



# FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

## Newsletter December 2021

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### **Dear Member,**

Thank you to all members who have supported the Friends over the past 2 years. In the absence of the community *Spring into Gardening* event and the Garden Volunteer program it has been a difficult period to keep in contact. Even with the removal of lockdown restrictions in late October and a gradual opening up of businesses, events and travel, the virus is still very active in the community and now there is a new *Omicron* variant we are dealing with and the future is again uncertain. Council has plans to hold a range of events in 2022 and hopefully the Garden Volunteer program can recommence in the new year.

### **Gardens:**

Melbourne, and most of Victoria, has enjoyed one of the wettest since 2011 and coolest since 2016 Springs on record. This has resulted in our gardens being in outstanding condition and many plants putting on a spectacular flower display. For the first time in many years only one day recorded a temperature above 30°C, and this was the last day of November when the temperature reached 31.6°C. The rainfall which fell regularly during Spring saw Melbourne receive above average rainfall of 275mm. Importantly Melbourne's water reservoirs are now over 90% in capacity and predictions are that this summer will be wetter than average due to the La Nina climate pattern.

The poor condition of the central area of the sunken oval has been raised with Council. Plans are in place to resow the lawn but this has had to be timed to avoid the high use of the Gardens during lockdown, and now the busy Christmas period, and to work in with the redevelopment of Como Park oval. Most likely the oval resowing will now occur in the new year.

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, the Gardens are experiencing a more normal pattern of use. Beds have been weeded and mulched, new annuals planted, extra rubbish bins have been added, and Council notified of a faulty light on the west High Street gate pillar. Gardeners have again raised concern about damage to the garden bed along the east boundary.



The large south Lemon-scented Gum, *Corymbia citriodora* in the east shrubbery became almost leafless in early Spring.

Recently Council initiated a pruning program, reduced the canopy of the Poison Star-apple and placed several new possum bands in the tree. This work has seen extensive reshooting of the gum over the past few weeks.

Photograph: 11 October 2021

On Friday 29 October the Friends were notified of the collapse of the Lavalle Hawthorn (*Crataegus x lavalleei*<sup>1</sup>) beside the RSL Memorial and loss of a branch from the nearby Chinese Elm. The severe storm event on the previous evening caused power outages and extensive tree damage across southern Victoria, Ballarat, Mornington Peninsula and the Dandenong Ranges.



Collapse of Lavalle Hawthorn (left and right) and failure of Chinese Elm branch (foreground) from the top of the canopy. The trunk of French Hawthorn was hollow and several large branches have previously been removed. The tree has been retained for the short term. It is likely that this tree was existing when Edna Walling prepared a Landscape Plan in April 1947, with the plan showing "Ex. *Crataegus*" in this location. Along the fence line to the west two *Crataegus mexicana* were to be planted.



About 2 weeks ago the Cape Chestnut in the south east corner, which had died, fell over and just avoided damaging a seat.

Photograph: 22 November 2021

### Christmas Party:



The Christmas party is on **Sunday 12 December from 3-6pm** near the RSL memorial, High Street entrance in Victoria Gardens.

Guests are asked to bring a plate to share and their own drinks, chair or rug.



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<sup>1</sup> Often incorrectly spelt as *Crataegus x lavallei* is a hybrid between *C. crus-galli* × *C. pubescens* f. *stipulacea*. Fruit orange-red, about 2 cm long, on thin stalks about 5-8 mm long.