



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter March 2017

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Dear Member,

No 40 °C days in Melbourne this summer and the Gardens have benefited from not having high temperatures burning leaves and causing premature leaf fall. This is the first time since the summer of 2004-05 that the temperature has not exceeded 40 °C. The highest temperature was 38.9 °C at the Essendon Airport on the 17 January.

However while the number of extremely hot days was lower than average, there were more days above 25 °C, 30 °C and 35 °C than usual and the highest minimum overnight temperature was recorded at Laverton on the 8 January when the temperature did not drop below 28.9 °C. Rainfall was mostly average and above average in the east. It is now a few weeks since there was any rain in Melbourne and the parks and gardens are now starting to dry out.

Irrigation and Lawn Upgrade:

You will have seen recently erected notices at the entrances advising residents of improvement works. The proposed works include:

1. Installation of a new irrigation system on the sunken oval and lawn areas throughout the gardens
2. Re-levelling grades on the sunken oval
3. Installation of new kikuyu turf on the sunken oval and banks
4. Creation of a new granitic sand path linking the playground with the existing path in the gardens

The works will commence in April and be completed in June. The irrigation system will significantly improve the quality of grass on the sunken oval and throughout the gardens. During the Friends site visits with Council the poor grass cover on the sunken oval bank and around the seats has been a regular complaint. It is particularly bad at present. The ability to establish a grass cover in a heavily used area and on a steep bank will be particularly challenging.

It has been suggested by the Friends that the installation of a plastic cell base may be necessary to hold the water and turf in place. This would also deal with soil compaction and reduce damage from dogs digging into the ground. A product Netpave 50 has been successfully used in Yarra Park to establish a grass cover in car parks. Further information available at <http://www.tdpltd.com/our-products/netpave-50/>



In other news from Council, the Friends have been advised of preliminary planning and discussions relating to the Victoria Gardens portables, shed and storage areas. Stonnington Major Projects has a budget to upgrade the area, including the old gardeners' potting shed and the two portables. Council will seek further information about how we can better accommodate all users of the area.

If you have any suggestions or ideas about the future of the depot area, which is looking very uncared for and untidy at the moment, can you please contact the Friends.

To reduce the clutter in the gardens a bracket will be built to install the dog dispensers onto existing bin enclosures rather than the existing arrangement of a separate timber post beside the bin.

Plant News:

A feature along the west shrubbery at present are the numerous and dense blue flowering *Plectranthus ecklonii* (Spurflower). A brittle fast growing shrub to about 2m high, spurflower is one of a few plants that grows and flowers well in dry shade. The plant should be regularly pruned to develop a compact plant. White and pink flowering cultivars are available. The plant is frost tender but grows very well in Melbourne.

The plant is a native of South Africa and has a wide distribution from Eastern Cape to Barberton in Mpumalanga. It is confined to moist coastal subtropical and forest margins. Australia has 22 endemic species of *Plectranthus*. The most commonly cultivated is *P. argenteus* from NSW & Qld which has attractive silver foliage.



Christmas Party

On the afternoon of Sunday 11 December 2016 the Friends gathered in the Gardens to celebrate what was a very productive year.



Photograph provided by Peter Legge

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday 14 March at 7.45pm at 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran (opposite the Flying Duck)