



**Friends of Williamstown  
Botanic Gardens Inc.**

**NEWSLETTER No 25  
August 2015**

*President:* Sue Murray ph 9397 5698

*Secretary:* Lindy Wallace ph 9391 5387

*Postal address* P.O. Box 826, Williamstown 3016

*email* [williebotgardens@gmail.com](mailto:williebotgardens@gmail.com)

*website* [www.friendsofwilliamstownbotanicgardens.net](http://www.friendsofwilliamstownbotanicgardens.net)

## **1. Upcoming Events**

### **General Meeting of Friends – 9 Wednesday September 2015**

**7.30 pm at the Williamstown Croquet Club, 104 Victoria Street Williamstown**

You are invited to come along to view the video filmed by Trade Creative Media of our May tree tour led by John Hawker and to discuss future directions for the Friends. Supper will follow.

Shelley Wood is delighted with the video both as a wonderful record of the Gardens in May 2015 and also as great tool to teach about the specific trees in the Gardens and the value of Botanic gardens - not just for the general public but also for staff working in the Williamstown Botanic Gardens. Please join us.

### **General Meeting of Friends - Monday 5 October 2015**

**7.30 pm at the Williamstown Croquet Club, 104 Victoria Street Williamstown**

**Speaker Helen Page “The historic Boroondara (Kew) Cemetery and the work of the Friends of the Cemetery”**

Recently committee member Helen Page was interviewed by Megan Backhouse for a gardening article which appeared in Spectrum, The Age Newspaper on July 17 2015. The article is extremely interesting and can be viewed at: <http://m.smh.com.au/entertainment/tending-the-gardens-at-boroondara-general-cemetery-20150711-gi9kfu.html>

It is worth quoting the following which is relevant to the need for adequate, qualified staffing of our Botanic Gardens and demonstrates the value of Friends groups.

‘Instrumental in resuscitating the planting around East Melbourne’s Bishops court, (Helen) Page joined the cemetery trust four years ago and has now turned her attention there.

She has engaged experts to prepare landscape reports, adopted a 10-year tree removal and replacement strategy, established a program of working bees, put out calls for people to donate plants, overseen new landscaping around the above-ground crypts, changed the standard-rose maintenance regime. In short, she is on a mission. Out with indiscriminate herbicide spraying, wide spreads of woodchip mulch, poor pruning, and failing trees.

Page sees this 12.5-hectare expanse as an old garden that, like any other, is in need of a sensitive eye and consistent plant husbandry. "The thing with old gardens is they need manpower," she says.’ Megan Backhouse in Spectrum, The Age, 21 July 2015.

Learn more about this historic cemetery garden and its renewal when Helen talks to our general meeting. Supper will follow.

### **AGM of Friends of Williamstown Botanic Gardens - Wednesday 21 October**

**7.30 pm at the Williamstown Croquet Club, 104 Victoria Street Williamstown**

Please join us for our AGM at which time membership renewals are due and the committee for the following year is to be appointed. We are looking for members interested in coming on to the committee – the majority of our committee having now served for six years. Formal notice later.

**Storytime under the Golden Elm “Where the Wild Bugs Are” – Friday 30 October  
10.30am – 11.15am in the Williamstown Botanic Gardens**

This will be the first of the storytime season for 2015- 2016. It is an event of Children’s Week. We’d love to see members along with or without children or grandchildren to support our partnership with Hobsons Bay Libraries.

**Friends Get together? – Sunday 8 November?  
11.00pm – 1.30pm Williamstown Botanic Gardens**

The committee has discussed ways in which we may attract new members. It has been suggested that the Friends may meet in the Gardens, bringing a picnic and inviting potential members. There are possibilities for activities and music. We will explore this idea at a general meeting.

**2. Recent Events and Activities**

**Tree tour with John Hawker – Sunday 17 May 2015  
Williamstown Botanic Gardens**

On a beautiful late autumn day John Hawker lead a fascinating and well attended tour for the Friends while Laurens of Trade Creative Media filmed the event. Since then drafts of the video have been reviewed by Sue Murray, Barbara Sloan and Shelley Wood and the final result will be available as an ongoing resource for the Friends and Hobsons Bay City Council horticultural staff. We thank John for so generously giving his time and sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with us.



John Hawker at tree tour  
(Courtesy Sue Myer)



Nankeen Night Heron spotted during tree tour  
Photographed later (Courtesy Sue Myer)

**Dennis Reserve Community Meeting – Monday 1 June 2015  
Williamstown Senior Citizens Centre, Cnr Ferguson Street and Melbourne Road**

Dennis Reserve (Lyons Street) “is one of three public reserves established in Williamstown during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is an integral part of the Government Survey Plan. The remnant mature trees including the Aleppo and Canary Island Pines illustrate the development of the reserve as a formal garden...” (Victorian Heritage Database Report)

The Friends in partnership with the Williamstown Garden Club approached Council some years ago to request that the Ladies Bowling Club site in Dennis Reserve be made available for horticultural use – a community garden with a small area set aside for propagating by the Friends.

In May 2015, Hobsons Bay City Council responded to calls from the community to delay the decision to locate tennis courts on the Ladies Bowling Club site and to consider options for the larger Dennis Reserve at a community meeting. The Friends committee deferred their scheduled 1 June meeting to enable members to attend the community meeting. A variety of views were presented to 200 attendees. Our Vice President Kim Sawyer spoke on behalf of the Friends.

We are now awaiting the promised commitment to develop a Master Plan for the Dennis Reserve. Groups who presented at this excellent community meeting were subsequently contacted and advised that Council staff were to put a proposal to HBCC for further action for initiating a Master Plan which would include community input.

The Friends support either horticultural use or restoration of open space giving the opportunity to add something to enhance the historic, botanic significance of the Reserve.

## **Curator's Report August 2015**

### **Irrigation:**

It has been an extremely busy winter in the Williamstown Botanic Gardens with the installation of the new irrigation system to the Northern Garden occurring. Over the past months various sizes of trench have been snaking their way throughout the garden. Anyone who has wandered through the garden would have noted very little disturbance, as the contractors and garden staff worked closely together to minimize any impact to visitors.

The works were planned to occur during the quieter winter visitation time, and staff planned meticulously to ensure minimal disruption occurred to the significant plant collections within the garden beds. Plants may have received their winter prune, were lightly trimmed, were lifted and temporarily transplanted or whole garden beds left empty to rest in time for spring/summer plantings and displays.

All in all introducing a new irrigation system was a huge undertaking and the only current evidence of this occurs are the remaining narrow soil lines snaking across some lawns. By the summertime these lines will hopefully have disappeared under new turf.

### **Ornamental Lake:**

If you visit the WBG the week beginning the 17<sup>th</sup> August, you may witness the biannual "clearing of the ornamental lake." This task has been occurring in the gardens biannually for over 50 years (except during the early 2000's when the pond was a sad and empty mass...or is that mess?)

For many years gardeners caught the fish, drained the water and then began the arduous and rather smelly task of shovelling the slush into barrows and manually transporting it to a large hole in the gardens depot nearby. There the sludge would remain to dry out and be used in garden beds the following year. Staff would then prune all surrounding plant material "inaccessible from land", hose down and sweep the concrete base, and then refill the lake for the following years.

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> garden staff will begin catching the remaining fish and draining the lake, which should take a day or so. The pruning will begin and on the Thursday a contract drainage truck will arrive to suck the remainder of the sludge and "dewater" the clean sludge off site. It is anticipated that by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> all pruning should be complete and the lake awaiting a healthy refill.

### **Plantings:**

Glorious scents waft across most paths as you wander the gardens during August and spring foliage and additional scents are on their way. The gardens are about to burst into life once more and the spring and summer displays should be prolific with the consistent watering from the new system.

Annual displays will be introduced in late September so watch the garden beds by the cast iron gates, as tiny plants rise up and peak above the historic rock boundaries. Await with anticipation the glorious displays of summer annuals to brighten your day.

### **Paths:**

Following the irrigation works and the ornamental lake clean out, most paths within the gardens will receive some well earned attention. Grading, a base cover of gravel, and a top dress of 7ml pebbles will ensure lawns and garden beds are beautifully edged and a dry, smooth stroll around the gardens will hopefully be possible at all times.

**Shelley Wood, Curator, Williamstown Botanic Gardens**