

While there is not much in flower at present, these *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* Common Everlasting are a feature
Photo Andy Russell

From the President

As I write this, it is Day 3 of Winter, the cold has set in with a vengeance. At our working bee yesterday, most standing water was frozen and the ground very boggy making tasks difficult.

Some stories in this edition which may interest you, are a report on our stall at the Market Day, an article on the outstanding achievements of one of our members, Liz Dennis, assistance from Friends of the Arboretum with weeding and mulching the STEP entry, propagation of *Themeda australis* and our contribution to the environment by creative use of unsold newspapers, saving them from landfill.

Our road to recovery has started with work by Iconic to stabilise some of the paths leading to The Clearing in readiness for Reconciliation Day (see article). We are still waiting for engineering work to commence to enable efficient water reticulation and re-direction. We are hopeful that this work will then be followed by path restoration (which may include some re-alignment of existing paths). We have a long way to go but are hopeful that planting will commence in Spring. Many species have succumbed to excess water or being buried by gravel washed off paths. Plant replacement will be an expensive exercise and any financial assistance you can provide would be very much appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge all of the hard work by STEP volunteers over the past 6 months. They have laboured on under difficult circumstances and through their efforts, our Regional Botanic Garden will emerge again as a highly desirable location for visitors to National Arboretum Canberra.

Judy Smith
President

Themeda propagation and planting

One of the joys of experiencing native grass areas around Canberra is the sight of swathes of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) in full flower, giving a distinctive orange, brown tinge to hills and paddocks in Summer. This grass is planted in several locations within Forest 20: the Grass Gallery, the Bush Tucker Garden, north and south entry points from the Mesa Oaks and in various locations within the Central Garden. Raising from seed takes patience as seeds may remain dormant for some time. David Shorthouse successfully managed to raise a tray of seedlings and passed them on to be potted up. The grasses were in pinch pots for 6 months, then transplanted into tubes for a further 3 months. When it was evident that roots were well established, they were planted out in various locations in Forest 20. The image shows young grasses among established *Themeda* in the Bush Tucker Garden, planted to create a denser display.



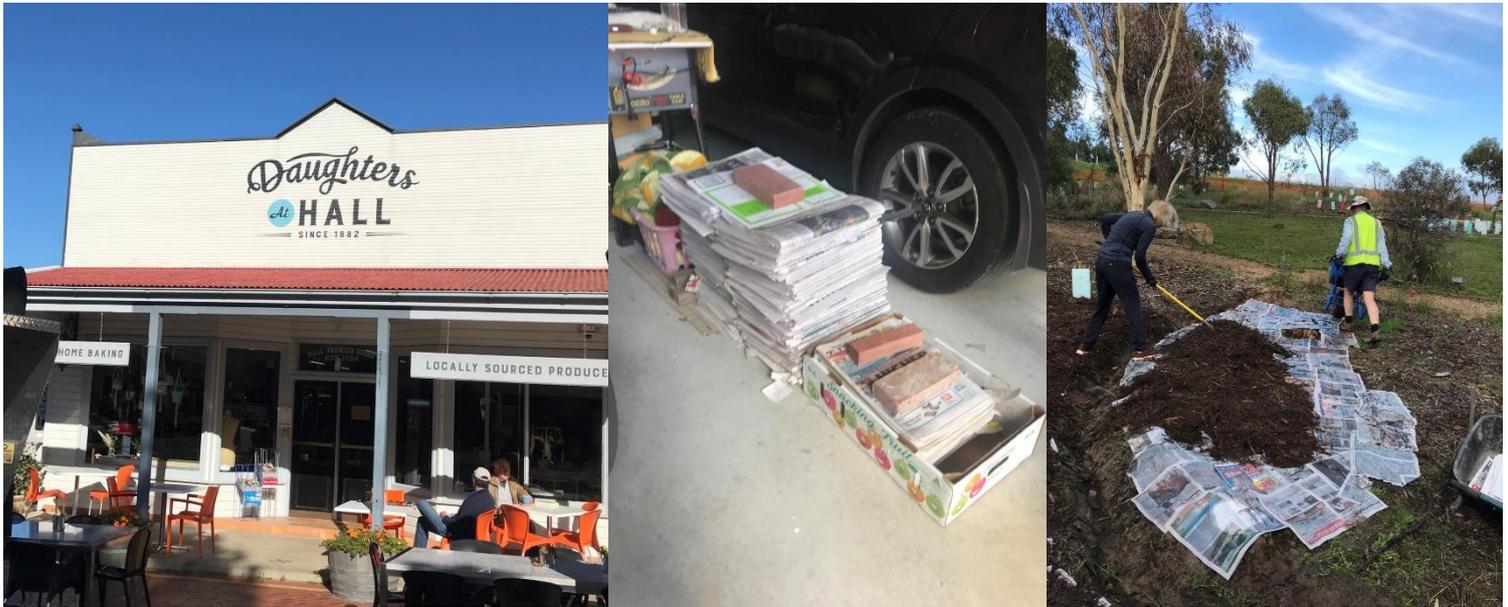
Top *Themeda* seed heads, Left *Themeda* in seed Tray, Centre *Themeda* seedlings, Right *Planted out in Bush Tucker Garden*

Old News is Good News

STEP is very lucky to have access to a ready supply of unsold newspapers. We have an excellent symbiotic relationship with Daughters at Hall, our local coffee shop as we take their unsold newspapers to use at STEP and they have less to be disposed in their trash hopper. The newspapers are thoroughly soaked (not a fun activity on a cold day) then spread out on the ground to suppress weed growth. The newspaper layer is then covered with a thick layer of mulch – a job requiring a fair bit of exertion, so rest time is allowed.

Continued next page.

PS Daughters at Hall is a great coffee shop with a very relaxing village atmosphere.



Left, Daughters of Hall Café, Centre Unsold newspapers Right, Covering newspapers with mulch
 Photos and text Judy Smith

Nature snaps

The door is open but is there anyone home? How does the spider manage to create such a perfect circle?
 The magpies are welcome visitors keeping a keen eye on what we might unearth while weeding.

Left, Most likely a trap door Spiders home
 Right, Magpies checking out mulched area



Helping Hands

Early in May, we had several days when Friends of the National Arboretum came to help us with weeding and mulching tasks. Their help was much appreciated, and we were able to clear considerable amounts of the accumulated biomass. Our “regular” Hort Crew helpers, Pete and Elliott were also on hand (and can be spotted in the photos). The weeds in the two trailers represent only a fraction of what has been removed.



*Left and right Hort Crew
Pete and Elliot*



Left, Weed trailer and overflow

*Right, Our volunteers and Hort
crew at work*



Photos and Text Judy Smith

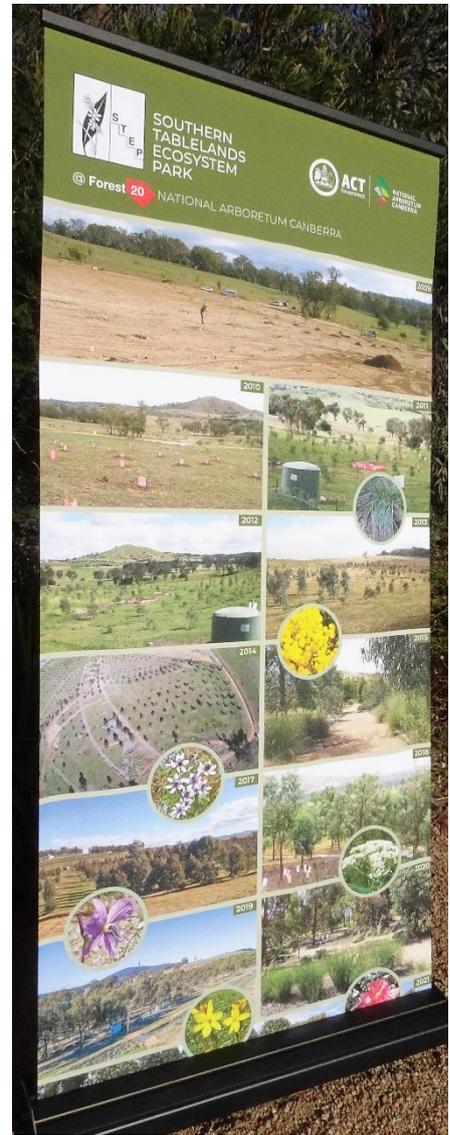
Reconciliation Day at the Arboretum

Monday 30 May was the Reconciliation Day holiday for the ACT. As for last year the Arboretum was the centre of activity with a wide range of displays, art and craft activities, kite flying, and stage presentations making extensive use of the Village Centre, the Terrace, the amphitheatre, and other ways to celebrate this important day for recognising and learning about indigenous Australians and their culture. Forest 20 and its bush tucker garden was readied for a higher than usual visitation interested in plants used by indigenous Australians for food, fibre, tools and medicines.

Unfortunately, the weather turned against outdoor activities and the small group of STEPPers who were ready to welcome visitors to Forest 20 were forced by mid-morning to abandon that part of the activities. However, the STEPPers located in the Village Centre were able to talk to many visitors forced inside for the warmth and coffee, and they invited them to visit Forest 20 when it is open again, and the weather more suitable for learning about bush tucker plants. One of our visitors was the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, who asked after our regional botanic garden project and was interested to hear how we are going. The pull-up banner showing progress in Forest 20 from 2010 was a well-used aid to demonstrate how we have progressed.

Let's hope for better weather next year and a Forest 20 that is repaired and planted anew with a wide range of local plants.

Text David Shorthouse, photo of STEP banner Andy Russell



ANPS Day Activity Group visits STEP

Although STEP is currently closed to the public because of water damage, it can still serve its educational role even in its present state. On 15 March 22 members of the Australian Native Plant Society's Day Activity Group (DAGs!) toured STEP under the guidance of David and Lainie Shorthouse to learn about the impacts of excessive water flows, above and below ground, on plants and infrastructure. DAG members also visited the Terra Australis Garden and the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection at the Arboretum.

Photo and Text Digby Gascoine



The STEP Rockery

The STEP Rockery This is a funny little area between block I and the Wetland. In heavy rain a stream develops and runs down between the rocks and stones, so it seemed an ideal area to show that some of the small plants of The Southern Tablelands are suitable for gardens and pots. So far, the listed plants have done really well since planted in early summer 2021. *Grevillea lanigera*: Pollinated by birds and regenerates by seed or suckers. It is a variable species from prostrate to erect shrub to 1.5m tall. *Grevillea lanigera Numeralla form*: This form has attractive greyish foliage and deeper red flowers. I was told it was found about 5 years ago in bushland near Numeralla by a person from Bywong Nursery. *Hibbertia obtusifolia* is another variable plant. We have the two forms. One with greyish leaves and a quite open growth habit to about 60cms tall. The other with green leaves and a sprawling to prostrate growth habit. Both types have bright yellow flowers, and it will be interesting to see how they develop. *Goodenia pinnatifida*: is a pretty plant forming a mat up to 1 meter wide, it may die back in summer but regenerates after rain, again a bright yellow flower waving above the green foliage. *Pelargonium sp. Striatellum*: is a listed NSW threatened species which is very pretty and forms a patch several meters wide, so it will be interesting to see how it copes in a more controlled area. It is normally found in the transition zone between wetland and pasture. (See environment.nsw.gov.au) and has eye-catching pink flowers So far these are the plants that have coped with the challenging conditions well and would add to any garden



Hibbertia obtusifolia



Pelargonium sp Striatellum



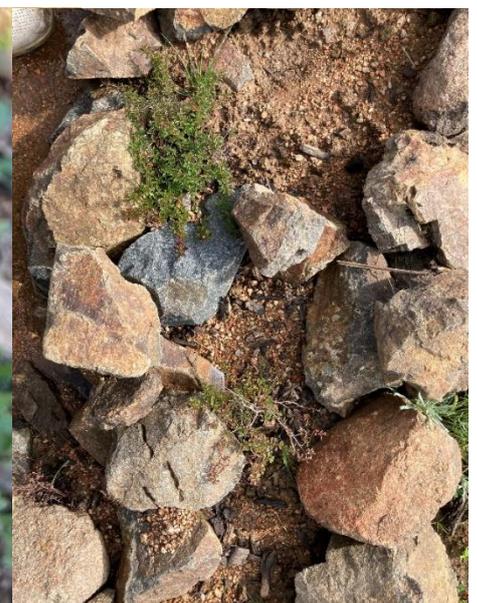
Grevillea lanigera Numeralla form



Drainage line leading to ephemeral wetland



Goodenia pinnatifida



Hibbertia obtusifolia small leaf form

A scientist of distinction among the weeds

A regular fellow weeder is Dr Liz Dennis AC, who has recently been awarded one of the highest medals of the Academy of Science, the Ruby Payne-Scott Medal. This award to a woman scientist acknowledges Liz's long and deep contribution not only to science but to her work encouraging girls to get involved in STEM subjects. She was also, last year, made a Member of the US Academy of Science to add to the long list of awards including her long ago Prime Minister's Award for Science. But she retains her deep passion for growing native plants...and pulling up invasive feral species!



Dr Liz Dennis AC and STEP weeders Photo & Text Max Bourke

Dr Liz Dennis AC photo CSIRO taken in the past

Donate through the Friends of National Arboretum Canberra Public Fund

With the end of the financial year in sight, now is a good time to consider making a tax deductible donation to STEP. The way this is done is through the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra website. When you choose donation, it will suggest that you open an account which I recommend you do. On the donation page you have a choice to donate to STEP or the Friends. Naturally choose STEP. This fund has been most beneficial for STEP as we have used the proceeds for major works such as the new shed which is a vast improvement on our previous 3x3 garden shed we used to have. It served us well and we appreciated the donation of that from a past chief minister. Andy Russell

Membership renewal time is coming up

With the start of the new financial year on July 1 we start our new membership year. The fees remain at \$20 per individual or family. It is preferable to fill in a membership form so that we have your correct details (especially for new members) though renewing a current membership it is sufficient to say there are no changes to your details. Receipts are always written and can be sent out by email (or they may stay in the book). A number of our members have paid for multiple membership years so feel free to check with me as to your current status.

Andy Russell, Membership Officer membership@step.asn.au

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FlagCentral.com.au E-mail sales@flagcentral.com.au Phone 1300 788 891 Suppliers of promotional banners and flags of Burleigh Heads, Queensland. Flag Central donated the flag at STEP



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Produce Sale at the Village Centre

On Saturday 19 March STEP again took part in the sale organised by the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra in the Village Centre. A thank you to the Friends Harvest Group for inviting us.

Judy's little baskets woven from *Poa and Carex species* from Forest 20 sold well, especially with a little Easter egg serving suggestion. Otherwise, we had Hardenbergia, Chocolate Lilies and some native grasses to sell too.

Takings were over \$250 which was well worth the effort. I've got a few ideas for plants for the next stall whenever that may be.

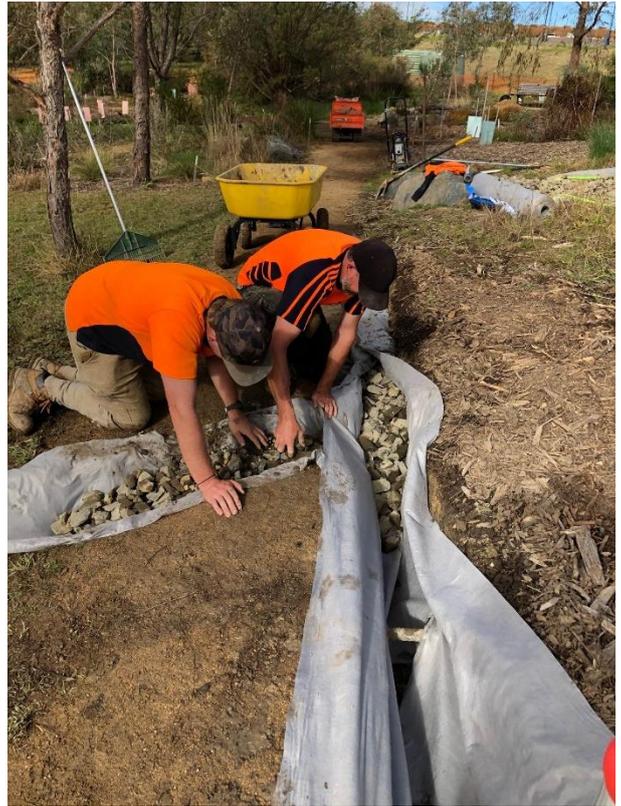
Lainie Shorthouse



Lainie at our stall

Iconic Trails start work on path repair

With the activities for Reconciliation Day on 30 May proposed to be held again at STEP, specifically the Bush Tucker Garden (BTG) component; it has not only been STEPpers who have been busy sprucing the place up. The Arboretum staff and workers from a company called Iconic Trails have been active in making the paths from our entrance to the BTG safe for walkers and presentable to the expected crowds. The NAC staff and Iconic needed to rebuild the roll-overs on the paths in the Bush Tucker Garden that had been washed out from the heavy rain. Also, there were two spectacularly boggy spots that required some serious remedial work to help with sub-surface drainage.: one along the path near the Gathering Node (just past our native pea patch), and the other at the intersection of that path and the main western path. Iconic were required to excavate the boggy ground and fill the area with large blue metal rocks , topping it off with the crushed granite that we use for our paths. The end job is very good: up to the standard we expected. The photo shows Iconic workers laying 50mm blue metal in trenches to help drainage along one of our paths. Amalie Shawcross of NAC advises that she is progressing the contract for the balance of the work to bring our paths back up to the standard they were before the damaging rain of these last months.



Text and photo Bill Handke

Gymnopilus junonius Spectacular Rustgill

At the base of a *Eucalyptus nortonii* the Mealy Bundy a clump of these colourful fungi was seen in late April and early May. The origin of the name which was named by the Finnish mycologist Peter Adolf Karsten, was *Gymn* meaning naked and *pilus* meaning cap, *junonius* is a reference to Juno the Roman Goddess who was said to be beautiful and statuesque. Other common names have been used are Laughing Jack and Laughing Jim (or Gym).

These fungi may appear tasty but are not edible and may be poisonous. They are a wood rotting fungi and are normally seen in small groups at the foot of dead trees. They are found from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, North Africa, Asia, and North America.



First sighting

Text and right photo Andy Russell, Left photo Lainie Shorthouse



at a later date showing some predation

Some photos from the last 3 months



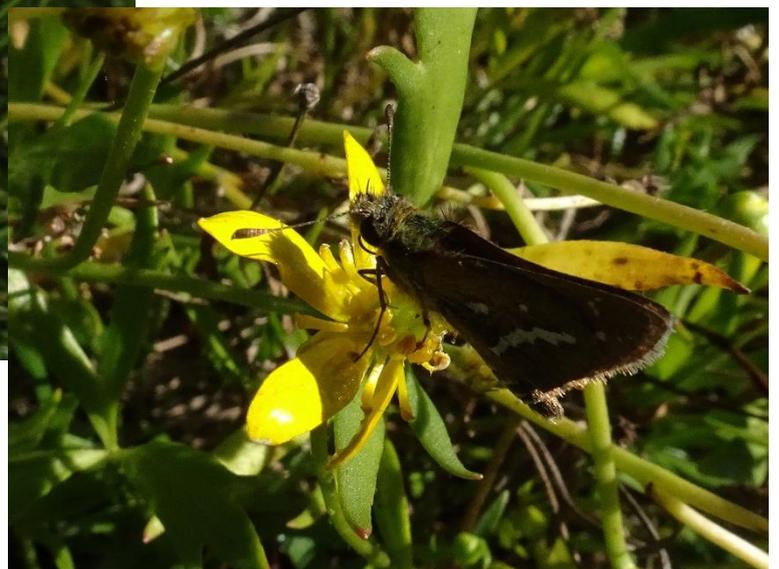
Deliochus species A leaf curling spider



Ocybadistes walkeri Greenish Grass-dart



Leptorhynchos squamatus Scaly Buttons



Taractrocera papyria White-banded Grass-dart

Photos Andy Russell