes. Leaves vary in length - 4 to 36 cm.

cont. page 2:

From front page:



The flowers occur in Spring to Summer. A purple fused corolla 3cm across, shallowly cut between 5 notched lobes.

Fruits occur in February - an ovoid 2cm long. The berry is smooth and yellow to orange in colour.

Propogation is by seed or cutting.

*Solanum laciniatum* is found in forests east of Melbourne, sometimes near streams and often on rocky sites:

There are 5 species of *Solanum* in Victoria. They are all called Kangaroo Apples. The ripe berries or fruits of the Kangaroo Apples are not poisonous, though they are unpleasant to taste. The berries of some kinds of *Solanum* were used as food by the aborigines. The misconception that the berries are poisonous may be associated with the name 'Solanum' the latin name of the very poisonous European nightshade.

Potatoes and tomatoes belong to the same genus *Solanum*.

# The Birds and the Bees

Have you been to Eltham lately? Or driven down Blackburn Road? If you have, you must be aware that the expression 'population explosion' is far more than just an empty cliché. (Isn't that the trouble with clichés, that they express something so obvious that even expressing it is tedious?) The human population explosion, although it is taking place at such a rate that its environmental consequences are dizzying, happens slowly enough that a whole lifetime is hardly enough to hear the bang...unless you drive down to Eltham.

But looking at a similar explosion in animals with shorter generation times than ours is like watching a speeded-up film. An explosion like this is taking place in the ELZ right now, and we have ringside seats. What we are seeing is the invasion of the ELZ by an animal which finds our environment even more congenial than its homeland. The animal is the European wasp, Vespula germanica.

Let me digress to tell you the story of the starling, Sturnus vulgaris, in the USA. This bird, native to Europe and much of Asia, was deliberately introduced into the US. Twenty-three separate introductions were made without success: The birds didn't survive. But the Americans really wanted those birds, and in 1890 they released eighty in Central Park, NY. A year later eighty more were set free. In ten years the starlings had colonised New York City. By 1918 they had begun to radiate and were found breeding 300 miles from New York in every direction. By 1932 they bred in more than a third of the USA, and by 1949 in over half. Now they breed throughout the whole USA. Typically,

the juvenile non-breeding birds were sighted in an area five to ten years before breeding was established there. The starlings colonised three million square miles in fifty years after the successful introduction, without changing their habits of life at all.

Now, back to the wasps. In 1977, the first European wasps were recorded at Daylesford, having apparently come from New Zealand where they have been established for many years. (English wasps, Vespula vulgaris, an almost identical-looking but less aggressively colonising species, have lived in Melbourne since the '50's.) When I first attended LaTrobe University (early 1982) there were no European wasps there, but by 1983 they were abundant. In my first year in the ELZ (late '82-'83) I seldom saw a wasp. Now I can see one whenever I want. See the connection with starlings?

I'll tell you about the wasps' life history. The adults rather resemble bees, but are bright lemon-yellow and real black rather than the bees' goldy-yellow and brownish-grey. They are less furry than bees, their bodies are more elongated, their wings narrower and held straight along the back. Their flight is more darting than that of bees, and the sound it produces is different. Like bees, the wasps are social, but their colonies are usually underground in soft earth. Each colony consists of a fertile queen, numerous infertile workers (which are smaller), a varying number of drones (males), and many wingless developing larvae and pupae, which are contained in cells in a honey-comb-like structure made of a papery material. The adults feed on sweet materials (nectar, honeydew, soft drinks, etc.), but they

4  
The Birds and the Bees cont:

collect meaty substances to feed to the larvae. These foods include dead or live insects (in fact, the one good thing to be said of the wasps is that they do kill blowflies), carrion, scraps from pets' dishes and so on. In Europe, the colonies normally die out in winter: the only survivors are the young queens which have become adult and mated in autumn, and spent the winter in solitary hibernation. These are the ones you find in woodheaps, under stones, or in piles of bricks. Kill them at once! Each one is ready to found a whole new colony, all by itself, as soon as warm weather comes.

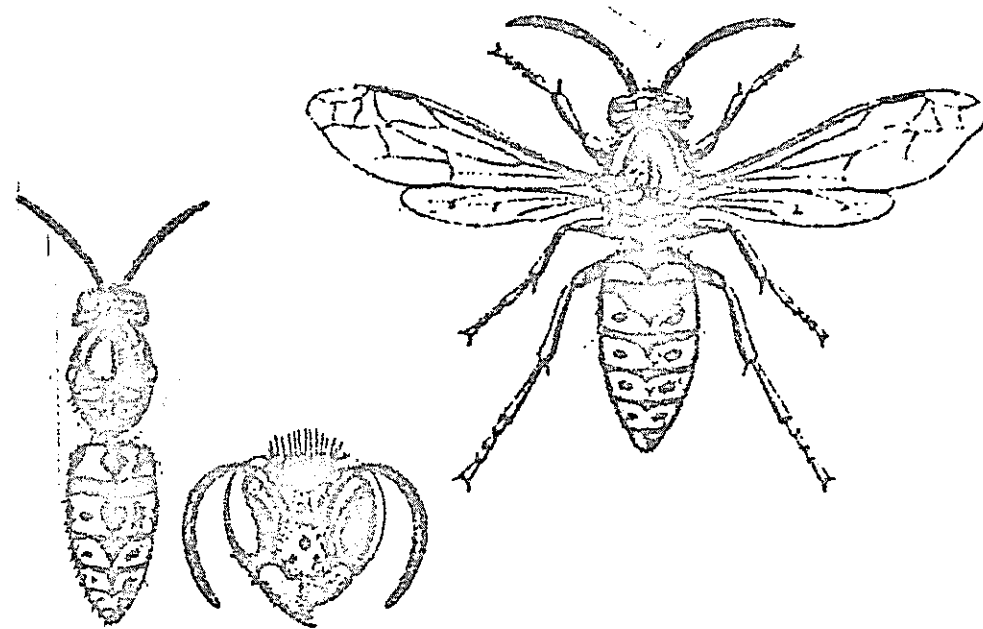
However, right through this winter, I have seen workers hanging about my dog's dish. Since they are collecting meat, it follows that there must be overwintering colonies about. This is confirmed by discussions with the Department of Agriculture, and it's bad news: it means the wasp population explosion is a really BIG BANG.

There are several reasons I wanted to draw your attention to the wasps, apart from their instructiveness. Firstly, the workers sting repeatedly (not once like bees) and most severely. They do hang about sweet things, so be careful if drinking from cans out of doors.

Secondly, nests have been found in the ELZ, and the Council can't always attend to them promptly. You can deal with them yourself, or I'll do it for you, if you prefer. If the nest is in the ground, just pour half a litre of kero or petrol down the entrance after dark, then cover it up with a stone. If the nest is in a wall or other inaccessible place, the Dept. of Agriculture recommends that you use carbaryl (often called tomato dust) or propoxin (sold for flea powder -- check the labels carefully). You could try rotenone or another environmentally acceptable product, but no guarantees! (Let me

know if you do and it works.) Just dust around and into the nest entrance (which is usually a small hole. The wasps will carry it into the nest, where they groom and tend each other, the larvae and the queen: the nest should take a few days to die out, and you should then block up the entrance.

A final note for those who keep bees. The worker wasps will steal honey and larvae and can often be seen at the entrances to weak hives. The spring wasp queens will enter weak hives and may found colonies in them. Beekeepers in New Zealand have opened hives they thought contained quiet bees and found them full of most unquiet wasps. So keep your eyes open and your hives strong. We are experimenting with blowfly traps this season -- we may keep down two menaces. Meanwhile it's not quite too late to check your woodpiles and timber stacks!



By Kristin van Brunschot

# Christmas Hills Hall

I'm sure you're all eagerly watching the progress on the Christmas Hills Hall. If not, why not?

The work schedule is outlined in the CHPA October newsletter. So far we are on schedule, thanks to the good work of a relatively few people. George Winter and Ron Kreymborg have completed the electrics and Jeph Neale, Mark Denton, Pierre and Harold have completed the floor.

Much work is still to be done to complete the job for our inaugural event on Saturday 8 December.

The Hall is looking great and if you would like to contribute (labour or money) to this magnificent example of community enterprise, ring Glennis Bibra (712-0486, 417-3414) or Ron Kreymborg (730-1602). Your help will be welcome.

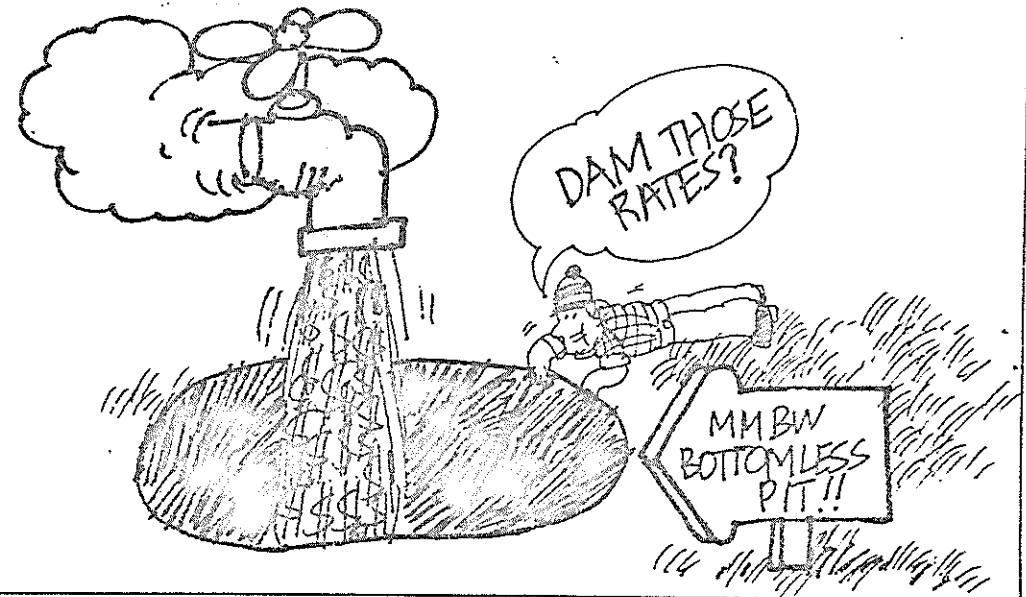


# MMBW Rates

Several residents have received rate notices from the MMBW. We surmise that this is a new drainage levy imposed by the Board since their assuming responsibility for the management of the Upper Yarra River.

We are investigating the legitimacy of this levy and would suggest recipients of the notice to withhold payment until the issue is clarified.

For further details contact John McCallum.



# Amendment No 22 - The Hearing

On 24 July about twenty-five residents of the ELZ met at the Healesville Council chambers with a one-man panel from the Ministry for Planning and Environment to speak to their earlier written submissions on proposed Amendment No. 22 to the Environmental Living Zone or just listen to the proceedings. This amendment seeks to exempt six properties described as being of a 'rural nature' from certain ELZ provisions. It would permit the keeping of 'livestock other than goats provided that the number of animals kept does not exceed the self sufficiency capability' of the allotments in question and also of 'domestic pets other than cats'.

In opening the meeting, Mr John Chamberlain, acting as a one-man panel, informed the group that of the 74 submissions received, 24 were in favor of the amendment and 45 against. He then laid out the ground rules for the exchange of opinions, which was to take place in an informal way that would allow an opportunity for all who wished to be heard to add to their written submissions and to answer questions from other people in the room, as well as the chair.

Ted Elgood, on behalf of the newly formed Bend of Islands Residents' Association, led off for the supporters of the amendment. He was followed by Gordon Littlehales, Eileen Hasty, and Margaret Elgood, all speaking as property owners.

Among the points raised by the proponents of the amendments were the following: 1) the land under consideration differs considerably from the greater part of the ELZ because it has been used for grazing and is only lightly wooded at best;

2) most of these holdings have been intelligently managed and the land not abused; 3) non-conforming rights should not be allowed to lapse after a short time of non-usage, for special conditions, like overseas travel or high fire danger, might require the temporary removal of stock; 4) if non-conforming rights are threatened, existing improvements would be rendered valueless and future ones non-economical; 5) the resale value of these distinctive areas has been lowered by the stringent restrictions of the Zone; 6) some of the property owners in question had not been aware that their land was included within the ELZ; and 7) cleared land is less of a fire hazard than bush.

The case against the amendment was put by John McCallum and Neil Harvey, on behalf of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association and the Round the Bend Conservation Co-operative respectively, Tim Ealey as an 'expert witness', and the following as individual property owners: Tom Fisher (including a written addendum by Michael and Barbara Cargill-Faris), Margaret Dillon, Meg Henderson, Cric Henry, Fabian Douglas, Wendi Henderson, Frank Pierce, Syd Tunn, George Winter, and John Roberts. Jeph Neale spoke on behalf of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade.

Opponents raised a variety of objections, including the following: 1) non-conforming rights are protected under existing zoning; 2) the ELZ is an ecologically integral area that would be virtually bisected by the proposed re-zoning; 3) most new owners and residents have moved into the area with the knowledge and support of the ELZ zoning and would be disadvantaged by

## Amendment No 22 - The Hearing cont:

any changes; 4) the amendment is imprecisely worded and inconsistent with the stated objectives of the ELZ; 5) additional dogs would exacerbate the already existing problem of uncontrolled dogs; 6) the unique natural and esthetic qualities of the land should not be further compromised; 7) the threat to the lapsing of non-conforming rights can be handled without a change to the entire zoning; and 8) in general hobby farming has proven to be hard to manage effectively and in this case would compromise the nature of the Zone in perpetuity if not checked; and 9) well-managed bushland need not pose a greater fire hazard than grassland.

Mr Chamberlain, who has advanced degrees in both planning and environmental studies, conducted the hearings in a low-keyed manner that discouraged emotive rhetoric and permitted the rational exchange of information and opinions. He listened with patience and understanding to each individual, often asking pertinent questions, and accorded equal respect to esthetic and 'quality of life' points of view on the one hand and financial considerations on the other. He stated that he would visit the area but not contact any individual property owners. His findings could support, reject, or propose modifications to the amendment as currently worded. Council may accept or reject the panel's report, but the final decision will be made by the Minister, who will have all relevant information at his disposal. According to the new Shire Planner who acknowledged the unusually large amount of documentation for an issue of this nature, no word has yet been received from Mr. Chamberlain.

# End of Year Get-together...

## Sun. 2 Dec.

Instead of our December meeting we invite B.I.C.A. members to participate in the open day for the Shires 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

The day will end with a bar-b-que on the Co-op community centre site commencing at 4:30 pm.

This will be instead of the Nov. 25 General Meeting of B.I.C.A.

Please contact Janet Mattiske (7120 356) if you wish to participate in the open day.



# Being Prepared...

# Working Bee...

It's time to prepare for the bushfire season. Some things you should be doing are:

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18 NOVEMBER.

10am

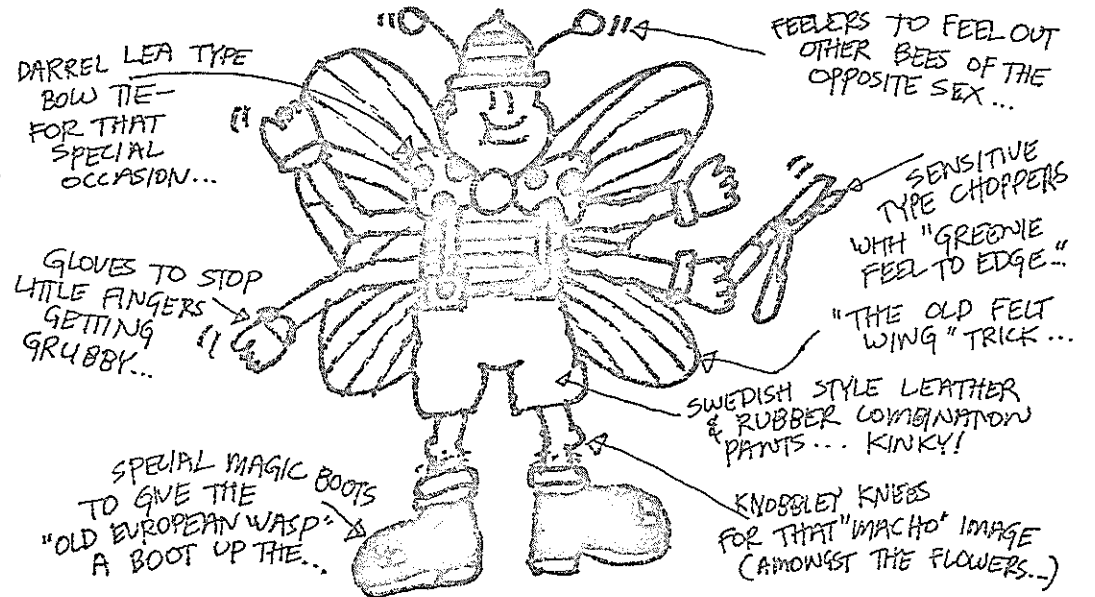
at the watertank Henley Rd./Catani Bvd.

- .check your equipment:hoses, metal buckets, ladders, gloves,fuel powered water pump, hessian bags, shovels,hoes, rakes, knapsack spray, blankets ...
- .re-check your water supply
- .move woodpile and stacked timber away from house
- .keep the grass short
- .reduce ground litter
- .clean out gutters;remove debris from roof.

We need to trim the foliage along the roads to increase visibility and improve safety.

Contact the C.H. Fire Brigade if you have any queries or want assistance.Other helpful hints were printed in Newsletter No.3.

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# The 150<sup>TH</sup>

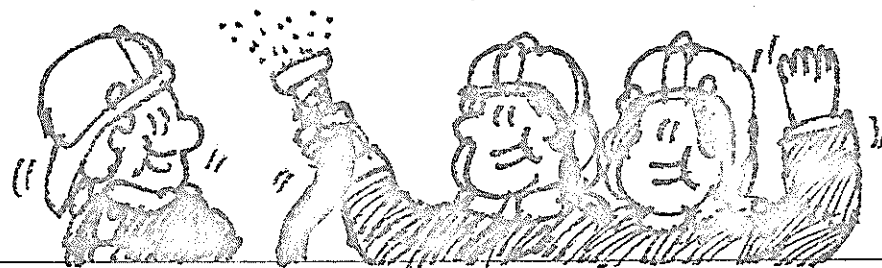
Healesville Shire will be making their contribution to the State sesquicentenary with a series of events and activities throughout the Shire.

On Sunday 2nd. December a number of residents will be opening their homes to visitors from other parts of the Shire.

Information about the ELZ will be distributed to raise others awareness of what we are trying to achieve in the zone.

# Brigade News

The last week of October was Fire Prevention Week. Our truck joined others from Region 13 to publicise CFA activities in Eltham shopping centre on Saturday 27th.



You are invited to an exhibition

## Two potters, two painters

Glennis Bibra, Elsa Jackman (decoration, Hilary Jackman),  
Syd. Tunn & Wendi Henderson.

at Healesville Art Gallery lapidary and pottery.  
Nigel Court, Badger Creek via Healesville, on the left,  
1km before Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary. ph (059) 624-147

opens: Sat. 1<sup>ST</sup> DEC. 1984 2-5pm.

finishes: Mon. 31<sup>ST</sup> DEC. 5pm.

open everyday including all public hols. 10am-5pm.

## FLEECES FOR SALE

CONTACT TED OR MARGARET ELGOOD,  
PHONE 7120 247.

THANKS TO:

CRIC HENRY, KRISTIN VAN BRUNSCHOT,  
JOHN ROBERTS, CAROLANN FISHER, TOM FISHER

AND YOUR ORGANISERS  
SYD AND WENDI,  
MICK W. AND MIKE F.

POST  
PAID