THE THE JERN SOCIETY

OF PICTORIA inc.

REMSIETTER

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AUGUST, 1985

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

The July Meeting:

A distinguished visitor to our July meeting was Mr. Oliver Frost, curator of Ripponlea gardens. Oliver spoke briefly about the huge task undertaken by his staff in renovating and rebuilding the Ripponlea fernhouse.

Vital statistics of the house are:

Dimensions: 140 feet long, 50 feet wide, 45 feet high.

Time spent on the Work: Fifteen months.

Work Personnel: Seven staff, all garden employees, four of whom are apprentices.

Construction: Steel and iron covered completely with spaced lathes.

Projection: The building is unique, with no comparable structure either in Australia or in the southern hemisphere. It will be a regular venue for horticultural study by students for years to come.

Oliver said that he was delighted to have received the support and interest of this Society and that his organization would undertake immediately to reciprocate with published acknowledgements of our involvement in such publications as "The Local Trust" newsletter (circulation 25,000 copies).

In addition, the Ripponlea fernhouse would be made available to our spore bank personnel for collection of spore at any time. Our contribution will be recognized for years to come by the installation of a plaque.

Oliver also said that all should be ready for planting by early September and he was hopeful that an opening ceremony could be held on or about Melbourne Cup weekend, 1985. A suggestion was made at the meeting that our incoming Committee may consider organizing a Society excursion for the occasion.

Guest Speaker:

Guest Speaker for the evening was Mr. Geoff Connellan, a lecturer at Burnley Horticultural College who spoke on "Controlling the Environment".

Geoff's talk was thoroughly prepared, well illustrated by use of an overhead projector, and splendidly narrated. He divided his talk into nine segments, all of which were directed at helping us to obtain maximum efficiency from the management of our glass or shade houses.

The talk obviously stimulated Members to think and to seek further discussion. At the conclusion of Geoff's talk, questions came from all parts of the hall. It took forty minutes to dispose of the discussion generated by these questions.

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BE SURE TO COME ALONG TO OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 8th.

ALSO ON THIS NIGHT SLIDES WILL BE SHOWN

OF THE OTWAYS TRIP AND ALSO FROM LORD

HOWE ISLAND.

We thank Geoff for his detailed and well explained study. A report appears in other pages.

"Special" Special Effort

No competition was conducted at the July meeting. The special effort competition will be resumed at the August mee g.

There will be nine prizes for the competition, eight of which are rare exotic fern species whilst the ninth is a glazed ceramic pot stand in the form of a turtle. The ferns are donated by Chris Goudey and the pot made and donated by Jean Trudgeon.

S.G.A.P. Wildflower Show at Ringwood Civic Centre:

Vice-President Bill Taylor has once again undertaken to stage a display of ferns on behalf of the Fern Society. The show is to be staged on the weekend of 10th and 11th August, 1985. Bill needs help from Members who are prepared to lend ferns for display and to take supervision duty. Have a talk to Bill about it at the August meeting. Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated.

The August Meeting: Thursday, 8th August, 1985 at Burnley Horticultural College Hall commencing at 8.00 p.m.

(a) Annual General Meeting

Agenda:

- (i) Minutes of 1984 A.G.M.
- (ii) To adopt a report on the Committee's activities for 1984/85.
- (iii) To receive and adopt the Treasurer's financial statement.
- (iv) To adopt the Committee's recommendation for adding some of the Society's constitutional rules as by-laws to the model rules of Incorporation.
 - (v) Election of Office Bearers for 1985/86.
- (b) August General Meeting
 I expect that all normal services
 will operate after the Annual
 Meeting as above. These include
 "Special Effort" and "Fern Table",
 etc. The highlight of this meeting
 will be a showing of slide
 photographs describing plants, their
 habitats and scenes taken on Society
 excursions to the Otway Ranges and
 Lord Howe Island.

With kindest regards DOUG THOMAS

"CONTROLLING THE ENVIRONMENT IN GREENHOUSES"

by Geoff Connellan

Meeting Report - 11th July, 1985

The main purpose in providing a glass or shade house for our plants is to protect them from wind, rain, hail and frost. Also, we need to create the right environment for plant growth.

There are three types of glasshouse in common use:

- (i) unheated or cold;
- (ii) heated (hothouse);
- (iii) frost protection house (some heat).

The shapes of these vary through gable, flat, skillion, igloo and flat arch; the material for making the frames may also vary between steel, timber and a combination of both. Steel has the advantage of longer survival.

Environmental control equipment which needs to be built-in would include ventiliation in the form of ventilators and/or fans. Fresh air is essential to the well being of the plants.

Cooling, especially in Summer, can be achieved by the installation of shade cloth screens, shade paint or evaporative coolers. Geoff prefers the knitted type shade cloth in preference to the woven material. He says it pulls tight very well but that both types give similar protection. 50% to 70% shade cloth density is adequate and colour is not an important factor.

It is good idea to think about the types of plants, in this case, ferns, that you want to grow. Do they come from climates which average 10° C or 30° ? If the latter, the climate inside the glasshouse needs heating. A building without heat will get as cold as any outside temperature. There is no escape from frost for plants housed cold.

Heat can be provided by small electric fan heaters for frost protection, or by using a double layer of the covering material, i.e. solar plastic sheet, glass, etc. Double layering insulates against day heat loss and frost. Gas heaters can also be used but these can have toxic effects on ferns. Wood stoves are quite effective when properly controlled.

It is better to heat tubes by gas and to introduce the heat into the glasshouse through the tubes or pipes.

To assist ventilation use mesh on the bench shelves in preference to solid materials. This allows for a gentle air movement around the plants.

Humidity can be effectively supplied by use of a misting spray. This can be achieved by using an inexpensive hand spray or a commercial mist spray system.

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Good light is essential for ferns. Sunlight produces a high level of energy and even though plants do not use the full spectrum of sunlight, ferns in particular will not thrive in deep shade. Hot summer sun, however, needs to be controlled by shade paint or shade cloth.

Should artificial light be necessary, cool white lamps or fluorescent tubes of the trade name "Grow Plant" are recommended as being capable of covering most requirements. Incandescent globes are unsuitable.

Geoff explained that Burnley College is currently experimenting with a solar application for greenhouses and a solar air heater was illustrated.

Finally, Geoff demonstrated a variety of materials which are quite suitable for greenhouse coverings. He recommended that Alsonite be chosen ahead of standard fibre glass because of the preservative coating on its surfaces. Alsonite has a longer life expectancy than uncoated fibre glass. Geoff said that the most efficient colours are white, clear and opal. Avoid all the rest.

Keith Hutchinson ably moved a vote of thanks to Geoff on behalf of Members. This was carried with sustained acclamation.

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THE TERRARIUM

(continued from the July issue)

Planting

Choosing the fern species for planting into the soil mixture provides us with an endless source of interest and delight. For those who are setting up a terrarium for the first time and would prefer to advance cautiously, may I suggest Doodia caudatum (small rasp fern), Aspleniums (any of the small species), Lastreopsis hispida (Bristly shield fern), Doryopteris species and some Selaginellas (fern allies).

The planting of the bulbils of several fern species often results in spectacular success. Bulbils of Hemionitis palmata (Mexico) occur on the face of the palm shaped fronds and develop into pretty little plants in the terrarium. Of similar structure is the Doryopteris genus which also does well. Adiantum reniforme is worth a try.

Arrange the species so that the tallest are placed at the back and shorter species graduate to the shortest at the front. Keep in mind that Selaginellas grow quickly in the terrarium and some species tend to dominate and become a little rank.

Maintenance

When planting and on occasions when the glass cover has to be lifted or opened, make sure that you close any doors which lead into the area where the terrarium is placed. Never take the risk of allowing precious moisture and humidity to be drawn off by draughts. Humidity is essential to success; the moisture in the original mixture and drainage material is sufficient to maintain the plants for months providing the case is not opened. If drying out does occur in hot weather, introduce moisture by use of a hand mist spray. Use boiled water in the mist spray.

Should you feel that a top dressing of mulch is needed, sterilise the mulch before applying.

Don't be disappointed if your terrarium becomes exhausted after eighteen months or so. Accept that it is so, clean out the case and set it up again. Don't ever use organic fertilisers.

The fluorescent light need not be switched on during the day. A couple of hours early in the morning and two or three hours after sunset is usually enough artificial light. There is one exception however; the light should be switched on whenever you have visitors.

Annual Subscription Rates

Singles: \$12.00 Family: \$15.00 Pensioner - Single: \$8.00 Pensioner - Married: \$10.00

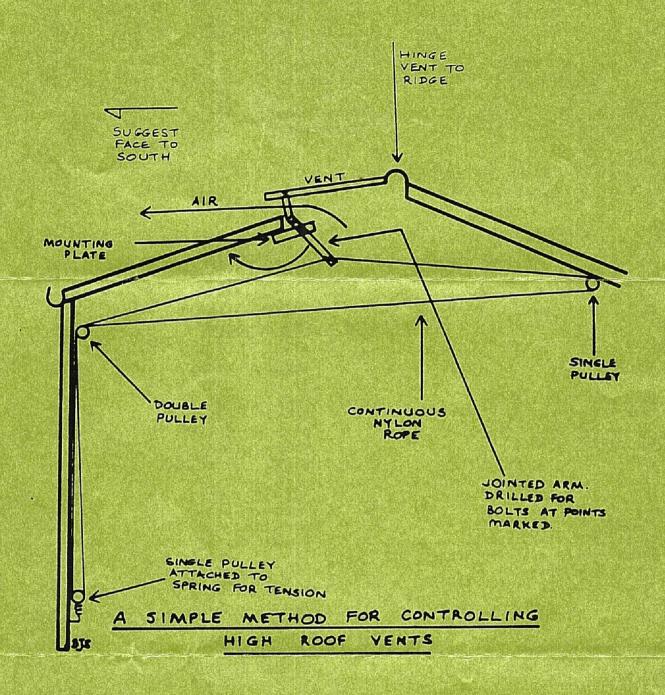
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This sketch is supplied by Barry Stagoll in conjunction with his 'Discussion on Building Glasshouses' article published in an earlier issue.

DIARY DATES

Thursday August 8th

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Slides of Otways trip and Lord Howe Island

Thursday September 12th Guest Speaker: Ray Edwards

Thursday October 10th

Chris Goudey
"Maidenhairs"

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.

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