



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter July 2023

President: John Hawker
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Dear Member,

Now into the second month of winter and 2 weeks after the shortest day a few plants will be starting to flower while other plants remain dormant. The night of the 22 June was the winter solstice, the longest night and shortest day of the year. It gets lighter and brighter from here – at least until the summer solstice on December 22. The difference between now and then is a little over five hours in Melbourne and about four and half hours of daylight if you live in Sydney.

The ability of plants to adjust their physiology by detecting night and day length is called photoperiodism. Not all plants have this ability and many focus their physiological attention solely on temperature and water instead. But of those that do monitor day length, some respond to shortening or lengthening days by going dormant. Others put resources into bulb or tuber production and some are prompted to flower. Of the latter, most flower when days are at least 12 hours long, but some are triggered to flower by long nights.

We tend to think of flowering plants as responding to the sun, but for short-day plants, it is long periods of uninterrupted darkness that generates flowering. These plants include annuals like primula and polyanthus, some chrysanthemums, and some varieties of strawberries. The popular winter-flowering zygocactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) plays night length off against temperature, demanding longer hours of darkness the higher the temperature.

The switch at winter solstice from lengthening nights to lengthening days is the solution to dill and coriander going to seed. Both herbs register day length and respond to the longer nights after the summer solstice [22 December] by trying to grow fast and set seed before the onset of winter. Seed sown in late summer and autumn produces leggy, weak plants rushing to flower, but if planted after the winter solstice (and after frosts) gardeners can expect sturdy plants and a long season of leaf¹. If planning to grow vegetables the following reference will be of help;
<https://localfoodconnect.org.au/community-gardening/planting-guide/>

Many might have considered June to have been particularly cold. The temperatures were close to average, the coldest being 4.2°C on 21st against an average of 6.9°C and the maximum 20.1°C on the 5 June against an average of 14.1°C. Rainfall for the month was 52.8mm (only 0.8mm more than last year) against an average of 49.5mm.

Stonnington Environment News:

We were advised that from 10.00am in Prahran Square and at Central Park on Sunday 4 June as part of World Environment Day, Stonnington Council has arranged for *Adopt a Native Plant Giveaway*. This activity was the same as the event held on 31 July in 2022 when 1500 native shrubs, grasses, groundcovers, and wildflowers were given away and 224 registered attendees and lots more turning up on the day.

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/what-the-winter-solstice-means-for-your-gardening-plans-20230620-p5di0n.html>

Garden Inspection:

The annual Garden inspection walk was held on Tuesday 6 June 2023 with Council staff Dominic Mazza, Adam De Zoete, Shanan Matheson and Sara Raeside. Shanan is Council's new arborist. Attending from the Friends were Dianne Wilde, Julie-Ann Hobbs, Gretchen Kaye, Sarah Jardine, Jill and John Hawker. The main matters discussed during the inspection included;

1. Clean and paint Toilet, improve inside conditions. No current plan to replace building
2. Remove/prune Bougainvillea
3. Remove Variegated elm stump
4. Fix fence and plant around Dragon's blood tree
5. Relocate the young Araucaria heterophylla from beside the memorial wall
6. Remove Buddleja madagascariensis in corner and prune (there are 5 plants)
7. Monitor Lombardy Poplars, prune basal watershoots
8. Repair stone fence and paint fence, east side
9. Remove ivy and palm seedlings, plant Cordyline stricta
10. Plant a flowering tree (Cercis) to replace Cape Chestnut and new tree to replace Blackwood
11. Repair waterlogged lawn along the SE boundary. Need to determine source of water
12. Repair brick gutter and stone wall
13. Prune unstable Diospyros dichrophylla (*Poison star-apple*). A tree has been propagated as future removal of the leaning tree is proposed
14. Remove North Privet tree (Ligustrum lucidum) and replant screening plants
15. Plant 2 Magnolia grandiflora trees in North boundary bed, west side
16. Prune Bottlebrush and Holly along west fence

Victoria Gardens Volunteers:

Earlier this year several documents that had previously been prepared were revised to comply with new Council templates. The documents were forwarded to Deb Nuemann (Environmental Officer) were:

1. Risk Management Guidelines (based on the Urban Forest template)
2. FOVG's Recommencement Proposal for VGV group.
3. Risk Assessment Draft

In reply Deb asked if members would be flexible in agreeing to have working bees operate on weekdays (preferable Tues/Thurs, AM) for a duration of around 2 hours. She also suggested an option for working bees to be monthly or every 2 months as Council was happy to accommodate aligning working bees with particular planting/horticultural plans for the Victoria Gardens space (e.g. supporting annual displays for special events).

In a reply to Deb, the Friends indicated that the preferred timing for a volunteer program is Saturday morning as an objective of the volunteer program is to attract younger members, who would not be available midweek. Since April Deb has taken 12 months leave and her replacement is Annie Swann.

Further discussion with Council will be initiated after their response is discussed at the July general meeting

Engaged Program

Earlier this year the Friends were contacted by Danielle Clarke from Council's Social Support Program to arrange a tour of Victoria Gardens as part of their Engaged Program. This Program helps with social isolation and encourages exercise and community connection. On 6th June John Hawker lead a group of 13 members of the local community and Danielle Clarke through the Gardens. Significant plants, features and history of the Gardens were highlighted. This is the second year FOVG has hosted a walk for the Engaged Program.

Photograph Collection

In December 2022 the Friends commissioned photographer Michael Pham to take a collection of photographs of the Gardens. About 100 images were taken and will be used for the revised and upgraded website and on Instagram. These photographs will also form an important historic record of the Gardens.

Instagram

After much discussion at our March meeting about ways of raising our profile, it was decided to start a Friends of Victoria Gardens Instagram account at; <https://www.instagram.com/friendsofvictoriagardens>



instagram.com

<https://www.instagram.com/friendsofvictoriagardens>

Sarah Jardine now manages our account with regular postings of images supplied by members to showcase the Garden. There are already 84 people following Friends of Victoria Gardens. We have also set up a Friends of Victoria Gardens Whats App group to facilitate the sharing of members photos for use on Instagram. Members may also share photos of the Gardens they have taken by sending them to our gmail account at info.fovg@gmail.com

Website

The Friends website is currently being reviewed and upgraded by Nick Hawker to present a new and easier site to navigate. Additional images will be added as well as an increased number of reports and documents recording the work of The Friends of Victoria Gardens and the Garden's history.

Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2022 – 2025

The Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025 has now been approved. The Plan establishes a policy and planning framework that will guide the delivery of Animal Management Services for the next four years.

- [Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025\(PDF, 5MB\)](#)
- [Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025 SNAPSHOT\(PDF, 6MB\)](#)

FOVG Membership

Membership subscription for **2023-2024** is now due as of 1st July.

Your membership demonstrates the strength of community support for the Victoria Gardens.

Membership Fee: **\$10 Individual and \$15 Family**. Payment via bank transfer as follows:

- Account name - Friends of Victoria Gardens Inc.
- BSB - 083 427.
- Bank - NAB
- Account number- 43 521 3152.
- Write your name in the reference section so that we can acknowledge receipt of your membership.

Next Meeting:

AGM: Tuesday **11 July** at 7.45pm at 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran,

Ordinary Meeting: Tuesday **11 July** (after our AGM on the same night)

Instagram Images



Image 4 July 2023

Planted in October 2022 to replace 4 declining Prunus 'Elvins', the Weeping Apricot (Prunus mume 'Pendula') is the earliest flowering of all "blossom trees".

An Asian tree species 4-10 metres tall depending on graft height with distinct weeping branching. The pink and sometimes white or red winter flowers are highly perfumed.

Originated around the Yangtze River in the south of China, although is dispersed throughout cooler non tropical parts of Asia.