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# Fagus

The Magazine of  
Friends of the Royal  
Tasmanian Botanical  
Gardens



## **Twenty-Five Years of Friends**

A group of First Friends photographed at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.  
Then Director, Tony May is standing third from left.



## Friends of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Inc.

### **Committee Members 2014–15**

President: Eileen Maskrey, 6227 8754

Vice President: Joan Booth

Secretary: Aina Dambitis, 6245 1896

Treasurer: Kay Hayes

Public Officer: Christopher Cruise, 0412 362 243

Membership Officer: Sally Dabner, 6228 5820

Publications Editor: Carolynne Cruise, 0401 862 672

Events Officer: Applications welcomed

### **Bookings for Gardens Tours**

Please contact the Gardens office on 6066 0451

### **Group Coordinators**

History: Jenny Parrott

Growing Friends: Carolynne Cruise

Seed Bank: Kay Hayes

Native Orchid Research: Joan Booth

Visitor Services: Rebecca Round

RTBG Liason: Anne Suter

### **Contributors to this Issue**

Joan Booth (Orchids); Robert Cockerell; Carolynne Cruise;  
Aina Dambitis (Growing Group); Mark Fountain;  
Kay Hayes (Seed Bank); Megan Marrison (Begonias);  
Eileen Maskrey; Frank Povah; Adam Smith;  
and the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

### **Our cover**

This issue marks a quarter of a century since Friends was founded. What wonderful things have members achieved in that time.

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**Remember the website: [rtbg.tas.gov.au](http://rtbg.tas.gov.au)**

and follow the links to Friends for the latest information.

**Like us on Facebook**



This edition of Fagus is meant to acknowledge the 25 years since incorporation of the FRIENDS organisation although the volunteers in the RTBG began well before this time. Our history group is rummaging through old records to document the past events and names of early volunteers. See the notice of further celebration with the Government House event (Could you help with names and contact details for original members?)

Our active volunteer groups have changed and an update is perhaps due. Would you like to become active in the gardens.

The committee have been enthused to try and include the Friends cottage as our project for the 2018 bicentenary for the RTBG. Any suggestions of how it may be used / presented?

Another point for you all – it is our AGM coming up in September. There are to be many changes. Our constitution regulates the length of service for the committee positions and our secretary AINA and Membership officer SALLY have completed their four-year terms and President EILEEN her three years. But all positions are for nomination at the AGM. It has been a busy year and the current committee members have worked hard and deserve many thanks (we won't tell you they have also had great times at committee meetings, lots of laughter).

This changeover time allows some new volunteer members to become more involved and contribute new directions and energy. So consider a monthly meeting – become more involved and nominate.

Membership fees were due 1st July SO you need to be financial members to nominate and vote at the AGM. The nomination forms are included in this magazine and nominations close 10 days prior to the meeting – nominations are not taken at the meeting. So come along and meet your fellow members and listen to a great speaker. Morning tea is provided, so do come.

My thanks for all the support and practical help you have given to the Fagus production team over the last few years, it has been an enjoyable learning 'train ride'.



# Acting Director's Report

Robert Cockerell



Over the past quarter, heading towards the end of the 2014-15 financial year, we have been very busy putting together an information package with real estate consultancy firm Knight Frank to advertise an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a private operator for the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens restaurant, cafe and kiosk. The EOI was advertised in the Real Estate insert in the Mercury on 18 June with a closing date of 16 July 2015.

The package of documents that has been worked on by Damian Bugg (Board Chairman), Doug Davey (Board Member) and David Hunt (Gardens Business Manager), includes an advertisement, a brochure and information document prepared in conjunction with Knight Frank and an extensive draft licence agreement and EOI form in conjunction with the Crown Solicitor's Office. The package looks very professional and combined with the work to our kitchen, dining areas and the outside of the Visitor Centre, I suspect (and hope) there will be real interest.

The selection panel for the private operator will include Damian, Doug and me from the Gardens, a representative from Knight Frank (with experience in the restaurant industry) and an independent member with restaurant and catering experience. The whole process will be overseen by a Probity Advisor and the Board and management will be striving to have the restau-

rant, cafe and kiosk open by 1st September 2015.

During May 2015, Damian Bugg (Chairman) wrote to invite Her Excellency the Governor to accept the position of Patron of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, and it is with delight that I can advise that Her Excellency accepted the invitation. Ben Davidson (Marketing and Events Officer) is in the process of updating the Gardens letterhead to show that the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens now has a Patron.

It is also with pleasure that the donation of a solar array comprising 161 solar panels, supplied by Nekon Pty Ltd, has now been connected. The installation firm, Powercom has advised that the estimates of savings to the Gardens on its energy bills will be in the order of \$15,000 to \$16,000 per annum. I have drafted a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board and staff (to be signed by Damian Bugg as Chairman) expressing our gratitude for this generous donation of \$62,000 (net, or \$80,000 before Renewable Energy Certificate Rebates) plus management of the project.

The overall concept was project managed by Mark Fountain (Deputy Director, RTBG) and Charles Scarafiotti (Nekon Pty Ltd) from start to end. I have included what I consider to be an impressive photo of one section of the installation. The solar panels are installed on the roof of the Visitor Centre and at the southern end of the Gardens on the

roofs of the nursery, workshops and staff facilities block. This is a rare occasion that I will allow myself to use the phrase "for the good of the Gardens", because in this case I truly believe it is.

A very recent exciting event with a difference was the RTBG hosting of the Dark MOFO installation "Giindanyba" between June 11th and the 21st each evening from 5pm to 10pm. The attendance was approximately 7,000 (with 3,500 attending on the last three nights). Barista Sista provided a refreshment service featuring hot, mulled wine during the event. Unfortunately – but to be expected in the middle of winter – the event was cancelled on one night and was closed early on another due to wet weather.

It was Tyrone Sheather's of the Gumbaynggirr people (NSW) first showing of his seven sculptures, which attracted media and television interest as the Festival progressed. As important as the event was to the young artist, it was also of importance to the Gardens in relation to what we learned from the exercise for consideration of future participation in Dark MOFO with an operating restaurant, cafe and kiosk being able to leverage off any future Gardens participation.

Since the discovery of Myrtle Rust in the North West of Tasmania back in February 2015, the RTBG staff has been assisting Biosecurity Tasmania in the identification, control and hopefully the eradication of the disease in our state.

## « « « The Acting Director's Report continued

The program of surveillance for this plant disease has been scaled back over the winter period while the climatic conditions remain unsuitable for the disease to develop. The response to the disease is still focused on the eradication of the disease rather than on control. A component of the response will focus on communications through the Biosecurity Tasmania Winter Surveillance Program Communications Plan, which aims to increase public and stakeholder awareness of the disease. RTBG staff have the potential to play a part in the communication role.

The disease has now been found on four different members of the Myrtaceae family but to date has not been found in the wild. RTBG staff have recently drafted an internal RTBG Myrtle Rust Response Plan with the aim of preventing and managing any Myrtle Rust outbreaks within the Gardens. The staff, who have contributed (to various degrees) to the

Biosecurity Tasmania emergency response, include Mark Fountain (Deputy Director – Collections and Research), Natalie Tapson (Horticultural Botanist), Lorraine Perrins (Curator), David Marrison (Team Leader) and Chris Lang (Curator, Tasmanian Flora) and Adam Lancaster (Horticulturist).

To capitalise on a significant masting (mass flowering and seeding) event for Tasmania's endemic conifers, and a very tight collection 'window' the RTBG's Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre, in collaboration with staff from DPI-WE's Natural and Cultural Heritage Division, undertook field trips to known conifer sites in April 2015. The fieldwork included three land-based sorties and two helicopter trips to difficult to reach key conifer sites.

The five field trips to date have covered ten locations with 26 separate collections of the four Tasmanian endemic conifers – *Athrotaxis cupressoides* (Pencil Pine), *Athro-*

*taxis selaginoides* (King Billy Pine), *Diselma archeri* (Chestnut Pine) and *Pherosphaera hookeriana* (Drooping Pine) – yielding 79.4kg of unprocessed seed material. The collection activity received positive television and newspaper coverage.

Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre volunteers continue to work on processing and evaluating the results of the 2015 Tasmanian Conifer collection season. So far eight of the 26 collections have been dried down and processed and all collections have significantly higher seed volumes than the previous collections of the same species currently held in storage.

As part of the \$100,000 election commitment funding for essential maintenance works in 2014–15, the Oatlands Centre for Heritage commenced maintenance works on 27 April on the Arthur Wall (c. 1829) with brick replacement, repointing, and recapping with works all but

Next page, please ➤



## « « « The Acting Director's Report conclusion

complete. In other heritage works the concrete paths surrounding the Superintendent's Cottage (c. 1829) have been removed to reveal that the building is sitting directly on sandstone to the extent that part of the wall of the building is carved out of the bedrock.

The heritage team was unable to install planned air drains and has cut fall drains through the sandstone instead. The work on the completion of the laying of screenings around the south side of the building and the removal of the concrete at the entrance the laying of pavers and screenings to the entrance to the cottage will begin on the week commencing Monday 22 June 2015 and hopefully all work is on track for completion on 30th June 2015.

Planning is also well underway

for investing the second year of the election commitment funding (\$100,000) on the Eardley–Wilmot Wall (c. 1840). Discussions have been held with senior staff at Government House with which the RTBG shares a section of the Wall. Planning is in progress for the works to commence in August 2015. The Official Secretary to the Governor has provided advice that Government House will meet 50 per cent of the cost of maintenance works to the East–West run of the wall, given that it is the physical boundary between the Government House grounds and the Gardens.

Finally, at the Board meeting on 25 June, the Board considered a paper from the Friends titled "Bicentenary Project Proposal by Friends of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical

Gardens Inc." proposing to accept responsibility for the interior of the Friends Cottage and the displays in consultation with the RTBG. The Board supported the proposal put forward by the Friends by way of a Memorandum of Understanding on the understanding that any works undertaken will be with approval of Heritage Tasmania (where applicable) and with the RTBG undertaking an evaluation of the current historical display in order to enrich the experience of visitors to the Gardens.

I have been in the Gardens for just over ten months now and I have to say nothing could have prepared me for the experience, and I wish you all well as we move through winter, when at times I feel like I have the Gardens all to myself.



All-weather shelters at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens



# President's Report

**M**IKE AND I are just back from a very busy family time in England. I would like to thank all the committee for holding the fort while I was away. A particular thanks to Joan as Vice-president, and Aina not only as Secretary, but also the coordinator for tours.

Winter is a quiet time for tours, but we do have a few bookings nearer to Spring. During Seniors Week (Monday October 12th to Sunday Oct 18th) we are offering a free, one-hour guided tour at 11am each day.

The Princess cruise ships have once again booked tours for their passengers each day of their visits during the 2105/16 season. The cruise line promotes our tours because they have such positive feedback from their passengers. Word of mouth is a powerful promotional tool.

The attached "tripadvisor" certificate is proof of this. Increasing numbers of travellers submit their experiences to sites such as tripadvisor and others visit the sites when planning a holiday.

While the Friends tour guides cannot take all the credit for RTBG's success, we must have helped gain some of the stars.

If you have been thinking about being a tour guide or Buggy driver, please contact me so that you can help support RTBG as a top spot to visit. I will be organizing a get together during August when we can meet each other, map out some

ideas for the busy season, and discuss training sessions.

A lot is happening in the Gardens, and Robert's forthcoming

detailed report will be very welcome as it gives us a true picture of what is happening over the next few months.

Our time in England was not a holiday, but we did get to the wonderful Chelsea Flower Show. I put a few photos on the RTBG Friends Facebook page, but watch out for more in a future edition of Fagus.

Our home base was near the ancient town of Malmesbury, Wiltshire. The privately owned Abbey Gardens are an absolute joy. Definitely more photos to come!

*Left: The RTBG tours have been rated very highly by passengers on Princess cruises.*

*Below: Eileen has promised us more garden photographs taken on her trip to England.*



# NOMINATIONS NOW BEING SOUGHT

see enclosed nomination form

Nominations are called to fill the following committee positions:

**President**

**Vice-President**

**Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Membership Officer**

and also the positions of:

**Publications Editor:**

You will be aware that the main focus of this role has been keeping our members informed through the pages of FAGUS, but as the job title indicates, it could be more extensive.

Our **facebook** page has been set up by your fellow committee members and we do need to keep up with modern times and technology.

Promotion of our Friends group is a shared activity, but posters/leaflets, etc. also come under the description of publications, and so fall within the Editor's area of responsibility

We owe many thanks to previous Fagus producers for all the work done to maintain this newsletter and keeping you informed.

The constitution reads:

(a) "Friends may publish from time to time a magazine to foster public interest in the educational, historical, cultural, recreational and scientific functions of the Gardens and promote and support their development."

(b) "The publication shall be

prepared by an editorial sub-committee comprising the editor, the president and others as required."

Could you contribute? If you have an interest or would like to be involved, please talk to us – it is an enjoyable volunteer activity.

**Events Officer:**

Friends has for some years lacked a nominated person on the committee to cover these activities. We need a motivated, outgoing person with lots of energy to pull together members for social/fund-raising events. Please, if you would like to help the committee develop this aspect of our organisation please, please, talk to a committee member.

## PLANT UNDER THREAT

an ongoing feature

Common name: River Boronia

Botanical name: *Boronia gunnii*



Plant type/family: An erect or multi-branched shrub up to 1.2m tall and growing in rocky areas along rivers and creeks in eastern Tasmania.

Why it is threatened: Endemic to Tasmania, it has a limited, linear range of about 17km. There are less than 1000 mature individuals known, making it extremely vulnerable to environmental changes such as drought and fire.

Its story: RTBG is growing plants in order to harvest seed for the Seed Conservation Centre at the Gardens.

How you can help: Get involved; join your local Landcare group, Threatened Plants Tasmania volunteers or join the RTBG Seed Bank, contact [jameswood@rtbg.tas.gov.au](mailto:jameswood@rtbg.tas.gov.au)

For more information: go to [www.rtbg.tas.gov.au/conservation](http://www.rtbg.tas.gov.au/conservation)



*Founder of Friends, Adam Smith takes us back in time*

## In the beginning...

**W**ay back in 1988 the RTBG was supported by a dedicated group of volunteers who "staffed" the museum (located in the Superintendents House). These volunteers came along on a regular rostered day each month, sometimes alone, sometimes with wife or husband. They welcomed the visitors to the building and answered a wide variety of questions about the Gardens and Tasmania in general.

I noticed in a recent newsletter that Elizabeth Dunbabin is still involved with the Friends. Elizabeth was one of those original volunteers. Other the roster prepared by the Education Officer Alan Grey, there was no formal group structure for these volunteers. However, their reliable assistance was very much appreciated.

There was also a small group of volunteer drivers who use the Horticultural Therapy bus to pick up people from aged care centres, and from disability support organisations, to bring them to the Gardens to participate in the RTBG Horticultural Therapy Program, at that time managed by Pat Mavromatis.

In 1988 I took on the position of Education Officer. In line with examples in other botanic gardens around the world, one of the opportunities that existed was the expansion of the activities undertaken and services provided by the Friends and to develop a way that the Friends could raise funds to support the Gardens. It was also hoped that a wider range of activities would enable a wider range of volunteers to be involved. And there were many people who wanted to be more involved in the RTBG. It must

be one of the most loved places in Tasmania after all, and Tasmanians are very avid volunteers.

One cold evening at Risdon Cove pyramids we gathered with interested people to discuss forming the Friends of the RTBG. From memory, around 30 people attended, and to our surprise many people wished to join there and then. And so the Friends of the RTBG Inc was formed.

Very quickly the organization blossomed. A Board was created, a Constitution written, a newsletter developed and a logo designed (featuring the leatherwood flower) and bank account opened. I held the position of Chair for 2 years and then handed over to the first elected Chair. From then on I provided the communication link between the Friends and the RTBG Management.

Training courses were run for volunteer guides – these were 5 days in duration and included end of course examinations.

Following a visit to Melbourne Botanic Gardens where I saw the amazing work being done by their Growing Friends, we started our own growing friends, operating from a small glasshouse behind the Superintendents House. Under the guidance of Jenny Parrot and Lyn Byrne, the growing Friends propagated all sorts of plants from the Gardens and sold them at regular plant sales days.

We created a small Friends Shop in the Museum, selling crafts and souvenirs – all hand made by the Friends. Even my mother and father got involved with selling aprons and woodwork from the shop. Other members created wonderful pressed flower cards, and printed t shirts and tea towels.

They say from small things big things grow, and that is certainly what happened. Starting small, each new activity or program grew in line with the enthusiasm of members. Although funds raised through membership fees, plant sales and guided tours was small initially, this grew quickly too, with the advantage that all proceeds were fed back into projects designated by the RTBG management.

While Education Officer at the RTBG I was lucky enough to travel to many botanic Gardens around Australia and the world (including the USA, UK, Brazil and Spain) to talk about the RTBG education and community programs. The botanic gardens network worldwide is enormous, and volunteers are absolutely essential right across that network helping to manage the gardens collections, conservation programs and visitors. The RTBG is no exception.

By the time I left the Gardens in 1997, the Friends of the RTBG had developed into a self-sustaining and productive volunteer organization with a membership around 200.

It has been great to watch the continued growth of the Friends of the RTBG. It's a long time since 1988 and you are still going strong. It is great to see how the volunteers are now more integrated into the activities of the Gardens, working alongside horticultural staff. All Tasmanians benefit from your efforts and that working partnership. The Gardens continue to be held dear to our hearts because of the care and advocacy you provide.

**Andrew Smith**

Founder

Friends of the RTBG Inc.



# FRIENDS GROUPS

## THE TASMANIAN ORCHID CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM

UNDER THE COORDINATION and guidance of Drs Nigel Swarts and Magali Wright volunteers have been trained in the techniques for conservation and propagation of key Tasmanian threatened and endangered native orchids.

This includes: the isolation and culture of mycorrhizal fungi, media preparation, sub-culturing of fungi and seed germination on agar plates, all using sterile techniques in a laminar flow cabinet. Cultures are prepared for long-term storage and DNA extraction. We have undertaken in-vitro seed germination trials and successfully potted up and transferred germinated seedlings

from the laboratory to the glasshouse. We hope to have flowering

plants to be used for display in the conservatory in the next season.

**Another program supported by the FRIENDS volunteers**



## BEGONIA GROUP

IN EARLY 2014 the nursery put an advertisement in *Fagus* calling for volunteers to form a begonia

group. The group is now formed and flourishing.

The group meets every second Friday in the nursery potting shed. Until recently, Peter Sharp lead the group and the Gardens are incredibly grateful for his professional expertise. Peter kept us busy getting everyone to build their knowledge by cleaning, pruning and fertilizing. It's been great to learn Peter's method for propagating begonias from seed and we've been fortunate in receiving 15 acquisitions through Peter from Dr Reka Morris, who has sent us wild-collected seed from Colombia, Mexico and India.

The group has also propagated begonias from cuttings. The begonia collection at the RTBG nursery



*A group of various begonia species in the Nursery glasshouse. These plants are being tested for their suitability for display in the conservatory*

being used extensively in our conservatory displays. New species and varieties from various local and mainland sources are being trialled to assess their display qualities.

As begonias do require a certain extended knowledge beyond normal gardening we would eager to have more people to come and learn about and assist with these plants. The great thing about the group is we do a range of plant activities including propagation by seed, cuttings and division; potting, pruning and cleaning when plants come back from the conservatory, assessing plants for their attractiveness, research and labelling.

All quarantine, labelling and documentation is to the RTBG protocols. The details are:

**Time:** 1 – 3 pm

**Date:** every second Friday e.g. 12th June, 26th June, etc. Please note during the school holidays the group may not convene. Please email or ring Megan on 6166 0449 to check.

**Where:** Potting shed, RTBG Nursery

**Contact:** Megan Marrison on 61660449 or email: Megan.Marrison@rtbg.tas.gov.au

**Parking:** in RTBG staff carpark (top carpark)

vale dashes in on days when he is filming in The Patch and grins at us and races out again.

Much of the nursery work is just like housework – never really finished. We sow seeds and prick out seedlings. Much of our time is spent moving plants from a small pot into a larger container – not exciting work but necessary, like washing dishes at home. We take cuttings from plants already growing in the Gardens (and occasionally from our near neighbour) and nurture them until they are big enough to plant out or sell. There is always weeding.

Plant sales have generated some much needed funds for the RTBG. The great tomato sale in September has grown so popular that it now extends over two days. We grow more than a hundred varieties of heirloom tomatoes. Extra people come in just to help with the tomato seedlings and on the actual sale days. Margot even has a Facebook site: RTBG Heirloom Tomatoes.

So, plants, equipment, experts – how lucky are we! And there is plenty of time for a gossip too.

This group of FRIENDS has been a major fund-raiser with plant sales over the years allowing FRIENDS to provide practical support to the gardens. FRIENDS now receive directly 50 per cent of all plant sales through the gardens.

To find out more you can contact Margot in the nursery most days.

## GROWING FRIENDS GROUP

WHAT IS IT we do? This active group has been one of the earliest in which FRIENDS members have been able to participate.

Originally known as the Propagation Group, Growing Friends is one of the most popular activities for Friends.

We all love gardens and plants

so no wonder there is sometimes a waiting list to join.

A group works in the Nursery area on a Tuesday morning and another on a Thursday morning. We have the benefit of stainless steel benches, potting soil ready to use, lights, heaters and, best of all, experts teaching us.

Margot White has oversight of the groups. Megan Marrison is not far away. Lorraine Perrins works at the back of the shed. Staff wander through looking for people and things and stop to chat. Tino Carne-



## VISITOR SERVICES Coordinator Rebecca Round

MEMBERS WOULD perhaps know these services are provided now from the Studio just inside the main gate.

The volunteers who work from here have seen a marvellous increase in the donation visitors now leave in the donation box. (there is

still no charge for admission to the gardens)

Volunteers in the Studio are the first contact for visitors to the RTBG. They endeavour to make visitors welcome and provide directions to the places of most interest to them. To the ABC section of the Community garden, 'The Patch', the Japanese garden and the Conservatory and to quietly steer them



to areas of importance such as the Subantarctic Plant House and other displays or collections of particular interest and beauty at the time of their visit.

They often tell about the

important projects carried out in the areas of conservation and propagation within the gardens and the valuable contribution garden staff make with projects off site such as Macquarie Island.

They advise, when asked, the best routes back to the city centre, the top of Mt Wellington, to Ross or the North West Coast. Even to the nearest supermarket, to their accommodation etc. or they direct them to the appropriate source of the information.

A buggy driver is on duty from the Studio as often as possible (roster permitting) to assist those with mobility difficulties to tour the gardens in some comfort. Others are able to make use of this service, they may have limited time due to travel

arrangements or simply enjoy the convenience, BUT people with mobility difficulties are always given preference. They explain that the buggy service may also be booked in advance through administration during office hours.

Directions to activities within the gardens, coffee, toilets etc. or to the shop if any other assistance is needed, they are happy to supply.

If you would like to become involved in this 'front of house' activity within the gardens, you will meet many interesting visitors and also get to really know our Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. So get in touch with the gardens administration or any of the committee members.

Miss Rebecca has advised she will not be available next year to co-ordinate the roster of this valuable group. (Though I'm sure she will continue to volunteer and may bring her scones to meetings.)

SO PLEASE CONSIDER whether or not you would like to contribute and take an active role.

## WIKIPEDIA ENTRY CORRECTED

Doing some research for an article I was working on a few days ago, I stumbled across a reference to the RTGB and the Subantarctic exhibit.

Both the exhibit and the gardens were incorrectly titled in the entry – the former was listed as the Antarctic Garden, the latter as the Hobart Botanical Gardens – so I took it on myself to correct them both.

Wikipedia is an extremely valuable tool but because many entries are made by well-meaning but unknowingly misinformed people, mistakes like these do manage to creep in from time to time.

## FRIENDS OF THE RTGB AND THE SEED BANK

THE SEED BANK at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens has a vital role in the preservation of the native flora of Tasmania.

As it is has a staff of just one, namely James Wood, this work would not be possible without the volunteers, who help collect, clean and sort the seed, and carry out germination testing.

The seed, once cleaned and sorted, is banked and stored at minus 20 degrees Celsius. However, there is no point saving the seed without the knowledge of how best to germinate it at some future time. To this end, a small band of volunteers turn up each week to carry out the testing.

Seed is sown into trays of agar

and subjected to a wide variety of conditions such as night and day, and seasonal, as calculated by James. The trays are placed in incubators where temperatures range from as low as 5 degrees to as high as 30 degrees Celsius, with alternating combinations in between. The seeds can also be subjected to heat and smoke treatments, and a potassium nitrate medium, to simulate conditions that exist in the natural environment.

The Friends of the RTBG are important supporters of the Seed Bank, not only purchasing some of the expensive equipment required, but also working as volunteers on a weekly basis in the laboratory.



family together with many others in the district. Her father worked for "the sustenance" building the Great Lake Road and then went to the cement works. At home the veggie garden was all-important. Chooks were looked after carefully and rarely appeared on the table. She remembers wallaby pat-

so does Rebecca. Every plant has its story. She knows who gave it to her or where she first found it, she tells us the name and comments on the particular colour or shape or scent. No wonder she gravitated towards the RTBG.

"I came to the RTBG when I gave up sailing." Sailing? Husband Graham owned and sailed the yacht *Nyalla* for some years. They were also interested in history. The family has a connection with the First Fleet convicts Nathaniel Lewis and Olivia Gascoyne (niece of a Spanish Admiral no less!) and is proud of the convict contribution to the island of Tasmania. These two interests led Rebecca to set up the committee which organised the building of the *Lady Nelson* in 1980, to sail on her and much later, in 2003, to board the *Marco Polo* for Antarctica. And she was not seasick.

"I stopped sailing when I no longer felt safe on board." Why? The terrible polio epidemic of 1937 and 1938 changed her life forever

**N**ow cream the butter and sugar. Beat harder. Now lightly beat in the eggs, doesn't matter about the mess."

We were in Rebecca Round's kitchen learning the secret of her Christmas puddings.

"Did you bring the stewed apple?"

"What is Parisienne essence?"

"It will give the puddings the dark colour we expect them to have. I cook them in the microwave oven. I can't be bothered spending hours baking. There is so much else to do."

And really, that sums up Rebecca – there is so much else to do.

I watch the pudding makers fill cups with the mixture in a kitchen full of bowls, packets of dried fruit, cupboards and drawers full of equipment. This is a real cook's kitchen. Sunlight filters down through the sky light onto a waiting catering size box of cling film.

In the living room two big boxes full of cakes and puddings are ready for Christmas. Gifts.

Rebecca grew up on a farm at Railton and the early lessons learned in the country have stayed with her. On the farm you worked hard and if you wanted something then you made it. The girls learned to sew, knit and crochet. Rebecca and her sister learned to milk the cows. Born in 1930, the Depression marked her

**Aina Dambitis**  
recorded this wonderful  
interview with Rebecca in  
December, 2014

ties and mum milking the goats. Later she remembers the rationing of the war years. They had milk, butter and cream and so could swop them for sugar, something the farm did not produce.

Today, looking out of the window, I can see the colours of the garden which surrounds the house. The three hens are just out of sight in the backyard. They scratch through the grass, making that contented chirruping, purring kind of sound that happy chooks make. "I love my chooks, can't be without them." Several raised vegetable beds are in use – enough for one person to manage. The rest of the garden is a riot of plants in every stage of flowering. Rebecca's mother always made time to grow some flowers and



and also that of her older sister. She contracted the disease when she was seven years old. For three years her mother rode her bicycle from Railton to the hospital in Launceston to visit every Sunday.

When the girls were discharged and home again, she massaged them and helped them to walk again. "It's no use complaining, you just have to get on with life." Rebecca is active in the Post Polio Network and speaks about polio and the need for immunisation when a public face is needed for this issue. She stood next to Rob Pennicott when he announced he would raise funds for Rotary's campaign to eradicate polio by circumnavigating Australia in his yellow boat. Her voice is stored in the National Library of Australia because she was interviewed for a social history oral project about polio.

By this stage, two batches of puddings have been cooked and a fruit cake is in the microwave. We are in the front room with the sewing box and the latest embroidery project,

a series of shells which will eventually turn into something bigger. Embroidered cushion covers and quilts fill the house. Pieces are promised to family members and there are lots of them. Rebecca was one of eight children. Embroidery helped to fill the dark time in her life after the death of her son. She could pick it up and be busy without thinking too much. Gardening helped too. A quilt is draped over a very old round table inlaid with Tasmanian timbers. TMAG used it in an exhibition and would welcome it back, but it is promised to someone in the family.

Rebecca and her husband were both teachers, working in country schools and on the eastern shore and at the Ashley Boys Home for two years. She remembers classes of 56 children. "Not a problem. You wrote the work on the board and they sat in their desks and did it." She was teaching at Bronte Park in 1967, the year of bushfires, a memorable year. Every now and then a former pupil recognises her and

stands to attention, and of course, Rebecca remembers the name.

At the RTBG, Rebecca has welcomed and informed countless visitors about the beauty of our Gardens. She has put her energy into the shop, into the Visitors' Centre and now into the Studio at the main gate educating the visitors and helping new volunteers – just like being a teacher again. Rosters? No problem. Buggy driving? Easy.

She worries about the RTBG's future and how lack of funds will force it to change. She thinks entry fees may be necessary. Our Gardens have never been funded generously but times are particularly difficult now.

So, we leave with puddings, various cuttings and an example of how a positive outlook on life creates a warmth and friendliness which attracts people and allows them to find the best in themselves. It's like the drop of Parisienne essence which brightens up a pale and uninteresting cake.

## • PLANT SALE •

This sale only happens once a year and is your chance to stock up for spring while raising funds for the Gardens. For more than 10 years dedicated volunteers have worked alongside Gardens staff to produce rare and heirloom variety tomatoes for the annual Friends of the Gardens Plant Sale. This sale raises funds which are injected directly back into the Gardens for projects including the Fuchsia House redevelopment, expansion of the educational facilities, the Friends Mixed Border and many other projects.

The sale has also attracted a huge loyal following with more than 2,000 eager tomato growers attending the sale last year.

Sale details:

- Prelude sale, entry with \$10 donation; Thursday 24th September
- Spring Plant Sale, free entry, Saturday 26th of September

## • SPRING COMMUNITY FESTIVAL •

Through the cooler winter months the Gardens horticultural staff and volunteers have been toiling away making preparations for the 30th annual Spring Community Festival.

The Spring Community Festival has been a Tasmanian institution since 1986 attracting more than 10,000 visitors annually.

**FREE PARKING AT THE CENOTAPH WITH FREE SHUTTLE BUSES DELIVERING YOU RIGHT TO THE GATES**  
**Gates will open at 10am and close at 4pm each day • [www.rtbg.tas.gov.au](http://www.rtbg.tas.gov.au) for more details**



# Winifred Curtis SCAMANDER RESERVE

THE RESERVE is one kilometre south from Scamander township, it is a unique ecosystem, adjacent to Henderson Lagoon. It incorporates dry sclerophyll bushland, heathland, marshland, duneland and wetland. It is the only such remnant of coastal vegetation in the Break O' Day Municipality largely untouched since the beginning of European settlement.

The late Dr Geraldine Archer, when she died in 1993, encouraged by her life long friend Dr Winifred Curtis who regarded the ecosystem in that vicinity as rare, left in her will 'for the people of Tasmania', a small portion of land. The reserve has been added too, with the support of public donations and Government grants and now covers over 80 odd hectares. Winifred Curtis generously gave her name to the reserve and it was opened in December 2001.

Dr Curtis was one of Tasmania's most distinguished professional botanists. She is known for her five-volume series titled *The Student's Flora of Tasmania* describing the native and naturalised flowering plants of this state. Her contribution to our plant science has been immeasurable. She visited the reserve many times and regarded it as a rare example of pristine bushland.

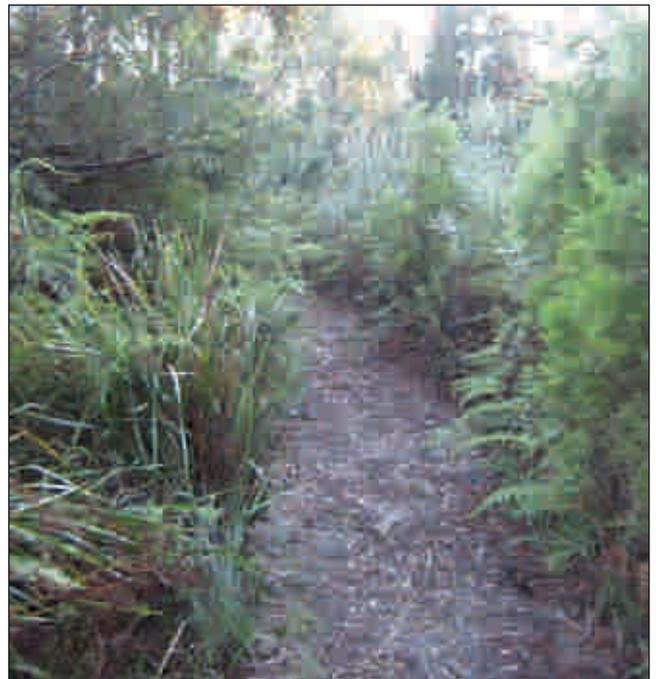
Cataloguing of plants, birds and vertebrate animal species in the reserve is a continuous process. So far 150 plus individual plant species

have been recorded, 90 plus bird species, all Tasmanian's marsupials (apart from the eastern grey kangaroo), countless invertebrates, and over 60 species of fungi. Much remains to be done especially following the disastrous bushfire in 2006.

The reserve is managed by the Trustees with generous assistance from volunteers. The Trust is a not for profit organisation and relies on donations from the public.

You are encouraged to visit as often as you like, there is no admission charge.

I am told the best time is between May and November, (an open invitation) when the place resembles a



"fairlyland". This weed free area of native flora is quite a spectacle.

Feedback from any members who visit is always welcome. The new chairman of the Trust managing this reserve is a Friends member, Mr Paul Frater.

A passing visit was a delight – not the best time of year, but we will be back.

## STAFF GRANT, 2015

ANNE GRIFFIN AND MEGAN MARLISON are the recipients of the Staff Grant for 2015.

They applied for financial support to upgrade the Certificate 1V in Training and Assessment which they originally obtained in 2007 at Tas TAFE. FRTBG will fund the \$1810.00 needed to pay for the course.

The intention of this grant is to support staff in their personal development and training, to help them enhance their knowledge and experience in their area of expertise.

The RTBG must also benefit from this in some way.

Their application met the criteria of this Grant. They will benefit from their knowledge of the current TAFE course work and having current qualifications will help them to work with trainees. And that will benefit the RTBG. They will be able to assist trainees and provide a mentoring role, guiding them through the course work.

Congratulations to them both.



Heritage restoration work on the Arthur Wall





# It's a long way from Castle Forbes Bay

Margot White celebrates forty years at the RTBG on September the 22nd 2015

**By Mark Fountain**

**P**icture this, a young girl, late for work, rushes into the crib room, says some choice words about the drivers who had driven past her while hitchhiking and some kind words about the driver who had delivered her to the door. It's a long way from Castle Forbes Bay and this is where, almost 40 years ago, Margot had just hitchhiked in to work from. The Gardens and especially the nursery would have looked very different then. The crib rooms wouldn't have been the crib rooms we see today and the nursery buildings and the depot wouldn't have been there either.

For many years Margot worked in the RTBG's Eastern Section, which I'm told was in those days almost like being in Siberia. Firstly, you're in the 'Far East' beyond the wall (the Eardley-Wilmot Wall in this case), and secondly, in winter it was bitterly cold. The windbreaks were much smaller then and there were very few sheltered nooks and crannies like the Japanese Gardens.

Margot worked in the Japanese Garden after it was constructed and this has engendered a love of all things Japanese leading to regular trips to Japan to visit gardens and orchid expos over the last few years. Another Japanese connection is that Margot is also close to becoming a black belt in Akido and is therefore officially dangerous.

Margot is rich in enthusiasm and ideas and she has quite an armoury of skills that she uses to support her roles in the RTBG Nursery. In the past she has taken evening courses in marketing and you can see these skills coming to the fore in the Great Tomato Sale. Other obvious skills include her huge capacity as a networker, these skills clearly come to the fore with the events and the volunteer groups Margot supports.

For example, Margot joined the Orchid society as a member after being given the role of maintaining the RTBG's Orchid collection and has also travelled to Conferences in WA and Japan to increase her knowledge (and her networks!) I'm sure this helped with the formation of the volunteer Orchid Group.

One of Margot's main roles is the development and set up of the Gardens Conservatory and Margot along with the nursery staff was responsible for changing the conservatory display away from the previous very high plant turn-

over and extremely labour intensive model to the current year round creative displays.

One last point – Margot is a walking archive of the last forty years of the RTBG history, I hope she doesn't wipe my file after this little piece of 'fact-ion'!

Congratulations Margot 40 years is an extraordinary achievement!

*Margot and Costa, 2010*





*All in a day's work!*





## Work and events at the Gardens

Page 15 shows the progress of restoration works on the Arthur Wall. Seen below is another view of part of the solar installation mentioned by the director on page 3.

The photo at left shows part of the “Giindanyba” installation at the Gardens. Created by NSW artist, Tyrone Sheather, it was part of the Dark MOFO event held in July. Tyrone is of the Gumbaynggirr people of NSW.



# The Return of the Flowers

*Retold by Frank Povah*

**Drought is a fact of life in Australia and studies have shown that one such event, recent in geological terms, lasted for about 1000 years; this beautiful story from the central west of NSW no doubt recalls that time. Set in the time after the hero, Baiame, had finished his work on Earth and returned to his home along the great river that we call the Milky Way, it speaks of the interconnection between all living things, the joy the Indigenous peoples found in flowers, and the importance of social cohesion.**

BAYAAMII'S LAST TASK on Earth had been to carve his mark on three giant gums, telling the Bageen, the Clever Men, that the Bee people who lived among them were never to be raided for their sugar bag, the dark, thin, deliciously flavoured honey so loved by humans. "No matter what," he told them, "these are always for the Bees in times of need, for without the bees many of the flowers will never grow and a time may come when the Bees are needed."

Bayaamii had gone, taking his wives with him. South-east wind, earthly relative of the wives, missed her kinfolk and began to sulk, causing the rain-bearing winds to cease. As the country dried, so the flowers gradually disappeared until the Bees – sacred to Bayaamii – had only tree sap and the occasional blossom from which to make honey to store in their bags.

As the generations passed, the young people became angry with their elders and scoffed at their stories about a time when the south-easterly brought spring rains and the land was covered in flowers; at stories about the delicious sugar bag that could be found in rock overhangs, tree hollows and, in exceptionally good seasons, even in cracks in higher ground.

"You are lying," they would say. "Prove it's true by letting us raid Bayaamii's trees for their sugar bag."

"We must not," their elders would say, "It is the Law."

But as the long, bitter years passed, the younger generations became less inclined to listen to advice and, fearing that the injunctions would be overturned, the Bageen consulted the Yuurii, the little hairy people who have links to the secret Other World. Feeling the people's plight and knowing the consequences of breaking Law, the Yuurii pleaded with Bayaamii who told them they

could guide a group of Bageen from every corner of the land up to his home on the great river where he would tell them what to do.

The Bageen were led to the sacred mountain – where even today you can see the steps Bayaamii cut when he returned to his home – and up to the ancient, sacred Bora, a ceremonial ground, on its summit.

There, the Bageen and Yuurii danced a great Bora, driving away obstacles and preparing the path to Bayaamii's home. As the dancing reached its peaked, the men were dragged upward by a great wind, twisting and whirling, sucking them up to the great river.

When they had recovered the courage to open their eyes, they found themselves standing on river flats covered in all manner of beautiful flowers stretching away as far as they could see.

Bayaamii's great voice spoke to them from somewhere along the river: "Go now," he thundered, "and gather all the flowers you can carry and I will send you with them back to your home in my country on Earth. When you get there, you must give them to the women, who will place them on the ground. Do not," his voice grew louder, "stop the children in whatever they might do, for you know they are special to me and my wives."

The magic of Bayaamii entered the

Bageen and they collected flowers in huge bundles, enough to cover the land it seemed, but they kept at it until another giant buuli, a willy-willy, swept them and their precious cargo up, returning them to Earth, each to his own country.

Back on Earth, the women cried with joy to see the beauty the Bageen had brought with them and dashed to and fro placing the flowers in great bunches all over the ground.

The children were amazed. Never before had they seen such colours, nor smelled such sweet scents. "It's true," they yelled, "what the Old Ones tell us must be true." Filled with joy, the children leaped and danced and as they did so their feet kicked the bunches of flowers in all directions. So happy was the sound of the youngsters, that the South-East women caused the rain-bearing winds to blow steady and strong, bringing the warm, spring rains to the land. Wherever a particular flower lay, there its children grow to this day.

The dance of the children is remembered for what it returned to the land. Some people say that if a grown-up has a pain in the binji – a belly ache – it's because they have been unkind to their children and Bayaamii's wives are punishing them.

If you visit the sandstone country behind the Blue Mountains, there is a sacred mountain with huge steps cut in one side and with its summit flattened by Bayaamii's Great Bora. This is the place where the Bageen were lifted into the sky.

In the same general area, there is a large rock overhang in which is painted a line of women, 15 or more metres long. Facing the viewer, they are holding hands and dancing with joy at the beauty of their world. This country may soon disappear into a great pit.

And last, but not least, all over Australia are old place names commemorating this great event. In the greater Sydney and again near Tenterfield, NSW, there are localities named Girraween – the place where the flowers returned.



# General Information for Members and Prospective Members

## General Meetings

**19th September:** AGM at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens 10am. Guest speaker will be John Wadswley: local historian, curator at MMT and formerly curator of Military Museum and heritage consultant. TOPIC: 'The Soldiers' avenue and the history of the Domain'.

**5th December:** Christmas get-together. Details T/C.

## Membership

just a reminder that membership is due 1st July There is an offer to 'ask a friend to join FRIENDS' and support our Botanical garden.

- Go into the draw to receive a guided tour of the gardens with one of our volunteer guides.
- Have a glimpse of what happens behind the scenes

Remember to join now and you are covered for all of next year.

## New telephone number

The RTBG has a new phone connection. The change-over will take a while, but the new numbers are: **6066 0451 or 6166 0453.**

## Neutrog

The order form is included in this issue. Remember this is a benefit only for members of the Friends.

Log on to their web site for details of all their products and growing tips as well as the benefits.

***If you would like to be involved in any of our projects please contact the President or any committee member.***

## Government House Reception

We are looking for former members to help us celebrate 25 years as an incorporated organisation. If you know of someone who would like to join us, please let us/them know about the reception at Government House on Friday 30th October. The reception will be between 6 and 7 pm. We need a name and address so that an invitation can be sent.



## FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL TASMANIAN BOTANICAL GARDENS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dr Prof. Mr Mrs Ms Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Please circle preferred option)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details: Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name preferred on badge \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pay the following subscription\* (tick one)

Single, \$30  Joint, \$40  Affiliate, \$55  Make a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I am paying by  Cheque/Money Order  Cash  Direct Deposit (details below. **PLEASE reference your name**)†

I am interested in  Cultural Heritage/Library  Visitor Services  Tour Guides

Community Garden  Growing Friends  Friends Cottage  Seed Conservation  Begonia Volunteers

\*I understand that my annual subscription will be deposited in Friends of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens account and will be allocated to specific projects of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens as nominated by the Friends Committee.

Please send this form with your payment c/o Membership Officer, or pay at the Botanical Shop

†Bendigo Bank. BSB: 633-700 A/c # 1171 21863 A/c name: Friends of the Royal Botanical Gardens

Membership # 2015/16 \_\_\_\_\_