



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter March 2016

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Dear Member,

Finally we have seen the end of summer and for the past few weeks we have experienced a February more like autumn, except for Tuesday 23rd when the temperature reached 41 degrees and was the only day that the temperature exceeded 35 degrees. This was an unusual experience as the last time this happened was in February 1992. Already a number of tree species, including elms, poplars, pears and crabapples are showing the first signs of autumn colour. A highlight of the summer has been an almost continual display of red, purple and white flowering Crepe Myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) cultivars. Several councils including the City of Stonnington have planted Crepe Myrtles as street trees in recent years and at this time of the year Lewisham Road south is a spectacular display of white flowering Crepe Myrtles.

Christmas Party

On Sunday 13 December the Friends gathered in the Gardens to celebrate Christmas and what was a very productive year. Following last year's successful photographic competition members brought along their favourite views of the Gardens.

The competition was won by Peter Legge whose view of the Elvins Prunus and Water Oak was rated as an outstanding photograph displaying the outline and tracery of the oak canopy and the intense colour of the Prunus. While large the oak is only about 70 years old.



2015sep: Victoria Gardens: Prunus "elvins", Quercus nigra: view to NW from SW corner

Peter Legge Sept 2015

Malvern Gardens, Spring Street & High Street, Malvern

On 2 February Vihra, Denise and John meet with Jan Wiener who sort help from the Friends to discuss the formation of a Friends group for the Gardens, and potentially a larger group that would coordinate community interest in all of Stonnington's gardens. The City has an important collection of parks and gardens that include, Hedgeley Dene, Central Park, Ardrie Park, Malvern and Victoria Gardens. There are also the Princes Gardens, Grattan Gardens and many small local gardens.

All of these gardens are important and greatly valued by the community. There is concern about the impact that events are having on the gardens and the decline and loss of trees. If you are interested, or know someone who is interested in being part of a group to progress this idea can you please contact Vihra.

Plant of the Month

The flowering Tree Gardenia, *Gardenia thunbergia* has been spectacular for the past month. There are 3 in the Gardens, the plant fronting High Street (photograph below), a planting in the western shrubbery north of the Golden Elm and an old leaning plant beneath the Spotted Gum inside the Murray Street entrance. Both these plants (but not the west shrubbery) are shown on the Edna Walling Plan drawn 8 April 1947 as "Ex Gardenia", which makes these plants at least 70 years old.

A large shrub or small tree the plant is endemic to the Southern and Eastern regions of South Africa and neighbouring territories such as Swaziland. It is densely twiggy and rigid with smooth light-grey bark, and is easy to grow as a strong hedge, but more usually as a specimen plant, striking in appearance and long-lived. The abundant and extremely fragrant flowers are about 70mm in diameter with long tubes only accessible to the proboscises of nocturnal hawkmoths. The fruit is oval, hard, woody and fibrous, about 80mm long and about 40mm in diameter, light-grey with small raised white spots and if not eaten by large browsers or elephants, will remain on the tree for years. The grey, extremely hard fruit can be seen on the plants in the Gardens.

In his most recent blog the director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Prof. Tim Entwisle reported on the Tree Gardenia and this can be accessed at; <http://talkingplants.blogspot.com.au/>



Feedback

If you have any matters you want to raise or suggestions for the Friends to follow up please feel free to contact Vihra Migios, ph: 9529 1959 email: vmigios@gmail.com

NEXT MEETING:

DATE & TIME: Tuesday 22 March 2016 at 7.45pm

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