

EUCALYPT

NUMBER 63 – Summer 2024-25



In this issue

Articles to celebrate and inspire.
And some to question.

One plant has hit the headlines for botanic gardens across the country.

Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens tell of the influx of visitors attracted to their botanic garden to view (and smell!) an amazing plant while it's in flower. Search engines are going off the grid with people curious to know more and, at the same time, discovering the amazing work of botanic gardens and their Friends groups.

A chain reaction for Friends' groups started with AAFBG.

Shiona Mackie from RBG Edinburgh tells us that our Australian Friends group inspired 21 UK Botanic Gardens to join the Friends Botanic Gardens Forum and subsequently there's now a European Friends of Botanic Gardens group!

Celebrate the dedication and work of Friends.

Read a summary of the Friends individuals and groups whose outstanding commitment we celebrated at the 2024 AAFBG Conference with Handbury Awards. Who are those special people or Friends teams in your group that deserve special recognition? The next round of Handbury Awards will be celebrated at North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens, Coffs Harbour in 2026.

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION of FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS

The **AAFBG** represents Friends of Botanic Gardens all around Australia, plus five overseas affiliate members. See our website for a full listing.

Address

PO Box 408, Eumundi QLD 4562

Email: info@friendsbotanicgardens.org

Website: FriendsBotanicGardens.org

EUCALYPT MAGAZINE

is published twice a year – Summer and Winter

EDITORIAL TEAM

Kate Heffernan

Editor & Copywriting

Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens, QLD

Jill Brownlee

Friends of Noosa Botanic Gardens, QLD

Roger Permezel

Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens, VIC

WordsWorth communicating

Layout & Copywriting

Deadlines: late May and late November

Email: mag@FriendsBotanicGardens.org

Tel: 0437 682758

**We welcome your articles, photographs,
and important calendar events.**

**Contact us at any time to discuss your
article, ideas, and events.**

AAFBG acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land where we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



FriendsBotanicGardens.org



[friendsbotanicgardens](https://www.instagram.com/friendsbotanicgardens)



[@AAFBG](https://www.facebook.com/AAFBG)

AAFBG ABN 99467025064
AAFBG Incorporation A0026805Z
ISSN 1320-8578

Content

Celebrating 40 years of Volunteer support of Geelong Botanic Gardens	3
Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum –Time for an Update	4
Save the Gong	6
Handbury Awards 2024	8
The Bauer Brothers of Wittunga	10
The 2026 AAFBG Conference Host wins two Horticultural Institute Awards	12
Maroochy Conference 2024	14
Vale Denis Matthews	15



Celebrating 40 years of volunteer support of Geelong Botanic Gardens

This year, Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens celebrate 40 years of supporting the Geelong Botanic Gardens and what a remarkable journey it has been.

The Friends were very involved in the opening of the 21st Century drought tolerant Garden in 2002. That was a huge event and opened up the Gardens to the Waterfront with great fanfare but the publicity and excitement generated by the flowering of the titan arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*) so wonderfully displayed in our impressive renovated Conservatory was just extraordinary.

The excellent marketing of this rare event by the City of Greater Geelong with live streaming, television interviews with horticultural staff, photographs and articles in Melbourne and Geelong papers induced over 20,000 visitors to our Botanic Garden and put Geelong Botanic Gardens (GBG) on the world stage. The Friends happily helped staff the conservatory over the long opening hours.

Having been instrumental in their establishment, our expert volunteers work every Wednesday morning dedicated to maintaining the beautiful Perennial Border and Heritage Rose beds and the Friends nursery. We also have a group of weeders giving assistance to the GBG.

Our Botanic Art class enrolments continue to be excellent with wonderful teachers and expert artists.

The Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens (FGBG) are committed to their altered arrangement, yet continuing role assisting the City of Geelong which is the local government agency responsible for the management of Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Jayne Salmon
Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens



Titan arum, also known as the corpse flower

images: all images supplied



Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum Time for an Update!

It is three years ago since I introduced you to the Friends of Botanic Gardens – unashamedly based on your organisation! I discovered the Australian Association when I was Convener (Chair 2011-2016) of the Edinburgh Friends, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The FBGF now has 21 members across the UK. We do not have as many Botanic Gardens as Australia and therefore, we do not have as many Friends groups. In fact we are seeing Friends groups disappearing as their fundraising activities/membership income is merged with the organisations running their respective gardens. Many of the Friends continue to volunteer for their gardens.

We have this year welcomed two new Friends' groups – the Friends of the Liverpool Botanical Trust (www.liverpoolbotanicaltrust.org.uk) and Friends of Clyne Gardens (www.clynegardens.co.uk). The former – an extraordinary collection of rare and exotic plants, including National Collections of *Dracaena*, *Solenostemon*, *Codiaeum* and *Fuchsia*, is based at Croxteth Hall Walled Garden, Liverpool. Clyne Gardens is located in Swansea – several acres of astonishing rhododendrons, azaleas and other trees/shrubs established as a private garden in the 19th century.



Group photo AGM NBGW 2024
image: supplied



Aberglasney 2024
image: supplied

Australian collection, Great Glasshouse
National Botanic Gardens Wales, 2024
image: Shiona Mackie



The highlight of 2024 for the FBGF was our AGM hosted by the National Botanic Garden of Wales – a rare face to face opportunity to meet up with colleagues. Our business meeting was a hybrid affair. We were delighted to welcome visitors from Bonn Botanic Garden – as observers. After lunch, we had three tours around the extensive grounds of the NBGW – these focussed on the Regency Garden, the conservation work being carried out at the garden and the renowned Glasshouse, which contains a remarkable collection of Southern Hemisphere plants.

As I write this piece on a freezing, dark January morning, it is amazing to think that May 11th was so sunny that the glasshouse was unbearably hot! The following day, we visited Aberglasney Garden, and were given a tour by the Director, Jim Stribling. Again, the sun shone for us and we learnt so much about the history and plantings in the garden. It does rank as one of the most beautiful gardens in the UK. Another delicious lunch followed the tour before we headed off in convoy to Swansea to visit the Botanic Garden there. The volunteers gave us a warm welcome, a tour and afternoon tea with Welsh teacakes! Altogether a very successful weekend with new friendships made and old rekindled – plenty of chat on how all our respective gardens are coping with the many challenges facing them – climate change, ageing demographic, recruitment of friends/committee members/funding shortfalls, etc.

As for our German visitors, they were so impressed that they went back to Bonn, and through the Association of German-speaking Botanic Gardens, they have established a Friends Working Group. There are 63 BG Friends' groups in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands and 26% of these groups attended their first meeting!

You can see that where the Australian Association led, others are following!!

Do come to the UK and visit our Botanic Gardens – you will be assured of a warm welcome!

Shiona Mackie
Garden Guide. RBGE
Chair. FBGF



FBGF website

Save the Gong

Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens

Roger Permezel – President

At AAFBG we are hearing with more regularity of challenges being faced by communities who see their Botanic Gardens being threatened by inappropriate planning, whether physically within the Gardens or by the intrusion of external developments causing overshadowing or noise pollution or loss of concealment and, sometimes, the trifecta of all three.

The threats can come through ill-conceived plans from property owners seeking to add more real estate and high-rise development ill-advisedly too close to Botanic Gardens or even from local Councils or other organisations charged with managing public Gardens on behalf of their communities.

Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens on behalf of its local community is currently campaigning – has been for five years – to have the City of Ballarat consider alternatives to its plan to demolish and reconstruct The Gong dam wall located in the state government Heritage Victoria listed Botanic Gardens, between the upper and lower Gardens.

The Heritage Victoria citation notes that the Buninyong Botanic Gardens “are of historical, aesthetic, scientific (botanical) and social significance to the State of Victoria”. Community passion for protecting the heritage values of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens is reflected in the report ***Our Heritage. Our Future.*** prepared by Buninyong Friends to present to Council and Heritage Victoria in support of our opposition to the Council plan.

Expert independent advice commissioned by Council from a leading Heritage Consultant cautioned Council, “Reconstruction of a new dam wall will have detrimental impacts on the cultural heritage significance of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens” but it seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

Our Heritage. Our Future. proposes that Council considers an alternative approach to remediation works at The Gong that would not cause the heritage degradation to be inflicted by Council’s plan.

One alternative proposal explains a design that creates a wetland to the east of The Gong dam wall. A series of water-holding ponds would eliminate the need for landscape destruction, prevent the loss of biodiversity and habitat destruction, facilitate responses to climate change, and enhance The Gong as a community asset. Such an option would allow for preservation of the existing Gong wall and its vegetation while retaining fishing and water-based activities in the dam.





image: Heritage Victoria

Environmentally, this approach would increase vegetation cover for shade and cooling, provide habitat for birds and other native species and, in step with Council's position on biodiversity, create opportunities to rethink the Gardens' plant collections through the implementation of a strategic corridor connecting The Gong to outlying remnant bushland. Council's executive, officers and councillors are intransigently wedded to the 'their' plan which they commissioned with no reference to Friends or the community.

Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens sees ***Our Heritage. Our Future.*** as providing a starting point for a meaningful, collaborative co-design process with Council and engaging across disciplines and stakeholders in a generative and positive way to include heritage bodies, community and user groups, neighbours, Traditional Owners, Botanic Gardens groups, landscape experts, engineers and designers.

If you have any issues of concern about threats to your Botanic Gardens, the AAFBG is here for advice and support.



Handbury Awards 2024



Val Richards image: supplied

Val Richards Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens

FINE ART FROM THE GARDEN

Valerie Richards has spent eight years as convenor of the Friends of Ballarat Art Group – increasing membership, and widening experiences with workshops, collaborations, and excursions. Valerie, an accomplished artist, shares her expertise and nurtures new artists in mediums including watercolour, coloured pencils, liquid graphite, acrylic paints, and pen and ink.

Concentrating on plants in the Botanic Gardens and the Ballarat region has resulted in exhibitions including “Connections in Nature: Rare and Endangered Plants of the Ballarat Region”. Collaborating with the Friends History Group resulted in collections “The Elms of Ballarat” and “Selected Pines of the Ballarat Botanic Gardens”.

Valerie has stepped aside from her role but remains generous in sharing her expertise and plans to continue her practice as an artist, and remain an active part of the Friends botanical artists.



Dr Glenys Bishop image: supplied

Dr Glenys Bishop Friends of Australian National Botanic Gardens

GUIDING VISITORS ISN'T A WALK IN THE PARK

Glenys Bishop, Friends' member as well as volunteer, led a critical overhaul to botanic garden guiding in response to the declining numbers attending guided walks at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. With various roles since undergoing guide training in 2010 including Guide Convenor, Guide Trainer, data collection, statistics, and developing rosters. Glenys also researched themed walks and promoted them via radio, internet, and social media resulting in increases in the variety of walks and the number of attendees.

Held in Canberra a very successful Australia and New Zealand Guides of Botanic Gardens Conference was led by Glenys with the Conference organising committee.



Lisa Steven (L) with Elizabeth Gilfillan
image: supplied

Lisa Steven Friends Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

STRENGTHENING THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS MELBOURNE COMMUNITY

Lisa Steven is described as resourceful, determined, loyal, always well-researched, and someone with non-stop energy and an extraordinary commitment. From developing online programs for members during the Melbourne Covid lockdowns to rostering members for Volunteer Plant Sales, as a member of the Friends Council and as Events Convenor. During the transitional period of a new committee, and as Assistant Secretary, Lisa helped four new council members learn the intricacies of the Friends' Association.

Lisa's eye for detail has resulted in comprehensive lists of office bearers, members, dates, and relevant schedules. Lisa brings the RBGM community together.

Using a variety of mediums but most often watercolour, botanical illustration is both an art form and a science. Botanical illustration was, prior to photography, the only way of visually recording the world's many species of plant life.

The first use of botanical illustration can be dated back to between 50 and 70 CE and the illustrated text, *De Materia Medica*, which was created by Greek botanist Pedanius Dioscorides as a guide to medicinal plants.

The Handbury Award recognises exceptional contributions to an Australian Botanic Garden, Arboretum, or Park by an AAFBG member group or individual from a member group. The Handbury Award is presented during the AAFBG Biennial Conference.

Friends of Kings Park

UNIQUE JOINT PROJECT AT KINGS PARK

Friends of Kings Park partnered with the Kings Park Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority on a project to reverse the degeneration of 2.2 ha of Kings Park bushland. Funded for five years by a Friends of Kings Park Grant of \$151,000, the project commenced in a highly visible area providing opportunities for community engagement, education on ecological restoration, and management processes.

Twenty Friends volunteers meet weekly for planting, seed collection, and pruning, as well as photographic records and data collection - used to measure changes to the site. The six-point Keighery Scale (1994) is adopted as the measurement tool using plant diversity, weed cover, and natural plant cover as a guide to site improvements. The site went from Degraded to Good over the first 12 months.

Friends of the National Arboretum, Canberra

40 VOLUNTEERS and 3000 VOLUNTEER HOURS PER YEAR FOR THE HARVEST GROUP

Using fruit and vegetables planted, picked, and preserved from the National Arboretum Forests and Discovery Gardens results in a significant contribution to fund-raising as well as fun for committed Friends of the National Arboretum in Canberra. The group also bag seeds, as well as growing and selling potted herbs and designer topiaries.

This contribution has supported the Friends' objectives of funding beautification projects such as a Forest Shelter, the lease of the Ngala Tour bus, and a 'Zigzag' Garden. Most recently completion of a 30-minute documentary on the development of the Arboretum, The National Arboretum Canberra – a 20-year Story, as a gift from the Friends to the Canberra community.

Growers Group - Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens

GROWING FRIENDS - A RESOURCE FOR BALLARAT GARDENERS

Growing Friends was one of the first three sub-groups as the Friends of Ballarat Botanic Gardens expanded. The initial nursery facility was supported by the Botanic Gardens with advice and some supplies. Over the years it has progressed with regular improvements to facilities, including purpose-built benches to move plants off a gravel base, space for on-site labelling, computer records, and worktables generously built and supplied by the Ballarat East Men's Shed. The group has shelter from the elements in the George Longley Building constructed in 2010. A glasshouse for propagation has been added to the facilities and provides space for growing begonias for the annual Begonia Festival.

Open one afternoon per week, and one Sunday per month, the Growing Friends open to cater to the gardening needs of Ballarat gardeners. They grow and sell rare ground covers, perennials, shrubs, and succulents. There is also a plant trolley outside the conservatory.

The Growing Friends come from a wide range of backgrounds and previous experience. They enjoy learning about plants and growing techniques, as well as the friendships and the afternoon teas. Growing Friends Nursery is the main source of income for Friends.

FBBG Growing Group show off their Handbury Award
image: supplied



Deplanchea tetraphylla
Ferdinand von Mueller

Baron Sir Ferdinand Jacob Heinrich von Mueller was a German-Australian physician, geographer, and botanist. From 1853 he served as government botanist for the colony of Victoria and from 1857 to 1873 was director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

The Bauer Brothers at Wittunga

Helena Jenkinson

It is interesting how one thing leads to another. While preparing History walks about Sir Joseph Banks, I was reacquainted with the work of Franz (Francis) and Ferdinand Bauer both incredibly talented botanical artists supported by Banks. Their work, especially Ferdinand's, is exquisitely detailed, scientifically accurate and indeed beautifully botanical illustrated.

They are both called the greatest of all botanical painters. Unfortunately, as David Mabberly points out in his book on Ferdinand, very little of their work was seen in the public arena. Most of their work in the early 19th Century was unpublished publicly until 1960 as it was for the very rich or official records.

Ferdinand's work became better known in Australia than in Europe and the United States of America after exhibitions here. There was little known about his personal life until Mabberley's book in 1999 and a more detailed book by Hans Walter Lack.

Extra interest in Ferdinand occurred in South Australia with the 200th anniversary of the meeting of Flinders and Baudin at Encounter Bay at Victor Harbor (8 April 1802). Ferdinand was the botanical artist on Flinders' voyage. Thanks to the internet their work has become more well-known through the Natural History Museum London website.

Franz 1758-1840 and Ferdinand 1760-1826 were born in Austria and were raised to be illustrators from their early days. They were encouraged by Dr Norbert Boccius, the Court Doctor, to be scientifically accurate in their artistry.

Recording colour was difficult especially as time was of the essence before live samples dried and faded. The brothers developed a colour code or colour chart correlating to the various hues of colour to more than 140 colours. This enabled them to draw the plant or animal in pencil annotating it in a cloud of numbers to then add colour to further drawings at a more convenient time. Even if the original coloured work faded there were the line drawings with numbers to retouch with accuracy.

Banks was anxious to engage Franz and secured his employment on an annuity for life of £300 as long as he worked at Kew. Therefore, at the age of 31, Francis, his Anglicised name, was permanently employed at Kew as an Illustrator in Residence until his death.



Erica baueri – Bridal Heath
image: Eileen Harvey



Banksia baueri – Woolly or Possum Banksia
image: Helena Jenkinson



Plate 13
Illustrationes Florae Novae Hollandiae
Ferdinand Bauer
image: public domain

Ferdinand made his own way as Banks considered him 'wayward'. Perhaps he was more of an adventurer. He was employed by Banks to travel to the Pacific with Matthew Flinders, and worked closely with Robert Brown, the botanist. While in the south he went alone to Norfolk Island, exploring, collecting and painting. He was always referred to in dispatches as 'Painter of Natural History'. On returning to England, he worked for himself and Brown in producing finished watercolours with detailed dissections of flowers and seeds. For 6 years he was employed by the Admiralty but his work was virtually disregarded later when his work was shifted to the British Museum and then the Natural History Museum.

Ferdinand returned to Vienna and on his 1826 death, Francis inherited his completed Mediterranean and Australian drawings which were ultimately purchased by Robert Brown. The general opinion of his work was that of the 'Leonardo of Natural History Illustration'.

Both were working during an exciting explosion of knowledge concerning the diversity of plants. Francis in situ at Kew, Ferdinand travelling the world and making his collection of specimens.

At Wittunga there are plants commemorating both brothers.

***Banksia baueri* – Woolly or Possum Banksia**

This spectacular flowering plant is found in sandy soils in south-west Western Australia and named by Robert Brown in honour of both Francis and Ferdinand. It grows to about 2m by 3m with the most amazing large cream/orange florescences with greyish woolly hairs in late winter, early spring. The seeds are enclosed in the woody cones until burnt. The species has no lignotuber, therefore it relies on fire to regenerate from its seeds. It is possible to grow from cuttings but it is very hit and miss, apparently.

***Erica baueri* – Bridal Heath**

Albertina Heath is not only my favourite Erica at Wittunga Botanic Garden but is also the most popular and widely cultivated of the South African Ericas. Although it can become a sparse, sprawling untidy bush when not pruned it has the most beautiful tubular flowers – soft, pretty pink a perfect foil for the fine grey/green foliage. Named to honour Francis it is now endangered in the wild due to the pressure of farming and commercial harvesting of the thatching Restio plants. It is an ideal plant for dry gardens and grows better from seed than cuttings.

In the Kangaroo Island section of WBG is ***Dodonaea baueri* - Crinkled Hop Bush honouring Ferdinand**. Endemic to South Australia growing naturally from the Gammon Ranges to Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island it is a tough plant. It only grows to about 1m high with small yellow-tipped flowers between December and March followed by the typical *Dodonaea* red brown capsules. It needs little water and grows naturally in rocky hillsides.

Next time you visit Wittunga seek out these three plants which commemorate two talented brothers who combined beauty and accuracy in illustrating the Natural World.

To learn more about the Bauer brothers and to view their work seek out the following books:

The Bauers: Joseph, Franz & Ferdinand, Masters of Botanical Illustration. An Illustrated Biography. Hans Walter Lack, 2015.

Ferdinand Bauer: The Nature of Discovery. David Mabberley. 1999



THE 2026 AAFBG CONFERENCE HOST wins two HORTICULTURAL INSTITUTE AWARDS



The theme for the 2026 conference will be

Growing Connections

the Role of Botanic Gardens in Nature Education

with one goal for the 2026 event being to enable more sharing and collaboration across botanic gardens on educational resources and programs.

August is when Coffs Harbour has mostly sunny days making it an ideal time for exploring the flora of the coastal headlands and rainforests of the Coffs Coast region as well as enjoying the botanic garden located at the heart of the city.

The botanic garden in Coffs Harbour has just completed building a new educational hub building called the Nature Discovery Centre and is gearing up schools educational program with new teachers kits and resources.



Alongside this work the garden also just received two awards from the Australian Institute of Horticulture (AIH) under the category of 'Green Space Community Awards'.

The first award was to the garden overall for "the development of a garden that showcases northern regional ecology and international horticultural themes".

(L) Graham Tupper - President of Friends, North Coast Regional Botanic Garden
(R) Rick Ackland - Garden Manager, North Coast Regional Botanic Garden

The garden in Coffs Harbour combines both plantings in its international garden areas with a focus on plants from other subtropical climate regions around the world as well as plants from east coast Australian rainforest and coastal area ecosystems. Visitors can learn about different types of tall lush Australian rainforests and just a short walk away also discover the delights of colourful coastal heathlands.

A relatively unique aspect of the botanic garden in Coffs Harbour is the retention of over half the garden area as old growth natural forest providing a wildlife refuge at the heart of a regional city and an ideal place for nocturnal wildlife tours.

The second AIH award was to the Friends of the Botanic Garden for "the support of the botanic garden through volunteer activities, guided tours and fundraising".

The Friends of the Botanic Garden in Coffs Harbour now has a membership of just over 330 people with the vast majority also electing to volunteer in a variety of roles such as garden maintenance, offering visitor information services, conducting daytime and nocturnal tours, and hosting a range of community events all through the year.

Volunteers also contribute to conservation of the environment through a regional seed bank project in collaboration with Landcare, maintaining a living plant collection and databases for rare and endangered plants and managing a herbarium.

You can find out more about the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden, Coffs Harbour at their website <https://coffsbotanicgarden.com.au/> and about the other natural attractions of the Coffs Coast region including the World Heritage Gondwana Rainforest areas near Coffs Harbour at this website: <https://www.coffscoast.com.au>.

North Coast Regional Botanic Garden, Coffs Harbour
image: all images supplied



MAROOCHY CONFERENCE 2024

A Team Effort

There will always be challenges as Friends groups evolve; and establishing strong relationships with governing bodies and other community support groups, as well as continuing to attract new volunteers with new skills was one of the key points we felt was a universal concern for the successful survival of any Friends group. Ways and means of adjusting to a changing climate and the use of technology to assist our ongoing roles eventually rounded out the theme - The Challenge of Change

We took heart from the fact that we had people attending from almost every State in Australia - and we mustn't forget that our population centres are so widely dispersed - but still with many smaller Regional Botanic Gardens flying their flags at the Conference and showing us they could do things every bit as well and as interestingly as larger Gardens, even with the associated costs to get here.

Larger and State run Botanic Gardens, such as Melbourne, Sydney and even Brisbane, did not respond with any delegates (perhaps because they do not have the freedom to influence as much of what matters in the everyday running of Botanic Gardens as Regional Gardens do), although Perth with its educational programme of native plantings for suburban gardens and Adelaide who were involved in airing their concerns about long term garden plant displays being sacrificed to expedite the short term installation of sculptural displays to bring in more of the tourist dollars to South Australia.

The Conference Evaluation Summary report bore out what we had all experienced over the four day period - an engagingly co-operative and responsive group of Friends working together with much enthusiasm to provide their solutions to various of our current issues and raise their concerns about potential new issues.

Having the Conference Tour at the beginning of the overall programme, on the Friday before the Conference started the next day, served us very well in giving delegates an overview of the context of the Maroochy Gardens within the Sunshine Coast setting, and the 'Day at the Gardens' at the end of the Conference showed delegates specific references as to how Maroochy was addressing some of its challenges.



Scan for all downloads and images
from the 2024 AAFBG Conference

Making Dale Arvidsson's keynote presentation Queensland-centric and covering Brisbane's array of Botanic Gardens and Arboretum projects was a winner, and celebrating the wide variety of Regional Botanic Gardens strung along the Queensland coast's bioregions was also an eye-opener for the Conference audience when presented by Lawrie Smith AM, both to interstate delegates and to locals. Many highlights then unfolded with examples of how Sunshine Coast Council were able to engage young people with nature-based holiday programmes, schools-based 'Kids in Action' events and adult education and entertainment in the Gardens; Friends of Kings Park put on a workshop showing their successful methodology for encouraging locals to plant native plants in their gardens, and Maroochy showed some of the results from our wildlife and community partnerships.

Friends of MRBBG were also able to demonstrate in their Rapid Fire presentation the successful project work which had come about from a close and collaborative working relationship with Council in the new Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Garden where the Friends designed, constructed, and funded the arbours and have now designed and funded in part the planting layout - thus demonstrating the value of our Friends group's combined knowledge and experience toward Council projects.

Overall, coming from a position of being rank amateurs in "How to Run a Successful Conference".... the Friends of MRBBG are very proud with what we have achieved. We've never hosted a Conference before but we have put on Open Days with entertainment and whole day events with plant sales, and speakers discussing topics such as 'native plants for your garden' and their 'relationship with native wildlife'.

Arranging a thoughtful group of speakers and bedding down the programme also had its challenges but each of our speakers excelled with their topics, delivery, interest level for delegates, both from other Friends of Botanic Gardens or from local institutions and community groups.

It has been a learning experience for all involved with many other avenues being opened up by the Conference speakers and delegates still to be explored in coming months and years by Maroochy.

Lynn Vlismas and Malcolm Cox; co-Conveners with Ray Dale Treasurer, John and Jenny The Bus Tour Guides, Deb Ducrou Caterer Extraordinaire and Everard Kloots Graphic Designer.

Vale Denis Matthews

I first met Denis when I signed up to be a Friend of Lismore Regional Botanic Gardens in May 2013. It was the Official Opening of the Gardens and Denis was Secretary and had been on the committee for many years. Since that time, Denis instigated or was involved in many projects. He was overseeing the printing of many books written for the Gardens by Calder Chaffey and helping to edit newsletters. He created the Solar Clock and labyrinth for the Gardens, always fascinated by maths and physics. He inspired the installation of an old school bell in the Hoop Pine Forest. All of these features are now a focal point for visitors, young and old.

More recently, at events and workday morning teas, Denis was the one to ask about the history of the Gardens and loved to tell a tale or two. His mind was constantly at work, suggesting ideas and projects. He leaves a very large legacy.

Tracey Whitby
President FLRBG



Denis Matthews
image: supplied



Stay in Touch

