

THE FERA SOCIETY



OF
VICTORIA

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY, 1985

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:The Christmas Meeting, 1984

Our 1984 break up, December 13th, was a wonderfully well attended function. All of the traditional features were outstandingly successful. The display of ferns for decoration was magnificent, occupying at least five large tables and presenting such a wide range of species that it could have been compared with displays at former Fern Society Shows. The healthy condition of all plants indicated very clearly that Members are succeeding handsomely in their cultivation of ferns.

The lucky fern in the display was a magnificent specimen of *Adiantum Anceps* grown and exhibited by Gay Stagoll. The prize was a book voucher presented by Lorraine Goudey on behalf of the Society Book Stall. Congratulations, Gay, and thank you very much Members for your marvellous response to this feature.

Christmas Hampers

Jean Trudgeon, Margaret Radley and Kath Brown had once again worked hard to prepare Christmas Hampers for our "Special" Special Effort competition. Through the generosity of donors, six hampers were prepared, a magnificently decorated Christmas cake made and donated by Mavis Potter, and a cold propagating frame donated by the Committee.

The winners, to whom we offer hearty congratulations, were:

1. Propagating cold frame - Joy Horman
2. Decorated Christmas cake - Ian Broughton
3. Hamper - Michelle Astride
4. " - Ossie Cooper
5. " - Jean Fitch
6. " - Betty Allgood
7. " - W. Howgett
8. " - Jean Boucher

Thank you very much, loyal and caring donors.

Supper

Supper was once again a delightful exercise. On the face of it one would have thought that such a large audience could not possibly be fed by a "please bring a plate of eats" scheme, but such was the generosity of Members that by the time supper was over there was food to spare.

Thank you Members for your splendid response to this need, and thank you, Beth Ward and Jan Seibel, for leading the organisation and smooth serving of supper. Thanks also to Bill Taylor and his willing helpers who worked tirelessly to decorate the Hall and arrange furniture.

Over supper and afterwards there was time for chatting and the exchange of ageless Christmas and New Year wishes.

Continued on next page

FEBRUARY MEETING

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February 14th, 1985, at 8 p.m.

Our President, Mr. Doug Thomas, will be speaking
on "DOING THE LITTLE THINGS".

Do come along to the meeting, and help get
the year off to a flying start!

Continued from previous page

The Entertainment

It was splendid to have as Guest Visitor, Professor Chambers of Melbourne University, to screen a collection of splendid colour slides of "The Genus Blechnum - a World View". His presentation is fully reported on page . Our sincere thanks to Professor Chambers.

In addition to Professor Chambers, we were privileged to have our traditional Fern Forum Panel to which we were all invited to direct questions on fern problems.

Keith Hutchinson, Chris Goudey, Richard Hartland and Barry Stagoll comprised the Forum with Keith Stubbs the compere.

Members made this session educational and informative by putting their questions from the Hall or in writing. In either case, the material was always interesting and the Forum Members very capable in dispensing advice.

The questions put to the Forum are more fully reported in other pages of this issue.

Farewell, 1984. A year in which the good times easily outweighed the bad.

Welcome, 1985 - and its challenges.

Next Meeting

The New Year commences on Thursday, 14th February, 1985, at the usual venue at 8 p.m.

Fern sales, book sales, library, spore bank, special effort and Fern Table are expected to resume.

I hope to be the speaker, and will try through colour slides to present a pictorial description of many of the little tasks that make fern cultivation so absorbing and fascinating.

New Cover For Newsletter - 1985

Keith Hutchinson has been preparing a new look cover for our monthly Newsletter. Keith showed the work to Members of the Executive in December last. All agreed that it is an eye-catching and attractive art form. I expect that Keith will give us full details when he has it ready for printing.

Thank you very much, Keith. Your work is much appreciated.

A Task for Every Member, 1985

The support and involvement of all Members is sought for the Society's fifth Annual Fern show. Practical details appear elsewhere in this issue, so my concern is to put a case to you for a personal commitment.

Continued overleaf

In all former years, the Show has been an outstanding success, both as a public relations exercise and a financial boost to revenue. It has been achieved by the dedication and very hard work of Members led by the Show Sub-Committee. There are tell-tale signs at present which indicate that in order to make the Show a comparable success with other years, we will need a greater effort from Members - Society-wide.

The general public do not seem to be buying ferns with anything like the enthusiasm of former years; even our own fern sales at General Meetings have fallen away. Members have become very selective in the species which they are prepared to buy. Day-to-day costs in the running of the Society have escalated so much that we as a total Society must look to the 1985 Fern Show for a public image boost (new members) and a lift to our finances.

As I see it, the areas of greatest need are:

(i) The loan of ferns in containers or slab culture for exhibition.

(ii) The offer of your own personal help in setting up, assisting with sales, supervising, or with dismantling the various structures at the end of the Show.

In the matter of supervision, do not be put off if you feel that you do not have sufficient knowledge to answer visitors' questions. Remember that we have plenty of well-informed Members to whom you can direct those enquiries which you are unable to answer. The fact that you are there doing your best is what matters most.

(iii) The use of vehicle for transport of ferns to or from the Herbarium.

(iv) That, failing all else, you turn up on the days of the Show as a paying patron.

Please give this appeal your most serious thought. It is imperative that the 1985 Fern Show succeeds.

Impersonation

Fern Nursery Members, especially those who have businesses in the country or interstate, are asked to be wary of customers whom they do not know and who claim to be senior officers of this Society. The ploy has been reported to us from a Victorian country fern nursery and appears to have been designed to try to gain special privileges from the Proprietor.

I strongly object to this practice, and advise Fern Nursery people that our Officers are just not like that. In fact, I doubt if any of them would ever enter a Fern Nursery anywhere as anything but an interested customer.

With kindest regards,

DOUG THOMAS

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

We commence 1985 with our new front cover. I hope you find the composition satisfactory. The excellent photograph of *Blechnum Gibbum* was taken by Mary Frost of Wangaratta, and we thank her very sincerely.

It is my hope that we will have more correspondence from members this year. The crossword supplied by Gillian O'Hara in the December issue was an excellent example of what is needed to make our newsletter even more enjoyable. Please make a resolution to submit at least one item in 1985.

1985 ANNUAL FERN SHOW

Saturday, 23rd March - Sunday, 24th March

This will be our fifth Annual Fern Show and we look forward to the participation of "new blood" to supplement the "old hands" in making it a success. The hard work of setting up the Show will be done on Friday, 22nd March. Please try to allocate some time to join in the activities and let a member of the Show Sub-Committee know when you will be available.

Our plans for organising part of the display into family or related groups were mentioned in the December newsletter, together with the names of the various group co-ordinators. Please make the jobs of these people easier by approaching them if you have suitable plants for display.

We will still need a wide range of plants for the general display (some duplication with the family groups will probably be both inevitable and desirable) and any member of the Sub-Committee will be pleased to hear what you can provide.

The Herbarium authorities have placed some restrictions on our use of the lawn area, and as a result we will have to limit the quantity of ferns handled for sale. Members wishing to sell ferns are asked to contact Bob Lee at the next general meeting or by 'phone (836 1528) for details of the conditions for fern sales and the limit on quantity.

BOB LEE

POTTED PLANTS AND FLORAL DISPLAY

- Date: 16th and 17th February, 1985
- Venue: National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra
- Organizers: The Fellowes Group of the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria
- Special Feature: The display is to celebrate 150 years of Royal Horticultural Society activity.
- Admission: Adults \$1.00. Pensioners 50 cents.
Children under 16 years, free.

The Fern Society will support the Fellowes Group in this exhibition by contributing a fixed display of container grown ferns.

Although the fern display will be small - just five feet by three feet - it does require some supervision. Offers of help in short term supervision would be appreciated.

Please contact Doug Thomas, 870-7229, or Bill Taylor, 277-4310, if you can help.

MEETING REPORT....13TH DECEMBER, 1984

An Exhibition of Colour Slides describing "The Genus Blechnum - A World View" by Professor Chambers.

Professor Chambers provided an enthralling pictorial description of the Blechnum fern; not only those growing as indigenous species in certain areas but by comparing the same species in different continents and noting differences in size, frond shape, environment and habitat.

The close relationship between the Lomaria and Blechnum genera was explained, the two being so similar that the popular exotic Blechnum Gibbum was once known as Lomaria Gibbum. Photographs of specimens of B. Gibbum were shown. The plants were photographed growing in their natural habitats in New Caledonia. In each of these, the plants had developed extensive trunks resembling tree ferns.

In New Zealand, Professor Chambers had found and photographed two species of little known Blechnums. These were of particular interest because the plants are content to grow in a habitat only a few feet above the high tide mark of the sea. Professor Chambers showed maps which pinpointed the localities of these plants.

This was intensely interesting material and the warm thanks of all present was evident in the enthusiastic acclamation which followed the screening.

A THANK-YOU

The Executive Committee extends a thank you to Albert Jenkins for his efforts during 1984. Although Albert's wife was unwell and needed constant care, Albert fulfilled thirteen speaking engagements on behalf of our Society.

We hope that both you and your wife will enjoy good health in 1985. Well done, Albert.

FUCHSIAS

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14. spore 16. WA 17. fan 18. Stag 21. rainbow
22. species 25. light 26. algae 28. nest 29. cell

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FERN FORUM

Quite a large audience attended December's Fern Forum, which comprised panellists Keith Hutchinson, Chris Goudey, Barry Stagoll and Richard Hartland, under the "control" of Keith Stubbs as moderator. Here are some edited highlights:

Q. DOES ANYONE USE FUMIGATION FOR PEST DETRUCTION IN GLASSHOUSES? IF SO, HOW SUCCESSFUL IS IT AND WHAT PRODUCTS ARE SUITABLE?

A. The panel was not very keen on using this form of pest control as ferns are very sensitive. If "pest strips" are to be used, it is recommended that they be placed in large rubbish bins. Gamexane tablets are suitable for aphid control.

Q. TWO YEARS AGO, I ASKED THE FORUM THE REASON WHY MY JAPANESE PAINTED FERN HAD DIFFERENT SHADES OF COLOUR. THIS IS STILL HAPPENING - DOES LIGHT OR SHADE HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON THIS HAPPENING?

A. It was felt that light or shady growing conditions have very little to do with the colour of the fern. The main reason is pigmentation.

Q. CAN DRIP WATERING BE USED SATISFACTORILY AND SAFELY FOR POTTED FERNS -

- (A) ABOVE THE FERNS
- (B) TO SUPPLEMENT A MIST-SPRAY SYSTEM ?

A. Drip water systems are excellent, particularly in glass houses. This is a very good way for feeding as well. Drip feeding is an excellent way to ensure that special ferns are cared for, but avoid putting too many ferns on the one system, as the tube may become overloaded.

Continued overleaf

Q. CAN OVERHEAD MIST SPRAYING BE USED SAFELY WITH ALL FERNS AND IN PARTICULAR IS IT SATISFACTORY FOR ADIANTUMS?

A. Overhead mist spraying is not generally recommended, particularly for maiden hair ferns which do not like water on the fronds as rotting occurs. If this method of watering is used, ensure that there is plenty of air movement to evaporate the water quickly (or shake off the water from the fronds).

Q. DO NEPHROLEPIS LIKE LIME IN THE MIX?

A. They will tolerate a little, but they prefer a slightly acidic mix, not alkaline.

Q. IS IT HARMFUL TO ADD OSMOCOTE TO A POTTED FERN WHEN COW, FOWL OR SHEEP MANURE HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN THE POTTING MIXTURE?

A. No, but overfeeding can burn the roots. If Osmocote is used on stags and elks, it should not be used beneath the outer layer and not into the crown of these ferns. Also, organic manure should not be used with trace elements.

Q. WHAT WOULD YOU USE TO TREAT A STAG WITH ALGAE AND SLIME AT THE BOTTOM?

A. The plant is being overwatered. These ferns generally need watering once a week in summer and once a fortnight in winter. If you put your hand under the bottom part of the shield, squeeze and feel water, then leave off watering for a few days.

Q. IS IT TRUE THAT THE BEST PLACE FOR HUMIDITY IS ON THE FLOOR AND SHOULD YOUNG FERNS BE PLACED ON THE FLOOR OF A GLASSHOUSE TO BRING THEM ON?

A. It all depends if the shelving in the glasshouse allows sufficient light to penetrate to the floor. It is true that there is more humidity on the floor, but this would be detrimental for very young ferns (too much moisture). It should also be remembered that the floor is the coolest part of the glasshouse at night.

Q. THE FORUM MEMBERS WERE ASKED INDIVIDUALLY TO NAME THE EASIEST FERNS TO GROW ...

A. *Adiantum raddianum*
Davallia mariesii
Microsorium punctatum cultivars
Pteris (most varieties)
Todia barbara (King fern)
Pellea rotundifolia (Button fern), and
 most Victorian native ground ferns.

Q. IS THERE A SUITABLE COMMERCIAL POTTING MIX?

A. One which gives good results is marketed by Garden Trend, in Richmond.

- Adiantum macrophyllum 2 (8-9)
- Australian Fern Journal 3 (6)
- Badger Weir (Healesville) 3 (5)
- Blue Mountains (N.S.W.) (Report on Oct. talk by Rod Hill 10 (4-5)
- Book Sales 6 (19), 10 (11)
- Burke & Wills - Killed by a Fern? 9 (12-13)
- Carnarvon National Park (Qld) 4 (5), 5 (4-5)
- Chewing insects 3 (7)
- Collecting fern spore 4 (7)
- Composting 4 (16)
- Crossword puzzle 11 (10)
- Cyathea marcescens 3 (14)
- Cunningham's Gap National Park (Qld) 10 (6)
- Dahrug National Park (N.S.W.) 11 (16)
- Dorrigo National Park (N.S.W.) 6 (8-9)
- East Coast Rain Forests (Report of Feb talk by Doug Thomas 2 (11-12)
- East Gippsland tour 2 (4), 6 (11-12)
- Elks & Stage 1 (5)
- Eungella National Park (Qld) 9 (5-6)
- Fans, Solar 5 (14)
- Fern Families, Identification of (Report of May talk by Chris Goudey) 6 (15-18)
- Fern Forum (Report of Dec.'83 meeting 1 (4-5)
- Fertilizers 2 (5), 7 (8-10), 11 (12)
- Frost damage 7 (5)
- Fungus gnat 1 (4)
- Glasshouse construction 10 (12-14)
- House plants 4 87-8)
- Kandalilla National Pk (Qld) 10 (6)
- Lamington National Pk (Qld) 68(4)
- Lord Howe Island, Ferns of (Report of Nov. talk by Chris Goudey 11 (4)
- Marsilea 9 (12-13)
- Minyon Falls Gorge (N.S.W.) 2 (6-7) 2 (12)
- Mount Tamborine (Qld) 10 (6)
- Mount Warning (N.S.W.) 11 (5)
- Natural Arch National Park (Qld) 10 (6)
- New England National Park (N.S.W.) 11 (6)
- New Zealand Ferns (Report of talk by Dr. Bob Chinnock) 6 (5)
- Nurseries 11 (11-12)
- Otways Tour Report 11 (7-9)
- pH of Soil 4 (6)
- Photography of Ferns (Report of talk by Keith Hutchinson) 9 (4-5)
- Platycerium superbum 3 (8-9), 4 (9A-9B), 5 (10-13)
- Polystichum proliferum, Variation in 4 (10-11)
- Pressing fern fronds 3 (9)
- Rainforest trees & shrubs 5 (6-7)
- Ravensbourne National Park (Qld) 10 (6)
- Scale insects 1 (5)
- Slide bank 1 (3), 4 (9B)
- Soil-less growing media 1 (8-9)
- Spore bank requirements 4 (9)
- Spore propagation 7 (5)
- Stags & elks 1 (5), 3 (8-9), 9 (8-9), 9 (14)
- Subscription rates 3 (10)
- Sucking insects 3 (7)
- Thrip 1 (4)
- Wiangaree National Park (N.S.W.) 7 (4)

SPORE BANK

Spore samples may be purchased at monthly meetings, or by sending a list of your requirements with 20 cents for each species requested plus 50 cents for packaging and postage, to Mr. W. Bright, 520 Burke Road, Camberwell, 3124.

A cheque made payable to "The Fern Society of Victoria" is the preferred method of payment for spore. Postage stamps in 30, 10 and 5 cent denominations may also be forwarded for small orders. Please allow two to three weeks for postage. Please include a supplementary list in case some species are depleted.

Instructions on propagation from spore are also available for an extra 10 cents.

The Fern Society of Victoria wishes to extend a warm welcome to those people who have joined their ranks in past months.

Leighton Knoll, Wiseman Road, Silvan South, 3795
 Corrinne Timm, 922 Wedgewood Way, Richardson, Texas, 75080, U.S.A.
 Mrs. Mary Holm, M/S 299, Oakwood, Bundaberg, Qld., 4670
 R. Nesbit, 24 Duncan Avenue, Seaford, 3198
 Ross Allport, 21 Pannam Drive, Hoppers Crossing, 3030
 R. W. Fletcher, 62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139
 Russell Leitch, 6 Mowbray Court, Sunbury, 3429
 Jim & Beryl Geekie, 6 Nelson Street, Thornleigh, N.S.W., 2120
 Diane Atterbury, 5331 Abbeyfield, Long Beach C.A. 90815, U.S.A.
 Gloria Biddle, 27 MacMillan Street, Ayr, Qld., 4807
 Walter Vears, 3 Haynes Street, Highett, 3190
 Ron and Michelle Parke, 9 Mayfair Avenue, Lower Templestowe, 3107
 Geoffrey Toll, 18 Carnarvon Avenue, The Basin, 3154
 Mr. & Mrs. Simonetto, 118 Rathmines Street, Fairfield, 3078
 Mr. D. Nisbet, 24 Duncan Avenue, Seaford, 3198
 Mrs. R. Smith, C/- 34 Willis Street, Winchelsea, 3241
 Mrs. Helen Baldwin, 2 Newark Street, Saddleworth, S.A., 5413
 Mr. W. F. Buxton, 44 Masters Avenue, Marion, S.A., 5043

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DIARY DATES

Thursday February 14th	Doug Thomas "Doing the Little Things"
Thursday March 14th	Bill Taylor & Neil Bailie "Epiphytes & Davallias"
Thursday April 11th	"Beginners' Night" - Back to the Basics -

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.
