



*Crowea exalata ssp magnifolia*  
(Image by Maria Hitchcock)

# Australian Plants Society Armidale & District Group

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## Summer Edition 2022

### In this issue...

From the Editor.....	2
Office Bearers 2022.....	2
Torrington after the fires.....	3
Arboretum Working Bee 25/02/22 .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
New Book on Orchids Error! Bookmark not defined.	
An Interstate Trip for Plants ..Error! Bookmark not defined.	
Garden Visit 19/02/22 .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Some Recent Books... Error! Bookmark not defined.	
For your diary.....	15



**Tarsipes rostratus**  
(Honey Possums) on  
Banksia speciosa in WA



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## From the Editor

Well, here we are after another year has flown. The past three years have been somewhat Biblical with drought, floods, pestilence (mice), pandemics and now war. We certainly live in interesting times.

The weather pattern has certainly changed. We have been keeping rainfall records at our property for forty five years. Over three years we had the driest year (270 mms) and the wettest year (1200 mms) that we have experienced in that time. This certainly tested the resilience of the plants and tested my own resilience as well.

Losses of plants from the drought were extensive, both of natives and exotics and much of my time in isolation was spent removing dead plants and trying to replace them with more drought tolerant species.

Then came the rain – and it kept coming. Our area is not called Saumarez Ponds for nothing. The ground was absolutely saturated with water oozing out of the ground from the top of the block to the bottom. I have been unable to get a mower onto the bottom of the block for a year. The deluge certainly tested the water tolerance of many plants.

I found where I had planted into mounds of earth, drainage was effective and losses were few. However, where I had not mounded, losses were considerable, especially Rutaceae (Correa, Phebalium, Philotheca) as well as Prostantheras and many others. The lesson: use mounds to plant into even if you do not seem to have a drainage problem. Many of the deaths became evident when the warmer weather arrived and with roots rotted away, the plants could not keep pace with transpiration and death ensued.

The group has continued its activities, albeit in a changed way to accommodate the public health requirements with COVID. We tried Zoom meetings but found nothing beat the fellowship of meeting in a garden and talking face to face. Most of our activities have been outdoors with working bees at the Armidale Arboretum and running a plant stall at the Markets in the Mall when allowed to. Garden visits have resumed. A few weeks ago we had 30 people attend, which would have been close to a record. The relief and joy of members in being able to get out again and socialise was quite evident.

We will continue with these outdoor activities. There is some prospect that the St Peters Open Garden Weekend in November will be on this year and we hope to participate with an open native garden and associated plant sale. So here's hoping the bad times are behind us and we can all share our plants together.

## Office Bearers 2022

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## Torrington after the Fires

by Maria Hitchcock

It is two years since the fires ripped through Torrington Conservation Reserve and while much of the park has regenerated well there are still areas which will take some time to return to the diversity that existed before.

### Mystery Face

The track from the carpark to the Mystery Face rock is in very good condition with some recent upgrades to the timber steps. Along the track *Acacia betchei* dominated with its sparse pale yellow flowers highlighting the bush on both sides of the track. There are not many wattles that flower in January so you should add this one to your list. It grows mainly in the Torrington and Granite Belt districts. *Grevillea viridiflava* was also in flower. Formerly called *Grevillea linearifolia* this small shrub was everywhere and in flower. I'm not sure if it regenerates from lignotubers or if these are seedlings. The Torrington form has greyish green narrow leaves and cream styles. The species is restricted to the Torrington, Girraween and Bald Rock areas as well as parts of the Granite Belt. I've tried growing this species without success. It probably likes a well-drained sandy soil.



*Acacia betchei*



*Grevillea viridiflava*

*Goodenia hederacea* was in full bloom spreading over bare areas of soil and making a lovely display. Nearby *Scaevola ramossissima* made a wonderful colour contrast. Both are groundcovers which are making the most of the cleared areas and sunshine. Both are good garden subjects. *G. hederacea* is a widespread species growing from the coast to inland in a wide variety of eco-systems. It would do well in a tub. *S. ramossissima* is fairly rare in our area with its main populations occurring in the south of the State. I've seen this in Victoria as well. The bright fuschia colour is very attractive.



*Goodenia hederacea*



*Scaevola ramossissima*

There are some wonderful rock outcrops along the track. This is the home of *Prostanthera teretifolia*, the greyish green mintbush which is restricted to Torrington and parts of the NW Slopes. It occurs mainly in the clefts between rocks where sand and leaf mould collect with rainwater to form a unique growing environment. There was a lot of regeneration but most of the plants were fairly small. Next spring would be an ideal time to revisit. This species has several colour forms ranging from white to pale pink to purple. I have a pale pink one which I collected years ago when my children were small. I've kept it going in the garden through successive generations. I called it 'Pink Cloud' and have been selling it through my nursery for years. It is a very hardy species and highly drought tolerant. It does require full sun to flower well. Nearby I spotted clumps of *Isotoma anethifolia* in full flower. *Isotoma* are easy to grow annuals and will self seed. They are highly drought tolerant. This species is restricted to the northern part of NSW.



*Prostanthera teretifolia*



*Isotoma anethifolia*

We finally arrived at Mystery Face Rock so named because of the natural carved image of a man's face. Nearby were signs of the fire's destruction with this hollowed stump.



Mystery Face Rock



Burnt out stump

Later that afternoon we drove along Blatherarm Rd and were stopped in our tracks by these great drifts of Flannel Flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*). I've been to Torrington many times but never seen Flannel Flowers before. We saw another large drift of them on Butler Rd. This has been an excellent season for Flannel Flowers along the coast and in the Blue Mountains. No doubt the fires stimulated seed in the ground to germinate and with the excellent rains they are putting on a spectacular show. We walked up Butler Mine Rd for some distance and came across *Dodonaea hirsuta* with its tiny leaves and large red seed cases. This species is confined to the Torrington and Granite Belt districts. Along the way we came across many more species regenerating such as *Dampiera stricta*, *Correa reflexa*, *Banksia marginata*, *Hakea macrorrhyncha*, *Brachyscome stuartii* among many others.



*Actinotus helianthi*



*Dodonaea hirsuta*

# Arboretum Working Bee Report 25<sup>th</sup> February

by Patrick Laher

Upon arrival at the Arboretum, it was still a bit drizzly, and I was ready to call off the working bee. But our local weather forecaster, Penelope Sinclair, said it would be OK. And, sure enough it was an excellent day for our work!

Our team of ten members, with the aid of a trowel and bucket, hand weeded all of our garden beds bar one. Phil Rose chain sawed dead material and overhanging branches. We found three locations of the dreaded Passion Vine, which we will have to remove each working bee. It is possible that our Currawongs are bringing in this seed or that it is in the mulch that we use.

Every garden is experiencing germination of just about every weed in creation! At our next working bee, we will complete the hand removal of weeds in the remaining bed, and do some planting. As the current Council mulch is unsuitable, we will try new mulch which hopefully will be available in April or May.

Thanks to the following: Penelope and the bearded Eric Sinclair, Colin Wilson, Phil Rose, Peter Shephard, Leontine and Ken Barnett, John Nevin and Greg Horsley.



Phil Rose pruning a tree



Peter Shephard weeding



Greg Horsley working hard



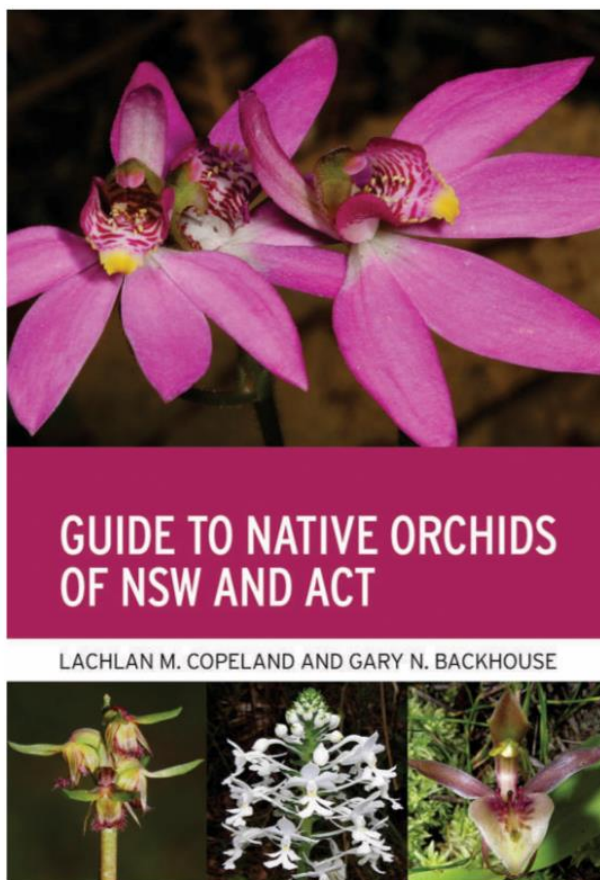
John Nevin weeding

## A New Book on NSW Orchids

### GUIDE TO NATIVE ORCHIDS OF NSW AND ACT

Lachlan Copeland, Gary Backhouse

Paperback - January 2022 - AU \$49.99



A few years ago, Barbara and I attended the Fred Rogers Weekend Seminar in Victoria that was devoted to Orchids. At the dinner on the Saturday night, I sat next to a chap called Gary Backhouse. In the course of the evening and the dinner, I discovered that he was the author of a recently published tome that dealt with the Orchids of Victoria.

I raised with him that Lachlan Copeland from up our way was interested in doing a similar book for the NSW Orchids (Lachlan was well known to us giving presentations during his PhD thesis on Homoranthus as well as leading many bushwalks).

Gary replied that he and Lachlan were working on the project together and hoped to produce such a publication. Well, here it is – the product of years of work. It is now available and I have my copy. It is a paperback, very well illustrated with location maps and comprehensive descriptions. Being a paperback, it is easily portable and can be used as a field guide.

To those with an interest in Orchids, very much recommended.

John Nevin

## An Interstate Trip for Plants

by John Nevin

Like most people, Barbara and I have had “cabin fever” after being locked away for most of the past two years with the COVID-19 pandemic. So, when the Qld border opened, we took the opportunity to travel with Pat Laher to Qld. There is a small hobby nursery in the Lockyer Valley run by Chris Nikolic and he holds a plant sale a few times every year at his property at Tallegalla called “Smarty Plants”.

Chris specialises in grafting, especially *Eremophilas*, *Banksias*, *Hakeas* and *Grevilleas*. We set off after an APS committee meeting and headed north on the New England Highway. On the way we drove over the newly opened road at Bolivia Hill and were impressed with the cantilevered design that has caused minimal disruption to the surrounding area that is well known for the number of endemic plants.

We eventually arrived near to Tallegalla and after securing some Motel accommodation, had a meal at a nearby pub enjoying the company of the locals.

The next day, with the help of Google Maps we found our way to the “Smarty Plants” Nursery. The nursery is on a fifty acre hobby block with the garden on a sloping area with a north east aspects. Like most of the Darling Downs and Lockyer Valley, the soil was a rich basalt. We arrived early as the sale did not start until 10 am (Qld time!), so we lined up with all the others that had ventured from surrounding areas, such as Ipswich, Toowoomba, Kingaroy and had an interesting conversation comparing COVID experiences and plant growing.

When the gates opened, we were impressed with the variety and reasonable prices of plants available and ended up getting many more than originally planned for. I was after a grafted *Hakea trineura* and obtained a good specimen but bought a lot of others that we liked. Patrick was after a grafted *Hakea archaeoides*. He was a bit slow and missed out getting one of the two available. However, the local buyer had pity on him realising how far we had travelled and passed one onto him. Chris Nikolic recognised the generosity of that person and is going to graft one for her in the next few months.

After the purchases, we took the opportunity to have a look at the extensive garden around the nursery – lots of lovely plants, many of which would be marginal in Armidale with our climate. In talking with other attendees, we were encouraged to travel twenty minutes to Lowood, where there was another highly recommended hobby nursery as well as a Rail Trail which the nursery owner had landscaped for a kilometre or two into Lowood.

We lost Patrick on the trip as traffic was heavy and phone reception poor, but continued onto Lowood. The nursery was Pete’s Native Plants and run from a suburban backyard and had expanded to take in two neighbour’s yards as well. The range of plants was quite extensive and priced very reasonably, so we loaded more into the boot. A feature was the range of grafted *Eremophilas*.

After making our purchases, we went to inspect the Rail Trail and the plantings alongside it. The Rail Trail is 130 Km in length and runs from Lowood to Yarraman. The first kilometre running into Lowood has a concrete pavement and there are extensive plantings on both sides of the trail. Lighting is provided by solar powered street lights. There were a lot of young people out riding for the day and noting our age and general level of fitness, they suggested an electric bicycle would be our best option.

Fortunately, there was a well situated Bakery at the beginning of the Rail Trail where we obtained a tasty lunch. The Trail has strong local support from Council and assistance with garden maintenance is provided by “work for the dole” and from the Courts as part of community service sentencing.

Then for home with arrival just on dusk at 8 pm. The last time we drove through the Darling Downs, the area was in the grip of the severe drought. This time the contrast could not be greater – lush and green everywhere with ripe sorghum crops ready for harvesting. All in all, an enjoyable escape, some new plants to try, and a great area to have a look at if you are up that way.





The entrance driveway to “Smarty Plant Nursery” at Tallegalla with Patrick’s car second in line.



The Nursery entrance before the gates were opened – I don’t think the bike gets much use.



Details for “Smarty Plants” Nursery



Customers lined up for the plants



Plants heading for new homes



Portion of the large garden at the nursery



The Rail Trail for the last kilometre running into Lowood. Note the concreted trail with solar powered street lighting and display gardens on both sides with an extensive variety of Australian plants, most of which are labelled.



The "Station" at Lowood end of the Trail with users having lunch.



The Trail with associated plantings and signage.



The unpaved section beyond the kilometre of concrete paving



Signage about the Code of Conduct for use of the Trail

## Garden Visit 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022

by Penelope Sinclair

Recently 20 fortunate members got together in the open air to visit the Armidale garden of Keith and Colleen Finlayson. This is a mainly native garden plus some of their favourite exotics, fruit trees and a vegetable garden. The block is about one acre.

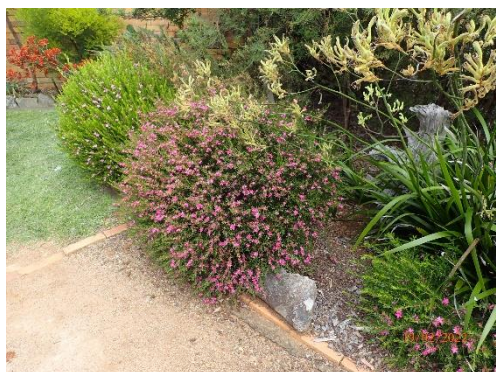
Keith explained that when they arrived 24 years ago it was very much an English style garden which included Pines and Cotoneaster bushes. They decided to grow natives to encourage the small birds back into the area. Their efforts have certainly been effective; despite the number of people sharing their space, we saw several honeyeaters moving through the bushes while we were there.



The garden contains some unusual and very beautiful species, many from Western Australia. Keith does some of his own propagating and has taught himself grafting. He has many *Eremophila* (Emu Bush) species grafted onto *Myoporum montanum* stock – in particular *Eremophila nivea* with its mauve/blue flowers and grey foliage made a great display as did the tall *E. calorhabdos*. Other colourful W.A. species



included the *Anigozanthos* spp. (Kangaroo Paws), scattered through the garden and seen below L) with *Crowea* spp. in flower and again with *Xerochrysum* sp. and the tiny blue *Wahlenbergia stricta* Blue Mist (below centre).



The garden layout with its different sized beds, neatly edged, and the mix of flower and foliage, forms and colour, provided unending interest. A delightful addition were the mighty grey tree stumps scattered through the area. A birdbath tucked under a flowering *Callistemon* was also eye catching.

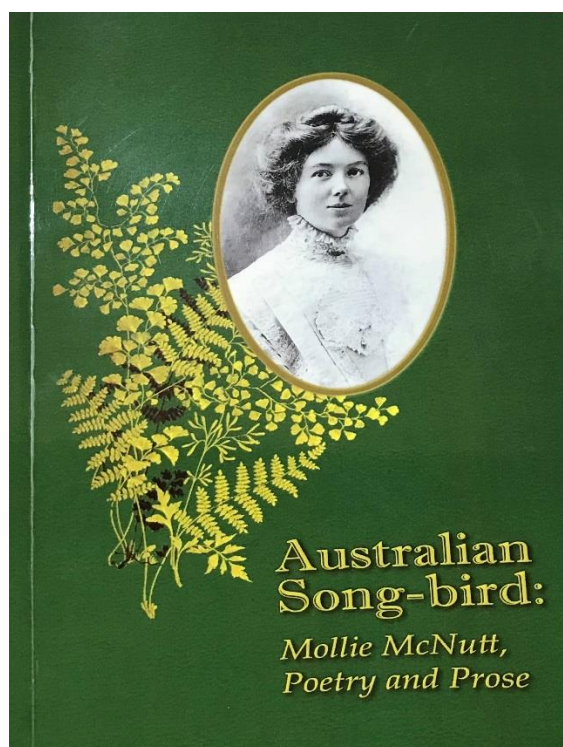
Interesting ground cover was provided by a small *Westringia* Wollomombi and *Wahlenbergia communis* (Snow Bells) while nearby was a *Goodenia ovata* and the white flowering *Platysace lanceolata*.



Keith and Colleen were kept busy answering questions as we moved through the garden. John Nevin expressed our appreciation as he presented them with 2 plants at the end of a very enjoyable morning's visit.

## Some Recent Books

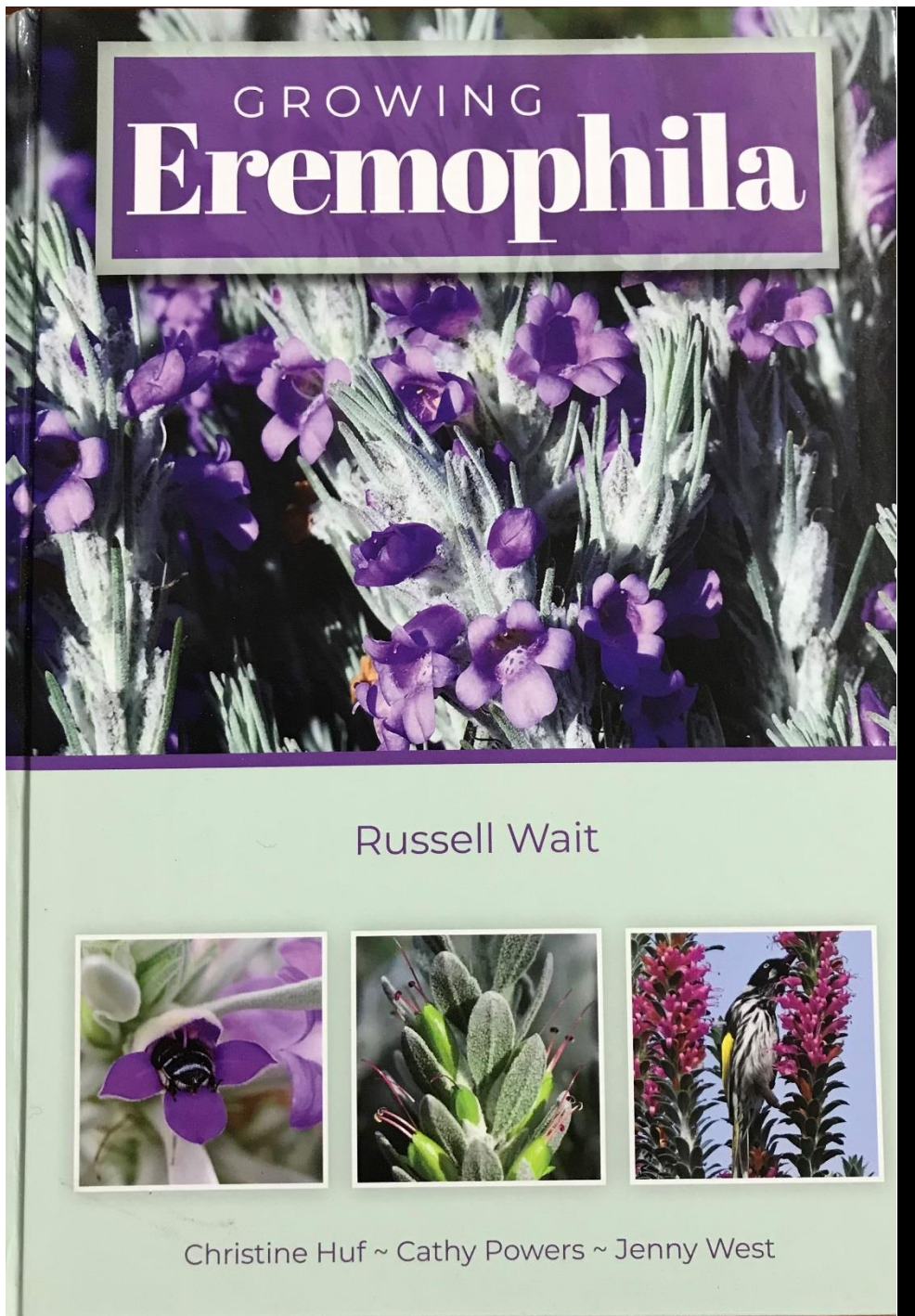
by John Nevin



This book was published by a local author, Jane Lally. It is the biography of Mollie McNutt, an Armidalian, who was the wife of Andrew McNutt. They were both teachers at Torrington in the early 1900's and both had a love of the bush. Mollie published prose and poetry about the bush for many magazines. She obviously had a deep affection for the local environment.

Her husband sent to the State Herbarium a specimen of Wattle that he and Mollie had found at Torrington and realised that it was different. It was indeed different, and was named *Acacia macuttiana* in August 1913.

Molly died at Torrington of tuberculosis at the age of 33 years. She is buried in the Presbyterian section of the Armidale Cemetery.



Another recent publication about the growing of Eremophilas. This book is hard cover, 490 pages, available through the Eremophila Study Group or direct from Russell Wait.



Information about Eremophilas has exploded in recent years, with much of the work being done by a group of enthusiasts from the Wimmera. Over many years they have conducted regular month-long trips to the interior with Bob Chinnock. These plants have been collected, named, grown and grafted with much knowledge accumulated along the way about their horticulture.

Russell Wait has had a fifty year interest in the Eremophilas, and this book is the culmination of those years of interest. It gives a general discussion about the genus, their cultivation, phylogenetics, and chemicals of medical use within the plants. It then goes on to describe the individual species, with a full page devoted to each species that includes a full description, detailed photographs, distribution maps and cultivation tips. 372 species are described in this way, and then species not yet in cultivation are discussed. 25 species recognised, but not yet named, are also described. For someone interested in this group of plants, this is an invaluable tome.

## **For Your Diary.....**

4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March **Armidale Show**

25<sup>th</sup> March **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am to 1pm**

27<sup>th</sup> March **Markets in the Mall**

1<sup>st</sup> April **Committee Meeting**

9<sup>th</sup> April **Visit to Water's Family property, Gara River**

24<sup>th</sup> April **Markets in the Mall**

29<sup>th</sup> April **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am to 1pm**

27<sup>th</sup> May **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am to 1pm**

29<sup>th</sup> May **Markets in the Mall**

3<sup>rd</sup> June **Committee Meeting**

18<sup>th</sup> June **Solstice Celebration – TBA**

24<sup>th</sup> June **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am to 1pm**

26<sup>th</sup> June **Markets in the Mall**

24<sup>th</sup> July **Markets in the Mall**

29<sup>th</sup> July **Arboretum Working Bee 9am – 1 pm**

5<sup>th</sup> August **Committee Meeting**

20<sup>th</sup> August **Garden Visit – TBA**

26<sup>th</sup> August **Arboretum Working Bee 9am – 1 pm**

28<sup>th</sup> August **Markets in the Mall**

2<sup>nd</sup> September **Wattle Day Celebration – TBA**

25<sup>th</sup> September **Markets in the Mall**

30<sup>th</sup> September **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am -1 pm**

7<sup>th</sup> October **Committee Meeting**

15<sup>th</sup> October **Mole Station Visit**

28<sup>th</sup> October **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am-1pm**

30<sup>th</sup> October **Markets in the Mall**

5-6<sup>th</sup> November **Open Garden – St Peter’s Weekend**

25<sup>th</sup> November **Arboretum Working Bee, 9am – 1pm**

30<sup>th</sup> November **Markets in the Mall**

3<sup>rd</sup> December **AGM, Garden Visit**

9<sup>th</sup> December **Planning Meeting for 2023**























