



THE FERN
SOCIETY OF
VICTORIA

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Member,

It is with great personal delight that I remind you of our Guest Speaker for next month's meeting, 11th November, 1982. Mr. Harry Jackson is well known to many of the original members of the Society for he was one of its early order of speakers. I recall the delight and enjoyment which I felt at having been in attendance on the evening of his first talk for the Society. It was marvellous.

I understand that Harry's health is now very good after having suffered a setback late last year. Like you, I look forward with pleasure to meeting and listening to him once again.

By the time this issue reaches your hands, the Show Sub-committee will have undertaken yet another public display of ferns on behalf of the Society. The success of this committee was highlighted at our October General Meeting when Mr. Ted Fogarty, representing the Victa Company, presented a valuable lawnmower to the Society as its winning award from the Melbourne Royal Show. It is astounding just what can be achieved when enthusiasm, vigour and dedication are applied to these Society ventures. Congratulations Bill Taylor and crew!

Establishing an Outdoor Fern Garden

I am certain that in order to discuss this subject fully I will need to do so in perhaps a serialised form, month by month. Space available in the Newsletter precludes any possibility of covering the topic in just one issue. In this form then I would like to discuss: Environment, canopy, soil preparation, planting species, maintenance, insect and bird control and choosing suitable species of native trees and shrubs for overhead cover.

Our first venture into the making of a fern garden was actually forced on us by the ferns themselves. About fourteen years ago Ella and I were disappointed and somewhat frustrated by the dull appearance and poor condition of our ground ferns. We had, for some time, been trying to grow them in pots under artificial shelter but it was obvious that the plants would not flourish in that environment.

At that time there was no Fern Society to which one could refer and books dealing with the cultivation of ferns were virtually unprocurable. The question arose as to whether the ferns would do better in an outdoor situation and although this seemed drastic at the time, it really was the only course we could take.

OUR SPEAKER FOR NOVEMBER
 IS
 HARRY JACKSON
 OF IDAHO NURSERY, EAST MALVERN

HIS TOPIC: INDOOR PLANTS



Ella and I are both interested in studying ferns in their native state and it was this that helped us to get the "fern garden" started. We carefully tried to provide an environment similar to that applying in nature, having regard to what we had learned as being the requirements of terrestrial ferns.

The following is a sequential set of steps which we undertook:

1. Choice of Site: The site chosen was one in which the area was protected from winds on all sides and providing good daylight. We were not able to protect the area from direct sunlight with a natural canopy of trees but overcame this by using hessian in much the same way as one would use shade cloth today. The hessian proved ideal.

At this point we has already achieved two of the "requirements of ferns". We had eliminated the possibility of winds drawing off humidity and had protected the plot from the burning effect of sun and frost.

2. Soil Preparation: The soil in the region of our home is poor - a heavy greyish clay with very little topsoil.

In fact it is so poor that I am convinced that if ferns can grow in it they can grow in almost anything.

Good drainage was a factor we had to achieve and this was done by firstly turning over the basic soil to the depth of a garden shovel. Next we laid over the loosened surface all sorts of rotten, half rotten and even green vegetation from other parts of the garden. Over this we scattered a quantity of small rocks, broken pieces of terra cotta roofing tiles and some strawy fowl manure. These ingredients were turned in; once again to the full depth of the garden shovel.

(To be continued)

With kindest regards,
 Doug Thomas

Our October Speaker, Betty Duncan B.A. B.Sc. (NZ), shared with us her great knowledge of the Genus aspleniaceae (Spleenwort) and Blechnaceae (Water fern) including the Doodia (rasp fern) which is in the Blechnaceae family.

She also showed some excellent slides and illustrated spore patterns with very detailed line drawings.

In the Genus of over 600 Aspleniums, quite widespread in New Zealand, several species can be found in Australia, *Plurosorus rutifolius* (the Blanket Fern) is the only one not to have a membranous protection of its sori.

Asplenium trichomanes - a small rock dwelling fern growing in Europe as well as Australia.

Asplenium obtusatum - (Shore Spleenwort) usually growing in close proximity to the sea.

Asplenium flavellifolium - (necklace fern) a small rock dweller very common and quite dainty.

Asplenium bulbiferum - (Mother Spleenwort) grows in tufts in the forest and has bulbils growing on fronds and occasionally bulbils growing on young plants growing from bulbils.

Asplenium flaccidum - (Weeping Spleenwort) grows from trees while the related *A. terrestre* grows on the ground.

Asplenium aethiopicum - is very rare indeed and is only found in the Grampians of Western Victoria growing among rocks.

The Blechnums - (Water ferns) are common in New Zealand as well as Australia.

Blechnum cartilagineum - (Gristle fern) fertile fronds are similar to barren, with continuous band of sort parallel to midrib. All other Blechnums are dimorphic, with fertile segments much narrower than the barren.

Blechnum pattersoni - (Strap Water Fern) can have many forms and is found throughout Eastern Australia. Grows well in cultivation and will tolerate quite damp situations.

Blechnum colensoi - similar fern but larger, found only in New Zealand.

Blechnum wattsii - (Hard water fern) was previously called *B. procerum* very common in Victoria.

- Blechnum minus* - (Soft water fern) very common in Victoria. Grows in tufts with tall fronds.
- Blechnum nudum* - (Black Stem) may occasionally have a small trunk and is common throughout Australia.
- Blechnum fluviatile* - (Ray water fern) grows in isolated clumps in most areas on banks, near streams and waterfalls. Rosettes of sterile fronds with longer fertile fronds. Very attractive.
- Blechnum volcanicum* - grows in New Zealand and Tasmania but recently found in Victoria also. Lowest pinnae deflex.
- Blechnum penn-marina* - (Alpine Water Fern) found in high country. Has a creeping rhizome and often forms colonies. Can have very attractive reddish colouring.
- N.Z. *Blechnum fraseri* - grows like a miniature tree fern with a very slender trunk. Found in groves in New Zealand. Fronds are more divided than most *Blechnums*.
- Doodia* - The Rasp ferns differ in that the sori are in an interrupted line parallel to the midrib - not continuous like related *Blechnums*.
- Doodia media* - (Common rasp fern) has creeping rhizomes.
- Doodia aspera* - (prickly rasp fern) Very hardy
- Doodia caudata* - not as harsh as other two and is dimorphic - sterile frond is smaller and flatter than the fertile frond. All pinnae are sessile except perhaps the bottom pair. Found only in Eastern Victoria.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As the tape recorder malfunctioned during Betty's most interesting talk this transcript lacks much detail so I apologize for its shortness.

The Editor

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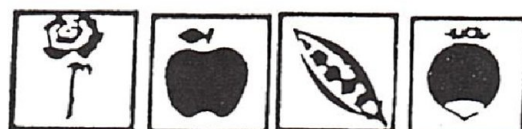
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TREASURER'S REPORT

The bank account of the Fern Society of Victoria has a credit balance of \$2,183.14, with a further \$2,000 on fixed deposit.

Apologies to any member who has paid his/her subscription and who may have received a letter stating that the subscription has not been paid. With such a large membership, it is very difficult to keep the system completely error-proof.

TREASURER'S LAMENT

Apropos the preceding paragraph - whenever you forward a cheque to the Fern Society, could you please make very sure that all details - sender, address, and type of membership, are clearly marked. There have been quite a few instances recently where cheques and money orders have arrived with no accompanying information at all! Of such stuff are treasurers' nightmares made! Your co-operation in this matter will be greatly appreciated.




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CHRISTMAS HAMPER

GIFTS FOR THE 'SPECIAL EFFORT' CHRISTMAS HAMPER WOULD BE MOST WELCOME. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASSIST US WITH THIS, COULD YOU PLEASE EITHER RING JEAN TRUDGEON ON 459 4859 OR LET HER KNOW AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING, AS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE GET THINGS ORGANISED TO MAKE THIS A SUPER-SPECIAL CHRISTMAS HAMPER.

We extend our thanks to Lindsay Campbell and the Tasmanian Fern Society for allowing us to reprint the following article which I feel is excellent and will give our members help in understanding fern nomenclature.

The Editor

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Lindsay Campbell

How many times have I heard people ask, "What's wrong with the English name?" or "What's the point of long unpronounceable names?"

With some 2,000,000 known species, confusion would be rife without an internationally recognised system of nomenclature. For example, Blue Gum in Tasmania is *Eucalyptus globulus* while in N.S.W. the common name 'Blue Gum' refers to *Eucalyptus saligna* and in other parts of the country many other Eucalypts share this common name. An international code allows plants to be recognised in every country of the world.

Generic Names By derivation the word genus means race. The genus is the first word in the bi-nominal (two name) system. It's a noun and always begins with a capital.

Generic names are drawn from three sources*

- * Ancient Aboriginal Languages - derived from names given to plants by ancient cultures.
- * Descriptive - mostly from Greek or Latin and refer to some prominent characteristic or structure of the genus.
e.g. (i) *Adiantum* - meaning un-wettable (the way maidenheads shed water)
(ii) *Cyathea* - from Greek *Kyatheion* - 'a little cup' referring to spore cases.
- * Commemorative - given in honour of a person. e.g. *Dicksonia* - James Dickson was a botanist specialising in ferns.

Specific Epithet The specific epithet (the second word) is an adjective qualifying the generic noun. A species group should be a well defined plant group who interbreed freely and whose main features are constant in reproduction and in cultivation. In practice this isn't quite so clear. Specific epithets are spelt with lower case letters.

They are derived from these sources:

- * Commemorative e.g. *Grammitis billardier* - a French botanist
- * Descriptive e.g. (i) *Pellaea falcata* - meaning sickle shaped.
(ii) *Microsorium diversifolium* - diverse foliage.
(iii) *Asplenium flaccidum* - from flaccid meaning withered and limp.
- * Geographic e.g. *Cyathea australia* - meaning southern

Often (particularly with the descriptive group) knowing the Latin meaning can help identification.

There are many rules that accompany the bi-nominal system and for anyone with an interest, further research can prove most illuminating.

The only way to familiarise oneself with Horticultural Latin is to use regularly i.e. Don't use common names (where a Latin name is known) and say the Latin name every time you see or have anything to do with a specific plant. If this is adhered to, those long unpronounceable words become second nature.

A previous tutor of mine related an interesting story to me. He attended the Horticultural Congress in the Soviet Union. There was a debate over whether commemorative specific epithets should begin with a capital or not. The Soviet horticulturalists argued that they should begin with an upper case letter, many plants having been named after Russian botanists and scientists, while the Americans opposed. A heated argument arose and the Soviets departed the hall. One of the other botanists stood up and said he never thought he'd hear the Russians supporting capitalism and the Americans opposing it!

NEW MEMBERS

ONCE AGAIN, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS TO THE FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA ...

Mrs. Dorothy Bahr, 78 North Valley Road, Highton, Geelong, 3216
 Mrs. Leslie Batiste, 7 Bowman Street, Noble Park, 3174
 Paula Buhagiar, 33 Savanna Drive, Mooroolbark, 3138
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 Susan Kruscic, 2/28 Eumarella Street, Tullamarine, 3042
 Mrs. B. G. Nott, 25 Holland Road, Blackburn South, 3130
 Carolyn Pearse, 5 Selola Court, Fawkner, 3060
 Tim Phillipps, 26 Chalcot Drive, Endeavour Hills, 3802
 David Rogers, P.O. Box 106, North Essendon, 3041
 Mr. C. Sturgess, 8 Franklin Street, Bacchus Marsh, 3340
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 Miss Gwen Junge, RMB 5915, Wattle Tree Road, Holgate via Gosford, 2250
 John & Joan Bedford, 342 Waterloo Road, Glenroy, 3046
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 B. S. Harris, 304 Sunshine Court, Lavington, 2641
 M. C. Brazier, 51 Bade Street, Nambour, 4560
 Denise K. Stapp, 1 Clifford Street, South Brighton, 5048

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO EACH OF YOU, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING IN PERSON THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE ABLE TO ATTEND OUR MEETINGS.

SPORE LIST - Species in Short Supply - November:

Spore samples may be purchased at monthly meetings, or by sending a list of your requirement with 20 cents for each species requested plus 40 cents for packaging and postage to Mr. R. Hill, 41 Kareela Road, Frankston, 3199.

Payment for orders may be made by postage stamp (27 cent stamps preferred where possible) or by cheque (payable to "Fern Society of Victoria").

If ordering species from this list, please include a supplementary list in case supplies of some species are depleted. All supplies listed in the October newsletter should still be available.

Instructions on propagation from spore are also still available for an extra 5 cents.

SPORE LIST

Species in Short Supply - November

ACROSTICHUM AUREUM (7-82)
 ADIANTUM PERUVIANUM (4-81)
 RADDIANUM 'SLEEPING BEAUTY' (3-81)
 ANOGRAMMA LEPTOPHYLLA (11-80)
 CHRISTELLA ARIDA (3-82)
 CIBOTIUM CUMMINGII (10-80)
 REGALE (5-82)
 CYATHEA CAPENSIS (?)
 CUNNINGHAMII (3-82)
 DREGEI (3-82)
 PHYSOLEPIDOTA (7-81)
 ROBERTSIANA (12-80)
 CYCLOSORUS INTERRUPTUS (3-81)
 DRYOPTERIS INTERMEDIA (7-81)
 LINDSAEA LINEARIS (1-82)
 MATTEUCCIA ORIENTALIS (?)
 MICROSORIUM SP. (SCOLOPENDRIA?) (4-82)
 MOHRIA CAFFROROM (?)
 OPHIOGLOSSUM PENDULUM (10-81)
 PLATYCERIUM WANDAE ('80)
 POLYSTICHUM SETIFERUM 'ACUTILOBUM' (6-81)
 PTERIS CRETICA (3-82)
 SCHIZAEA BIFIDA (5-82)
 STENOCHLAENA PALUSTRIS (2-81)

NEW SPECIES - NOVEMBER special thanks to the Fern Society Member who took the trouble to send us many packets of fern spore while on a recent trip to Malaysia. I'm sure there will prove to be some fascinating new ferns amongst these.

BLECHNUM SP. (CLIMBING/MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 CYATHEA SP. (PRICKLY/MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 CYATHEA SP. (SLENDER/MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 CYATHEA SP. (SLENDER/SINGAPORE) (10-82)
 DRYOPTERIS SP. (FILIX-MAS?) (8-82)
 LYGODIUM SP.A (MALAYSIA) (10-80)
 LYGODIUM SP.B (CIRCINNATUM?/MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 PELLAEA SP? (MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 FISHBONE FERN (MALAYSIA) (10-82)
 GROUND-FERN (LARGE/BIPINNATIFID/MALAYSIA) (10-82)

SPEAKER PROGRAMME

Thursday,
NOVEMBER 11TH

HARRY JACKSON
"INDOOR PLANTS"

Thursday,
DECEMBER 9TH

CHRISTMAS MEETING
AND FERN FORUM

NOTE: In the event of a power strike on the evening of any meeting, we regret that the meeting must be cancelled.

VENUE OF MEETINGS: Burnley Horticultural School Hall, Burnley

TIME OF MEETINGS: 8 p.m.

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