

December 1999

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# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. P O Box 220 Warrandyte 3113

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## A Productive Year

By Andy Nixon

No doubt the best way to start an annual report is at the beginning of the year, and a beginning of a year here is summer, and of course a main focus for us in summer is fire management. The fire season proved to be a reasonably quiet one with staff attending very few fires outside the district. (A fire at the Grampians was the one and only in '99). And in fact their busiest time was pre Xmas 98 - 3 wildfires attended. To date, touch wood, no fires have been recorded in the park for this calendar year.

There were perhaps three big focuses for the year: Rabbits and Weeds (Environment); and Mt Lofty (Assets). Each of these projects took up much staff time as well as large allocations of the operation and capital budgets. Non were without a few trials and tribulations along the way, but end results have proved worthwhile and all involved, including Fowspian's, need to be thanked.

The rabbit work included a district strategy for the Warrandyte/Wonga Park area and great team work was found with support from NRE, Nillumbik and Manningham councils. A number of community action groups were setup, field days held, and fencing action taken - most notably at Pound Bend, Mt. Lofty, and Bradleys Lane. This was ably supported by a whole host of people and funding sources. The entire project is a fine example of a community working together to alleviate a nasty problem.

Likewise other nasties of the vegetative kind were under attack, still are, (and I am afraid will still always be), during this year. Of particular note was the woody weed work done along Everard Drive - can you see the difference !?; the awakening of new riparian revegetation opportunities with the extensive removal of

willows in a number of locations; the zealous blitzkrieg of new weeds eg. Parrots Feather, St. Peters Wort; and of course the continued weeding of those areas that play special host to our rarer native species.

There have been many other and numerous activities that have kept the staff busy, involved and interested. Sometimes mundane, sometimes exciting (even adrenalin pumping - Oh! The find of a new species record for the park !), but never boring. The input into the role of environmental watchdog during the Jumping Creek bridge construction was a successful joint effort between park staff and community representatives. Parks Victoria has a new shop front at the also new 'Valley of the Arts' - Warrandyte Information Centre. Fuel reduction burns, Optus phone towers, marauding dogs attacking our friendly wildlife, offences, lost souls, information provision, staff stress relieve sessions (training, workshops, regional events etc.), new footbridges (along the river J.C. way), Gold Memorial walk, fencing for species protection, revegetation works here there and everywhere - all this keeps Warrandyte State Park ticking along.

We did have two, if I may use the term, 'downers' for the year. Mt. Lofty did not run as smoothly as we might have hoped, the money came in very late and some aspects of the project were rushed, but on the positive side the new walking tracks and opportunities that the upgraded visitor areas provide are looking good for the future. It is a shame however that Wittons Reserve has remained as a stalemate and this is the second disappointment for the year. With Mt. Lofty now open to the public a big challenge in

**Continued on next page**

#### A Productive year contd.

the year ahead will be for Parks Victoria, Manningham, and the local community to work together for the upgrade of this important riverside conservation and recreation node.

There are highlights! The completion of the three year project, Ecological Vegetation Mapping of the Warrandyte Gorge and environs is almost complete. Much thank needs to go to our diligent contractor Cam Beardsell and his entourage of assistants. The final document will be a vital tool in the future ecological management of the park and nearby reserves. Notably through this work approximately 15 new flora species have been identified. Next, the various 'weed' projects, as mentioned, undertaken

during the year have seen a further concerted effort from park staff, valued contractors, and community partnerships in attacking significant infestations. These have been good solid 'value-adding' environment projects.

And finally the nursery. What a joy! Its full, its vibrant, its looking green and healthy. So much thanks to the efforts of all who have participated in FOWSP nursery programs this year - particularly to the nursery manager for the extra work he is putting in. Its' when I'm feeling a little blue from the flood of admin work, or seeing red because of a new finance directive, its good to just go and look at the nursery, and see .....green.

## Worth Repeating

### Growing Green a growing thing

There is a revival in membership of conservation organisations.

By Claire Miller

**A**ustralian conservation groups are enjoying a revival, with most reporting dramatic increases in Membership.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has reached record membership levels, while other groups are reporting a surge in support from people who do not join but regularly donate money.

While the resurgence is partly due to vigorous recruitment drives after membership slumps in the early to mid 1990's the growth also appears to reflect community concerns that are having an impact on state and national politics.

In Victoria, for example, the Greens received their largest vote yet in an Australian election. Environmental issues determined the fate of several seats including Gisborne where Labor beat Mr Rob Knowles on the strength of preferences from anti-logging candidates who got 17 percent of the primary vote.

The Victorian National Parks Association's director Ms Amanda Martin, said politicians could not ignore results such as in Gippsland East where concern about the Snowy River saw the independent candidate, Mr Craig Ingram, oust the National Party incumbent With a 23 per cent swing.

In a marginal political environment, conservation issues would have greater bearing on political results Ms Martin said.

Association membership leapt by 500 to 3500

in 1996-97 after public outrage over the State Government's development plans for Wilsons Promontory. It also has 8000 financial supporters.

Greenpeace says its supporter numbers have doubled to 80,000 after it started its "Frontline" recruitment drive two years ago. Supporters are those who donate more than \$50 a year.

Australian Conservation Foundation membership has risen about 25 per cent to more than 22,500 in the past year, topping the 21,900 achieved in the heyday of environmental awareness in the late 1980s. Membership continues to grow by about 400 a month. Financial supporters number 50,000

The foundation's director, Mr Don Henry, said the rise support reflected increasing anxiety about perceived lack of environmental action.

"My sense is that the environment is well and truly back on the agenda," he said. Wilderness Society membership, which fell from 37,000 in 1991 to about 15,000 last year, is improving, about 1000 people joining the last six months.

The World Wide Fund for Nature's member and supporter base has jumped about 40 percent to about 15,000, while Friend of the Earth has 2200 members in Melbourne after a low of 2000 in 1994. Its peak was 2700 in the 1990's.

The Humane Society International now has 12,000 regular donors since opening its Australian branch in 1994. With about 950 members in 1997, Environment Victoria has steadied at more 1000 members this year. Its peak was 1500 in the 1990s.

Australians have also embraced volunteer groups such as Landcare, which work on local rehabilitation projects. The number of and Bushcare groups across Australia has climbed since the program was introduced a decade ago.

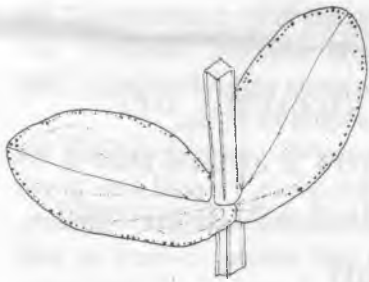
Source: The Age 29/9/99

## Yellow Perils

WEEDS are a constant threat to our dwindling native bushland. There are so many of them it's hard to know where to start and which ones to control. Some weeds have been around Warrandyte for many years and their impact, although serious, does not require urgent action. Among the weeds being targeted by rangers at Warrandyte State Park at present are three that are relatively new to the area - all have the potential to be a major problem if they were to spread. Two of them belong to the same genus, and all are classified as noxious and environmental weeds. By finding these weeds at an early stage of their infestation there is a real chance of eradicating them from Warrandyte or at the very least preventing them from becoming a serious threat to the Park.

The weeds are:

### St Peter' Wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*)



A dense plant which grows up to 1 metre high with thin, light green, prominently veined, rounded leaves that clasp (ie. no stalks) the square stems. The 5-petaled, yellow flowers occur in crowded clusters at the end of branches.

The plant usually grows in damp mud in open sunny areas along the banks of river, creeks and swamps, but could also occur in moist pastures.

Only known from a few places in Victoria, including the Woori Yallock Creek, and more recently along Jumping Creek and the banks of the Yarra River at Warrandyte.

### Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*)

An erect shrub up to 1.5 metres high with distinctive reddish stems which emerge from a woody base (rootstock). The thin, pale green leaves, (longer and more pointed than St Peter's Wort) also have a reddish tinge and are stem clasp. The 5-petaled, yellow flowers have prominent stamens and are followed by globular fruit which, over summer, turn from green to red to black.

Found in damp shaded forested areas, along creeks and rivers and may encroach onto adjoining pastures. Known from many sites around the State - a particularly bad infestation occurs along the Howqua River near Mansfield. Previously in Warrandyte, only a few plants had been noted close to the river mainly at Pound Bend. This year Tutsan has exploded on the scene, infestations have been found in many places close to the river. This is probably due to a slightly wetter season, but more likely it is a side effect of the reduction of rabbits in the areas where it is now flourishing.



### Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

An erect herb usually around 30-80 cms high. Starting out as a rosette of stalked wrinkled leaves, the plant develops one or more stems and the deeply divided dark green leaves become stalkless. The flowers, which occur in clusters at the ends of branches, are bright yellow typical daisy florets.

Occurs in southern Victoria generally on degraded land. Ragwort has not yet taken off in Warrandyte although infestations are common close by, however, occasional plants have been found growing in relatively weed-free bushland within the State Park.

It is vital that we control all these weeds before they take control of our precious bushland. You can help by keeping your eyes open for any of these weeds and for others like Parrots Feather (described last year), Chilean Needle/Spear Grass and Serrated Tussock Grass. If you think you may have seen any of these please notify the Park - contact ranger is David Van Bockel (9844 2659).

**Note:** St Peter's Wort and Ragwort can be seen growing (in a pot) at the nursery. For more detailed descriptions and photographs of these weeds refer to 'Noxious Weeds of Australia' by Parsons and Cuthbertson which can be found in the FOWSP library.



## Book Review

By Lee Speedy

### Feral Future

By Tim Low, Viking Penguin Books  
\$24.95



It's hard to miss the large, bright red cover of Tim Low's paperback 'Feral Future'. I initially hesitated buying this book, wondering if I'd rather live in ignorance! However a glimpse inside, revealing Tim Low's constant stream of very detailed information, made it difficult to resist. The subtitle explains 'Feral Future' as "the untold story of Australia's exotic invaders". Tim meticulously covers the deliberate **and** bumbling introductions of exotic flora, fauna and disease causing globalisation of the environment - the full bio-invasion!

There is humour in this book : in the early history of Australian acclimatisers, pushing for the import of giraffes, squirrels and flamingoes, to name a few. There is also a huge "wow" factor in his impressive (unimpressive?) statistics and lists, obviously drawn from reams of notes and resources.

Just mentioning words like "weeds" or "pests" seems to narrow the topic for many people. Tim

Low makes you realise the breadth of the issue with chapters detailing soil travellers, ballast, garden escapes, quarantine inconsistencies and Australian pest problems abroad. He takes care to factor in 'weedy' native plants as well as discussing biocontrol - planned introductions of species to solve existing problems, as with cane toads or mosquito fish.

I have only one criticism. As each newly mentioned 'invader' appears, like a vile character in a play, I would like to have seen less mention or repetition of that invader from chapter to chapter. I felt I had already read about that pest. I do realise though, the inherent difficulty in sifting and sorting these weeds or pests. Nature **is** linked, does have crossovers and communities.

Tim's book is wonderfully controversial. He criticises plant experts Mueller, Mollison and Burke, berates governments and refreshingly, lists what he believes we should be doing.

Whilst "Feral Future" is essential reading for botanists and conservationists, I would love to see this book read by council workers, farmers, politicians, pet shop and nursery owners as well as everyday gardeners. I wonder if this topic, much like the renewed interest in bush foods, will become a more prominent one in the coming century.

## FOWSP's Challenges

By Cathy Willis

This has been a fairly uneventful year for FOWSP, in that we have had no major issues directly affecting Warrandyte State Park to worry about. The major concern this time last year was what to do about nursery management. Our current manager has achieved far more than we had hoped, and as a bonus the nursery is heading towards becoming self-supporting.

Threats to the local and wider environment crop up all too often. As always, it is hard to draw the line on what we should be vocal about. With the establishment and success of Warrandyte Awareness Group, and their likely future alliance with the Wonga Park Environment Group, I believe we should stay focused on WSP, but offer our support to these groups whenever appropriate.

FOWSP faces some major challenges in the coming years. It is encouraging that our new state government intends to return to more conservation based management of our Parks. It is too early to guess what a split in park management services (with some parks returning to a National Parks Service, and metropolitan Parks becoming City and Bay Parks) will mean

for us. However, nationally "the environment" seems to simply not be on the agenda. With the introduction of the GST and the East Timor levy in 2000, the media focus is bound to be all financial in the foreseeable future.

Internally, the challenges may be even greater. We have a growing membership, and a core of committed people, whether they are manning the market stall, pricking out plants or taking a place on the committee. But these are a very small percentage of members. Why is it so hard to get people out on weekends? Why do we struggle to form a committee each year? Is everyone just too busy, or aren't we getting across the right messages? Burn out is a much over-used term these days, but it probably applies to a few long term committee members.

I would like to thank our wonderful supportive Park staff who are always willing to help us with their time and expertise. They do a great job with a limited budget looking after Warrandyte State Park. We all need to remind ourselves occasionally that that is the reason we are here too.

*This is an edited account of the secretary's report to the AGM*

# FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

We meet for propagation and other nursery activities every Thursday morning at 10.00am at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10), unless otherwise stated below. When there is no scheduled afternoon activity we often go on a spontaneously organised walk. Propagation takes place from 10.00am to 12 midday followed by lunch. No prior experience necessary - there is always someone available to show you the ropes.

*This activities list will be pinned on the noticeboard in the Folly.*

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No Thursday program will be printed for January and February. Propagation activities will continue as usual right through the holidays and we welcome all members especially those who have never been before.

As well as the propagation work, we will go out into the Park to collect seed for direct sowing in some of the revegetation fences.

We have a fridge available to keep lunches cool. Tea, coffee and morning tea are provided for workers and visitors. If you would like to see around the nursery, 'Frogland' or the coupe, then just come down on a Thursday morning.

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## Christmas Breakup

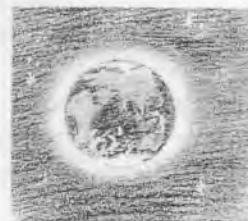


We are not really breaking up for Christmas. Thursday propagation mornings will continue right through the holidays, but it is a good excuse for a celebration and a chance to say thank you to all

those tireless workers and of course our nursery manager.

An informal get together with drinks and a barbecue lunch will be held (after a brief nursery session) on **Thursday 23rd December** at the 'Folly'. This is not confined to the Thursday workers, everyone is welcome. Lunch will be provided by FOWSP.

## Astronomy Night



**Date & Time:** Friday  
February 11th from 8.30pm

**Place:** Mount Lofty, Lower Homestead Rd,  
Wonga Park (Melways ref. 279 B5). Follow the  
'wombat' signs

Phil Mahon from the Astronomical Society of Victoria will provide a night of star gazing. If it is raining or overcast the activity will be postponed until the following night.

For more information contact Lee Speedy on 9437 0894

## FOWSP Committee 1999

Mike Coupar 9903 9567 Contact person  
Flora Anderson 9722 1776 Public Officer  
Pat Coupar 9844 1650 Editor  
Anthony Owen 9844 4867 Treasurer  
Cathy Willis 9844 1841 Secretary  
Cathy Papalia 9844 2771  
Jan Giles 9844 1226  
Lee Speedy 9437 0894 Contact person  
Geoff Speedy 9437 0894  
Alastair Traill 9722 1518

### Wildlife Rescue

Julie Pryor 9722 1117

### Market

Betty Oke 9844 3763

Park Office 9844 2659

Nursery Manager 0408800026

**FOWSP Committee Meetings  
for 2000 will be held at 7.30 pm  
on the second Tuesday of each  
month. Date for 2000 are as  
follows:**

**February 8th  
March 14th**

**April 11th  
May 9th  
June 13th  
July 11th  
August 8th  
September 12th  
October 10th  
November 14th**

**There will be NO newsletter in January. The Deadline  
for February Newsletter is January 25th**

### New Cards and Bookmarks

FOWSP has had a new set of greetings cards  
printed featuring four new Designs

**Common Imperial Blue Butterfly  
Mountain Clematis  
Common Wombat  
Silver Banksia**

In addition we now have our own bookmarks  
made from coated card and with a selection of six  
designs each with brief text. The bookmarks to  
choose from are

**Superb Fairy-wren  
Wine-lipped Spider-orchid  
Nodding Greenhood  
Tawny Frogmouth  
Growling Grass Frog  
Common Imperial Blue Butterfly**



## Worth Repeating

### Rare spider orchid will keep its ecological web

By Penny Fannin, science reporter

A spider orchid found at only one site in the world - Kilsyth South - has been saved from extinction after a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearing.

The rare orchid was discovered in 1991 on private land due for residential development. The owners of the property, Chris and Vasi Koundouris, had applied to Maroondah City Council to clear much of the site for a 40-square house and driveway.

Although the Koundouris's application to clear vegetation from the site did not include the area where the orchids were growing, the council refused their application on the grounds that the vegetation was of state and national significance.

The Koundourises appealed but last month the tribunal upheld Maroondah council's decision.

The tribunal ruled that the proposed development "would not satisfactorily protect the remaining vegetation community as a whole nor

the orchid".

A report commissioned by the council last year found the spider orchid population had national significance. Its vegetation was significant to the state as it was one of the largest grassy forest remnants in Victoria.

The report's author, Mr Geoff Carr, told the tribunal the Kilsyth South spider orchid, of which there are only 23 plants, was of "national conservation significance" and that clearing vegetation would threaten its existence.

Although the tribunal agreed that any development would be "detrimental to the conservation values of the site" it acknowledged the Koundourises had bought the land to build on.

"In the circumstances we believe that a fair next step would see the subject site publicly acquired," it said.

Maroondah council is attempting to buy the two hectare site and has sought financial assistance through the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust grant scheme.

The orchid has been nominated for protection under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

Source: *The Age* 28/10/99

## 'Our Natural Assets'

Now we have a change of State Government you will be keen to know Labor's policies on the environment. Before the election our group was sent two policies, one entitled 'Greener Cities', but here is the policy list at the beginning of the other document entitled 'Our Natural Assets' -:

### Labor will:

- Establish a Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
- Stop the commercialisation of national parks
- Legislate for a new National Parks Act
- Properly resource and expand the role of park rangers
- Establish a National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Save the Wilson's Promontory National Park from private development
- Propose the nomination of the Wilson's Promontory National Park for world heritage listing
- Protect the natural beauty of the Port Campbell National Park
- Protect public access to the Phillip Island Nature Reserve
- Develop a statewide strategy for alpine resorts while maintaining them in public ownership
- Establish a Port Phillip Bay Marine National Park
- Properly enforce the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act
- Seek to reduce land clearance and promote revegetation
- Ensure a comprehensive adequate and representative forest reserve system
- Encourage an ecologically sustainable timber industry
- Implement a Rivers and Catchments Restoration Program
- Abolish the Catchment Management Levy
- Revitalise the Snowy River system
- Retain water authorities in public ownership
- Develop a statewide Coastal Conservation and Management Program

If anyone would like to read the two policy documents they can be borrowed from the FOWSP library.

# “I SPY”

By B.G

## Helping Hands

For quite a few weeks in November and December Gabe Harvey, Judd Jenkins and Sig Howard have been very active helping the 'Friends' each Thursday. It is part of their Rudolph Steiner school curriculum - community service (year 9). Most welcome co-operation all round.

## Park Bark

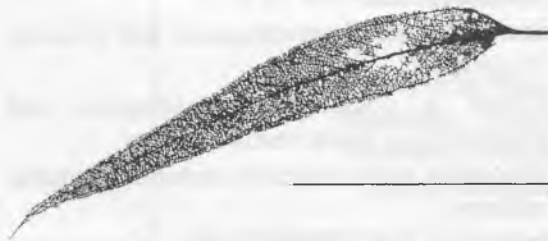
What was ranger Brian Phefley doing looking around the ground at the depot and picking up selected pieces of bark? Something to do with poster edges?

## Anderson Creek 'Activity'

We have received a copy of Melbourne Water's "Anderson Creek Waterway Activity Plan". It is a 60 page report with photographs, various tables and costs. It has detailed drawings showing creek cross sections, drainage and flood items, water quality and vegetation. If interested, the copy is in the 'folly'.

## Orchid Organs

Further to last months comment on the Tiger Orchids. Bruce Fuhrer, wife and friend were looking at the 'proliferated' patch and the query was raised as to why the orchids were finishing early. Said Bruce "I'd be finished too if my organs gave up" Quote from an impeccable ranger source.



## Four Fighters

From the last week of November four Project Fire Fighters are at the Park. They are: Justin Welander (crew leader), Troy Lowther, Anna Richtarik and Rebecca Roberts.

In the past these teams have been variously referred to as 'Hot Shots', 'Mobile Support Crews', 'Summer Crew', 'DORC's' (Disaster Organisation Rescue Crews), 'Fire Crew' and 'Space Cadets'. Welcome anyway.

## Sympathy Sought

Ranger, David Van Bockel, is bearing up well under a recent very expensive car repair. Take heart David, after July next year it would have cost you 10% more.

## November News

Helpers at the 'Friends' market stall were: Joan MacMahon, Wolfgang and Marie Krause, Neal Tessier and Lyn Wilson.

## 'Mudulla Yellows'

.....is a new disease spreading rapidly and killing trees, particularly eucalypts, across southern Australia. The causal agent, method of spread and cure are not known.

## Park People

- Margaret Humphrey is working two days a week at the Rhododendron Gardens.
- Colin Bromley will spend a short time at Powelltown revising 'chain saw capacity' and four wheel drive activity.

## Terry Travels

Terry Kane (who last year gave the 'Friends' an informative slide talk on the Sri Lankan environment) and wife Padiminic are moving to Western Australia with son Sachindra and daughter, Thilinie (which means gift in Sanskrit), who was born last May. Best wishes.

# Wurundjeri Plant Names

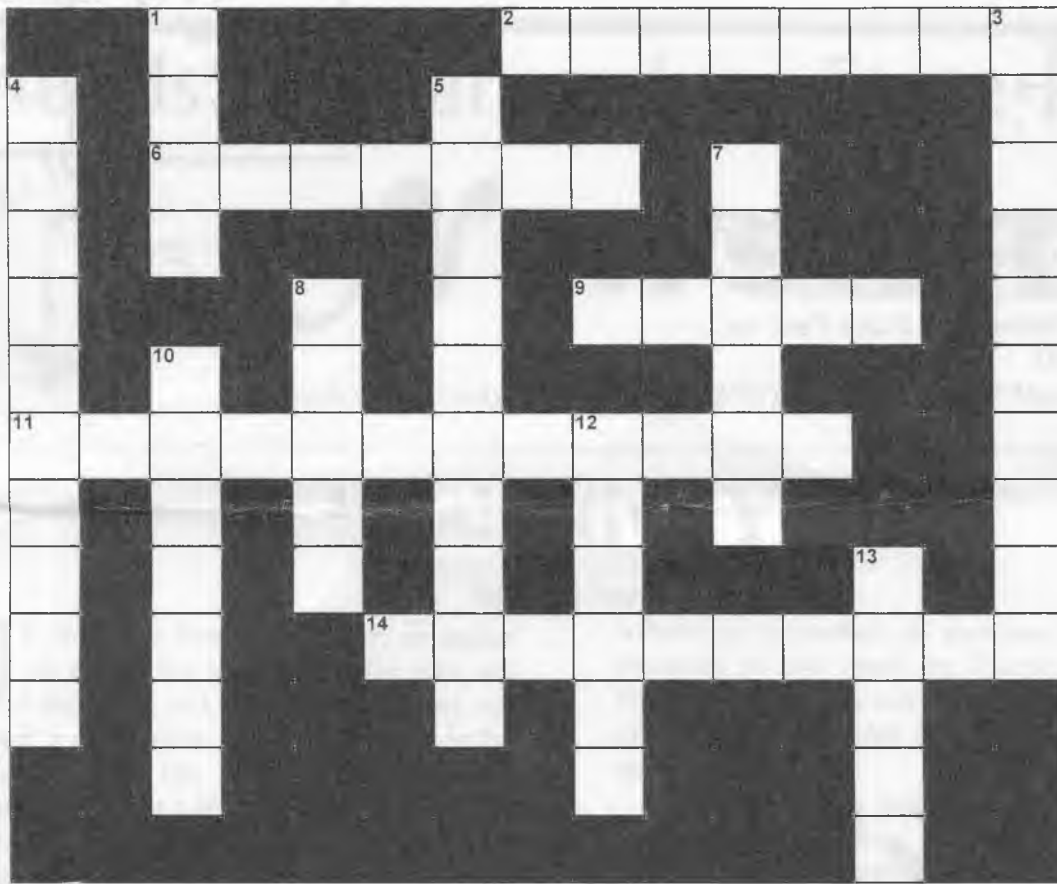
Coranderrk

Victorian Christmas Bush *Prostanthera lasianthos*





# December



## Down

1. smooth barked trees
3. aus. myrtaceous tree
4. laughing bird
5. banjo frog
7. WSP hill with Cairn
8. quaking grass
10. red pea, Running ?
12. wildflower time
13. tailless marsupial

## Across

2. eucalyptus obliqua
6. yam daisy
9. bend in Yarra River
11. a variety of plants
14. very local plants

## Nursery Report

As the seasons change so do the priorities of the nursery. With the weather warming up and having already enjoyed the spring flowers, it's time to collect seed that will carry us through next year.

We also need to prepare for autumn plantings which include the Jumping Creek Road bridge, community plantings and Park revegetation projects.

I would like to thank everyone involved with the nursery this year from FOWSP members to Warrandyte State Park staff; your dedication, knowledge and teamwork has been vital to the successful propagation of plants and creation of the relaxed friendly atmosphere of Thursday mornings.

I hope everyone has enjoyed their time at the nursery and I look forward to seeing all in 2000.

Have a happy Christmas and a safe New Year.

Thank you  
from The Nursery Manager

December



Surface  
Mail  
only

Postage  
Paid

REGISTRATION BY AUSTRALIA POST  
PP 346802 / 0005  
If undeliverable please return to  
Friends of Warrandyte State Park Inc.  
P.O. Box 220  
Warrandyte, 3113



*Silver Wattle (Acacia dealbata)*

*All of Warrandyte's wattles, with the exception of Lightwood (Acacia implexa) have finished flowering and are setting seed. Look out for the Silver Wattles that line the river, their dangling flattened seed pods are turning from green to reddish-brown and will soon be ripe.*

**FOWSP Membership Form**

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

- Family     \$20
- Single     \$15
- Concession \$10