

BRAIDWOOD GARDEN CLUB NEWSLETTER



MARCH 2020

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Suspension of the Braidwood Garden Club Meetings

It is with great regret that the committee has decided to suspend all meetings of the Braidwood Garden Club until further notice. In these unprecedented times it is impossible to say when we will be able to meet again, but we will as soon as we are able to given the demographics of the club. In the meantime the committee is implementing processes so it can continue to interact remotely and we will continue to produce our wonderful newsletter to keep you all informed and entertained.

REPORT OF THE BUS TRIP TO GARDENS IN YASS – Thursday 12th March by Rose DeMartin

Thirty-four members enjoyed a lovely day out on a perfect early autumn day visiting three gardens and a nursery in Yass. The trip was hosted by the Yass and District Garden Club who truly spoilt us and made it a special day out. Not only did they organise the programme, but they provided lunch, gave members present gifts of plants which they had potted up to replenish our gardens after the fires and drought and many of their members participated in the day's activities. Indeed they were the perfect hosts.

Our first visit was to **Margaret and Ken Reidy's** garden in the centre of Yass. There is a lot going on in this garden, with lovely garden rooms, leading to more surprises and quirky ornaments. They also had their veteran cars on display for the motoring enthusiast. We enjoyed morning tea there thanks to Yass and District Garden Club and members A-M.



Entrance to Margaret and Ken Reidy's garden



Succulent table in their delightful courtyard

We then had a brief visit to **Turners Wholesale Nursery** where some real bargains were had with the young lad running dealing with the till struggling to process all the extensive transactions

Our next destination was **Bimbi and Kim Turner's** stunning country garden and One Tree Olive Grove (one enormous olive tree with the yield of 10 normal trees) on a working sheep property at Bowning. Bimbi is a rose collector and had a number of areas devoted to different types of roses, also to fruit trees, perennial beds and a crepe myrtle grove. There was a number of interesting landscaping features, most notably their ha-ha wall which provides great vistas of the surrounding landscape and creating an amazing a borrowed landscape. We enjoyed our delicious lunch there and members were given plants.



The visitors on Bimbi and Kim Turner's back lawn



One of the many lovely roses



View over the ha-ha wall



Steps down to the rose arbour

Finally, we went back to Yass for a brief visit the oldest house in Yass which was originally the 'Rose Inn' dating back to 1837 and home to Edwina & Jim Hagan. They have a spacious 1.4 acres garden with some interesting plants and trees, including a magnificent specimen bunya tree. We were given more plants here.



Entrance to Edwina & Jim Hagan's house



Lovely autumn crocuses



How many plants can you get under a bus?

The day finished with a quiet and safe return to Braidwood, thanks to Ronda's careful driving.

More pictures at: <https://hope-today.org/pixt/bgc50/index.html>

WINTER /ALGERIAN IRIS FOR FREE by John Tuckwell



The heap of winter iris

To make room for a new native garden, John and Margaret Tuckwell had to have a large quantity of winter/Algerian iris removed and they are now on their nature strip at 64a Wilson St, Braidwood which is near the preschool. Please feel free to take some (there is a mattock by the letter box if you are having difficulties separating some plants). The offer will also be put on local Facebook pages in the coming days, so first in best dressed.



The winter or Algerian iris (*Iris unguicularis*) is a drought tolerant, low-maintenance plant & flowering in winter starting in May and carrying on flowering well into September, so providing some much needed colour during the winter months. It makes a tussock of arching, dark green leathery leaves, 1cm wide by 60cm long. Large lilac flowers nestle in the foliage. If gently pulled whilst in pencil (just before they open) the flowers will last four or five days in a vase filling the room with a delicious primrose fragrance as they unfurl. It likes full sun to light shade and prefers well drained poor soil and grows well around deciduous trees. To see the flowers better, cut foliage down to slightly above ground level in the autumn.

Since the widespread and destructive bushfires this summer, there has been much discussion about the best plants and techniques to make our gardens more fire resistant. We've all heard opinions about which trees burned and which didn't, and the oft-cited view that exotic species are a safer choice than Australian natives. However there's a fair amount of expert opinion indicating that planning fire-safe gardens is not as straightforward as implied by the simple dictum: 'exotics good' / 'natives bad'. We also need to carefully assess the broader environment in which your property and garden are located.

The outcomes of any bushfire experience will largely depend on a wide range of well-known factors outside our personal control – weather patterns (temperature, seasonal rainfall, wind speed and direction), landscape topography, firefighting support – the list goes on.

More within our control (leaving aside building design, maintenance, location and materials) are factors such as landscape planning, garden design, materials used and choice of plant species. All of these will have an effect on what happens when a bushfire enters your property.

For that reason, this topic will be covered in two parts, in March and April newsletters. This issue touches briefly on broader issues such as rural landscapes, farm plantations and garden design. Our April issue will discuss the question of what to plant, in particular those plants reputed to be fire resistant or fire retardant.

Rural properties/plantations

For out-of-town residents, planning for bushfire covers more than your house and garden. It obviously requires a thorough assessment of your property's location in the wider landscape - aspect, topography, ecology and vegetation, including any existing or planned plantations. It is also important to take into account typical seasonal conditions such as wind direction, rainfall, temperature and the area's fire history. Advice on assessing your property in terms of these broader issues is available from the NSW Rural Fire Service.

It is worth noting that when considering farm plantations and bushfires, the potential benefits are maximised if a plantation is well positioned, well designed and well managed. If well planned, appropriately planted and maintained, farm plantations can help reduce fire risk by:

- slowing the progress of a fire by reducing wind velocities. A fire may be stopped by a plantation or will move at a slower speed if it spreads to the wind-protected side.
- reducing damaging radiant heat, often the biggest killer in a fire. A vegetation barrier is a very effective shield from radiant heat.
- trapping embers from an approaching fire. (However, the condition of the ground layer will determine whether embers then start a fire or burn out).

For further information on the benefits of plantations (both native and other) see website:

- *Recreatingthecountry.com.au/blog/farm plantations*. This blog contains a number of useful articles on topics of interest to gardeners and rural landowners.

The house garden

Landscaping using appropriate design principles and plant selection can increase your house's chances of surviving a bushfire, even if your plan is to leave early. Poorly located vegetation that burns readily may expose the house to increased levels of radiant heat and direct flame. However, well-placed vegetation with low flammability may actually help protect houses by:

- reducing the amount of radiant heat on the house
- reducing the chance of direct flame contact on the house
- reducing wind speed around the house
- deflecting and filtering embers
- reducing flammable materials within the 'defendable space'.

The best way to ensure proper preparation is thorough planning, involving a combination of bushfire protection measures. These include:

- preparing a Bushfire Survival Plan (see NSW RFS website)
- having an adequate water supply and clear road access
- house construction and maintenance
- garden design and plant selection.

Designing the house garden

The Victorian Country Fire Authority has suggested a number of design principles outlining how creating a defendable space can be used to reduce radiant heat, prevent flame contact and minimise ember attack around a building.

When planning a new garden or modifying an existing one, we need to carefully consider the placement of garden beds, trees and other vegetation to reduce the bushfire risk to the house. Careful selection and appropriate location of plants can filter embers, absorb radiant heat and break up fuel in the path of a bushfire.

Unfortunately, plants can also contribute to house loss by:

- providing a continuous fuel path to the house, allowing direct flame contact.
- dropping leaf litter onto the ground, which may readily ignite.
- dropping branches or debris onto the house.
- adding to fuel loads on or near the house, e.g. creepers over pergolas, fences or verandahs.

- If located too close, burning vegetation produces radiant heat which may ignite the house or cause windows to break, allowing embers into the house. Vegetation should also be kept clear of access routes to and from the house and property.

1. Create defensible space - an area of land around a building where vegetation is modified and managed to reduce the effects of direct flame contact and radiant heat associated with bushfire.
2. Remove flammable objects around the house – within 10 metres of a building, flammable garden materials (plants, mulches, fences) must not be located close to vulnerable parts of the building (windows, doors, decks, pergolas and eaves) – to prevent flame contact on the house.
3. Break up fuel continuity – to reduce the spread of fire within a garden, create separation between plants, garden beds and tree canopies.
4. Carefully select, locate and maintain trees – as trees can be useful during a bushfire. Correctly selected, located and well-maintained trees can reduce wind speed, absorb radiant heat and filter embers.

The above information is a brief distillation of more detailed advice in the excellent booklet:

A very useful resource, you can download this booklet from the website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

[illegible]

Despite the current preoccupation with COVID-19 we are still recovering from the fires and the drought. The garden club committee has been investigating ways to help particular individuals. Immediate assistance through working bees etc is obviously on hold now or is not needed until later. We were also considering a cuttings working bee where we could collectively have had a happy morning together potting up cuttings and divided perennials for those in need. Again such a communal activity cannot take place. However, we can all individually do this now and aggregate our contributions for distribution.

It is very difficult to determine exactly who has been directly affected (information held by the QPRC recovery centre is rightly confidential) and in any event everyone has been affected by 7 weeks of fires, whether directly by loss of property or indirectly by smoke and mental anguish. Moreover, many directly affected probably lost more plants due to the drought than the fires and we all suffered from the drought. The committee has therefore decided that any contributions will be taken to the villages of Nerriga, Araluen, Mongarlowe and Bombay as well as Braidwood and left for locals to take on an honesty basis.

<https://braidwoodgardenclub.wordpress.com>

'Braidwood Brilliant' Waratahs Working Bee - 22 March 2020

On a fine Sunday morning around 20 volunteers and children from the Braidwood Urban Landcare Group (BULG), the Braidwood Garden Club and local community members took part in a working bee at the Flood Creek Community Recreation area near the start of Bombay Road. The morning involved weeding around the existing plantings, spreading more mulch, planting heaps of bulbs and the ten 'Braidwood Brilliant' Waratahs donated by the Garden Club as part of marking its 40th anniversary year, following a suggestion by Cathie and Philip Owen. The bulbs came from those dug up from Floriade by garden club members & from a garden bed in North Ryrie Park opposite Smokey Horse, thanks to QPRC. In the spring in the Ryrie Park garden bed, this and two other small beds will be turned into a sensory garden – another project marking our 40th anniversary year and adding to our wonderful new playground there.



Philip Owen planting a 'Braidwood Brilliant' Waratah

Social distancing was followed throughout the working bee, which ended with the unveiling of a sign acknowledging all the supporters of the Flood Creek Community Recreation area managed by BULG in the presence of QPRC Mayor Tim Overall, Counsellor Pete Harrison and Nick Fry from Braidwood Bank. The Motion Ninja Academy run by Hollie Bakerboljkovac gave a demonstration of their use of the Flood Creek Park, including getting adults to join in with their moves.

Hopefully, come spring, the cherry trees planted last spring plus the bulbs, will make this an even more delightful area to walk through and in the years to come, become a must visit place to see the waratahs in flower.



Sue Murray and others planting bulbs



Derek Duffy and others spreading mulch



Motion Ninja Academy demonstration

Comments From Kay Hamer Who Lost Her Home In The Fires

"Regeneration in a Burnt Garden"

Patience is a wonderful virtue but it is very hard to practice when looking at blackened plant remnants. However slowly things are picking up and I have had some surprises. The gladioli think it was all done for them and are flourishing, even putting up flower stems and the Red Hot Pokers are very happy

Of more concern is the number of spring flowering bulbs and corms that have started into growth, the jonquils are up and I will be interested to see if they flower as it is suggested that they won't if they get too hot in summer!!!! The naturalising cyclamen are flowering, some of the big corms got totally burnt but I found seed capsules with viable seed in the debris and have raked them in with fingers. The salvias and aquilegias are growing back from burnt remnants and there are seedlings of portulaca coming up. Most of the bottlebrushes are sprouting mainly from the base with some of the less burnt ones sprouting from the stems but I have yet to find a viable grevillea. Several Hakea are sprouting from the base as are all the gums even my tiny ones planted in the spring. Wattles are mostly dead but the silver wattle is putting in a bid for the entire property and will have to receive some serious discouragement. One clematis has come from below ground right next to the burnt post but others that got scorched have died and are not showing any signs of recovery. The wisteria, chocolate vine and lilac are sprouting in the ruins and may yet cover the mess before the clean up happens. They are coming from below ground and not from the old trunks which leaves me with the fun task of removing all the growth from the top of the pergola next Spring after the frosts have finished. The grass is flourishing and I have lots of microlena this year after a mass of blow away grass last autumn. There is even a nursery of microlena among the pavers under the pergola which I am using to replant badly destroyed spots. Fruit trees are resprouting and flowering with the pear having both flowers and fruit. With the breaching of the hail nets the Bowerbird and friends have cleaned up the few apples I had and they even took the sloes which usually get left. The philadelphus have recovered and even put out a few flowers and iris of all sorts, except where the rhizomes got totally burnt, are looking good. The ones by the dam have gone from very dry to burnt to flooded and still grow so nature is amazing. With the effort of the RFS and locals the veg patch survived and I had my best crop ever of garlic and

shallots. The potato crop was small due to the drought and the raspberries do not like severe heat and singing. I will replace the hail nets with shade cloth in the winter both for frost and vicious sun and heat in summer. They seemed to have survived but with the wind and rain holes are showing up where embers landed making it easier to decide to replace them. One result of the burning along the Corang River and adjacent scrub is that I have a very unafraid Eastern Whip bird joining me in the garden and before he developed a taste for sweet corn he scuttled around beside me in the veg patch. I had to repair the 2 large holes in the net to keep him and the bowerbird out. He still ignores me and flits in and out of the piles of debris finding something to eat. With the deluge, frogs reappeared and I had the chorus of a thousand frogs for several nights with a couple joining me in the shower or sitting on the overflow from the tank and calling loudly outside the bathroom window. So despite coronavirus a batch of useless politicians and a summer from hell the garden has got going again and the bulb catalogues have appeared and seduced me! Happy gardening and if you would like suckers from Lilac, wisteria or chocolate vine please drop by...easy to find just beyond the Corang River bridge on the Nerriga road on the left coming from Braidwood.

PS Another suckering plant threatening a take over is the Carolina Jessamine or gelsemium jasminoides. However Lonicera fragrantissima has not survived so if anyone has a cutting or would like to raise one I would love it. Primroses survive fire!!! ”

Thankyou Kay

THE PLANT OF THE MONTH

By Kate Chinnick



**Punica
Granatum
(pomegranate)**

- Native of the Mediterranean and southern Asia
- Deciduous shrub or small tree
- Grows to 4.5m tall and 3m wide
- Leaves are blunt tipped and glossy turning yellow in autumn
- Prefers full sun in any well drained soil
- Flowers are 8 petalled, orange/red and funnel shaped in spring / summer
- Fruit follows flowering & ripens in autumn
- Red seeds and pulp are delicious
- Propagate in spring from seed or cuttings in summer
- Likes a dressing of lime

What to do in the garden for April

- Trim evergreen shrubs so they recover before winter
- Choose trees for autumn colour
- Good time to plant or move Camellias, Rhodo's & Azaleas
- Look for Liliun, Hippeastrum & Sprekelia Bulbs
- Complete planting of spring bulbs
- Tidy leaves of Hellebores, Winter Iris & Aquilegias
- Sow Asian Greens, Broad Beans & Peas
- Plant all Brassicas (cover with fine netting against white butterflies, old lace curtains ideal!)
- Remove all old leaves from Strawberries (put in garbage)
- Remove 3 year old Strawberries & replace with new stock
- Repot herbs and pot plants with new potting mix
- Pick up any fallen fruit & dispose of if diseased