



NEWSLETTER

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From The President,

Rain on the roof, what a lovely sound. Even the sight of washing hanging damp and limp in the carport for days cannot diminish the joy of hearing water trickling into the tanks and seeing the grass turn green .

It is bark season again and club members with eucalypts will understand the implications. Long shreds of bark litter the lawns and garden and get caught up in the shrubs and the effort required to clear it up is considerable especially when there are hundreds of trees shedding it. Put through the shredder it makes excellent mulch but most of ours gets loaded into the trailer for a trip to the recycle depot where it gets added to their green waste pile. Perhaps I could build a kiln and turn it into biochar?

A recent 'not quite full' trailer load of green waste had hubby asking if there was anything else to go so without hesitation I mentioned the diosma hedge. It has been looking straggly and unkempt for a while and was on the 'must go' list so out it came.

Now I have the great pleasure of being able to rejuvenate the soil and replant the area and this is the perfect weather for it. Fortunately the resident blue wrens have relocated to the nearby hebes and grevilleas without complaint and their discarded nests make an interesting 'show and tell' for the grandchildren.

2015 promises to be another interesting and action packed year for the club and I am looking forward to sharing it with you all.

Norma Keily

BIOCHAR - What is it?

Biochar is a solid material obtained from the carbonisation of biomass which can be crop and other waste, woodchips, or manure. This 2,000 year-old practice converts agricultural waste into a soil enhancer that can hold carbon, boost food security, and increase soil biodiversity, and discourage deforestation. The process creates a fine-grained, highly porous charcoal that helps soils retain nutrients and water.

Biochar is found in soils around the world as a result of vegetation fires and historic soil management practices. Intensive study of biochar-rich dark earths in the Amazon (terra preta soils) has led to a wider appreciation of **biochar's** unique properties as a soil enhancer.

Biochar can be an important tool to increase food security and cropland diversity in areas with severely depleted soils, scarce organic resources, and inadequate water and chemical fertilizer supplies.

Biochar also improves water quality and quantity by increasing soil retention of nutrients and agrochemicals for plant and crop utilization. More nutrients stay in the soil instead of leaching into groundwater and causing pollution.

In the home garden **Biochar** needs to be mixed with the soil within the root zone of the plants and the Diggers Club recommends a rate of 2kgs to 10m².

In the soil **Biochar**

- Increases water retention
- Provides a safe habitat for soil microbes
- Raises soil pH
- Improves soil structure
- Can be added to the compost heap to speed up the process
- optimises fertiliser use by loosely holding it until taken by plants thus reducing leaching

Biochar is available locally from SA Biochar Works in Macclesfield. Contact Greg Marlu at gregmarlu@tpg.com.au, or visit his website www.sabiocharworks.com.au or phone 8388 9356.

Greg has **Biochar** in 30 litre bags or 200 litre drums.

Many studies are underway across the world examining the benefits of the product and plant growing comparisons demonstrate the advantages of using **Biochar** to produce healthier more pest and disease resistant crops.

There are numerous websites detailing information about the value of

Biochar.



STRATHALBYN GARDEN CLUB PROGRAM

MEETING DATE	SPEAKER/ACTIVITY	TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION
January 23rd 2015	John Zwar	International Botanic Conference in NZ.
February 27th 2015	Barbara Ward	Water Plants Yarrabee Gardens
March 20th	Visit Murray Bridge Garden Club	Details to come
March 27th 2015	Rodney Hutchinson	Ants
April 24th	Troy McKenzie (Leaf Boutique)	Companion planting
May 22nd	Vince Davey	Neutrog
June 26th	AGM	

IT HAS TO BE SAID....!

The raffle is an important and exciting component of our regular monthly meetings but not when the 'prize' turns out to be a smelly, maggot ridden bag of anonymous manure or a cutting plonked in earth with no roots and no identifying information.

99% of the time the items placed on the table are of a high quality and are very desirable but on rare occasions they are not.

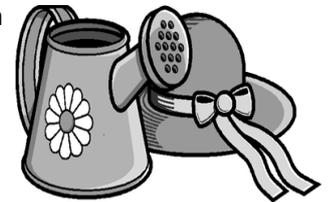
Please make sure that all contributions to the raffle table are of an acceptable quality with plants clearly labelled with botanical or common name and as much growing information as possible. If the pot has been recently watered please wrap a plastic bag around it to prevent 'accidents'.

We do not want to be inadvertently spreading plant or soil borne diseases around Strathalbyn either so please make sure items are pest and disease free.

Produce should be of good quality and suitable for consumption.

Goodies of a non-plant nature should be well presented, useful and relevant.

Your understanding and support in this matter will make the raffle table even more of a highlight!



MEMBERS TALKS

Do you have a special interest in a particular field of gardening?

Would you like to share your enthusiasm for your special area of interest with the club?

Do you have an activity to advertise?

Are you looking for help or advice with gardening related matters?

There is always room in the newsletter for relevant items of interest.

Time can be made available at meetings for Members Talks.

If this is an opportunity that interests you please speak to a member of the committee.



STRENGTH FOR LIFE 50⁺

Great for keeping strong and fit for gardening!

Run by Fleurieu Fitness and Health in conjunction with COTA SA

The RSL Hall, High Street Strathalbyn

Sessions Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday & Friday 9.15am - 10.15am.

Additional classes are being planned.

\$6.00 per session

Each participant must have an initial assessment to design an individual program to suit their specific needs. (Cost \$25)

For more information

Or to book an individual assessment

Contact

Paul Holdsworth 8536 2204 or email paulh@adam.com.au

OPEN GARDENS AUSTRALIA

Most Gardens are open 10 - 4.30 each day.
Entry is usually \$8 per person, under 18 free.
More details in the Open Gardens Australia
Guide and on their website
www.opengarden.org.au



With the organisation ceasing to exist after June 2015 this may be the last opportunity to visit many of the gardens listed.

February Open Gardens

7 - 8 Joe's Connected Garden 6 Argent St Elizabeth Grove
A fine example of neighbourhood cooperation with highly productive and low maintenance permaculture gardens feeding the owners of all the connected properties.
Over 350 varieties of edible fruiting plants, kitchen garden, raised beds with herbs, vegetables and strawberries.



The following media release was received recently.

A NEW ERA FOR OPEN GARDENS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Plans are now underway to establish a new era for open garden lovers in South Australia.

A new organisation, to be known as Open Gardens SA Inc, has been registered and the group has been overwhelmed with support.

An interim committee will be appointed in early 2015 to help carry on the good work of the popular Open Gardens Australia – which announced it will officially close down its national program of open gardens as of June 30, 2015.

The new group includes many faces from the 25 year history of the organisation in South Australia – including amazing garden owners, selectors, committee members and representatives from Adelaide's horticultural community. The group will now undertake the task of organising the new season agenda for Spring 2015.

The design of a new website is currently underway, and the group is currently taking any enquires at

interest@opengardensa.org.au.

The current season of Open Gardens Australia will continue as normal until June 30, 2015.

The new South Australian interim committee looks forward to speaking with all media in the New Year when the interim committee is appointed.

Applications for membership - \$30 General member or \$150 for Foundation membership - can be made on the form provided, copies of which are available from the Treasurer's table.

N.B.

SIGNING IN

Members are reminded that it is important to sign the Attendance Register on arrival and when picking up your name badge for the meeting so that our record keeping for insurance purposes is accurate.

Apologies can be recorded with an A in the appropriate column.

Known future apologies can be recorded in the space provided.

LUCKY DOOR PRIZE

Just a reminder that the lucky winner of the door prize has first pick from the raffle table and this can be taken before the raffle draw so there is ample time to make a choice.



MUST VISIT

In November last year Troy at **Leaf Boutique** ran a Companion Planting with vegetables workshop. The garden bed planted at the workshop is thriving and bursting with produce. Corn, tomatoes, beans, basil, beet-root and marigolds are all growing beautifully in a few centimetres of soil without any chemical inputs and with very few pests or diseases.

Worth a visit to see how it works and to gain inspiration. Troy will be our guest speaker in April talking about companion planting with winter vegetables.

GREG THE WORM MAN 0438 808 066

Kilo packs of composting worms

Vermicast for soil improvement

Worm Farms to order

Worm Wee 3 litre & 20 litre containers

Catch me at the Strathalbyn Garden Club meetings!

SHEEP MANURE for Sale

\$5 / bag (delivered to Strath)

\$4 / bag (collected from farm)

\$20 / collected in trailer, i.e. 6'.4'

Tania & John Richardson

Woodchester

85375011

We're happy to make your garden happy! Spread the word.

GARDENS IN ART - CRISTOBEL SADLER

Samuel Johnson in his 1740 Dictionary of the English Language described a garden as “A piece of ground inclosed, and cultivated with extraordinary care, planted with herbs or fruits for food, or laid out for pleasure “.

Cristobel illustrated her talk with photographs of pieces held in the Art Gallery of S.A. and commencing with the Middle Eastern oriental gardens as depicted on ceramic tiles from the period moved on through the centuries and across different cultures and countries to show how gardens are represented in art.

Different mediums of expression from the carpets of Isfahan, to tent panels of nomadic tribes, Japanese Noh costumes, Tiffany stained glass windows, William Morris fabrics and wall papers, the written descriptions of gardens in Jane Austen and even the lyrics of the Christmas Carol “King Jesus has a garden of diverse flowers” illustrate the importance of gardens to mankind.

Some of the artists mentioned were familiar, like John Glover who arrived in Tasmania on his 64th birthday in 1831 and proceeded to grow and then paint a garden.

The way gardens are depicted varies from the detailed and accurate as in the work of Stanley Spencer, to the misty and abstract as painted by Clarice Beckett. Some artists depict the enjoyment of gardens, eg Charles Hill while other artists represent them as abstract concepts.

The research undertaken by Cristobel, a Gallery Guide of many years experience with a Masters Degree in Art History, was extensive and comprehensive and yet barely touched on the wealth of examples available for viewing in the Art Gallery of SA. A trip to the gallery to explore the topic further would be an excellent way to spend a spare day or series of days.



John Glover's statue in Evandale Tasmania.

URRBRAE HOUSE VISIT OCTOBER 31ST

The trip to Urrbrae House and Waite Arboretum was inspired by John Zwar who spoke about them so eloquently at the January 2014 meeting.

The weather was hot and blustery which made visiting the arboretum uncomfortable and the north wind had taken its toll of the rose blossoms in the extensive gardens. Undeterred the 18 garden club members enjoyed the colour and perfume from beneath the cool shade of a spreading peppercorn tree with the most amazing gnarled trunk.

Urrbrae House was completed in 1891 and was built to suit the weather conditions, having wide verandas and underground rooms to provide cool living in the heat of summer.

Our tour guide regaled us with tales of school visits during which students take on the roles of various household staff, laundry maids, kitchen hands, gardeners etc. and, dressed to suit, perform the tasks in pre labour saving devices style. One room is set up as a school room complete with old fashioned desks with ink wells and a cane.

Some rooms have been kept in their original style, the billiard room, library and dining room while others have been repurposed as exhibition spaces and offices. Some original areas of wall paper have been conserved while other details have been recreated to preserve the 'feel' of the house.

The refrigeration plant in the basement of Urrbrae house was not open to us but has it been restored and is in working order. Originally built in 1895 it was the first domestic refrigeration plant in Australia and it comprises a plant room containing a compressor, a chill room and two cold rooms.

After a very pleasant lunch in the Waite Refectory we braved the heat and briefly explored the arboretum which on a cooler day would be worth visiting again. The trees are labelled and a variety of sculptures add visual interest.

