

THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



WAITE
ARBORETUM

NEWSLETTER NO. 56
Winter 2008

Secretary
Mrs Rosemary Sawley
8379 7102

Editor
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since reporting to you at the AGM on March 31st we have had two Committee meetings. The major items under discussion are:

1. The Elm Avenue, the bore and water use generally on the Waite Campus with current water restrictions.
2. Reinstatement of meteorological readings at Waite.
3. Loss and replacement of Dry Rainforest plantings.
4. Fundraising and other events planned this year.
5. Vice-president Beth Johnstone has undertaken to compile a list of media contacts and also to look more closely at the role of the committee and how it functions.
6. Acting-treasurer Norma Lee has reported our current membership stands at 137. It is vital that we continue to increase our membership base, so if you have contacts that you feel might support the Arboretum, please spread the word.

We are thrilled to learn that Sophie Thomson has accepted our invitation to be a patron of the Friends of the Waite Arboretum. Sophie has a high profile as a speaker and a presenter on ABC TV and will be a great ambassador for us.

Secretary Rosemary Sawley has suggested we may occasionally seek speakers who are of interest to our members and those of the Waite Conservation Reserve for a combined meeting. This fits well with the concept of greater cooperation with other Friends groups.

The use of Urrbrae House is important to the function of the FWA and we must keep communication lines open. Many of our volunteers work in the grounds of Urrbrae House and the area is important to the integrity of the house.

We have a small sub-committee looking at the question of recycling in the grounds.

The Director, Jennifer Gardner, has overseen continuing improvements to the Arboretum despite setbacks from the fire, and water restrictions, but we are keen to see more sensible rules on water use and the increasing use of mulch by next summer.

If you missed hearing David and Judy Symon reading 'Australian Flora in Verse' I hope you will be able to attend the concert on July 20th.

Don't forget, on August 18 we have the Director of Carrick Hill, Richard Heathcote, speaking after his return from overseas on a Churchill Fellowship.

On the following Sunday, August 24 we invite you to enjoy a picnic lunch and a tour of Ian Roberts property at Blyth. Bring along friends and enjoy the day out!

Bryan Milligan.

IN THE ARBORETUM FROM THE DIRECTOR

New Planting

57 specimens have been planted this year. These include 3 rare species of Dragon Tree *Dracaena cinnabari*, *D. serrulata* and *D. tamaranae*, all propagated and donated by Dr David Symon who secured wild collected seed from their countries of origin. Transport SA generously donated two very old cycads, *Cycas revoluta* sago palm. These were transplanted from the TSA carpark which was earmarked for building. The cycads had been transplanted to the carpark about 30 years ago and were originally from an established garden in Walkerville. The magnificent specimens were quite a challenge to move and Sandiron Constructions generously assisted with a Bobcat excavating and transporting the specimens, digging huge holes and manoeuvring the specimens into place beside the watercourse. Max Bawden (President, Palm & Cycad Society) and Heinz-Dieter Froehlingsdorf (PCS & Transport SA), Mark Ziersch and volunteer Andy Saunders did all the considerable manual work.



Bruce Milgate (Sandiron Constructions), Andy Saunders & Max Bawden installing cycad

Most of the other new plantings continue the development of the Dry Rainforest Demonstration Garden and are looking very good now the weather is cooler.

Publicity

Sophie Thomson's segment on the Arboretum Palm Collection went to air on ABC TV 'Gardening Australia' program on 31 May. Sophie has been a great supporter and promoter of the Arboretum over many years, and I am delighted that she has agreed to be a Patron of the Friends of the Waite Arboretum.

Volunteer News

On 4 June a special lunch was held to thank all the volunteers at the Waite Historic Precinct. The event was attended by many of the 100 volunteers who assist in a wide variety of roles in Waite Arboretum, Gardens, Waite Conservation Reserve, Treenet and Urrbrae House. Handcrafted sterling silver pins, designed by Pat Hagan, were presented to volunteers who have given 10 or more years of service. In addition five volunteers were recognized for their outstanding commitment over 15 or more years. Volunteers make a huge contribution to the Precinct. The lunch enabled volunteers from different areas to meet each other and learn about other activities. .

Mark Ziersch now has a volunteer, Kerry Boone assisting him in Arboretum one or two days a week. Kerry has a keen interest in both the Arboretum and Waite Reserve and has helped with brushcutting, planting, plant propagation and weed control. We are delighted to have Kerry on the team. We also welcome Andy Saunders and Bruce Harlock who have also joined the regular Tuesday morning volunteers this year. More volunteers are always needed. Please contact me if you are interested.

On Saturday 12 July 11 – 3pm, members of Heritage Roses will be doing their annual pruning in the Historic Precinct gardens and more helpers are always welcome.

Seats

Seats greatly enhance the amenity of the Arboretum and gardens, allowing visitors to rest and enjoy the surroundings. There is an opportunity to donate a lovely teak bench seat for the Urrbrae House Rose Garden. It can be a memorial seat or just a gift. Contact me on 8303 7405 if you are interested.

Jennifer Gardner

NUXIA FLORIBUNDA (Benth.)

Nuxia floribunda, Family Loganiaceae, is native to Africa where it mainly occurs in the Cape midlands and from E. Cape to Mozambique and up into eastern, central and tropical Africa. It is fairly widespread in the coastal and mountain forest belt but, being relatively sensitive to drought, does not occur naturally in very cold or arid regions.

Nuxia floribunda has a variety of common names including forest elder, forest nuxia, wild elder and vlier. Its generic name honours M. de la Nux, an amateur botanist on Reunion Island and its specific name relates to its profusion of flowers (L. *Flora* = goddess of flowers; L. *abundans* = abundant).

Nuxia floribunda is a small to medium sized tree (usually about 3 m in height although it can grow to 25 m). The bark on the main stem is rough and flaking, grey to brown. The leaves are simple, 40-160 x 10-70 mm, oblong to elliptical and tapering to a pointed apex. They are often in whorls of three, the margins are faintly toothed or entire and are often undulating. The petioles are slender and 15-45 mm in length. The cream – white flowers are small, scented and are borne in large, branched inflorescences (cymose panicles). They are at the ends of branches and in the axils of leaves (see Interpretive Sign below). The calyx and corolla are 4-lobed; the stamens protrude. In the Arboretum, *N. floribunda* generally flowers in August and September, although it has been recorded as flowering from June – December. The fruit is an ovoid capsule which protrudes slightly from a persistent calyx. It splits into four lobes and contains numerous seeds. *Nuxia floribunda* appears to be self-pollinating as well as being pollinated by bees and other insects which are attracted to its sweet scent. Because of its attraction to insects, it is also attractive to insectivorous birds and seeds are dispersed on birds' bodies as well as by wind.

Nuxia floribunda has various uses, e.g. the bark was used for traditional Zulu medicine, the leaves were used to treat various ailments in other parts of Africa (see information on the Interpretive Sign) and due to the large amount of nectar produced, it is a good honey tree. The pale yellow, close-grained wood is hard and heavy and was once used for making wagons. It is used for fencing, general carpentry, furniture, turnery, and for fuel.

Nuxia floribunda is a very attractive tree and, particularly when in flower, is well worth a visit although it behoves the visitor to avoid the numerous bees which buzz round it!

Sadly, our specimen # 381 did not survive the 20 November 2006 fire although # 369 appears to be surviving.

Much of the material for this article was sourced from:

www.plantzafrica.com/plantop/nuxiaflor.htm

Jean Bird

The interpretive sign for *Nuxia floribunda*.

Nuxia floribunda

Vlier, Kite Tree, Forest Elder



Vlier is a small, attractive, evergreen tree with a rounded and shapely crown. It is native to Africa where it is widespread in coastal and mountain forests from the tropics to the Cape, occurring frequently along watercourses.

In spring, vlier is a profusion of tiny, cream-coloured, sweet-scented flowers in large much-branched clusters. The flowers are self-pollinated as well as by bees and the fruit is a small capsule containing many tiny wind-dispersed seeds.

It is reasonably fast growing and hardy, at its best in a mild climate with plenty of moisture, but performing well in the Waite Arboretum under natural rainfall. It is not suited to frost-prone areas. Its non-invasive root system makes it an excellent choice near buildings and pavements.

The light yellow timber is useful, being hard and close-grained. The Zulus traditionally used the bark, rich in tannins, as a strengthening medicine after a death in the village, while in other parts of Africa, the leaves are used to treat coughs, colds and a variety of other ailments as well as in rituals.

Nuxia, named in honour of M. de la Nux, a French amateur botanist, is a small genus of about 20 species. The specific name *floribunda* means many-flowered.

Drawing by Emma Kinnane, text by Jennifer Gardner. Sign donated by The Friends of the Waite Arboretum Inc.



The Skid Steer in action shifting one of the many truck loads of mulch donated to the Arboretum by arboricultural industry.

POT – POURRI

HIGHWAY PLANTING IN CHINA

My wife and I and some family have recently (Oct. 2007) had a 16 day organized tour in China. This was mostly along the eastern parts of China, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing except for a visit to Xian, a one time capital of China, the start of the Silk Road and the site of the entombed Warriors. We did not go to the Manchurian north, the Gobi west, nor the Himalayan south. The amount of building and road making in China is prodigious. From Hong Kong we went to the famous conical karst mountains at Yangshuo. We did an open boat trip along the Li River. For kilometres along the river the banks had been planted with giant bamboo clumps to beautify the site and they certainly looked handsome.

Every highway we were on was lined on both sides with a triple line of shrubs and trees. A great many of these roadside trees were planted close together and few would be more than 2 m apart. Where space was available – at road angles or chance spaces, quite large trees were transplanted, *Trachycarpus* palms, plane trees with trunk diameters to 30 cm were heavily pruned, the trunks wrapped in straw rope and all propped up by 3 bamboos until established

Quite a variety of trees was used and I was out of my depth with conifers and some Chinese species but could recognise the following.

About Guiliss, inland from Hong Kong, a lot of eucalypts were grown in the taller outer row. They were growing vigorously and did not seem in flower and I had no chance of identifying them. The train line from Xian to Shanghai was lined with poplars, 2 willows, cypress and a few true *Pinus*. Many of the cypress type trees looked sick, possibly through pollution and many had been cut off at about 1 m and were reshooting. As the train was going at 206 km/h, it was not easy to concentrate on the trees.

Further south than Shanghai on the road to the Yellow Mountains (Huangshan) were oleanders, willows, poplars, roses, a small conifer, golden privet (?) and an attractive *Hibiscus* that opened yellow and aged to pink, and also camphor laurel. The road margin was planted with white *Zephranthes*. In Shanghai itself there were lots of *Cycas* in the ground or in tubs, the palm *Trachycarpus* and plane trees. On the steep winding road to Huang Shen were fir or spruce, *Liriodendron* and bamboo. Bamboo was also widely planted on the mountain-sides, probably as a crop.

The pit stops, comfort stations, were an eye opener. We stopped at two with a dozen urinals opposite a dozen cabinets and a dozen wash basins, all nice and clean. Outside was a shop selling fruit, food and drinks, They left our highway pull-offs for dead with their over-flowing bins, litter and faeces.

Out to the Simatai section of the Great Wall. This is about 150 km west of Beijing. The area is higher and drier and has snow in winter (as does Beijing). Many conifers (? *Thuja*) have been planted on the slopes, sometimes each with its own little retaining wall. On the roadsides were *Robinia*, juniper, two species of *Rhus*, now turning red, and, draped over rock slopes, was

Virginia creeper already crimson. Earlier we had seen tree-growing nurseries along some roads but tens of thousands of trees must have been planted on these few roads alone.

D.E. Symon

THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

The cedar of Lebanon is *Cedrus libani*, but today in Lebanon only fragments of the great and widely spread forests remain. The tree is closely related to *Cedrus atlantica* from the Atlas Mountains and *Cedrus brevifolia* from Cyprus. Indeed, some would consider them to be disjunct geographical variants of one species.

The phrase "Cedars of Lebanon" is well known, having Biblical associations. Psalm 92 verse 12 says "The righteous flourish like the palm tree, grow like a cedar in Lebanon". King Solomon, who reigned from 970-931 BC, used vast amounts of cedar for the structures and furnishings of his huge temple in Jerusalem. Hiram (Hiram), King of Tyre, was commanded by Solomon, "Send me also, cedar, pine and algum from Lebanon," to which Hiram replied, "I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar ... My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea". In John Masefield's poem "Cargoes", the quinqueremes rowing from Ophir carried "sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine". The locality of Ophir is debated but in Kings¹, Chapter 10, verses 10-12, the vessels carried almug trees from Ophir, big enough for the pillars of the house of the Lord.

The search for fine cedar began at least a thousand years before Old Testament times and for some record of this we must go to the "Epic of Gilgamesh" which is still being pieced together from the cuneiform tablets found in the ruined cities of Ur, Uruk, Nineveh and other cities dependent on the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The story is the oldest written epic to survive. The most modern (and very readable) account of the epic may be found in the 1999 Penguin classic by Andrew George. Gilgamesh is recorded as King of Uruk, c. 2800 BC and the oldest copy of the Sumerian Gilgamesh poem is c. 2100 BC with copies becoming "abundant" c. 1750 BC.

According to the story, Gilgamesh and his companion, Enkiddu, decide to make an expedition to the Forest of Cedar in order to get timber. They reach the mountain of densely grown trees – "They stood there, marvelling at the forest, gazing at the lofty cedars... On the face of the mountain the cedar proffered, its shade was sweet and full of delight". They meet and argue with the ogre, Humbaba, the guardian of the forest and, with the aid of the sun god, Shamash, they kill him. Then they "trample the forest" Gilgamesh felling the trees and Enkiddu choosing the timber. Enkiddu describes a great door he plans to build for the temple of the god, Enlil, using lofty cedar. "To the house of Enlil the Euphrates shall bear it ... they bound together a raft, they lay the cedar on it". Enkiddu was the helmsman while Gilgamesh carried the head of Humbaba.

At the time of Gilgamesh, the cedar mountains were probably densely covered with timber. It is also probable that the forests were more extensive, occurring on the more inland Antilebanon Range and possibly as far south as Mt Hermon but no cedars exist there now. However, they

are still to be found in the Taurus Mountains of south-eastern Turkey. Those in Cyprus are reduced to a few remnants.

The Gilgamesh story of seeking cedar presents some problems. Even at that time, the value of forest trees must have been recognised. Why else would they have needed to be guarded? The whole undertaking was extremely ambitious. The journey from Uruk to the nearest forest was something like 800-1000 km and the nearest point to the Euphrates from the Lebanon mountains was 250 km. There must have been a team of men to fell, trim and move the large trunks. How then did they transport them over land to the Euphrates? A stone relief from the time of Sargon II (721-705 BC), now in the Louvre, shows Phoenician boats carrying and towing logs from Lebanon for the Assyrians. From this time on, all Mediterranean forests were heavily logged, not only of cedar but also of pine, fir, oak and juniper. During the Greek ascendancy, and later, there was enormous demand for timber as empires rose and fell. Pine, fir, oak and juniper were all used but cedar was especially prized when large pieces of timber were needed. The command of forests was politically important for maritime states. It is known that Antony gave Cleopatra a well-forested area of Cilicia, not for status or hunting but to provide timber for an Egyptian fleet. After Alexander's death (323 BC), Antigonos, one of his generals, needed a fleet to consolidate his power and Diodorus (1st Century BC), a Greek historian, records "He collected fellers and sawyers from all parts, and also shipwrights, and he brought the timber down from Lebanon. 8000 men were employed to fell and saw the timber and 1000 yokes of oxen were used to bring it down".

During the long history of agricultural man and the steady increase in population in the Mediterranean basin, timber was used extensively for fires, houses, mine props and smelting by armies and navies while large areas were cleared for agriculture. Replanting was not practised until modern times. The present stony ribs of the northern African coast, Malta, Corsica, Sicily, southern Italy, Greece, Turkey and especially the drier eastern Mediterranean, have been deforested, the situation aided and perpetuated by goats. With the spread of Christianity, even the sacred pagan groves were destroyed, thus adding to the loss of trees. The remaining cedars of Lebanon are a poignant reminder of once magnificent forests.

References: George, Andrew (1999) "The Epic of Gilgamesh" (Penguin Classics); Meiggs, Russell (1982) "Trees and Timber in the ancient Mediterranean world" (Oxford University Press).

D.E. Symon

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr Andy Saunders, Pasadena; Ms Ashley Hwel Ting Tan, Highgate; Miss Thomasina Siekmann and Prof. Henry Bennett, Crafers

AUSTRALIAN FLORA IN VERSE

The afternoon of poetry read by Dr David Symon and his wife, Judy, on 15 June in the Drawing Room at Urrbrae House was delightful; those of you who were unable to attend missed a treat.

The President introduced David with a brief summary of his many achievements and David started by explaining his rationale for collecting poems relating to the Australian flora. When researching information for his book 'STURT PEA: a most splendid plant', David came across a poem about Sturt's Desert Pea. This led him to seek more poems about Australian plants. He found that there were 600-800 such poems but no anthologies of poems about Australian plants, except for some, such as that compiled by Ninette Dutton, for garden plants. This inspired David to collate poems about the Australian flora; in addition, he decided to include some widespread weeds, e.g. olives, salvation Jane in the anthology which he is in the process of preparing.

David and Judy decided to limit their readings to just a few families of plants, some of which were represented by the floral arrangements on the table beside the lectern. More poems have been written about eucalypts than any other Australian plants and David began with a few words entitled 'The Monotony of Highway 1' written by Mark O'Connor about these trees. This was followed by several other 'gum' poems, including those about the Lemon Scented Spotted Gum, the Red Flowering Gum, the Stringy Bark and some Aboriginal chants. There were poems about wattles (*Acacia* spp.), Australian oaks (*Casuarina* and *Allocasuarina* spp.), palms and others.

David and Judy read poems ranging from the descriptive, many of which evoked vivid mental images, to those with environmental themes; some were political, e.g. the poem purporting to give the late Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's views on rainforests and the felling thereof.

One poem called 'Macadamia Nut' was an amusing conflict of views about whether the nut, should be called 'Macadamia' or 'Bobble Nut', with Judy insisting on the latter whereas David opted for the former.

All in all, an interesting, informative and enchanting afternoon of poetry, read extremely well by David and Judy Symon.

Jean Bird

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 20 July: 2 – 4 p.m. Urrbrae House. Concert. The Arbor Wind Quintet will perform works by Bach, Mozart, Prokofiev, Joplin, Debussy and Dvorak. Afternoon tea will be served. Cost - \$15. **Don't forget to book for this event.** Bookings: 8303 7405 or email: jennifer.gardner@adelaide.edu.au

Monday 18 August: 8 p.m. Urrbrae House. General Meeting. Richard Heathcote, Director of Carrick Hill, will speak on 'Creative Garden Developments and Innovative Storm Water Harvesting at Carrick Hill'.

Sunday 24 August: Visit to Ian Roberts' garden and gallery at Blyth. See below.

Thursday 4 & Friday 5 September: National Wine Centre and Arboretum. TREENET. 9th NATIONAL STREET TREE SYMPOSIUM.

All Friends of the Waite Arboretum and their friends are invited to visit Ian Roberts' property at Blyth on 24 August. Ian is a brilliant artist who loves native plants. His collection will be on view. You will need to bring your own picnic lunch.

Blyth is ~ 2½ hours' drive from Adelaide and it has been arranged that those participating meet at Ian Roberts' gallery at 11 a.m. Directions follow:

