

# THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM INC.



WAITE  
ARBORETUM

## NEWSLETTER NO. 58

Summer 2009

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### FROM THE PRESIDENT

2008 marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Arboretum. The Elm Avenue was planted over two years from 1928 to 1929 but recent dry years have taken a heavy toll of the vigor of many of those 80 year-old trees. However after much lobbying and appeals to a number of people, Dr Gardner has managed, in recent weeks, to oversee the installation of a drip irrigation system for this historic planting. Jennifer will enlarge on this in her report.

Along with the two other Friends' groups we had a successful get together at Urrbrae House on December 1. At that function we had a short address from Waite Director Professor Geoff Fincher giving an insight into the exciting developments on the Campus.

I was also pleased to welcome our new Patron, Sophie Thomson, The Director of Community Engagement, Martyn Evans, and Joe Bennink (Entrepreneurial Programs and Community Relations). It was also an opportunity to thank our sponsors who have been so helpful during 2008. We will be profiling them individually in the newsletters ahead.

We are especially grateful for the extraordinary work put in by Mark Ziersch, without whom Jennifer would be unable to achieve many objectives in the Arboretum.

During the year we had visits from several groups including the Heritage Rose Group and the Friends of Carrick Hill.

Your Committee is looking at further ways of increasing our membership, including putting together an illustrated talk to take to meetings of interested people around Adelaide. If you know of anyone who could help with such a project, please contact the Director or a member of the Committee.

2009 could be a difficult year for us in raising funds so we would greatly appreciate your support at fundraisers and, of course, continuing membership and donations.

Thank you for your support in whatever form it takes.

March 7 – 8 Friends will again mount a display at the ABC Gardening Expo at the Wayville showgrounds. If you can help staff the display, please contact Rosemary Sawley 8379 7102. It is a great way to promote the Arboretum and enlist new members, and helpers have free entry!

Lastly, I urge you to enter April 6 in your new diaries. At 8 pm in Urrbrae House we have been fortunate to obtain Professor John Argue as our speaker at the AGM. John's address is titled "Adelaide's Water – Understanding the *Crisis*".

This is an important topical issue affecting the Arboretum, the whole campus and all of us as individuals.

As we have new members who may not be aware of the names of our current Committee, Editor Jean Bird will include them in this newsletter. We are also keen to welcome new nominations to be put forward before the AGM in April.

Bryan Milligan

## IN THE ARBORETUM

FROM THE DIRECTOR  
Nov. 2008 to January 2009

### Elm Avenue irrigation

Installation of inline drip irrigation in Elm Avenue has just been completed. Funding for the project was secured from the University's Property Services and the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice-President (Research). To improve the health of the trees deadwooding the lower canopies has been undertaken and some work on the upper canopies is planned for 2009. Weeds are being controlled, and the whole avenue is being heavily mulched over the surface drip lines with donated mulch.

### Seats

Two more seats have been installed in the Arboretum – gifts of Mrs Phil Leaney (in memory of Eric Leaney) and Myles Graham (in memory of Daniel McCluskey). This brings the total number of donated seats to 37 (24 in the Arboretum, 10 in the Gardens and 3 in the Reserve). Seats add greatly to the amenity of these areas, allowing visitors to rest and enjoy the natural environment.

## Guided walks

Arboretum guides conducted 31 walks this year for community groups, schools and the general public including special walks during the Fringe Festival, History Week and SALA Week. Guiding is a very satisfying volunteer activity and a great way to learn more about the collection. New guides are needed to supplement those who are retiring. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who is interested in becoming a guide or giving talks about the Arboretum to community groups.

## Sponsorship in kind

The generous assistance (arboricultural work, chipping, mulch) by Adelaide Urban Tree Service) and mulch (Trees Are Us, Taking Care of Trees, Active Tree Services, Austral Tree Services, Heath's Chipping Services, Arborsmart, Urban Tree Surgery and others) is gratefully acknowledged. Bunnings Warehouse at Parafield gave us generous discount on tools and equipment for the volunteers.

## Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to thank you, the Friends of the Arboretum, for your support over the last year. Your memberships and donations have paid for arboricultural work, new labels, promotion of the Arboretum, stump removal and other maintenance. The Friends' Committee has worked very hard to ensure successful events – an exhibition, a lecture, a concert, a field trip and Gardening Expo stand.

I gratefully acknowledge the work of the dedicated Arboretum and garden volunteers whose efforts greatly enhance these valuable assets which are so enjoyed by the wider community. In the Waite Historic Precinct as a whole (Urrbrae House, Arboretum, Gardens, Reserve and Treenet), volunteers contributed a phenomenal 6,720 hours in 2008 – with a value to the University of \$130,400. Volunteering at the Precinct is enjoyable and satisfying. New recruits would be very welcome.

Finally, I thank Mark Ziersch, Arboretum groundsperson extraordinaire who gives such devoted attention to the establishment of new plantings and the care of the collection as well as many, many additional volunteer hours.

Jennifer Gardner

## SCHOTIA BRACHYPETALA SOND

*Schotia brachypetala*, Family Fabaceae, Sub-family Caesalpinioideae, is a medium-large handsome tree. It has a variety of common names including weeping boer-bean, tree fuchsia African walnut, parrot tree and drunken parrot tree. Its generic name, *Schotia*, honours Richard van der Schot who visited South Africa with Jacquin, the author of the genus, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The specific name, *brachypetala*, means 'short petals' and refers to the fact that the petals are partly or completely reduced to short filaments.

*Schotia brachypetala* can grow to 20m under ideal conditions but is usually 11-16m with a spreading canopy of 5-10m. There are sometimes several trunks and the bark is brown or grey-brown and rough although it may sometimes be smooth. The compound leaves are pinnate with 4-8 pairs of leaflets, each with an entire margin, sessile on the stem. The foliage is reddish-copper coloured when young but mature leaves are glossy dark green. The trees are evergreen in frost-free regions but in cold regions may lose their leaves for a short period in winter. The asymmetrical flowers are deep red with 5 sepals, 5 petals, nearly equal in size, overlapping in the bud, and 10 free stamens (sometimes very slightly fused at the base). The fruits are hard, flat dark brown dehiscent pods with 2-3 pale brownish seeds, ~ 2cm in diameter and with a conspicuous yellow aril. The brightly coloured sepals, stamens and pedicels, rather than the reduced petals, give the flowers their colour. The flowers are filled with nectar which overflows and 'weeps' from them and this may well be the reason for the common name, weeping boer-bean. The common name, parrot tree, indicates the attraction of the nectar-filled flowers to parrots and the nectar has a tendency to ferment before the parrots can eat it all, thus the common name, drunken parrot tree.

Flowering times are somewhat irregular in spring to summer and trees more or less adjacent may not all be flowering at the same time. This results in a longish feeding season for the nectar feeding birds.

As well as being attractive to parrots, *S. brachypetala* attracts other nectar-feeding birds, bees and insects, all of which feed on the nectar. Insectivorous birds feed on the insects attracted to the flowers and starlings and various monkeys eat the flowers, monkeys eat the seeds, birds eat the aril on the seeds and various game animals browse on the leaves.

This extremely ornamental tree has a variety of uses apart from providing food for the various animals mentioned. Hangovers and heartburn are treated by a decoction of the bark, mixtures of bark and roots are used to strengthen the body, purify the blood, treat nervous heart conditions and diarrhoea. The seeds are roasted and eaten. They have low fat and protein content but are rich in carbohydrate. Both the Bantu-speaking people and early European settlers are alleged to have eaten the seeds from roasted matured pods. *Schotia brachypetala* bark gives a red-brown or red colour and can be used for dyeing, the timber is suitable for furniture making, especially the dark, termite resistant heartwood and the timber was formerly used for making parts of wagons.

*Schotia brachypetala* is native to southern parts of South Africa and occurs mainly in sub-tropical regions. It grows as far north as Zimbabwe to about 17° S. It does not usually grow near the coast although it grows in the inland eastern parts of South Africa. Its southernmost extent is about 33° S. It is a woodland rather than forest tree and is cultivated in warm climates. It is a common street tree in parts of Australia.

The *S. brachypetala* in the Arboretum, # 324, was planted in 1960. It is a spectacular tree and is ~ 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>m x 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>m. The heavy clay in the Arboretum and lack of water in the summer might account for its slow rate of growth since deep sandy soil and plenty of water in the summer apparently provide ideal conditions for the rapid growth which has apparently been recorded (12m in about 17 years).

Much of this information was garnered from [www.plantzafrica.com/plantqrs/schotia](http://www.plantzafrica.com/plantqrs/schotia) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schotia\\_brachypetala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schotia_brachypetala)

Jean Bird



Photograph of *S. brachypetala* courtesy Jennifer Gardner

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our Christmas Party, combined with the Friends of Urrbrae House and the Friends of the Conservation Reserve, held on Monday 1 December, was well attended and very successful.

After nibbles and drinks and some socialising among the guests, Professor Geoff. Fincher, the Director of the Waite Campus, addressed the gathering. He thanked all of the Volunteers on behalf of the University and pointed out that some thousands of hours had been contributed by Volunteers to the various Friends Groups over the year. He spoke of some of the activities at the Waite with some emphasis of the work of the Australian Centre for Plant Genomics where research involves improving the resistance of cereal crops to hostile environmental conditions such as drought, salinity, high or low temperature, mineral deficiencies and toxicity by identifying the genes which make plants stress tolerant and genetically modifying stress intolerant plants. He also explained the use of The Plant Accelerator (a “super greenhouse”), which was jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government, the Government of SA and the University of Adelaide under the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

(NCRIS). Professor Fincher talked about collaborative research in the past and that proposed for the future and described some of the research proposed for the future at the Waite.

The President of the Friends of the Waite Arboretum followed Professor Fincher and welcomed our new Patron, Sophie Thomson. He then thanked the Committee and Volunteers for their efforts throughout 2008 and made special mention of our wonderful Director, Jennifer Gardner, who works tirelessly for the Arboretum and Mark Ziersch who still contributes so much of the physical work. He summarized the work done in the Arboretum in 2008 and future commitments such as the recently approved Elm Avenue irrigation research project. Bryan also mentioned the success of the TREENET Symposium held in early September, the second day of which was held in the Arboretum. Special gratitude was expressed to our many sponsors, some of whom were in attendance.

The Presidents of the Friends of Urrbrae House and the Friends of the Waite Conservation Reserve also thanked their Committees and Volunteers, spoke of the work done and their plans for the future. The President of the Friends of Urrbrae House particularly thanked Lynette and Amanda, who, in their first year of involvement with Urrbrae House, have done such a tremendous job. He also sang the praises of Glen Woodward who turns 80 and has decided that his time on the Committee should come to an end. Bill Wallace announced Life Membership for Glen, who has made contributions in very many ways and this was greeted with well-deserved applause. Glen was presented with a commemorative plaque and said a few words in response.

The speeches completed the formal part of the proceedings after which Christmas cake was served.

**A REVIEW OF 'FROM THE GROUND UP'**  
by Sophie Thomson  
Published 2008 by Neutrog Australia Pty Ltd

The cover blurb states that this is 'a complete and comprehensive garden guide specifically developed for all South Australian gardeners – from novices to experts. It is a collaborative effort utilizing the recommendations of many South Australian plant experts, combined with Sophie's vast plant knowledge and experience.'

For once this does not seem to be an exaggeration. Sophie writes concisely and clearly and imparts a huge amount of gardening wisdom covering a wide variety of gardening areas. In her new role as Patron of the Waite Arboretum, Sophie will be known to many of you but she also energetically presents for the ABC's Gardening Australia program, writes for its magazine, does Gardening Columns for the Sunday Mail and the Adelaide Hills Weekender, consults on a wide variety of South Australian gardens and has spoken at hundreds of garden and lifestyle events, garden clubs and plant societies – all as well as looking after her family! She began working in her parents' plant nursery and her enthusiasm and knowledge are obvious. Sophie has spent five years producing this book and her effort is rewarded.

The text is divided into chapters. At the end of most there is a list of recommended reading/viewing and contacts to encourage further research. The first chapters cover the basics – our South Australian climate and how plants grow in it, the soil and how to improve it,

watering, mulching, growing and maintaining plants, pruning. There is a lot of sensible information here simply presented.

A short overview of garden design is followed by a chapter on Australian native plants by category – tree, groundcover etc. – with a key to characteristics like sun and water requirements. Obviously only some of the more successful garden varieties can be mentioned but it is a good basis for further research. Similarly the next chapter on exotics is by no means definitive but Sophie says she has tried to give a list of 'sure fire' plants that are her favourites, with an emphasis on climate-compatible varieties for a range of requirements. The plants are divided into plants for sun and plants for shade before splitting by category of tree etc.

There is a chapter on roses with the rose varieties recommended by the Rose Society of South Australia. The guidelines for selection were for reliable, repeat bloomers that were hardy and not particularly susceptible to pests and diseases as well as being readily available. Sophie explains the different types of roses and then lists the chosen roses by category of bush, weeping etc. The last part of the chapter discusses how to grow roses successfully.

A chapter on productive plants starts with consideration for planning a kitchen garden, then mentions varieties of salad herbs and leaves, edible flowers, vegetables, culinary herbs, fruits (including how to prune fruit trees), each list suggesting what to grow and how best to do it.

Trooping the Colour discusses annuals and biennials. There is a long and useful table of plant varieties and their characteristics – plant height, sun and water requirements, flower colour and features, type of plant (annual / biennial / perennial, availability as punnets / pots / seed, whether they self-seed and flowering season. The next chapter considers bulbs and provides general information plus samples of common bulbs by flowering season, again with a useful key.

Gardening in pots is the next topic with sections on good pot plants for sun and shade, hardy indoor plants, plants for enthusiasts – orchids, African violets, begonias, bonsai, bromeliads, cacti and succulents, ferns, fuchsias. As elsewhere in the book local plant societies for these varieties are mentioned with web site or contact email address given.

The need to reduce lawns was mentioned in the Watering chapter but there is a chapter on Lawns where their benefits are discussed as well as waterwise maintenance and suitable varieties.

A chapter on Pests and Diseases followed by one on Weeds gives detailed information on these with suggestions for control.

The final useful item in the book apart from the index is a Calendar listing suitable activities for each month.

The cover says that this guide will become the reference book for all South Australian gardeners. I think this is probably true for the book covers a lot of ground (unintentional pun!) very well. It is the sort of book you can dip into to read or just use as a reference book. I recommend it for either purpose. It is so nice to find a gardening book that is written for South Australian conditions, so many are for the Eastern states or even for Britain – not very useful to us here and the source of much confusion, for instance the idea of planting in spring just before the hot dry months! This book should dispel such myths and help us to garden correctly for our climate, so it is an important and commendable book. Well done, Sophie.

Lynda Yates

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The time for the renewal of your membership has come round once again. In previous years, members have been extremely generous with donations to the Friends when they have renewed their membership and this has allowed us to fund labels and arboricultural work etc. The membership fees have increased slightly for 2009 (the first increase since the incorporation of the FWA) to \$15 for individuals, \$20 for Family Membership and \$40 for institutions. Despite the increases, we again urge you to dig as deeply into your pockets as you can so that the work in our Arboretum may continue. **NB: donations to the FWA are tax deductible.**

## 2008/9 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following people are currently members of the Committee of the Friends of the Waite Arboretum:

Bryan Milligan (President), Beth Johnstone (Vice-President), Rosemary Sawley (Secretary), Peter Nicholls (Treasurer), Jean Bird (Newsletter Editor), Heather Beckmann, Colin Jenner, Cathryn Hart, Henry Krichauff, Jeanette Lord, Judy Tyler, Lynda Yates.

Nominations are called for the Committee to be elected at the AGM on Monday 6 April.

## NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new member:

Garry Mighall, Collinswood





## **Adelaide's new-look Gardening Australia Expo** ***new host, fresh attractions & more to see & do!***

**Adelaide's biggest garden party, the Gardening Australia Expo** will return to **Adelaide Showground, March 7 – 9, 2009** with a fresh new look and even more for South Australians to see and do. Packed with advice, ideas and inspiration, this spectacular expo will see **new host Stephen Ryan** and presenters **Sophie Thomson** and **John Patrick** bring ABC TV's *Gardening Australia* to life.

Watch Stephen Ryan, Sophie Thomson and John Patrick on the **Gardening Theatre Stage** as they provide advice and conduct practical demonstrations; and on the **Q&A Stage** where they will team-up with other horticultural and landscape industry experts to answer all your tricky gardening questions.

Take a stroll through the **Plant Pavilion** where you'll find **plant and nursery specialists** with a huge variety of plants to buy; and **Plant and Botanical Societies & Garden Clubs** with information and advice on specialty plant care.

Foodies will be tempted by the **fine foods and beverages**, as well as lifestyle products available from specialty providers in the **Gardener's Village** – perfect for garden lovers looking for indulgence!

There will be **hundreds of exhibitors** in attendance with an abundance of outdoor gardening products and gadgets to see, try and buy.

Children visiting the expo will find fun and entertainment in the **ABC for Kids Activity Area**. With interactive activities including colouring-in, book readings, DVDs, games and regular visits from ABC for Kids characters, the area will ensure the expo is a great family day out!

Mark your diary with dates of Adelaide's biggest Garden party, the Gardening Australia Expo – you won't want to miss it! For more information and to find out what new attractions will be unearthed at the expo visit [www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au](http://www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au) regularly.

**Where & When:** Adelaide Gardening Australia Expo  
Adelaide Showground, Wayville  
March 7 – 9, 2009

**Open:** 9.30am – 4.30pm daily

**Cost:** Adults: \$13, Pensioner/Seniors Card holders: \$11, Family (2A+2C): \$29, Children 5-16yrs: \$5, Children under 5: FREE

**Tickets:** Tickets available online from [www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au](http://www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au) or at the door

**Groups:** Pre-booked tickets are available for groups of a minimum of 10 people at a discounted rate.  
To arrange a group call (02) 9452 7575.

**Information:** Visit [www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au](http://www.abcgardeningexpo.com.au) or call 02 9452 7575.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Friday 6 March: Gardening Australia Expo Wayville Showground**

**Monday 6 April: 7.30 p.m. AGM Urrbrae House. 8 p.m. Prof. John Argue, University of SA, Urban Water Resources will address the topic 'Adelaide's Water - Understanding the Crisis'.**

**Thursday & Friday September 3 & 4: 10<sup>th</sup> TREENET Symposium.**

**Spring: Date to be announced. Visit to Dean Nicolle's property.**

**Sunday 20 September: Arbor Wind Quintet.**