

# AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

*Southern Highlands Group*

*...your local native garden club*

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Spring is wattle, daffodils, and ... Philothecas. That sounds quite strange, even if we use their old name Eriostemon. Even though they start to flower in winter they are looking magnificent in spring, a naturally rounded shrub absolutely covered in flowers, a magnet for bees.

Happy in sun or part shade. There are hybrids to extend the colour range. *Philotheca myoporoides* 'Winter Rouge' with deep pink buds opening to blush pink and fading to white.

### In this issue . . .

- P. 2 The Next Diary Dates Details and Remaining Program for 2019
- P. 3 – 4 Snippets
  - Save the Date
  - August Plant Table
  - Bundanoon Earth Festival, Saturday 21 September
- P. 4 Southern Highlands Conservation Story, Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve – Jane Lemann
- P. 6 Cultural Burning: Bringing Back the Practice – Louise Egerton
- P. 8 The Wattle Walk, Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan – Paul Osborne
- P. 9 APS Newcastle Get-Together – Sarah Cains
- P. 10 Visits to the Janet Cosh Herbarium and Robertson Nature Reserve – Cathryn Coutts
- P. 12 Book Review – Weeds of the South East by F.J. and R.G. Richardson and R.C.H. Shepherd - Jenny Simons

### The Next Diary Dates Details

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October at 2pm at the CWA Moss Vale** - Louise Egerton will talk about *Birds of the Southern Highlands through the Seasons*.

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm at the CWA Moss Vale** - Erica Rink will give an illustrated talk about her *W.A. Wildflower Trip*. This started in Perth driving through all the wildflower hot spots to Karatha in the north via Karijini and Millstream Chichester National Parks, then back to Perth via Exmouth and Kalbarri National Park. That was 6000kms in 4 weeks. Flowers were spectacular after good rainfall.



### Remaining Program for 2019

You might like to bring a friend to enjoy the talks and outings. Any member is welcome to attend committee meetings. Please feel free to share this newsletter.

Date	General Meetings	Events	Committee Meetings
	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month at CWA Moss Vale		
<b>Oct</b>	3rd October Louise Egerton will talk about <i>Birds of the Southern Highlands through the Seasons</i>		8th Oct Sarah's

Date	General Meetings	Events	Committee Meetings
	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month at CWA Moss Vale		
Nov	7th November Erica Rink will talk about her <i>W.A. Wildflower Trip</i>		12th Nov Trisha's
Dec		Sunday 1st Dec Xmas party at Sarah Cains	

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## Snippets

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### Save the Date



On Wednesday 27th November there will be a fundraising movie evening at the Bowral Empire Cinema. We'll be raising funds for Australia's national environment organisation, the **Australian Conservation Foundation**, with a one-night-only screening of the classic film, **Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid**. Tickets: \$25 including refreshments, available from the box-office or from [louise.egerton0@gmail.com](mailto:louise.egerton0@gmail.com)

Come along and bring your family & friends to support our national environment organisation.

### August Plant Table



One of the interesting plants at our August meeting was the black flowered form of *Gastrolobium sericeum* [previously known as *Brachysema sericea*].

It is a low spreading shrub up to half a metre high and about a metre wide. Leaves are about 50 mm long. The typical "pea" flowers consist of 4 petals; the "standard", the "keel" and two "wings". The flowers have a much shorter standard than is typical, and occur in the leaf axils in winter and spring.

*G.sericeum* appears to be reasonably adaptable to a wide range of soils, provided they are well drained, in sun or semi shade. Its flowers produce nectar which attracts honey-eating birds. It tolerates even quite severe frosts in my Bundanoon garden.

Propagation is said to be easy from seed following pre-treatment, and cuttings strike well using firm, current season's growth.

## Bundanoon Earth Festival

**Saturday 21 September, 9am to 3pm, Bundanoon Hall.** Celebrating 10 years of *Bundanoon On Tap* when Bundanoon became the world's first single-use plastic water bottle free town. A day of workshops, stalls [including ours], environmental displays, kids' activities, presenters, food & music.

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## Southern Highlands Conservation Story

### Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve

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**Jane Lemann** Acting Secretary 2019. PO Box 981 Bowral 2576



*Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve from Bowral*



*From Welby, Mittagong*

Known locally as The Gib, it is currently 130 hectares of forested Crown and Council land between Mittagong and Bowral. It is an 863 metres high volcanic intrusion composed of microsyenite (Bowral Trachyte) that was quarried for 100 years (1886-1986) for stone to build many grand public buildings. In 1919 Alderman Joshua Stokes purchased 66 acres on the summit from the estate of quarry owner Alexander Amos to be a future flora and fauna reserve. In the 1930s the recreational access and facilities were built in a Depression Relief program and successive councils have purchased land for the Reserve as it has become available.

This is a very brief summary of the work of the volunteers known as Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare. Our work started in 1993 as a Management Committee appointed by Wingecarribee Shire Council to assist with 'care, control and management' of Mount Gibraltar Reserve. Geoff Allen was our first president, followed by Stuart Kyngdon with Maurice Bratter as treasurer.

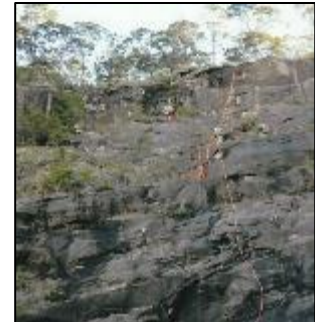
Our first year was spent assessing the 65 hectares of seriously degraded and weed infested forest. Vehicle misuse had completely denuded the Inner Bowl and areas adjacent to entrance lanes. We were able to have the Crown land on the north face gazetted as part of the Reserve thus doubling the size of the Reserve. With \$75 donated by the National Parks Association we were able to obtain \$5000 Landcare grant for tools, a fauna assessment and a masterplan. We advertised for helpers and started bush regeneration work with a plan to start at the top and systematically work down to the boundaries. We removed weeds (Ivy, Honeysuckle, Blackberry, Cherry Laurel, Barberry, Holly, Cotoneaster, Privet, Banana Passionfruit, Blue Periwinkle, Gorse, English Broom, Jasmine, Cape Ivy, Turkey Rhubarb...) to promote natural regeneration of the forest plants. With council help, plans were made to control the goats, rabbits, foxes and cats. We have met every Thursday morning and carefully recorded our work and our hours (47,523 hrs). These hours are accepted as in-kind contributions to acquire matching funds from various granting bodies. This allows us to employ qualified contractors for the difficult sites. Today this combined total amounts to over \$2.5million.



*Volunteers at Entrance Wall, 2015*



*Volunteers weeding ivy*



*Contractors on quarry face*

With the help of Larry Melican, our guiding scientist, we produced our flora and fauna lists and a plan of action and goals for our efforts. A careful fire management plan was prepared with the Rural Fire Service ecologist to burn sensitive areas only at certain frequencies. The Sydney Catchment Authority, Landcare and the council were very supportive and with much pride we received a Landcare award in 2001.

We pushed hard for the Environment Levy on everyone's rates to enable the council to employ qualified bush regenerators to guide and assist volunteers and ensure the work of all the groups will be maintained.

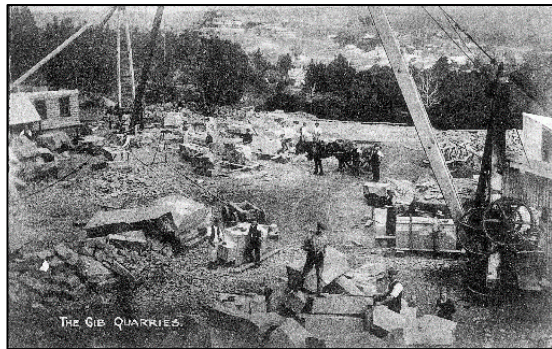
In 2001 the reserve Management Committees were reorganised into council Bushcare groups with our convenor Dr Richard Hanbury. We had to hand over control of our funds to the council. The Wingecarribee Landcare and Bushcare Network Inc. was formed to provide a voice for all volunteers and fund management for non-incorporated groups. In 2007 we produced an informative full colour hardback book (details below) to record what we knew about the Reserve to share with everyone. We have had to fight hard to prevent extraction of land, intrusions in many forms and for maintenance of the Reserve.

We have found management of the Reserve falls into four areas:

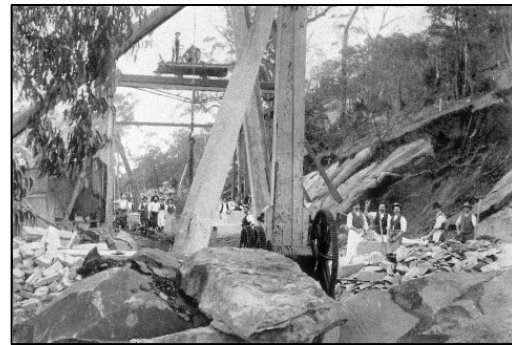
**Aboriginal Connections:** We remain hopeful that there will be more participation from the Gundungurra people.

**Biodiversity Conservation:** After 26 years the primary weeding is almost complete, the forest is regenerating well and has been listed as a unique endangered ecological community supported by the microsyenite derived soil: Mount Gibraltar Forest by NSW Scientific Committee 2001, and nationally endangered: Upland Basalt Eucalypt Forest of the Sydney Basin Bio-region in 2011 under the Australian Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and there are several listed threatened species such as the Greater Glider, several birds, reptiles, microbats, and plants. However, it is the whole assemblage of plants, animals, fungi, microorganisms and their interactions that is unique. The Reserve is also registered with Land for Wildlife.

**Heritage Protection:** There were up to ten quarries operating on the Gib producing a massive amount of dimension stone, kerb and guttering, monuments, memorials, ballast and blue metal. In 2008 the NSW National Trust added the Mount Gibraltar Quarries Complex to its Industrial Heritage Register and in 2013 the NSW Heritage Council listed the Reserve as a Significant Site for both the quarries and the ecology.



*The Gib Quarries*



*Loveridge and Hudson Quarry*

**Recreational Enjoyment:** In the 1930s Oxley Drive was extended over the mountain and the scenic loop road, lookouts and shelters were constructed together with the Stone Stairway. These are now heritage items. In the 1960s the Rotary Club improved walking trails and the council constructed the Bowral Lookout in 2001. We have done our best to maintain and restore these facilities and constructed the Heritage Quarries Circuit walk, the Commemorative Trachyte Entrance Wall and this year restored the Stone Stairway to enable passive recreation and enjoyment of this precious Reserve.

The Reserve is a special place with a local identity that the whole community can be proud of and cherish.



*Bowral Lookout*



*Jellore Lookout*



*Stone Stairway*

References. *The Gib, Mount Gibraltar, Southern Highlands* 2007 Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare (available at <http://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/mount-gibraltar-reserve>)

*Sydney's Hard Rock Story* 2014 R Irving, R Powell, N Irving

*Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve*. Information Booklet available at the Welcome Centre. Mittagong

## Cultural Burning: Bringing Back the Practice

**Louise Egerton**

We are all scared of bushfires. We know how destructive they can be. In recent years we have become accustomed to seeing large areas of the bush being burnt on purpose. Hazard-reduction burns are intended to reduce the impact of a hot, out-of-control fire swallowing up our homes, our lives and those of our stock and pets.

But there is a lot of bush out there and only a limited time in which to do hazard-reduction burns. Our firefighters are under a lot of pressure. They are there to protect us from the worst possible

scenarios but, with tens of thousands of acres to burn each year and only a few months in the year in which to do it, now and then a hazard-reduction burn runs out of control. So...are we burning in the best possible way?



When Den Barber, Director of Koori Country Firesticks Aboriginal Corporation came to talk to our local APS members, he offered another way to burn the bush. Drawing on the traditions of the original inhabitants of our continent, he explained how the 'old' ways had a lot to offer and perhaps we should be taking a leaf (sorry, couldn't resist) out of the Aboriginal cultural burning practices.

Here are just some of the things I learnt that afternoon. Cultural burning involves smaller controlled fires that run at a human walking pace or slow enough for animals to make their escape. As well as reducing the fuel load, as any controlled burn must, it can remove weed species while restoring native ones, especially where grasslands are concerned. The burn is 'cool', never reaching into the canopy of large trees: this is an absolute no-no in Aboriginal lore. Grass, leaf litter, shrubs or weedy saplings may be burnt but never should the flames be allowed to lick into animal-bearing hollows.

Cultural burns only require patches of bush to be burnt, so they do not require the massive infrastructure and large numbers of personnel on the ground that attend hazard-reduction burns. Traditional firestick practices may be slower but they won't run amuck, threatening lives and homes, and these fires will not generate huge clouds of thick smoke that are becoming an increasing health hazard for nearby town- and city-dwellers. Little but often seems to be the key.



*An Aboriginal Cultural (cool) Burn.*

Another advantage of traditional burning practices is when they can be done. Hazard-reduction burns are undertaken in the cooler months of the year. With hot weather there is the danger of fire jumping containment lines and burning out of control. With smaller, slower, cooler and more considered traditional methods, it can be safe to burn within a broader timeframe. Of course, each type of country depends on many factors, such as the nature of the fuel load, the slope and aspect of the land, the weather conditions and its proximity to sensitive ecological features. Timing is still important but not in the same way as with hazard-reduction burns. Flowering and fruiting seasons of bush tucker plants must be taken into account, and the breeding season of local birds, reptiles and mammals. It is possible sometimes to burn around such sensitive areas.

Den is no stranger to our way of burning. For over 15 years he worked for NSW's National Parks and Wildlife Service and in that time he participated in many hazard-reduction burns but a visit to Cape York, where he witnessed cultural burning first hand, changed his mind-set. So 'I gave up the drip torch' he said, and he started Koori Country Firesticks.

The organisation works with private and public landholders and managers, including national parks, local land services and councils. Interest and demand for this cultural practice is growing as we search for better ways to manage country. Were it not for people like Den there is a danger that such ancient knowledge could simply slip away from us all. For many in the audience his presentation was a light-bulb moment. It opened our minds to another way of doing things.

And as if that wasn't enough, we were treated to a grand finale, a Wiradjuri song, accompanied by clapsticks, performed by Den: 'wiiny nganhagu ngurambang' or 'Fire for that Country'. For a full translation of the entire song and an interview with Den go to <http://kooriculturefiresticks.com.au/assets/pdf/Cultural-Burning.pdf>

*Images are from the Koori Country Firesticks website. With thanks.*

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## The Wattle Walk, The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan

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### Paul Osborne

5<sup>th</sup> September, 2019. The group gathered near the paper daisy display. A look around the nearby beds set a good mood on a warm spring afternoon. After a quick roam around the nursery exchanging ideas and experiences of the plants for sale, we set off along the drive to the other side of the gardens.



*Acacia howittii prostrate*

The dappled yellows and greens of the Wattle Garden are easy to spot once nearby. Extensively planted beds are spread over a number of levels which gently merge so that getting about is comfortable. An informal stroll with some re-grouping here and there around specimens of interest naturally followed along the paths. Most plants are labelled, some with further information.

Frost hardiness was often remarked on and it seems some of the popular prostrate and smaller cultivars of *Acacias*, *A. howittii*, *cognata* and others may need more protection

in Southern Highland gardens. Doing well at Mt Annan though.

There is a range of sizes and habits of the plants scattered throughout from blackwoods (*A. melanoxylon*) and other trees to shrubs and near groundcovers. Of course the foliage of many are as interesting as the various shades of flowers.

Protected amongst sparse eucalypt woodland of mainly grey box (*E. moluccana*) the Wattle Garden is open but nicely secluded. The picnic area is a peaceful place with glimpses out to the distance beyond.



*Acacia ausfeldii*



*Acacia cardiophylla*



*Acacia lineata**Acacia saligna* 'Springtime Cascade'

Driving back out into a very busy part of Sydney it's pleasing to know the native Botanic Garden is there to be visited any time.

*Editor's Note: On Wattle Day, Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September, Bundanoon celebrated. Sylvia David and field naturalist friends had a stall outside the shops decorated with big bunches of wattle, yellow pom poms, yellow and green banner... and 2 toy wombats. This was to publicise Wattle Day and to raise money for Wombat Care Bundanoon. Sprigs of wattle were handed out, and Drive Safely from Dusk to Dawn swing tags and wombat calendars were sold. The mood was lively and happy and the Bundanoon community got involved.*

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## APS Newcastle Get-Together

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### Sarah Cains

On the weekend of 18/19th August 2019 three Southern Highlands APS members joined 100 APS members from around NSW at the Get-Together hosted by the Newcastle group. These events are known to provide much interest and stimulation for lovers of native plants and this one did not disappoint. You can be certain to come away enriched with new ideas and with rekindled enthusiasm for our marvellous plants.

The programme put together by the Newcastle Group was a treat for Highlanders because we learned about and saw coastal vegetation local to the Hunter region. I commend to you the comprehensive article with pictures written by organiser and president of Newcastle APS Group, Mark Henley, on the NSW APS website.

On the Friday night Kris Gow and I attended the Presidents' dinner. Energetic and capable Board member, Heather Miles, brought us up to date with initial planning for the ANPSA (Aust. Native Plants Society, Australia - the national parent body for all APS groups) conference to be held in 2021. It is the turn of NSW to host this event and Kiama has been chosen as the venue. The Board is meeting regularly and would be delighted to hear from any members with ideas for speakers, visits or other events potentially of interest to a group of 200 to 300 APS members.

Following Heather's news, local group Presidents were invited to give short overviews of activities of their groups. Kris spoke well for our group, telling of our active and increasing membership and the well attended activities and projects we enjoy together. It was truly sad to hear the depressed note in the voice of the Tamworth president's delivery. Climate change is wreaking havoc in their

district with water running out in the town and devastatingly dry conditions killing their precious plants; so hard to listen to.



*Awakarbal Nature Reserve*

On a more cheerful note, an absolute highlight of the weekend was visiting the coastal heathland at the Awakarbal Nature Reserve. Many plants were in flower and it was a thrill to reacquaint ourselves with the way plants growing in exposed conditions interweave to create a wondrous, dense, wind-sculpted tapestry of texture and colour.

As we walked towards the sea we were delighted to see local orchids, twiners and groundcovers. Further on the headland became more

windy and exposed, resulting in dense plant growth. Banksia species included, *B. aemula*, *B. serrata*, *B. integrifolia* and others and *Eriostemon australasius* caught our eye. This large-flowered beauty, we were told, is one of the few Eriostemons not moved by taxonomists into the Philotheca family.

*Ricinocarpos pinifolius* which can be a tall, upright shrub away from the coast, was displaying a mass of startlingly white flowers where it grew tucked below a diverse and protective cover. It formed a compact little plant of under a metre high. Acacias are a dominant feature of the heath and many species were spotted. These plants mentioned are just a few of so many, many more species that combine to form the coastal heathland. What an amazing place!



*Ricinocarpos pinifolius*

It was my great good fortune that Kris's excellent driving skills are matched by her even temper. My deficient navigational skills with Google Maps were met with good humour and we reached most of the far-flung destinations within the allocated time spans - just!

Many thanks to the Newcastle Group for hosting such an enjoyable weekend.

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## Visits to the Janet Cosh Herbarium and Robertson Nature Reserve

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### Cathryn Coutts

Jane Pye and I, both APS Southern Highlands members and botanical artists, were among a group of local artists who visited the Janet Cosh Herbarium at the University of Wollongong on September 3. Our visit was followed on September 5, with a visit by University staff to the Robertson Nature Reserve and Robertson Cemetery.

The visits were focussed on the plant collections and art works of the late Janet Cosh (1901-1989), who spent a great deal of time collecting and painting plants in and around the Southern Highlands. Some of these locations include Jamberoo Pass, Macarthurs Crossing, Mount Gibraltar, Sheepwash, Kangaroo Valley, Sassafras and the Budawangs, Robertson Rainforest, Bundanoon, Barren Grounds, and Minnamurra. These sites encompass many vegetation types.

Jean Clarke, one of the authors of *Flowering Wonderfully\** on the botanical legacy of Janet Cosh, assisted by Michael Swire, Resource Collection Officer at the University Library, displayed several of

Janet Cosh's original drawings and paintings and talked about her field work. This was illustrated in notebooks with plant habit drawings, sketches of descriptive details and colour notes. We noted that she had collected as far afield as Wombeyan Caves.

After she died substantial funds from Janet Cosh's estate were left to the University of Wollongong to establish a regional herbarium, named the Janet Cosh Herbarium.



Jean Clarke, with Jane Pye beside her, discussing the collection

The art collection, held in the University of Wollongong Library Archive, with some items on loan to the Fitzroy Falls NPWS Visitor Centre, is fascinating and well worth seeing. Janet Cosh's dedication to the task of collecting and recording our native flora is clearly evident. APS members will recognize many of the plants she drew and the sites where she found them.

Some significant and unusual plants she collected include *Grevillea rivularis* from Carrington Falls; *Hakea constablei*, east of Lake Mittagong; *Acacia chalkeri*, near Wombeyan Caves; and *Telopea mogaensis*, from Meryla State Forest.

This year, I have been assisting the Janet Cosh Herbarium and University staff to re-visit some of the sites to see which species are still growing there, since the original specimens were collected 30 or more years ago.

The visit to Robertson Nature Reserve and Robertson Cemetery on September 5, included Artist-in-Residence Dr Mary Rosengren, Dr Jo Law Senior Lecturer in the School of the Arts, English and Media and local artist Liz Jeneid. APS member Helen Tranter, who has had a long-term association with the Nature Reserve, and knew Janet Cosh personally, met with the visitors and myself, to talk about some of the significant rainforest species.

Mary Rosengren's work as Artist-in-Residence is a collaborative project with the Janet Cosh Herbarium. The project included an exhibition at the University of Wollongong, which recently opened on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September. It showed annotated maps, sketches, drawings, projections, paintings and photographs from the Janet Cosh Herbarium Historical Collection, bringing together archival materials and a range of contemporary responses to Illawarra and Southern Highlands sites where Janet Cosh collected and documented botanical specimens, threatened species and range extensions of some plants in the 1970s and 1980s.

I can recommend that an excursion to the Janet Cosh Herbarium would be worthwhile for interested APS Southern Highlands members in the future.

On 1 October 2019, the Herbarium staff will be visiting sites around Bundanoon. Details and some photos of this visit will be provided in a future newsletter.

*\*Flowering Wonderfully: The Botanical Legacy of Janet Cosh, J. Clarke and A. Haynes, 2012, University of Wollongong NSW, p.64.*

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## Book Review – Weeds of the South East by F.J. and R.G. Richardson and R.C.H. Shepherd

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Jenny Simons

The first question is ‘What is a weed?’ If we take a simple definition, that a weed is a plant out of place, then Australian native plants can become weeds just as effectively as migrants from overseas.

In compiling this book the authors F.J. and R.G. Richardson and R.C.H. Shepherd have sought out native weeds as diligently as the migrants and have helpfully used a green typeface to distinguish native weeds from the rest.

Two years ago I found growing in one of my native gardens a shrub that I had no recollection of planting, didn’t recognise the look of and for which I had no written record. It flowered in its first year of growth and I failed to identify it. In its second year it flowered very profusely with racemes of tiny light brown flowers. These soon became masses of fluffy seed heads. I *had* to know what it was. Perusal of my native plant reference books did not reveal its identity. I tried to locate it through Google – no luck.

Then my recently acquired ‘Weeds of the South East’ occurred to me as a possible reference. This is a very substantial volume and begins with an invaluable quick reference guide to weed identification through flower colour and shape, number of petals, leaf shape and style of plant. By perusing brown flowers, thread-like shaped flowers and broad-leaf herbs I was directed to the shrub *Cassinia arcuata*, with a page reference and a very accurate photograph. I also found that it is native to NSW, Vic., SA and WA.

After two years, this book had solved the problem of the plant’s identity and revealed it to be a weed in my garden.

The next step was to remove the shrub and consign it to the green bin. There were about two million seed heads by this time and I’m fervently hoping that it will not self-seed in my garden. Its popular names are Drooping Cassinia and Sifton Bush.

Is it familiar to members of our group?

‘Weeds of the South-East’ covers the area of the southern half of New South Wales through Victoria, Tasmania and eastern South Australia. It is a really excellent reference book, useful for every kind of native and exotic weed, and helpful in identifying garden plants which might ‘jump the fence’ and become weeds in bushland. The third edition is dated 2016.

When you have identified the weed, there is a useful description of its habit and habitat. I use the book regularly for the identification of exotic as well as native weeds. My most recent find was *Veronica persica*, Creeping Speedwell, a winter weed of moist places in my garden.



MANY THANKS  
to all  
contributors to  
this newsletter.

Thank you to Jane Lemann, Louise Egerton, Paul Osborne, Sarah Cains, Cathryn Coutts and Jenny Simons. As always, I’d love to hear from any of you with stories to tell, snippets to share, books to review or questions you want answered.... There is so much knowledge in our membership. Let’s share it as much as possible.

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