

STEP NEWSLETTER MARCH 2019



Rytidosperma bipartitum, Leafy Wallaby Grass

From the President

At the time of writing (late February) I am much relieved that the horrendous days of extreme heat appear to be behind us. The dryness continues to be a concern even though we have had some sporadic falls of rain. A slow and steady soaking would be at the top of our wish list.

The new shed project is very exciting (see article). I would like to extend sincere thanks to all who were able to give donations to help us with the fitout of the shed and allow for more projects later in the year. The Arboretum has been very generous in its support of the shed construction also. Thanks must go to Terry Murphy, Bill Handke and Ross Dalton (Treasurer) for their work in bringing this project to fruition. Soon we will have a “Fair Dinkum” shed at Forest 20.

Invitations are being sent out to STEP members for the Soiree to celebrate 10 years since the planting of the first eucalypts at Forest 20. Thursday working bees have been focussed on ensuring that STEP will look its best for that occasion. Please ensure you send your rsvp to secretary@step.asn.au by 18 March for catering purposes.

In addition to our usual activities, David Shorthouse has been very busy furthering our contact with CIT (see article) and promoting STEP as an “in the field” leaning space for a range of CIT courses.

I hope you enjoy the content of this Newsletter and that I get to meet some of you at our Soiree.

Judy Smith
President STEP



Shed construction

Preparation of the site for the new shed and the concreting was done by Darren Rope, part of the NAC works team with some assistance by various other NAC workers (including Director Scott Saddler) and some STEP members, notably Terry Murphy, Bill Handke and Mike Smith. The following images show the amount of work which was involved, and we are very grateful to Darren for all he has done for us.



Trenches dug photo 5 February



Materials delivered photo 21 February



Formwork nearly completed Thursday 7th February



First truck unloading, 4 photos by Andy Russell



Concrete pour

David and Wal looking on



Second load



A spectator sport. Richard Jones, Lainie Shorthouse, Ross Dalton . Men at work, Bill Handke, Mike Smith and Terry Murphy



Scott Saddler – helping with the concreting



Scott Saddler - raking



Sue Genner, David Shorthouse, Lainie Shorthouse,
Matt Parker Operations Manager NAC, Scott Saddler, Director NAC



Foundations for the roof extension supports



Screeding the concrete



concreting almost finished

The 10 photos above are by Judy Smith



Fairdinkum Sheds started construction of the shed on 28th February. Left photo March 4 by Terry Murphy. Right photo 7th March by Andy Russell.



Completed shed



Jens and Mike building a retaining wall, photos Andy Russell

Welcome to new members

Welcome to the following new members, J Moore, B & J Hamilton, C & C Ikin, A Downs, P Arcidiacono

STEP acknowledges the support of the following Corporate Members



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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 STEP banner that is at the She-oak Nook entrance to Forest 20.



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Seed Collection

Many of the plants at Forest 20 are now at a stage where we can harvest seeds for propagation. New STEP members, Cathy and Chris Ikin, have bagged some branches of *Bursaria spinosa* to collect seed.

Photo Judy Smith



An important message from our Treasurer and Membership Officer

Over the last year we have received three payments that we (and our bank) have been unable to identify. Two of these likely relate to membership payments as they were \$20.00 each and were made, one in late June and another in early July in 2017. We do have the name of the banking organisation but no location. The third payment was more recent on 29 January and was for \$50.00 coming from Bendigo Bank and recorded as Shed Donation. If you are able to help us identify these payments that would be much appreciated.

When making a payment by internet banking please be sure you record your name as a first priority on the transaction. We do like receiving payments direct to our account as a preference. It is an unfortunate situation if you have paid your membership and we drop you off our list because we cannot identify the payment.

Acacia pycnantha

Suzette Searle, Convenor of ACT Wattle Week and lover of all things wattle, has very kindly given us four more Golden Wattles, Australia's floral emblem species. One of these has been used to replace a Golden Wattle planted 2 years ago by NAC Director Scott Saddler and which died.



Above left, David Shorthouse and Suzette Searle
Above right, Lainie Shorthouse, Suzette Searle, Judy Smith, Scott Saddler and David Shorthouse. Below Scott Saddler watering the Golden Wattle that he had just planted, with him is Bill Handke and Terry Murphy.

The remaining three trees will be planted near the entrance to the Bush Tucker Garden below The Clearing, on the opposite side of the path where we already have three of this species planted.

Many Hands

Of the items farmed out when the old shed was moved, I gained custody of a bucket of gardening and work gloves. In readiness for a new shed, I thought the gloves all needed a good wash. Duly done and hung on the clothes line, I was struck by the thought that these gloves represent who we, as STEP members, are. We are varied in our size, purpose, degree of wear and tear and age, but we all have a single intent, a common goal. We are all the "many hands" which "make light work". Thank you to all the hands which wear the gloves and make Forest 20 such a delightful place



Book Review

Artist, Activist, Gardener: Olive Pink

Gillian Ward

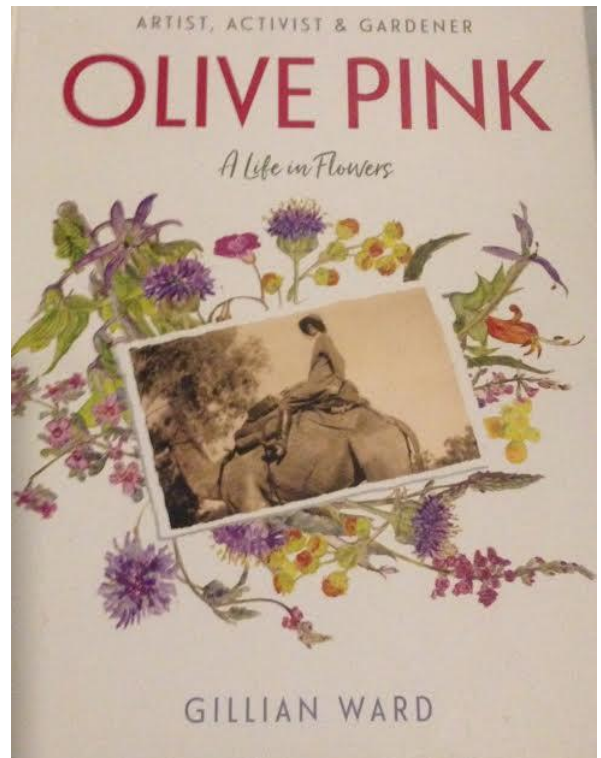
Hardie Grant Books (Melbourne) 2018

228 pages

Julie Marcus, author of Olive Pink's biography (The Indomitable Miss Pink) writes the foreword to this book and give a sympathetic and insightful assessment of Olive Muriel Pink (1884-1975).

Gillian Ward delves into the life of this amazing woman, and Ward's forensic research provides a myriad of historic documents and photos which round out Olive Pink's character and her life achievements.

Her formative years in Hobart were influenced by lessons in art, music and elocution, followed by an academic secondary education. Her interests were encouraged by relatives and acquaintances who were noted painters. At age 12, a friend of her father's, Alfred Bell, gave her a book A Handbook of the Plants of Tasmania which she kept throughout her life. Also, in those early years, she was inspired by "the progressive attitudes to social justice and Aboriginal welfare through her Quaker friends." (p11)



Her post-school interests led her to painting classes at Hobart Technical School under the tutelage of Benjamin Sheppard. Family moves to Perth and then Sydney were always accompanied by Olive furthering her artistic endeavours, particularly at the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney.

At an Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) Congress (c. 1925), Olive met Daisy Bates. On several trips to Bates' camp on the Nullarbor, Olive developed a keen appreciation of the flora and birdlife of the desert and strong friendships with the Aboriginal people.

Later trips to central Australia, influenced by the publication of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen's The Arunta (1928), furthered her passion for the remote desert regions of Australia. There followed a life devoted to the welfare of Aboriginal people, and through her art, an appreciation of the flora of these arid lands. She became a friend to Albert Namatjira and embraced photography as another medium to express her love of the land.

In 1946, at age 61, she moved into "Home Hut" in Alice Springs, where she lived till 1955. Her skills enabled her to have a small income from her paintings of native flora. Her most significant legacy was the founding, in 1957, of the Australian Arid Region Native Flora Reserve.

Olive died in 1975 and the garden she had so painstakingly created was named not Altjerra Tjukurrpa Arid Regional Botanic Garden, but the Olive Pink Botanic Garden which Gillian Ward asserts may have irritated Pink somewhat.

Regardless of the name, Olive Muriel Pink's vision, passion, creativity, love of flowers and the land and its indigenous people endure. Ward (p93) recounts that Olive Pink's favourite poem was by the Persian poet Saadi:

If thou of Fortune be bereft
And in the store there be but two loaves left
Sell one, and with the dole
Buy Hyacinths to feed thy soul.

A 6m x 6m block – microcosm of life at Forest 20

In preparation for the upcoming Soiree to celebrate 10 years since the planting of the first trees (22 March 2009), the working bees have been focussing on tidying up, weeding and mulching. I took on a small 6m x 6m patch just to the north of The Clearing. There are 4 *Casuarina verticillata*, 4 or 5 healthy clumps of *Wahlenbergia stricta*, and an assortment of *Poa* species around the uphill side. As I weeded, I was rewarded with sightings of 3 different moths – one snowy white with black dots on the inner edge of its wings, a small yellow one too fast to photograph, a very peculiar one with abdomen bent upwards. Next, I found several large wood cockroaches, a cricket and a placid and beautifully marked brown grasshopper. The *Wahlenbergia* were almost finished flowering and hopefully were dropping seeds. A little *Glycine* had ventured into the plot and looked well established. One of the *Casuarina* was in bloom and one had an odd gall like growth on the top, exuding something which a horde of ants seemed to like. Seeing such a variety of life at this small scale is encouraging for the health of Forest 20 (and it does take the boredom out of weeding).



Above, 6m x 6m block,



Allocasuarina flowers



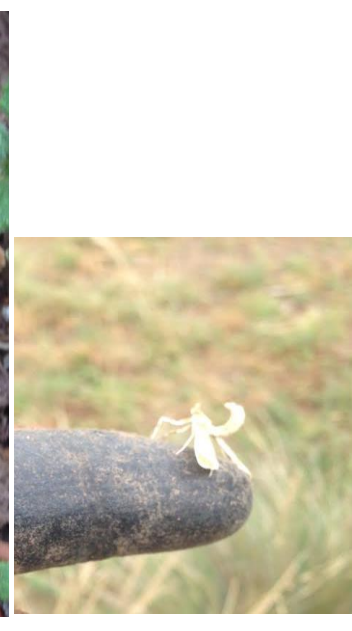
Allocasuarina gall



Above Grasshopper,



Reddish Wave (moth) *Scopula rubaria*



An odd moth

Below *Glycine tabacina* Variable Glycine

Signs of the times



Our long-awaited signs have arrived. While the task of putting these out will take quite a while, we are sure they will be very useful for STEP visitors and add significantly to our reputation as a regional botanic garden.



Ray is complemented on taking out a barrow load of wireweed

Right hand photo Arriving just over the fence from Forest 20 on Thursday morning the 14th. Were they fresh volunteers for our working bee? No such luck.

New addition to the wetland - *Lythrum salicaria*

Several plants of *Lythrum salicaria*, commonly known as Purple Loosestrife have recently been planted in the ephemeral wetland.

This plant is native to south east Australia, but interestingly is also a native of Europe, Asia and north west Africa. In America it is invasive.

Lythrum salicaria is a perennial plant which prefers wet or boggy conditions but can survive in dryer circumstances. It is a perennial plant 1-2m tall. When established it grows numerous stems from a single root. The flowers are 6 petalled and pink to reddish purple in colour and show many variations of colour and size. The whole plant as well as the flowers can attract many insect species. Overseas the black margined loosestrife beetle eats the leaves and the loosestrife root weevil feeds on the roots, while the loosestrife flower weevil eats the flowers. These insects do not appear to occur in Australia. However, the beetle Spotted Flower Chafer, *Neorrhina punctatum* (already identified at STEP and shown below) may feast on the flowers and some moths also feed on the plant. Locally, the plants seem to survive well, can multiply rapidly to produce a large clump and can produce up to 2 million seeds annually. In winter the plants die down and need to be cut to ground level.



The plants at STEP were obtained from 2 different sources - from Ros & Ben Walcott's garden in Red Hill and from an uncultivated source. The plants from the 2 sources show different characteristics. The more cultivated one has larger bright pink flowers while the wilder one has smaller purple flowers. It is possible for the different variations to hybridise, so we may see other varieties at STEP if they survive the lack of moisture and any insect predations.

Photos and article by Jennie Widdowson



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