



# FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

## Newsletter June 2015

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### Dear Member,

Melbourne has quickly moved into winter with the first week of June ranging between 11 - 14C being the coldest ever recorded. This autumn saw an outstanding display of yellow, red and orange autumn leaves in the Gardens and throughout Melbourne. In the Spectrum part of The Age of 6 June pages 6-7 Victoria Gardens was included as reason 6 "Why to visit Prahran". The article includes the Friends website and says the Garden is one of the more intact Victorian era gardens in suburban Melbourne and is a favourite place for a summer picnic. It's good to receive this publicity and hopefully you are all making use of the website.

Poison Star Apple - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diospyros\\_dichrophylla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diospyros_dichrophylla)

A very rare large shrub has been identified in the Gardens by the Royal Botanic Gardens. It's a *Diospyros dichrophylla*, Poison Star Apple or Poison Peach and is growing beneath the south Lemon scented Gum in the east shrubbery (has olive like small leaves). There are only three other plants known in Victoria, all occurring in the Royal Botanic Gardens and are a similar size.



A native of South Africa the shrub grows 2-3m high and occasionally up to 13m. It grows along the east coast line (Eastern & Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo) occurring in coastal scrub and sandy flats, grassland, wooded ravines and rocky hillsides. Leaves are alternating, narrowly ovate, leathery, margin entire and tightly rolled under, dull green and paler green-grey below with dense hairs. The flowers are small about 10mm long and creamy white. The fruit is almost spherical about 2-2.5cm diameter, golden velvety, splitting into 5 vales and 4-5 persistent calyx lobes usually curved backwards. The wood is hard, black and ebony like. Some authors describe the fruit as being poisonous, which is puzzling as generally ripe fruits from this genus are quite tasty and edible, though green fruits are rich in tannins. Our plant does not appear to set fruit.

Diospyros comes from the Greek and is translated as 'celestial pear', a reference to species with edible fruit such as the Persimmon of China and Japan, and North America. There are about 23 species of Diospyros in South Africa but most have inedible fruit. There are 11 Diospyros native to Australia and about 700 species worldwide. Ebony is a dense black wood taken from several species in the genus *Diospyros*, including *Diospyros ebenum* (Ceylon ebony, Indian ebony), *Diospyros crassiflora* (West African ebony, Benin ebony), and *Diospyros celebica* (Makassar ebony). *Diospyros tessellaria* (Mauritius ebony) was heavily exploited by the Dutch in the 17th century.

Bladder Nut, *Diospyros whyteana* (formerly *Royena lucida*) occurs in Victoria Gardens. There are plants in the shrubbery along High Street and north of the RSL Memorial. This low spreading shrub has glossy green leaves and a distinctive feature is the bronze-rusty coloured young leaves.

#### RSL Memorial Upgrade

The Mayor Cr Melina Sehr and Mr Rod Coote President Prahran RSL Sub-branch launched the upgraded RSL Memorial at the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ANZAC Ceremonial Service on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015.



#### Gardens Inspection

An inspection of the Gardens was held on Thursday 21 May with Rebecca James, Steve Watt & Glen Anderson (City of Stonnington) and Vihra Migios, Denise Saville, & John Hawker (Friends of Victoria Gardens). Responses from members included the lack of shade in the playground, condition of the toilet, weeds, need for new planting and mulch, protection of young trees from ring barking, poor condition of seat surrounds around oval, and need for an interpretation sign.

The meeting was very constructive and important improvements will be made. Council has accepted the need to improve horticultural standards, remove weeds, especially tree seedlings and to mulch beds and young lawn trees to prevent ring barking. The condition of the toilet will be improved, painted and the asphalt entry path leveled and repaired.

#### Treasurer Wanted

**No one** has responded to the call for a new treasurer. Jennifer Withecomb is moving and a new treasurer will need to be appointed at the AGM on 23 June 2015. If you can help please contact Vihra Migios, ph: 9529 1959 email: vmigios@gmail.com

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

**DATE & TIME:** Annual General Meeting, Tuesday 23 June 2015 at 7.45pm

**LOCATION:** The Studio, 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran (opposite the Flying Duck)