

Flourish

Supporter News Spring 2024

ISSUE 17

A Heritage Icon Restored

The Legacy of the Cobungra Wattle

Lighting up the Gardens



Royal
Botanic
Gardens
Victoria



Pookila Return to Cranbourne Gardens

Twenty eight native mice called Pookila were reintroduced to Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne in early May as part of a collaborative conservation effort with Zoos Victoria and Moonlit Sanctuary.

Since their discovery in Victoria in 1970, Pookila have declined sharply, becoming extinct at seven of 12 known locations due to factors like fire, drought, and predation by feral cats and foxes. The Pookila were last seen at Cranbourne in 1976. Now, after nearly 50 years, their return is most exciting.

Manager of Environmental Systems at Cranbourne Gardens, Ricardo Simao, said the Gardens are thrilled and so grateful to re-introduce the species.

“Cranbourne Gardens is home to over 450 native plant species in its bushland, with native grasses and landscapes which will provide many safe hiding spots for this little creature. We also have predator proof fencing to protect them from cats and foxes”.

Named after the Ngarigo word for ‘mouse’ (‘bugila’), Pookila are native to southeastern Australia, residing in open heathland and coastal areas. Unlike house mice, the Pookila have bicolored tails, large eyes and soft fur.

We look forward to seeing them thrive in their new sanctuary!

COVER

The newly restored Rose Pavilion.

ABOVE

Pookila at Melbourne Zoo.

Welcome to Flourish Spring

Dear supporters,

Welcome to the Spring edition of Flourish. I hope you are enjoying the colours, scents and warmer, sunnier days of the season.

As always, there is plenty happening at both Melbourne and Cranbourne Gardens. Our feature event of Melbourne's winter calendar, *Lightscape*, has had another successful season in its third year running, with an all new 2km light trail through the Gardens. It was wonderful to catch up with many of you at the preview event. I hope you enjoyed the show and perhaps even a mulled wine or toasted marshmallow as well.

With the generous support of the Hains family, the newly restored Rose Pavilion was officially opened in May. The pavilion, originally built as a bandstand, now reflects its original design when opened by William Guilfoyle in 1896. Thank you again to the Hains family, who have enabled us to preserve this important part of Melbourne's heritage for generations to come.

Recently, our science and conservation teams celebrated some important milestones. The endangered Pookila (New Holland Mouse) was re-introduced to Cranbourne Gardens after an absence of 50 years. Meanwhile, we worked with Zoos Victoria to conserve the critically endangered Tree-tree Finger Fungus by training the first ever sniffer dog to assist with conservation.

This year, we also took the opportunity to strengthen our relationships with the tourism industry when we attended the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) 2024 held in Melbourne. The event saw over 2,600 delegates from 37 countries meet with over 620 Australian tourism businesses and was a fantastic way to

enhance our tourism offering and boost visitation by overseas visitors.

Also in this edition you will learn about some of our dedicated donors, who have supported our work through both living and planned gifts. Over my time at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, I have been astonished at the generosity of all our donors and the remarkable work their support allows us to achieve. It is heartening to read just a few of our many donor stories in Flourish and I hope you are inspired by them as much as I am.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the many warm wishes of congratulations I received from our donor community as I formally move into the role of the Gardens' Director and Chief Executive. I am proud to be at the helm of this globally significant organisation and I take its future stewardship and success seriously. I believe our donors are a critical part of this success and I look forward to working with you in the future.

I hope to meet many more of you over the coming months and look forward to a chance to celebrate our year of achievements at our end of year event in November.



Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chris Russell'.

Chris Russell

Director and Chief Executive,
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

Supporter Spotlight

Nola Foster: An intrepid collector and passionate contributor

Nola Foster is a dedicated and energetic supporter of Cranbourne Gardens, and a founding member of the highly skilled 'Herbarium Collectors' volunteer group. A plant lover and naturalist at heart, Nola's enthusiasm and invaluable support has been vital to the ongoing success of seed and specimen collection at the Gardens.

Most recently, Nola's generosity provided support to kick-start the Southern Grasslands project at Cranbourne Gardens. The Southern Grasslands is an area she has deep affinity for, having collected many a specimen on foot through the impressive terrain. Nola refers to the landscape as "uniquely gorgeous"



and adores the expansive views of the trees behind the Grasslands. The project will improve access to the Grasslands area for the public to enjoy and protect and revive endangered species Nola has spent years passionately collecting.

Born in Melbourne, Nola moved to the Bay Area of California with her late husband and raised her family. Nola initially studied architecture, then channelled her love of design into horticulture and landscape design, where she consulted as a plant specialist in gardens throughout the Bay Area. Deeply inspired by the American approach to philanthropy and giving, Nola lives by a motto of, “everyone can contribute in their own way”.

On returning to Melbourne, Nola’s time spent studying taxonomy at Merritt College, California, bode her well for a three-month intensive mounting course she undertook with fellow volunteer Linda Moon, at the National Herbarium of Victoria. The duo learnt every aspect of specimen collection, pressing and mounting in order to commence a formal herbarium collection of Cranbourne Gardens. In 2001, Nola and the Collectors set out with the aim to collect and identify 550 plants; twenty-five years on, they have collected and documented approximately 760 unique specimens across the conservation bushland.

Nola initially made a donation in honour of staff member Warren Worboys and Cranbourne Friends member Alex Smart, whose unwavering support of the Herbarium Collectors she greatly appreciated. In celebration of Warren’s



contribution to environmental horticulture through the establishment of the irrigation system at Cranbourne, Nola funded soil moisture sensors that monitor trends in soil chemistry. In honour of Alex, the team were able to collect the beautiful Victorian wildflower *Viola eminiens* which is being propagated for display at the Cranbourne nursery.

Whether it be providing seed funding for the Grasslands, donating crucial mounting tables or rallying in-kind support for an irrigation system, Nola’s imaginative drive and ability to motivate others will be felt for generations to come.

“Perhaps in 100 years, civilisation will look back and thank us for doing what we could to preserve this precious landscape.”

LEFT

Wendy Smart, Nola Foster, Alex Smart, Warren Worboys and John Arnott on a recent Mount Donna Buang expedition.

ABOVE

Nola on site at Cranbourne Gardens with the Herbarium Collectors.



Events

Lighting Up the Gardens

As winter made its presence known across Melbourne, the Gardens prepared for its annual light show, *Lightscape*, giving visitors the chance to experience the landscape in 'a new light' — and with over 100 supporters joining us to welcome the new season of *Lightscape*, winter never looked better!

On a Thursday night in June, our supporter community attended a sneak preview of the *Lightscape* trail before the general public. The Gardens hosted guests with heart-warming bites and drinks provided by Curtis Stone Events.

LEFT

Director and Chief Executive Chris Russell with Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Chair Penny Fowler AM.

It was an opportunity for supporters to meet each other, the Garden's staff and members of the Board. There were speeches from Board Chair Penny Fowler AM and now Director and Chief Executive Chris Russell.

After the event, all rugged up and warm, everyone headed to Observatory Gate to start the *Lightscape* trail. The all-new trail featured an array of sound and lights including works from First Nations artists, a laser lightshow in Fern Gully, an avenue of lighted cherry blossoms and much more.

RIGHT

Jane and Stephen Grover.



TOP LEFT
Jenny and Anton Gaudry.

MIDDLE LEFT
Gillian and Ian Wong, Deputy Chair, Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation Victoria.

LOWER LEFT
Chris and Susan Hughes with Sally and Rick Loder.

TOP RIGHT
Jennifer Wolcott with Tony and Lee Bacic.

MIDDLE RIGHT
Sandra Ivory and Caren Taylor with Kathy Kings
Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation Victoria.

The Rose Pavilion

A Heritage Icon Restored

The Rose Pavilion is open to the public once again after restoration works to return it to its former glory were made possible through the generous donation of the Hains family and the Portland House Foundation (now the Helen and David Hains Foundation).

The Hains family have a strong connection to The Rose Pavilion, and it now exists as a fitting tribute to their parents, the late Helen and David Hains. The family came together to launch the Pavillion and celebrate Helen and David's love for the Gardens and the enduring significance of the Rose Pavilion in the Melbourne Gardens today.





Exposed to the elements, the Pavilion has undergone several restorations over the last 125 years. Melbourne Gardens Master Plan envisaged the repair of its structural elements and returning the Pavilion to its original heritage design. An intricate historical study of the Pavilion was undertaken, with considerable care taken in sourcing materials to match the workmanship of the original design. Along the way, the project team rediscovered several revealing facets adding to the rich cultural history of this folly structure.

Built in 1896 to commemorate the Gardens' 50th anniversary, The Rose Pavilion was initially intended as a bandstand and carefully sited by Guilfoyle to overlook the 'charming view' of the Ornamental Lake and achieve the best acoustics. For the first few decades, band performances were a popular regular occurrence at the Rose Pavilion, with the flat wooden ceiling designed to enhance sound. Guilfoyle enthusiasm soon shifted, limiting its use to ensure the protection of surrounding lawns and plants. On the occasional 'Hospital Sundays', aptly named charity collection days, musical performances were allowed and could be heard across Hopetoun Lawn.

The earliest photo of the Pavilion is dated 30 October 1897, taken during the Police Band recital on one 'Hospital Sunday'. Young men in sailor suits and

OPPOSITE

The Rose Pavilion c 1906. Image Supplied by Phil Bertling

LEFT

The Rose Pavilion c 1897 detailing the fashions of the time. Image supplied by Maraika vanWessem



Breton straw hats look carefree compared to the older men in narrow suits and bowler hats. Ladies are resplendent in long dresses with billowing mutton-chop sleeves, adorning huge flat straw hats decorated with masses of artificial flowers. Further research by the team uncovered a 1944 booklet describing a concert by the Railway Workshop Band, which attracted a staggering 5,000 people.

The first recorded restoration of the site was in the 1970s, a project which deviated from the original design. However, whilst working on the building, the team discovered a date from the 1920's written on a beam (a builder's tradition), suggesting an additional restoration must have occurred around this time.

This important piece of Melbourne history could not have been restored without vital donor support. The iconic beauty of the Pavilion will live on for years to come thanks to the incredible generosity of the Hains family.

"An intricate historical study of the Pavilion was undertaken, with considerable care taken in sourcing materials to match the workmanship of the original design."

RIGHT

A memorial plaque laid in tribute to the late Helen and David Hains.



The Legacy of Anne U'ren and the Cobungra Wattle

A story of discovery and connection

The decision to leave a legacy gift to the Gardens is one which supports the work we do now and into the future. We are so grateful for all gifts as they recognise what is most important to our gracious supporters.

For dedicated conservationist and generous Gardens supporter, Anne U'ren, her gift in Will honored a deep appreciation for the plant world and horticultural research at the Gardens. An enduring connection that resulted in a profound discovery alongside esteemed RBGV scientist, Neville Walsh.

Over several years Anne would collect and send fragments found across her and husband, Jim's remote bush block in East Gippsland to Neville at the Herbarium. These 'rare little bits and pieces' would arrive at Neville's desk each in their own uniquely folded envelope, and sometimes by the box full. Neville and Anne developed a beautiful relationship through correspondence, identifying many interesting fragments that turned up from Anne's little conservation haven. The sharing of specimens culminated in trips to the U'ren's Cobungra bush block and the magnificent discovery of a new wattle species.

When Neville visited the property in January 2019 he found an unusual looking wattle in bud – pretty sure he had stumbled upon something significant, he returned when it was in flower, and lo and behold, a new species was discovered. The distinct wattle, aptly named *Acacia ureniae*, honored the then 80-year-old Anne and their unexpected and botanically significant finding.

A year after Neville and his colleagues identified around eighty of the small shrubs, the area was consumed during the catastrophic bush fires that roared through eastern Victoria. The newly



discovered wattle is now considered critically endangered, underlining the urgency of the work achieved at the Gardens. Anne's support has directly benefited the incredibly important work carried out at the Victorian Conservation Seedbank, where seeds are put in long-term storage for research and restoration programs.

Anne's passion and legacy will live on in her gift to the Seedbank, where a small collection of *A. ureniae* seed are held to this day. Anne's bequest also chose to support the landscapes at Cranbourne Gardens, where along the Eucalyptus Walk, plantings of her Cobungra wattle can be found. Three *A. ureniae* seedlings, carefully cultivated at the Cranbourne nursery, are due to be re-homed at the bush block in the coming weeks. Anne's gift acts to safeguard the future of critically endangered species and the ongoing conservation work she so greatly enjoyed.

"Anne's passion and legacy will live on in her gift to the Seedbank, where a small collection of *A. ureniae* seeds are held to this day."

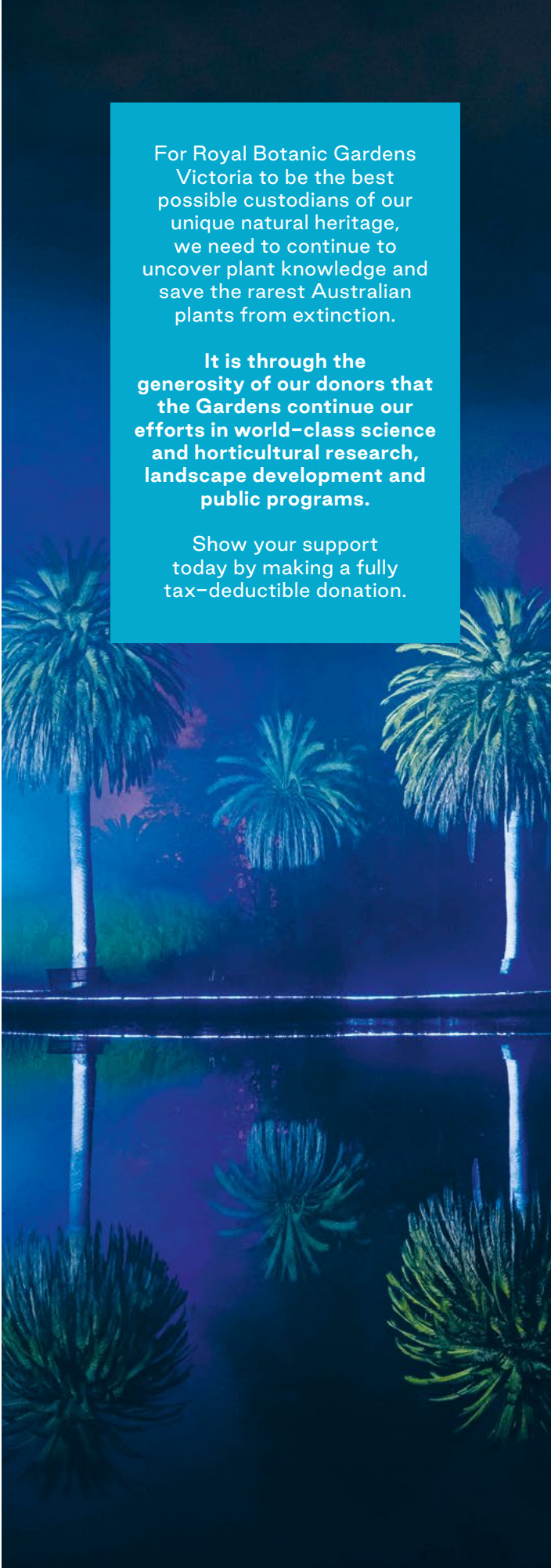
If you would like to leave a bequest to the Gardens, or are seeking more information, please contact our Bequest Coordinator Sophie on (03) 9252 2330.

OPPOSITE

Anne and Neville with fellow RBGV staff at the U'ren's bush block during a collecting trip. Image courtesy of Peter Symes.

RIGHT

Anne with her beloved dogs in East Gippsland, Victoria.



For Royal Botanic Gardens
Victoria to be the best
possible custodians of our
unique natural heritage,
we need to continue to
uncover plant knowledge and
save the rarest Australian
plants from extinction.

**It is through the
generosity of our donors that
the Gardens continue our
efforts in world-class science
and horticultural research,
landscape development and
public programs.**

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today by making a fully
tax-deductible donation.

YES, I would like to support the Garden’s mission to see life enriched and sustained by plants.

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I will give \$ _____

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- ☐ Please send me information about including a gift to the Gardens in my Will
- ☐ I have already included a gift to the Gardens in my Will

Please tear off and return to:
Private Bag 2000,
South Yarra Victoria 3141

To donate online, please visit:
rbg.vic.gov.au/support-us/



All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible

"A bequest represents hope for future generations and a heart-felt generosity to the community.

The Foundation is extremely fortunate to receive bequests from passionate supporters who choose to leave a legacy that will benefit many generations after them. The Gardens are an iconic sanctuary that people feel a deep, often life-long, connection to. They are a place of solace and beauty, a place for gatherings and celebrations, and a place where valuable scientific and conservation work is undertaken and shared worldwide.

The Foundation's mission to distribute critical funding to secure the future of the Gardens is only possible through the generosity of donors who give during their lives and through their estates by way of a bequest. The funds are invested prudently and responsibly to provide a sustainable source of funding for projects that are identified as key priorities.

We are deeply appreciative of all gifts, no matter how large or small, as they provide vital funding for the future of our treasured landscapes and commemorate the special role the Gardens played during the donor's life and their desire to contribute beyond their lifetime."

**Farren Williams, Chair,
Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation Victoria**



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**To support our work or learn
more please contact us on:
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ISSN - 2652 - 4325