

# Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens

2000 - 2025

Twenty-five years of  
support and advocacy for  
Bendigo's Botanic Gardens



Compiled by Judy Milner 2025 - Member. Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens

Updated from Edition 'Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens 2000 – 2020'

## Establishment of Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens The First 25 Years

Rejuvenation of Victoria's Regional Botanic Gardens was an initiative of the 150th anniversary of Victoria in 1984. Many of these gardens were in a poor state and their function had been devalued. Funding from this initiative provided for evaluation of the gardens, listing of significant trees and proposals for revitalisation and expansion. Various designs to upgrade the White Hills Botanic Gardens were formulated during the 1990s and meetings with council representatives and interested residents (including key Friends' member Jane Cleary) were held to discuss the appropriateness of these. Recommendations to form a Friends Group occurred during this time.

In July 1999 Rosemary Davies (horticulturalist, author and gardening presenter, whose husband Peter worked for council), arranged for a small group of people to a meeting as a first step in forming a community group to be known as 'Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens'. She indicated that council had given support for such a group. Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat had keen botanic garden 'friends' groups and small friends' groups existed in a number of other regional botanic gardens. Bendigo in the 1990s had some strong horticulture and garden groups of keen plant growers and the city was unique in not only having a lake, like Ballarat but three major historic parks all connected along the Bendigo Creek. Rosalind Park in the centre of town has some wonderful trees and the fernery, some early historic plantings still survived around Lake Weeroona and at White Hills Botanic Gardens there was a collection of historic plantings, as well as an aviary, animal exhibits and heritage structures.

*"We already had an outstanding framework of horticultural assets, now was the time to move on it and build the enthusiasm as well as a major tourism drawcard for Bendigo!"*  
R. Davies



Along with Jane Cleary (who had lobbied for such a group to be formed) a team was gathered to form a Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens Group. It was anticipated its role would be to work with the City of Greater Bendigo to protect, restore and promote our city gardens.

This first meeting was held at the Boardwalk Cafe on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July 1999. There were 10 people present which included two council employees. The aims and purposes of the group were discussed and formulated, and other issues were also raised. The outcome of this meeting was that they should look at the pros and cons of being incorporated and that contact be made with other Friends Groups to find out how they operate.

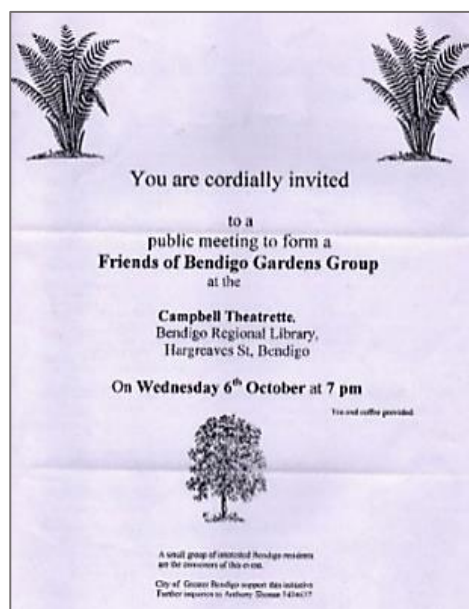
A second meeting followed at the Senior Citizens Rooms, Golden Square on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 1999. A decision was made to hold a public meeting to present the concept of a 'Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens' group.

The Public Meeting was widely advertised and held at the Campbell Theatrette, Bendigo Regional Library at 7pm on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1999. Rod Orr welcomed the attendees and chaired the meeting. Rosemary Davies explained the purposes of the meeting. Jane Cleary spoke about other Friends' Groups and the ability to represent Bendigo's Botanic Gardens more effectively than is possible now. Anthony Shean (Council Rep) spoke about the group being sponsored by council for insurance purposes etc.

Rod Orr moved a motion that:

"We establish 'The Friends of Bendigo's Botanic Gardens' as a community group sponsored by the Council of the City of Greater Bendigo." This was carried by those present. The mayor, Councillor Daryl McClure, made concluding remarks and invited attendees to supper and further discussion.

The first gathering following this was a 'bring-your-own' picnic lunch at the White Hills Botanic Gardens on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999. Proposed Friends' activities were discussed over lunch and a guided walk followed. On 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2000 a group of 7 visited Ballarat Botanic Gardens to meet with the Ballarat Friends Group.



## Getting started

The **First Annual General Meeting** was held at Golden Square Senior Citizens Rooms, at 7.30pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2000. Eighteen members were present, and a committee was elected.

President - **Glenys Anthony**

Vice President - **Rod Orr**

Secretary - **Jane Cleary**

Treasurer - **Jan Orr**

Other positions:

Publicity and information - **Tim Lawrence**

Guided Walks - **Jane Cleary, Jan and Rod Orr**

Other Committee members - **Barry Hargreaves and Lyn Hargreaves**

**Rosemary Davies** was appointed patron and **Anthony Sheean** filled the position of council representative.

The membership fee was set at \$10 and Tim Lawrence was to request Weeroona College for logo ideas. It was anticipated that the Friends role would be to work with the City of Greater Bendigo to protect, restore, enhance and promote our city gardens. Committee meetings following this were often held in members' homes with general meetings held at Golden Square Senior Citizens Club Rooms.

The first committee meeting was held at the home of President Glenys Anthony on 16th March 2000. It was agreed to operate under a 'Deed of Delegation', (rather than an incorporated group) which would bring us under the umbrella of the City Council and cover us for insurance purposes. Logo design, name badges, collection of old photographs and a post office box were all discussed. Activities proposed included speakers, a visit to Castlemaine Gardens, and a walk along the linear park from Rosalind Park to White Hills.

By May 2000 there were 23 financial members and name tags were made featuring the image of the Conservatory using an illustration by local artist Stan Thomas. During 2000 a 'Getting to Know You' casserole tea was held, several excursions were attended, a working bee at the Fernery in Rosalind Park occurred and regular newsletters were sent out. Affiliation with the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens, Victoria (now a National Body) was established, and various sub- groups were to be formed – (Propagation, Plant labelling, Research, Guiding).

At the Annual General Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2001 Glenys Anthony outlined all the achievements of the previous year. She noted that by end of January the numbers had grown to 46 financial members. A propagation group had been set up and the first session was held at the McKenzie Street Nursery 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2001 under the guidance of Mark Geyer (COGB Manager of Parks and Gardens), and Sandra Crump (COGB Nursery Manager).

The group undertook propagation of some of the listed significant trees – notably *Umbellularia californica* (Californian Bay Tree) from Rosalind Park (now gone) and from White Hills Botanic Gardens *Schinus terebinthifolius* (Brazilian Pepper Tree) and *Dovyalis caffra* (Kei Apple). These have now been planted in BBG, White Hills. Other activities during the year included a walking tour of Canterbury Park, Lake Neangar and Lake Tom Thumb (Eaglehawk) as well as a day trip to the Garden of St Erth, Norgates Perennial Nursery and Ascot Box Hedge Nursery in the Trentham area. In July, a joint activity with the Gallery Friends was 'A Night with John Wolseley' (artist) about his travels and plants encountered in preparation of his exhibition 'Tracing the Wallace Line'.

Well known horticulturalist, John Hawker (Heritage Victoria) was a guest of the Friends in August. He spoke about the history of Botanic Gardens at an evening event that was followed by walks through Rosalind Park and Lake Weeroona identifying trees the following day. Much to our delight it was not long after this that the botanic gardens were added to the **Victorian Heritage Register**.

During September a plant stall was held at a Sunday market to sell plants supplied by the propagating group and in November a busload attended the Geelong Botanic Gardens to participate in a tour around these wonderful gardens with the Geelong Friends Group. The year concluded with a December 'End of the Year Celebration' at the home of Friends Patron Rosemary Davies and her husband Peter. Members enjoyed a shared lunch and a tour of their extensive private garden.

A monthly newsletter was being sent to members which had various titles until eventually becoming known as 'From the Conservatory' - an acknowledgment of the elaborate Victorian Glasshouse in the Conservatory Gardens.



*Friends Working  
in the Mackenzie Street Nursery*

## Ongoing support and advocacy

By the Annual General Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002 there were 48 financial members and Glenys Anthony (President) described all the activities held the previous year thanking all those members who have contributed to the Friends during the past 12 months. Geoff Hocking was speaker and spoke on the topic of Early Bendigo. Fiona McMahon addressed the June dinner meeting where she explained her role as City of Bendigo Heritage Officer.

Two Friends members (Jane Cleary and Jan Orr) were included on the Parks Advisory Committee established by the council in 2002. Conservation of the Fernery at Rosalind Park, the impact of school use on Rosalind Park, the development of a Living Collections Policy and a weed and pest management program for the gardens were all issues the Friends raised at PAC meetings. Activities included a walk in the Fryers Flora Reserve, and an excursion to the Terrick Terrick National Park. Jane Cleary and Jan & Rod Orr attended and enjoyed the Association of Friends 2002 Conference held in November at Ballarat Botanic Gardens.

At the AGM held in Feb 2003, Jan Orr was appointed President with Jane Cleary taking on the role of Secretary. As the new president Jan especially commended all the work Jane had done in promoting the gardens through guided walks and speaking to community groups. By this stage the Friends Group was well established and respected by the council and the parks department. A membership brochure was developed.

## A New Home

In 2005 the Friends drafted a submission to council requesting the un-occupied care-takers residence at the White Hills Botanic Gardens be repurposed as a home base for The Friends as well as a resource centre. This was also proposed at the Parks Advisory Committee Meeting where both Jan Orr and Jane Cleary were our representatives. The CEO John McLean and the councillors all received copies of the persuasive submission. This was followed by a delegation of members speaking directly to the council. The outcome of our lobbying resulted in the council agreeing to an inspection of the building and the drawing up of a business plan to evaluate the viability of the proposal. Drawings were developed and later that year money was allocated for the project.

Also, during this year there was a major restructure within the council which resulted in Tim Buyx being appointed as landscape architect and several other changed positions within the parks department. A conservation Study of WHBG was completed by Lee Andrews and associates in 2006 which became a key guide when evaluating proposed developments.

By September 2006 the re-purposed 'house' was utilized for FBBG meetings, Illustrators, Growing Friends gatherings and as a resource centre. These facilities were also used by the parks staff, two rooms being dedicated for their use. The Friends improved the facilities by adding tables, bookshelves, a fridge, microwave and illustrators' equipment. Later-on block-out blinds, picture rails, overhead projection facilities, display boards, library books etc. were added. A Deed of Delegation outlined the roles and responsibilities of both council and the Friends relating to the use of the house.



*Looking at the potential of the disused original caretakers house.*



*Meeting room after refurbishment*

Previously our committee meetings had been held at member's homes, in the portable tearooms at the Mackenzie Street nursery and then in the work shed at White Hills Botanic Gardens.



*Committee Meeting in the Mackenzie Street Nursery tea rooms.*



*Committee Meeting in the works shed BBG White Hills.*

# 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BBG - 2007

2007 was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the gardens and the Friends, in conjunction with the council, arranged a week of celebrations to mark this significant occasion. It provided an excellent opportunity to promote the gardens to the community, to publicise their importance and to advocate for appropriate future development.

**WHITE HILLS BOTANIC GARDENS**  
*Bendigo* (Est. 1857)  
 10 - 18 NOVEMBER 2007

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

The White Hills Botanic Gardens were officially gazetted in 1857. The City of Greater Bendigo and the Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens have planned a week of activities in November to celebrate this important anniversary.

Over the years the gardens have seen many changes to their original design. They used to feature a network of pathways edged with closely planted garden beds and shrubbery.

However many original features still remain. There are many old trees, with several that are listed on the Heritage Trees Register.

Many botanic gardens established during this time included a small zoo. The White Hills Botanic Garden is now one of only two botanic gardens to retain animal exhibits.

A natural loop in Bendigo Creek was made into a water feature when the creek was straightened. Today the lagoon has added significance, as it is the only natural section of the creek remaining.

The City of Greater Bendigo and the Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens have begun the long process to restore these historic gardens so that Bendigo, once more, will have a Botanic Garden of regional significance.

**BENDIGO**  
 City of Greater Bendigo  
 Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens

**WHITE HILLS BOTANIC GARDENS**  
*Bendigo* (Est. 1857)  
 10 - 18 NOVEMBER 2007

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

**Saturday 10th November**  
**Botanical Illustrators' Open Day**  
 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm at **Samuel Gadd Centre**  
 The Friends' Botanical Illustrators at work.  
 Jean Dennis (second botanical illustrator) will demonstrate illustration techniques.

**Sunday 11th November**  
**Sculpture in the Park** 10am-4pm  
 There will be a range of regional artists work on display with mosaic and sculpture activities for children.

**Monday 12th - Thursday 15th November**  
 Educational activities in the gardens with local school groups.

**Friday 16th November**  
**Guest speaker - Lee Andrews**  
 8pm at **Samuel Gadd Centre**  
 Lee Andrews (author of Heritage Significance Assessment for White Hills Botanic Gardens) will speak on "Botanic Gardens: Their past and future acclimatization role".  
 Bookings are required as space is limited.  
 Ph: 5444 0053 or 5448 4396 by 1st November.

**Sat 17th November**  
**Plant Sales at Samuel Gadd Centre**  
 9.30am - 3pm, Napoleon Street entrance  
 The Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens will be selling a range of plants including canna, iris and tulip bulbs from the collection.

**Sun 18th November**  
**Picnic in the Park - 10am-4pm**  
 Celebrating 150 years of the White Hills Botanic Gardens.  
 Bring a picnic and enjoy fun activities as well as historic and botanical displays.

- Children's activities throughout the day.
- 10.30am - Commemorative tree planting.
- 11.30am - Choir "Vocal Tones".
- 12 midday - Tasting on the Water Official commissioning of the new recycled water irrigation system.
- 1.30pm - 4pm - Guided walks with the Friends Group.

**Contact** Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens  
 Judy: 0419 324 294  
 City of Greater Bendigo: 5434 6000

**WHITE HILLS BOTANIC GARDENS**  
 10 - 18 NOVEMBER 2007

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

**Sculpture in the Park**

Exhibition  
 Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> Nov  
 10am-4pm

**BENDIGO**  
 City of Greater Bendigo  
 Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens

**WHITE HILLS BOTANIC GARDENS**  
 10 - 18 NOVEMBER 2007

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

**Public Lecture**  
 by **Lee Andrews**

Lee is a consultant in the field of culturally significant landscapes, garden history and horticulture. She has completed landscape conservation studies and plans for a wide range of significant sites including the White Hills Botanic Gardens. She is currently chair of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Garden Committee.

She will speak on:

**Botanic Gardens. Their past and future acclimatization role.**

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 8pm  
 at the Samuel Gadd Centre  
 White Hills Botanic Gardens, Bendigo  
 Bookings: 5444 0053 or 5448 4396

**BENDIGO**  
 City of Greater Bendigo  
 Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens

**WHITE HILLS BOTANIC GARDENS**  
 10 - 18 NOVEMBER 2007

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

**Picnic in the Park**

Celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the White Hills Botanic Gardens

Bring a picnic and enjoy fun, music, games, entertainment, displays, guided walks and much more.

10am - 4pm  
 Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> Nov  
 at the gardens

**BENDIGO**  
 City of Greater Bendigo  
 Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens



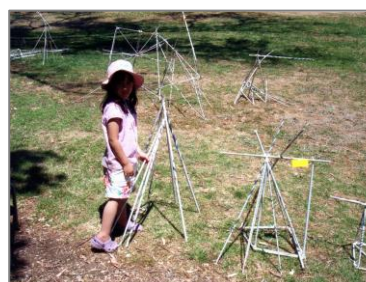
Mayor Julie Rivendell and Councillor Trudy McClure planting a Kei Apple Tree as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations 2007. Patron Rosemary Davies looking on.



Mosaic created by children with Lucy Cleary



Plants for sale - Elva Ritchie



Children's sculpture activities



Sculpture in the Park

## Samuel Gadd Centre

As part of the 150th events the 'The House' Resource Centre was officially opened by Mayor Julie Rivendell and named 'The Samuel Gadd Centre' in recognition of his key role as curator of BBG and other city parks from 1875 until 1903.

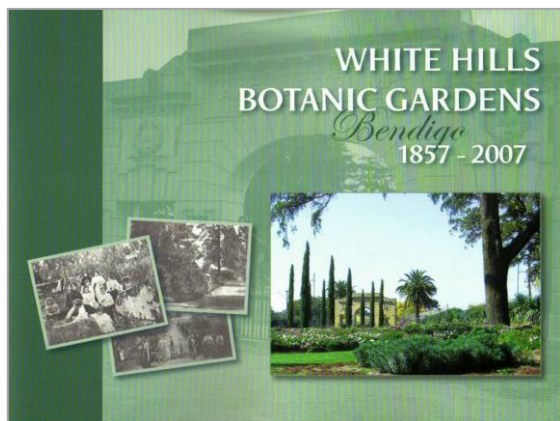


At the official opening of the Samuel Gadd Centre. Julie Rivendell (mayor), Jane Cleary (FBBG President) and Tim Buys (Manager Parks and Reserves COGB)



## 150<sup>th</sup> Booklet launched

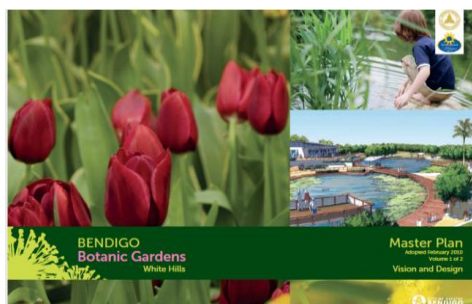
The following year saw the Friends launch a booklet *White Hills Botanic Gardens, Bendigo 1857-2007* (outlining the first 150 years of the gardens), a coloured visitors' brochure and a website for WHBG (initiated by Roger Cousens, University of Melbourne). The council supported the Friends with these projects.



	1902. The Botanic Gardens, showing the lagoon. Plate 69 in: Bendigo and District in 1902, in the State Library of Victoria, Accession Number RARELTP919.454 B43. Photo of the original taken by Lee Andrews.
	John Gill and family, 1904. Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens archives.
	April 1905. View of the curator's cottage and paths forking around it. Reproduced from the <i>Bendigo Advertiser</i> (page 7), Newspaper Collection, State Library of Victoria
	The lagoon, April 1905. Photo reproduced from the <i>Bendigo Advertiser</i> (page 10), Newspaper Collection, State Library of Victoria. Original by Vincent Kelly; photo of picture by Lee Andrews.
	c.1907. Lake and Picnic Pavilion in Botanical Gardens, Bendigo. Note the railings of the footbridge across to the Island. Ken Duxbury postcard collection; also in La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. Accession number H90.14011372
	John Gill and family, 1910. Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens archives.
	Members of the Y. W. C. A. at the Welcome Picnic held at the Botanical Gardens in honour of the return of secretary Miss Stevenson. Photo by C. White.

A Page from the original website

## Master Plan – 2008-2010



In 2008 the COGB employed Kevin Walsh (horticulturist, garden designer, and writer) to develop a Master Plan. As part of this process a steering committee was set up which included representatives from the Friends. An early outcome of this process was the decision to return the gardens to their original name of Bendigo Botanic Gardens, with White Hills being added to acknowledge the location. This more accurately identified the status of the gardens to visitors and locals alike. Although it was a sensitive matter, it was also agreed that the animals would be phased out over time as the location and facilities were no longer considered appropriate for their care. A key component of the plan was

the proposed expansion of the gardens onto the adjacent land beyond Hamelin Street. This area would be comprised of areas designated as the Garden for the Future, Central Hub and Arboretum. The Draft master Plan was publicised in 2009 and officially adopted by council in 2010.

## Curator appointed

In November 2012, Brad Creme was appointed Curator of Bendigo Botanic Gardens, White Hills. It was the culmination of many years of campaigning and submissions to COGB. His arrival refocused progress on the gardens and many of the proposed improvements to the heritage section were quickly implemented. The cockatoos, kangaroos and wallabies were removed, interpretive labels installed, original paths re-instated, and senescent trees removed and replaced.

During 2012-13 the Friends' status with the council was changed from a Deed of Delegation to a Memorandum of Understanding. The Friends became Incorporated, receiving an ABN and a tax file number. This allowed the Friends to independently apply for grants for gardens projects.

Refurbishment of the Heritage section of the gardens continued, and the Friends assisted with planting of new areas such as the Victorian Garden, the Grape Arbour near Scott Street, the Children's Garden in 2013 and the Edwardian Garden in 2014. The curator position was discontinued under a restructure by council in 2017 with the role being absorbed into the Gardens Staff **Team Leader** position held by Kirstie Paterson.

## Garden for the Future

In 2014 the Council received a grant from the State Government of \$500,000 towards the **Garden for the Future**. Taylor, Cullity & Lethlean were engaged to design the GFTF in consultation with relevant groups, including the Friends.

TCL with 8 subcontractors, ACE with 6 subcontractors commenced the project when funding was committed in 2016 (COGB \$3.5m, The State Government \$1.1m, Bendigo and District Community Enterprises \$20,000, Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens \$20,000 and Vic Roads \$750,000.) Construction started in 2017 and the GFTF was finally opened by Mayor, Cr Margaret O'Rourke. with a community day including guided walks, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018.

It provides a contemporary botanic garden experience to enjoy. It is located on the south side of the Heritage Garden and features the Fun and Fantasy Garden, the Around Australia Garden and the Around the World Garden. An events stage and shelter have been constructed and they are available for concerts and other large events.



*Friends weeding in the Garden for the Future*



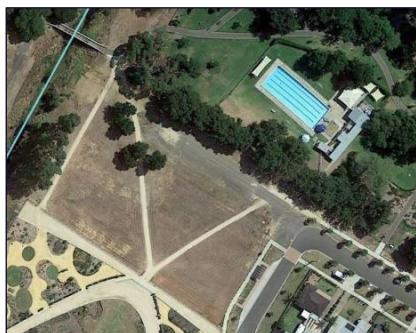
## Central Hub – Larni Garingilang

The Central Hub buildings and landscaping form the heart of the Bendigo Botanic Gardens precinct by punctuating the Gardens' entrance, forming a central activity amenity and building. It is located between the heritage section and the Garden for the Future. A tender document specifying requirements was prepared by Council in May 2019. GHD Woodhead were selected as designers and after consultation with the Friends, Parks Staff and others, a detailed proposal was prepared. These plans were presented to the Friends in April 2020 for comment and feedback. A State Government Covid 19 stimulus package in 2020 meant the project could proceed without delay.

The precinct was officially opened on the 8th of October 2022. It features indigenous plants both ornamental and having uses relevant to the Dja Dja Wurrung people,

Larni Garingilang means home of growth in the language of the Dja Dja Wurrung - the traditional owners of the land. Apart from the café and function centre the area also provides, gathering and educational spaces, wetlands and ponds, a stormwater harvesting system and over 15,000 indigenous plants and trees.

. Although originally intended to provide an information centre, with working space for the Friends Group, the leasehold arrangements meant the whole of the building envelope was leased to private operators for their management which is now known as Omari. The opening of Omari café and function centre occurred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2023. Unfortunately, a major electrical fire destroyed the function centre and severely damaged the restaurant ceiling on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 2024. The restaurant was closed for repairs until later in the year and rebuilding of the function centre is still on-going in 2025.



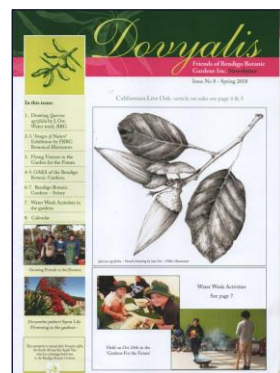
Underground storm water storage



One of the main features of the project is the substantial water feature that fronts the buildings. Storm water is captured in underground water tanks and then pumped into the wetlands which is stocked with small indigenous fish species. In 2024 Larni Garingilang ponds were chosen as a site to host four endangered fish species. Southern Pygmy Perch, Murray River Rainbow Fish, Olive Perchlet and Southern Spotted Gudgeon.

## Dovyalis Newsletter and life membership for Jane Cleary

In 2015, a City of Greater Bendigo Community Grant was received to cover the cost of a Lap Top Computer (with appropriate software) as well as the design, printing and postage of an upgraded newsletter. This also paid for the first year of publication. The first edition of the newsletter was launched on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June by Mayor Peter Cox. It was published under the name of Dovyalis which relates to a significant plant (*Dovyalis kaffra*) in the Bendigo Botanic Gardens, White Hills. On this same occasion a Life membership was awarded to Jane Cleary, to officially recognise the work she had done over many years to promote the restoration and development of the Botanic Gardens. The certificate was presented by Rosemary Davies (Patron) and Jane also received the gift of a painting of *Dovyalis kaffra* (Kei Apple) painted by FBBG Illustrator Jan Orr.



**Life memberships** were also awarded to Jan and Rod Orr, in 2022, and Judy Milner in 2023 to recognize their dedicated contribution over many years.

## Financial contributions

The Friends have made substantial monetary contributions to the gardens over their first twenty- five years which total well in excess of \$90,000. Contributions from the Friends have included \$10,00 towards the new Central Hub Precinct design, \$15,000 for heritage fencing near the Memorial Arch, \$20,000 for the Garden for the Future and \$11,000 towards promenade seating for The Garden for the Future. Most of the money is raised from plant sales, with guided walks, contributions from the illustrators and books sales adding to the funds.



## The Growing Friends

This sub-group was active from the earliest days of the Friends and was originally known as the Propagation Group. Initially the group met monthly at the McKenzie Street Council Nursery under the guidance of Mark Geyer from COGB Parks Department and Sandra Crump (Council Nursery manager). Rosemary Davies (Patron of the Friends and ABC gardening commentator) assisted with activities at the nursery which included sorting and cleaning tulip bulbs, pruning Chrysanthemums, potting up cuttings, re-potting seedling acacias, preparing plants for the selling area and many other tasks. As time went on the group was also completing gardening activities other than propagation and so it was decided to rename the group as the 'Growing Friends' which was the term used by The Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens Friends' Group.

Some of the other initial activities included

- Dead heading and de-suckering roses in the Conservatory Gardens as well as pruning them in the winter.
- Planting and lifting tulips in the Conservatory Gardens.
- Planting Poa seedlings around the animal enclosure at White Hills Botanical Gardens as well as cutting back and planting cannas.
- Labelling plants in Rosalind Park and at White Hills.
- Regular weeding and general maintenance of the Fernery in Rosalind Park.

By 2004 the Mackenzie Street nursery weekly plant sales were taken over by the Friends with proceeds going into a fundraising account. The Growing Friends continued being based at the Mackenzie Street Nursery until Sept 2006 when they relocated to the White Hills BG with Judy Milner as co-ordinator. A nursery had been set up behind the caretaker's house, which was being refurbished ('The House' later became the Samuel Gadd Centre). We were so pleased to have our own home base and quickly started to set up a display area for the plants we would be propagating. In 2007 staff member Sandra Crump, (who had also relocated to White Hills from Mackenzie Street nursery), requested council install a polyhouse and shade sails. The polyhouse came quickly and by 2009 the large shade sails were completed. Most of the plants for sale have been propagated from plant material sourced from the BBG.

At White Hills, working bees were originally held fortnightly on a Tuesday morning. For some time the alternate Wednesday was included to increase activity and to cater for the availability of some members, however over recent years we have settled on a regular Tuesday morning session between 9.30 and 11.30am with two groups working - one group in the nursery and the other group working in the gardens. There is fluidity of members between the two groups and the general members also help on plant sale days.



The Growing Friends were involved with planting of the newly reconstructed Cottage Garden beds near the Scott Street car park during 2010. The nursery steadily improved its facilities by including a heated propagating tray and plant benches. The acquisition of calico aprons with our name and logo along with our customised plant labels upgraded our corporate image.



Brad Crème's appointment as Curator in 2012 gave us more support and direction to our role as well as formalizing our health and safety guidelines.

The Botanic Gardens acquired the National Collection of Lavenders in 2012. This resulted in activities to maintain the collection by propagation and to make various forms available for sale. A visit to Yuulong Lavender Farm (where the collection originated) was arranged to collect species from Rosemary Holmes which brought the collection to a total of 81 species and cultivars.

In 2015 it was agreed to allow public buying from the nursery on Growing Friends days, and a Federal Grant provided 10 new steel mesh benches for plant display. Hilary Tovey took over from Judy Milner as co-ordinator of the Nursery area in 2016 and Annie Clark continued co-ordinating the group working in the gardens.



*The  
FBBG  
Nursery*



*At  
Yuulong  
Lavender  
farm*

There was some reconfiguring of the Nursery in 2017 when 3 large mulch bays were constructed in the works area. This resulted in an extension of the nursery and the donation of 6 x 3 tier plant stands added to the facility. Frank Musk (member) and friend Geoff Williams constructed further storage benches in the garage space. In 2018 refurbishment of the Polyhouse was carried out, outdoor stools were acquired, and plant category signs installed. During 2018 extra working bees were arranged when weeding of the Garden for the Future became a high priority due to prolific growth following substantial rains. Weeding continues to be an important way for the Friends to assist the gardens.

As a change from volunteer work the Growing Friends arrange occasional visits for our workers to private gardens - often with morning tea.

In 2015 it was agreed to allow public buying from the nursery on Growing Friends days and a Federal Grant provided 10 new steel mesh benches for plant display. Hilary Tovey took over from Judy Milner as co-ordinator of the Nursery area in 2016 and Annie Clark continued co-ordinating the group working in the gardens. In 2019 Judy resumed the role of Growing Friends Nursery co-ordinator due to Hilary relocating to Castlemaine.

**Covid and its consequences.**

2020 started very positively for the Growing Friends until Covid19 required the Friends to go into recess from March 2020. Plants in the Nursery continued to be cared for by the staff and many were planted into the gardens. By March 2021 we were in action but by July we were all in lockdown again only restarting our activities in September with covid protocols being observed. We currently work closely with Kirstie Paterson (team leader BBG) as Brad Creme's position as curator was discontinued in 2017.

The Nursery is now open every Saturday and Tuesday morning between 10am and 12 midday which has helped to make it more accessible to the community.

Membership has grown substantially over recent years, and we now have an enthusiastic crew of volunteers working both in the gardens and the nursery each week.



Growing Friends at Work



## The Friends of Bendigo Botanic Gardens Illustrators

At a meeting in February 2005 member Roger Williams proposed the forming of a Botanical Illustration Group. This proposal was adopted, and an initial workshop was arranged to be held at the Bendigo Town Hall in June. An Introduction to Botanical Illustration was led by two tutors. Edyta Hoxley introduced the group to drawing plants and painting with watercolour and Dr Sabine Wilkens spoke about plant structure. The weekend workshop was funded by a council grant covering the tutors and venue. 18 participants sponsored by Bendigo council through a grant. This was followed by 10 three-hour workshops with tutor Edyta Hoxley commencing in August and occurring fortnightly. Workshops with Stephanie Goss and Jean Dennis as well as regular weekly sessions continued at Golden Square until 2007 when the group relocated to the newly refurbished Caretaker's house (now known as The Samuel Gadd Centre) at White Hills Botanic Gardens. Equipment was acquired by the Friends to facilitate the Illustrators work including a light box and reference books on botanical illustration (available on loan).



The illustrators are very committed and continue to employ visiting tutors to increase their skills. Some of these tutors over the years have included Peter and Kathie Strickland (using pens and pencils including stippling), Wendy Jennings (acrylics and watercolour), Mali Moir (painting veins in leaves), Stephanie Goss (painting with watercolours and another session painting fruit and vegetables), Fiona McKinnon (colour mixing methods), Fiona McKenzie (painting leaves) Chris Rockley (drawing with pen and ink), Marta Salamon (painting on black paper with gouache and watercolour), and Chris Rockley (pen & ink drawing and another session on painting fish). Regular in-house workshops using the skill of members were also held.

Visits to botanical exhibitions or groups were organised with some of the early visits being to the Royal Botanical Gardens 'Whirly Birds' Botanical Illustrators Group, the 'Art of Botanical Illustration' Domain House RMBG, Jenny Phillips Gallery Melbourne and to Geelong for an exhibition of Botanical Artists at the Gordon Gallery and Bank's Expedition Illustrations at the Geelong Art Gallery.



By 2008 the Illustrators were confident enough to contribute to a Bendigo Pottery Exhibition Art Show, 'Botanical Bliss'. This was well received and seeing their work professionally mounted and displayed added impetus to some of the newer members.

During the Christmas period 2012 a further exhibition was held at the Paynter Gallery, Bendigo Pottery. In 2015 The Illustrators put on their third Public Exhibition at Dudley House Bendigo. This exhibition titled 'Bendigo Botanica' was officiated by Peter Cox (COGB Mayor) and opened by Stephen Ryan (horticulturalist and broadcaster). It was well publicised and received very positive feedback.

There have been regular exhibitions since that time.

2020 – "Bendigo Botanicals" at the Custom House Gallery in Echuca, celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

2021 – "Naturally Inspired"; a joint exhibition with The Friday Group at the Raillery Hub, St Arnaud.

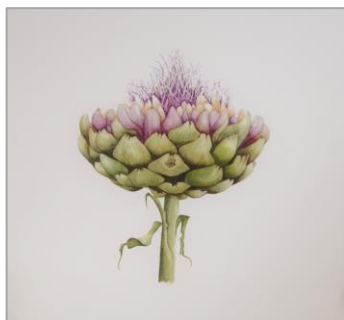
2025 – "Re-Emergence" at the Old Courthouse in Eaglehawk.

2025 – "Retrospective" at Dudley House, celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

At various public occasions the illustrators have demonstrated their illustration techniques. Some original works and prints from the Illustrators have been given as gifts to visiting speakers and other dignitaries. A record of some of their works have been kept in a folio in 'The Friends' archives.



Artist - Jan Orr



Artist - Annie Clark



Artist - Pam Sheean

## Garden Guiding

Garden Guiding has always been an important role for the Friends. This involves introducing people to the gardens, informing them about the key elements, the collections, the heritage and the plans for future development. Jane Cleary as well as Jan and Rod Orr were the initial members taking on this role which included Rosalind Park and the Conservatory Gardens at times. Some tours were taken prior to the formation of The Friends group for the Summer in the Parks Program. Since 2012 Parks Staff members have also taken guided walks. In 2019 Jane commenced a training session for potential new guides. She has been the main guide since the formation of the Friends and has regularly attended the biennial National Botanic Gardens Guide's Conferences. Her knowledge of the plants and their significance, her association with other botanic guiding groups and her long-standing interest in the gardens results in a wealth of knowledge to share with visitors. Anne Aston then co-ordinated the Guides until Simone Carmody took over this role in 2025.

Simone has developed a detailed training program for new guides, has provided excellent themed documentation. She has also upgraded our signage and promotional material for guided tours.



Training of new Guides 2019

As well as regular guided walks for the general public, many tours have been provided for local and regional groups. These have included Lions, Probus, Apex Clubs, Garden Clubs, Church Social Groups, School students, U3A Garden Groups, Sustainability at the Pub, Roundabout Garden Group, Retirement Villages, Nursing Homes, Seniors Groups, Arthritis Group, Moteliers Association as well as Bendigo Information Centre volunteers. State-wide and nationally we have had conducted walks for the International Dendrological Society Conference, the Horticultural Judges Association, National Trust, Goldfields Garden Group, the Renaissance Herbs Association, Garden Clubs (Woodend) and Friends Groups from Cranbourne, Wombat Hill, Ballarat and Kyneton Botanic Gardens.



Members guided walk



Visit by Friends of Australian Gardens Shepparton.  
September 2018



Guided walk 2025



New Guides 2025

## Outreach and Education

The Friends have participated in many other activities to involve the community and to increase their own knowledge:-

- Educational activities with school children on special days.
- Representation on Botanic Gardens Committee COGB
- Spring in the Bendigo Bush Displays and walks
- Zonta Garden Gala 2011, displays and talks
- Coliban Water Watch Week activities with local school children each October
- AFBG Inc conferences
- Garden Guiding Conferences
- BGANZ conferences
- Plant Society Conferences
- APS Bendigo Flower Show participation.
- Sustainability Festivals Excursions

Through the years the Friends have participated in trips to various parks, gardens and nurseries. These visits have been most informative and have enriched our links with other groups. Botanic Gardens have included, Daylesford, Benalla, Castlemaine, Ballarat, Shepparton, Melton, Malmesbury, Kyneton, Colac, Williamstown and Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Cranbourne.

Nursery visits have included Goldfields Revegetation Nursery, Garden of St Erth, Lambley Gardens & Nursery and Yuulong Lavender Farm.



*Excursion to Melton Botanic Gardens. April 2006*

Local trips and walks have included Lake Weeroona, Linear Park and Conservatory Gardens in Bendigo, Canterbury Park in Eglehawk, and further afield Terrick Terrick National Park Mitiamo, Fryerstown Flora Reserve, Taradale Forest , Melbourne University Systems Garden, Ripponlea Gardens, Coliban Park Garden, Forest Hall and Buda Garden in Castlemaine and the Melbourne Zoo featuring the habitat created for exhibits and Gargarro Botanic Gardens at Girgarre.

The Friends have appreciated the assistance of volunteer guides on most of these excursions.



*Daylesford Botanic Gardens*



*Geelong Botanic Gardens*



*Williamstown Botanic Gardens*



*Malmesbury Botanic Gardens*



*Gargarro Botanic Gardens*

## Speakers

Guest speakers have been a feature of Annual General Meetings and on other occasions.

- 2000-2004 James Lerk (Local historian) in conjunction with Bendigo Gallery (Historian) 'History of Rosalind Park'  
John Wolsley (Artist/scientist.) in conjunction with Bendigo Gallery Recent works relating to 'Tracing the Wallace Line'  
Jane Edmondson (Television Garden Presenter) 'Home Composting'  
Geoff Hocking (Illustrator and author) 'Early Bendigo'  
Fiona McMahon 'Her role as Chief Heritage Officer COGB'  
Barbara Watson (FBBG member) 'Take a walk with me'. Gardens of South Africa, USA and Europe  
Rob Price (DSI) Work on the possum problem in Rosalind Park  
Kevin Walsh (landscape Architect) 'History and Development of Castlemaine Botanic Gardens'  
Eric and Mary Wilkinson (FBBG members) 'Bonsai Pruning and Potting'.  
Roger Williams 'His year working for Administration of Norfolk Island'
- 2005-2009 Anthony Sheean (COGB) WHBG Wetlands talk  
John Martin (Dawsons Cactus Gardens) spoke about selling the property and sharing the plants with the gardens.  
John Hawker (Senior Horticulturalist Heritage Victoria) 'History of Botanic Gardens. What is their role?'  
Judy Milner (member) Illustrated talk. Historic Structures in Bendigo's 4 Key Botanic gardens  
Marylin Sprague (Goldfield Revegetation Nursery) 'Growing Australian native Plants''  
Mitch Kemp (COGB) re 'Developing a Master Plan'  
Jane Cleary (member) 'Plants of the Bible'  
Norma Cook (member) Her 'Capetown to Cairo' Tour  
Pam and Anthony Sheean (members) 'N.Z.Botanic Gardens' seen on their recent tour.  
Kevin Walsh and Tim Buykx (COGB) presented the proposed plan for the new Botanic gardens.  
Richard Barley (Director RBGM) 'The Role of Botanical Gardens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'
- 2010-2014 Jan and Rod Orr (members) Their tour of the 'Canning Stock Route'  
Judy Milner (member) 'English Summer Gardens'  
Rod Orr (member) 'Rare and threatened plants of the Bendigo Region. The Role of Botanic Gardens.'  
Rosemary Holmes (Yuulong Lavender Farm) The Lavender Collection BBG originating from Yuulong Lavender farm.  
Simon Harrison (Parks and Natural Resources COGB) Current projects and future plans for Bendigo's Public Gardens  
Gemma Fennel (Project manager COGB) 'Garden for the Future Developments'.
- 2015-2020 Stephen Ryan (nurseryman and media presenter) The importance of Botanic Gardens and plant collections.  
Rosemary Holmes (previously owner of Yuulong Lavender Farm)- entertaining talk about the horticultural history and practical uses for the various lavenders.  
Marilyn Sprague (Goldfields Revegetation Nursery) 'Growing Native Plants for Cut Flowers.'  
Annie Clark and Judy Milner (members) Botanica Gardens Cruise of UK and Ireland's gardens.  
John Hawker (Heritage officer, Heritage Victoria), speaking on Oaks and some other Fagaceae trees.  
John Arnott (Manager of Horticulture, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, Victoria) 'Care for the Rare'. The role of regional botanic gardens in conserving Australian Rare and Threatened plants.  
Jane Cleary, Judy Milner, Jan & Rod Orr (members) 'Western Adventures Illustrated' - Recent trips to WA and SA.
- 2020-2025 Dr Mark Hall (Senior Biodiversity Officer with the City of Greater Bendigo) on Landscape Ecology  
Jan O'Heir (secretary of the Camperdown Botanic gardens and Arboretum Trust) 'Historical and ongoing importance of Botanic Gardens in Regional Communities'.  
Stephen Ryan (President of Mount Macedon Horticultural Society) presentation about Ellis Rowan (1848-1922) renowned Australian Botanical Illustrator.

## Association Membership

The Friends are members of:

- Garden Clubs Australia
- Australian Associations of Friends of Botanic Gardens
- Garden History Society
- Botanic Gardens Guides Association
- Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand Inc (BGANZ)

## FBBG Executive Positions - 2000 to 2025

2000	President	Glenys Anthony
	Vice President	Rod Orr
	Secretary	Jane Cleary
	Treasurer	Jan Orr
2001	President	Glenys Anthony
	Vice President	Chris Wilson
	Secretary	Jane Cleary
	Treasurer	Jan Orr
2002	President	Jan Orr
	Vice President	Lyn Hamilton
	Secretary	Jane Cleary
	Treasurer	Lorraine Griffiths
2003	President	Jan Orr
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jane Cleary
	Treasurer	Joy Williams and L. Griffiths
2004	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Joy Williams
	Treasurer	Lyn Hamilton
2005	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Lyn Hamilton
2006	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Jim Hamilton
2007	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2008/09	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2010/11	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Annie Clark

2012/13	President	Jane Cleary
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Jan Orr
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2014/15	President	Jan Orr
	Vice President	Delene Comerford
	Secretary	Judy Milner
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2016/17	President	Jan Orr
	Vice President	Delene Comerford
	Secretary	Judy Milner
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2018/19	President	Anne Bridley
	Vice President	Delene Comerford
	Secretary	Pam Sheean
	Treasurer	Annie Clark
2020/21	President	Anne Bridley
	Vice President	Delene Comerford
	Secretary	Pam Sheean
	Treasurer	Annie Clark/Jan Bobin
2022/23	President	Delene Commerford
	Vice President	Judy Milner
	Secretary	Pam Sheean
	Treasurer	Jan Bobin
2024/25	President	Pam Sheean
	Vice President	Mandy Scott
	Secretary	Judy Milner & Helen Musk
	Treasurer	Jan Bobin
2025/26	President	Mandy Scott
	Vice President	Jenny Makepeace
	Secretary	Caroline Byrne
	Treasurer	Jan Bobin







*Friends Working Bee BBG Late Winter 2005.  
Jim Hamilton, Jan Orr, Bill Baker, Denise Baker, Helen Hickey, Mike Bundy,  
Gene West (BBG Gardener) Rod Orr and Judy Milner (kneeling)*