

THE
FERA SOCIETY

OF
VICTORIA

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NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

The May Meeting: We almost needed the "House Full" signs for our meeting on the 9th. The attendance was excellent and Members were treated to a first-class talk on "Insect Pests" by Mr. Phillip Hicks of the Department of Agriculture Plant Advisory Service.

Phillip's talk included advice on the use of chemical sprays, their "hazard" levels, and the need for the positive identification of insect pests so that the appropriate spray can be used. He also provided in-depth studies relating to the introduced European Wasp, spiders and ants.

This was a very well prepared and excellently delivered talk with thorough explanations accompanying each facet. We join to thank Phillip Hicks for his work.

Special Effort: Ten prizes were available for competition; these were the lucky contestants:

Mavis Potter
 Brian Fowler
 Nancy Logan
 Steve Gamble (two prizes)
 Bob Lee
 Kath Brown
 Pater Goschnik
 Albert Ward
 Lenore Lee

Two bottles of Maxicrop, a package of "Decor" flower pots and seven beautiful potted ferns were the trophies.

Kath Brown, a dedicated and loyal worker for the Society since its inception, has decided to retire from her duties. She has served as Special Effort Organiser, Committee Member, Fern Show ticket seller and as an assistant in packaging and mailing the monthly newsletter.

Kath's work contribution has been tremendous. In the implementation of "Special Effort" alone she has worked to "pay the rent" for the meeting hall at Burnley. Her friendly manner and genuine concern for the well-being of the Fern Society has endeared her to Members over the years. Thank you Kath for a wonderful contribution.

The inevitable outcome of Kath's retirement is that we now need a "person" to take up the work of Special Effort Organiser.

Margaret Radley has assisted Kath on a regular basis in the past and I understand that Margaret intends to continue with her share of the work. That is in an assisting capacity.

At a time when we badly need the Special Effort to help "pay the rent", a volunteer would be very welcome. It is essential that the Special Effort feature be continued at general meetings and that Members continue to support it.

Continued on next page



Rod Hill will be our Guest Speaker at the meeting on Thursday, 13th June, 1985.

Rod's topic is "Ferns of South-east Queensland in their Natural Habitat".

Burnley Horticultural College Hall, Swan Street, Burnley commencing at 8.00 p.m.

"Be there - early"

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held at Burnley Horticultural Hall on Thursday, 13th June, 1985 commencing at 8.00 p.m.

An enjoyable evening is planned wherein our Guest Speaker, Rod Hill will take us into South-east Queensland to look at native ferns in their natural habitats.

The speaker program is developing very well and the talk by Rod will add just the touch of variety needed to produce a nice overall balance.

In addition we are to have a short talk on the development and reconstruction of the great fern house at "Ripponlea" by gardens curator, Mr. Oliver Frost.

With kindest regards
DOUG THOMAS

RIPPON LEA - APPEAL FOR FERNS

The massive Fernery which is being restored at Rippon Lea is nearing completion and will be restored as near as possible to its original condition.

A small group of fern lovers from the Society were taken on a tour of the Fernery, Mansion and the grounds by Professor Garrick Chambers and the Curator, Oliver Frost.

The group including myself were quite enthusiastic at the invitation to assist in the re-building of the fern collection to what it must have been at the turn of the century.

The official opening of the Fernery will be in September of this year and it is anticipated that all the planting will be completed before that date.

At the end of this item, I have compiled a list of all the ferns in cultivation at Rippon Lea. As you can see there are not very many. We would be most grateful for any fern species or varieties that are not listed. We would prefer not to have any horticultural cultivars e.g. *Nephrolepis exaltata* CVS; *Adiantum raddianum* or *tenorum* CVS, etc.

Please don't bring your ferns yet. Could you please see me at the June meeting with your offer?

CHRIS GOUDEY

FERNS & FERN ALLIES AT PRESENT IN CULTIVATION AT RIPPONLEA

Adiantum raddianum cv. Fragrans	Diplazium australe
Arachnioides aristata	Diplazium esculentum
Asplenium australasicum	Dicksonia antarctica
Asplenium oblongifolium	Marattia salicina
Asplenium bulbiferum	Microserium diversifolium
Blechnum nudum	Microserium scolopendria
Cyathea australis	Nephrolepis cordifolia
Cyathea dealbata	Lastreopsis acuminata
Cyathea cooperi	Phlebodium aureum
Cyathea brownii	Platyserium bifurcatum
Cyathea decurrans	Pteris tremula
Christella dentata	Pteris pacifica
Cyrtomium falcatum	Pteris umbrosa
Cheilanthes tenuifolia	Pteris multifida
Dennstaedtia davallioides	Pteris cretica cv albolineata
Doodia aspera	Pellaea viridis
Davallia canariensis	Pyrrosia lingua
Davallia griffithiana	Rumohra adiantiformis
	Selaginella kraussiana

THE END OF AN ERA: by BILL TAYLOR

Happening Date: 5th May, 1985

Many of our Members will know or have heard of the fern nursery called FERN FROND 7. It has operated from Mount Dandenong Road, Croydon and in Maroondah Highway, Ringwood.

Fern frond 7 has supplied many of us with a wide range of exotic and native ferns over a long period in the nursery business. Their endeavour to supply something different was always their aim, either by growing their own in earlier days, importing from up north or purchasing from other growers.

All this to keep up with a wide range for people to select from and if perchance they did not have a desired plant in stock, then they would sincerely endeavour to procure it.

The end of an era has occurred, on the 5th day of May, 1985 - sadly.

This great collection of ferns accumulated over a long period was sold piece by piece to a crowd of some 500 people who came to this last sale.

It was a shame to see the well established garden ripped apart as those who had bought plants growing in the ground began to demolish it. The collection of hanging and container grown plants disappeared in the same manner.

So long and thanks to FERN FROND 7.

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would be pleased to hear from any of our
Members who are interested in growing
and collecting the various species of
Nephrolepis ferns.

PESTS OF FERNS

Talk - 9th May, 1985

In speaking to the Fern Society of Victoria, Mr. Phillip Hicks of the Garden Advisory Service commenced by asking members to let him make a list of the pests they found among their ferns. There were one or two that he put under "Too Hard" like "Blackbirds", but as you will see in these notes, he had answers for most of their problems.

The President thanked Mr. Hicks for his very helpful talk and members agreed that it was one of the most useful that they had heard.

INTRODUCTION

Slides showing a variety of insects illustrated that all insects are not injurious, and that it is quite wrong to destroy all of them indiscriminately.

Insects look like people, like you or your neighbour - they have a head, eyes, mouth, ears (if you count antennae) - and there followed some examples. Stick insects which members said they thought were harmless are not, as they damage our eucalypts. Norfolk Island Pines dry off each year when they should not, and when they are examined there are insects on them which members suggested were Mealey Bugs, but turned out to be larvae of the Ladybird, which in this case were the predators of Mealey Bugs which were causing the trees to dry off.

So we must not go out and kill off every insect. There are many good ones. First have a good look and decide what the trouble really is.

TREATMENTS

There are different sorts of treatment - Contact, Systemic and Surface sprays.

Contact Sprays: The commonest spray is the Household "fly" spray - often of pyrethrum. In the garden they vary with the insect to be controlled.

Systemic Sprays: For example - "Rogor" or Omethoate. They are sprayed on the plant and are absorbed and as a systemic insecticide they control insects which suck sap from the plant. These deal with all sucking insects including those which get under leaves or roll the leaves round themselves.

Surface Sprays: These are used for insects such as Cockroaches and leaf-eating insects such as caterpillars. One often used is "Carbaryl". The household one - "Baygon".

These treatments all have degrees of hazard for the user and proper care must be taken always to read the label. Labels are written with great care. The World Health Organisation of the United Nations produces lists with information on the relative hazards of chemicals.

Special care must be taken in handling concentrates used in spray mixtures. Care must be taken in the storage and carriage of bottles and containers. A bottle dropped or broken as in a car accident can spread the concentrate on you. This can be very serious. Take care in mixing - Look at the label and be sure to take the precautions.

Continued on next page

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CHEMICALS

"Maldison": This is Malathion and is slightly hazardous, and one of the safer sprays.

"Rogor": Dimethoate. Low hazard level. Metasystox, also a systemic, is much more highly toxic than Rogor.

"Omethoate": A Selleys product, it is highly hazardous but is recommended as a systemic for ferns and indoor plants as it does not have a phytotoxic effect on them. Because of its toxicity to you, take the plants outside to spray them. Do not spray inside the house.

Pyrethrum: A natural compound extracted from a Chrysanthemum grown in South Africa, and has a low hazard.

"Carbaryl": Fairly safe. Used against Caterpillars and leaf-eaters.

"Dipel": Very safe. A bacterial spray against Lepidopterous caterpillars.

"Tetramethrin": A synthetic product safer than pyrethrum used in contact sprays, for example "Embassy" fly-spray.

"Permethrin": Hazard unlikely. Residue remains on an indoor surface for two weeks, and when used to commercially moth-proof carpets controls for over ten years.

"Baygon dust": Low hazard.

Dieldrin and Chlordane: Hazard high - do not use inside house. Will be withdrawn from sale in next few months.

"Dicofol": Miticide for all mites.

Eucalyptus spray: (None at the meeting owned up to using it) In fine print it will be seen to "contain" pyrethrum, which may be the effective constituent!

Garlic spray: Comments same as for Eucalyptus spray.

"Cleasel": Wetting agent which affects some insects, sometimes used with other agent.

It is always better to use sprays and materials that have been tested and are known to "work" - especially for amateurs who cannot make full tests and trials for themselves.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

An example would be our obtaining a parasite from Greece to control the European Wasp. If this can be done it may be possible to have tests and trials so that they can be released in Melbourne in three years' time.

There is a wasp which by laying its eggs in the Mealey Bug results in killing off the Mealey Bug. These are now in use.

Biological Controls are of three types: Sex, Aggregation and Trailing.

Continued overleaf

Sex Controls called Pheronomes: These are sex hormones - Chemical scents or perfumes. One in use now will attract a male Codlin moth from half a mile away. This is used by the orchardist to determine the number of Codlin moths that are about and so whether he must spray for Codlin at once or wait and make another test in say a week.

The Pheronome is placed in a small tubular container in a tray of sticky material with a cover above it to stop rain.

Aggregation: It was thought that Elm Bark Beetles were not in "Ripponlea" but when a Pheronome trap was used there a few weeks ago some 20,000 beetles were caught in an hour!

Trailing: Ants follow their "trail" which is marked with a Pheronome on the path etc. If you rub it off they cannot follow it.

The European Wasp when "brushed" (as Australians "do" to flies) is "aggression" to the wasp, which marks you with a pheromone (this also happens when you disturb its nest) and the whole nest, often some hundreds, is alerted and guided by the pheromone, fly out and attack you. Run inside or shut yourself in a car at once!

INSECTS

European Wasps: They like the things we like - beer, sugary liquids, Coca Cola, cat food, meat. If you leave it alone it will share the meal with you and fly off, but if you drive it away it generally decides you are being aggressive, marks you with a pheromone as we have seen above and the whole nest attacks and you can be stung badly. They do not lose their sting as does a bee. If you are stung or think you may be stung run inside or close yourself up in a car. We have not yet had a fatality but it is quite possible. Take care of an opened can, use a straw (be careful it does not climb out up the straw) or use a glass. The nest is grey, round or oblong with the entrance near the bottom, and made of cellulose, probably from a fence or post. "Carbaryl" dust near the entrance works well. Your local Council will do the job and they have a brochure they give away.

Argentine Ants and other Ants: Ants help carry Scale, Mealey Bugs and Aphids from plant to plant. The "honey-dew" excreted by the insects attracts the ants. "Hortico" Ant spray will control ants but breaks down quickly out of doors. Dieldrin (so long as it remains available) is the best. It is hoped that an alternative will be found.

Aphids: Cleansel gives some control and does not damage ferns. Pyrethrum is good but it must be sprayed on the aphids - not just "near".

Scale Insect: Is carried by ants, which are attracted by the honey-dew the insect excretes. The honey-dew is food for Sooty Mould. Scale insect is also carried by the wind in its early stages. So, if you stop ants it helps stop aphids and so sooty mould. Scale is controlled by White Oil mixed with Malathion. Omethoate is a good systemic control. If you have only a few aphids a cotton wool bud and methylated spirits can be used.

White Fly: A pest in vegetables and Glass Houses. Very small insects can be seen on the back of bean leaves. The White Fly does not seem to cause great damage and spraying is seldom necessary. "Pestaway" sprays helps. White Fly is attracted by yellow colour, so a sheet of tin or plastic coated yellow and spread with vaseline attracts the White Fly and it gets stuck in the vaseline.

Spotted Mite: Very small and hard to see - use a hand lens. It may be easier to see eggs or cast skins. They are called "Red Spider" because they turn red in cold weather (overwinter as "red" spider). They do not like moisture - misting of ferns gives control. Predatory mites are available - obtained from Queensland. "Kelthane" or one of the systemic sprays can be used. They can "web" leaves when present in numbers.

Passion Vine Hopper: Controlled by Malathion and Agral.

Silvering of fern fronds: May be the result of Two-spotted Mite but more likely it will be Thrip. As it is a sap-sucking insect Malathion is used. It is also used for Thrip on ferns, rhododendrons, azaleas and viburnums.

Snails: Beer and flour baits, "Defender" (metaldehyde) baits, but best is Blue bait (Baysol). The first two "intoxicate" the snail and next day it can't find its "home" and dies of desiccation (rain or watering allow them to recover). "Baysol" and "Defender" can kill dogs and should always be used sparingly. Especially, keep the box away (top shelf).

Earwigs: "Carbaryl" spray of the structures round plants - shelves, paths, pots - it is not necessary to spray plants.

"Decor" Pots: When a mix such a African Violet mix which is high in organic material is kept moist as in these special pots midges breed quickly and are a nuisance indoors.

Scalloped edges and holey leaves: Can be caused by Garden Weevil. This is a nocturnal beetle which breeds in the debris at the base of the plants. "Baysol" pellets assist but "Baysol" spray works if used in the late afternoon.

Millipedes: These are not a new pest. They were introduced from Portugal many years ago. They do not have predators or parasites here. They breed in rotting organic material. They have stopped the "Overland" express by walking along the rails. They invade houses. If this "invasion" is the problem about the only way is to close the crevices they use for entry! South Australia is presently importing a parasite from Portugal. "Carbaryl" has a minimal effect. "Baysol" sometimes helps.

Wood Lice - Slaters: These live in rotting organic matter. They sometimes seen to damage seedlings. Microscopic fungi in rotting material may be the attraction for Slaters. "Carbaryl" will kill them.

Paraquat and Diquat: These kill undesirable plants - and desirable ones too! So does "Zero".

Green Elf and other products of this types. Much water - Little active product. It is best to make up sprays and the like for yourself from concentrates.

Pressure Packs: Use them when necessary but avoid damage to plants from cold - frost bite - from the evaporation of the spray base.

Harlequin Bug: The best treatment is the Lawnmower! The bugs breed in long grass in winter.

THE TERRARIUM

An area of fern culture which has received very little attention from speakers and writers in recent years is one which is achieved by growing ferns indoors in a glass terrarium. Wardian cases in days gone by.

This lack of attention is rather a pity because there is so much enjoyment and interest to be won from succeeding with ferns in this way. It is well worth a try.

Picture a well set up terrarium complete with lovely healthy ferns, illuminated by a fluorescent light above and designed to complement the hall furniture of which it is a part. The very thought of it conjures up a setting of great and enduring beauty.

The environment inside a terrarium is very humid, generating condensation which is so heavy that it simulates the development of rain in nature. In such an environment a great variety of species can be grown, including those which would otherwise be virtually impossible by normal methods e.g. Hymenophyllums (Filmy ferns).

Other suitable genera are Hemionitis, Asplenium, Doryopteris, Doodia, etc. The bulbils picked from many of our cultivated ferns also form an interesting addition to the arrangement. Jelaginellas also do well.

Usually ferns grown in a terrarium mature to produce spores as quite small plants, probably because of the close confinement, artificial lighting and the absence of fertilizer from the soil mixture.

After two to two and a half years in the terrarium the soil becomes spent and should be replaced with a fresh mixture. Plants too should be replaced and those taken out of the terrarium can be planted into the garden or fern house. Early Autumn is a good time of year to do this. It is surprising to see how quickly the ferns adapt to their new "freedom" and then in time revert to normal growing size.

Requirements:

1(a) The Terrarium or Glass Case

I have not been able to find out whether or not the true terrarium (Wardian Case) can be bought these days. It is an all glass structure complete with a drainage pan at the bottom fitted with a small tap for removal of surplus water. The front glass panel is removable which makes the tasks of planting and maintenance easily accessible. An adjustable ventilating slot is located at the rear under the lid and a horticultural fluorescent light is set above to complete the unit.

When set up on a neat occasional table, planted and placed in an entrance hall, the sight is absolutely delightful.

The overall size of the case would depend on individual taste or availability of space. On average, the size most favoured would be 90cm (3") wide, 75cm (2'6") high and 30 cm (12") deep.

(To be continued - next month, fish tanks and soil preparation)

DOUG THOMAS

Termites: Get three quotes and then come and see the Garden Advisory Service at Burnley.

Blowflies: Simply leave the windows open - the blowflies don't like it indoors and will fly in and straight out again. But if there are no screens don't ask about mosquitoes.

Derris Dust: Good for Cabbage Moth, etc.

Disyston granules: Hazard is from the chemical which is released when the granule is moistened, as when mixed in soil and moistened, the systemic chemical, which is the hazard, is released and is absorbed by the roots. Take care - even a moist hand, say by perspiration, provides a hazard.

"Lebacid": This is used to replace lead arsenate as first spray for Codlin Moth.

Sprays are best mixed freshly when required, making up as much as is needed so there will be no temptation to use what is left over next day.

BUYERS' GUIDE TO FERN NURSERIES

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DIARY DATES

Thursday
June 13th

Rod Hill
"Ferns of South East Queensland
in their Natural Habitats"

Thursday
July 11th

Geoff Connellan
"Controlling the Environment"

Burnley Horticultural College Hall, Swan Street,
Burnley, 8.00 p.m.

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

A very warm welcome is extended to all those who have
joined the Fern Society of Victoria in the last few weeks.
Space constraints in the June issue have made it necessary
for us to defer the publication of names and addresses to
the next issue.

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