THE THE JEHR SOCIETH

OF FICTORIA inc.

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REWSLETTER

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# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE.

Although Thursday the 13th February was quite a hot humid day we commenced our first meeting for 1986 with a good attendance and I'm sure all members enjoyed Carol Curtis with her well prepared talk on soils and soiless potting mixtures.

# Book Sales

After nearly seven years as Manager of Book Sales Lorraine Goudey has tendered for resignation, I would like to thank Lorraine for her very dedicated work in this field and I know she will be of great assistance to whoever takes over this task. Thank you Lorraine.

# Slide Competition.

Peter Goshnik has over 90 slides already and next meeting will be our last month for entries so please make an effort to bring at least one slide.

# Spore Bank

Joel Macher is in urgent need of spore for sale at our Annual Fern Show so it is vital that he recieves it by next meeting.

# Wangaratta trip-5th APRIL.

The final costing for this trip is \$59 per head all inclusive so next meeting will be the deadline for those wanting to go. Looking ahead to 1987 our Tasmanian Trip on March 7th via the Abel Tasman will vary in cost depending on numbers. With a party of 33 the cost will be \$472 but if we can get 43 the cost will fall to \$437, 25 have booked to date.

#### Name Tags.

Another request from our questionnaire is for members to wear name tags, so please endeavour to assist new members by wearing them at our meetings or outings.

# Annual Fern Show.

April 12th and 13th at Nunawading Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Rd., Forest Hill. Barry Stagoll reported that posters are available for members to distribute in their area particularly in nurseries and on super market notice boards etc. Ferns for display or for sale can be checked in at the centre after 1.00 p.m. on Friday 11th April. Check in forms available from Bob Lee at our next meeting.

# MARCH MEETING.



TASMANIAN FERNS - CHRIS GOUDEY.

CHANGE OF VENUE & DATE.

VENUE: - HERBARIUM, BIRDWOOD AVENUE, STH. YARRA.

THURSDAY 20TH MARCH, 1986.

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# Special Effort Winners.

(1)Albert Ward

(2) Terry

Barry White (3)

Jack Barrett

(5) (6) Ann Bryant

T. Tomlinson

John Oliver

(8) Edna

# Next Meeting

Please note that our next meeting will be March 20th at the HERBARIUM as Garden Week will occupy the Burnley Hall.

With Regards.

Keith Hutchinson.

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# THE FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA.

# 1986 FERN SHOW

Nunawading Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill.

Saturday, 12th April

10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

Sunday, 13th April 10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

The show is getting close and the Sub-Committee responsible for its organisation is keen to have firm information on the availability of helpers for setting up and dismantling/clearing up (Friday during the day and evening, and Sunday evening respectively), assisting with handling and selling in the sales area (various tasks each day including the Friday), and assisting with visitors' questions/controlling visitor flows round the Centre (during opening hours), core of helpers for each of these tasks has already been assembled, but further offers of help will be appreciated - and "new blood" amongst the Show helpers is especially sought. You could make such an offer at the March meeting, or by contacting any of the sub-committee members at the phone numbers listed in the last newsletter.

Sufficient offers of help for provision of tea/coffee and biscuits sales have been made for this innovation to proceed. However, to spread the workload a little further and provide for some "reserves" some extra willing helpers would also be much appreciated in this area.

Make opportunities count to promote your Show. You should find a copy of the Show advertising leaflet enclosed with your Newsletter. Please try to arrange for it to be displayed prominently at some appropriate public place in your locality (aside from retail nurseries, libraries are a good choice). Extras will be available for collection at the March meeting if you feel you could assist with wider distribution. At the time of writing it appears that the area from Burwood/Ashburton through to Box Hill may not be well catered for. As this area could be fruitful in view of its reasonable proximity to the venue can anyone assist to cover it?

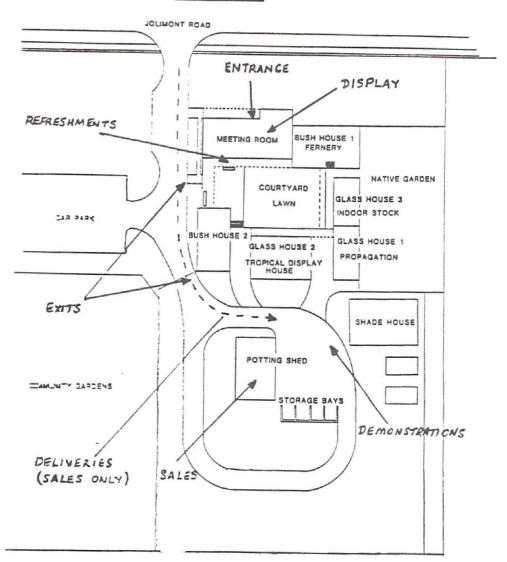
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Display plants should be welcome at the Centre from Mid-morning on the Friday. We want wide participation, and encourage members to bring their special favourites, particularly ferns not widely seen elsewhere. They don't have to be large speciments, just nicely grown. We guarantee they will be well cared-for. If you should have a large quantity to offer or can offer plants but are concerned about any special requirements Subcommittee members would be grateful for some notice.

Members with ferns to sell are reminded that the main requirements are that their plants are healthy and advance notice is given of their intention. Please tell us at the March meeting, when we can advise more fully on arrangements (they are not complicated, and we look forward to helping you to help the Society with this important Show feature). If you cannot attend the meeting please ring a Sub-committee member and we will take it from there. Ferns for sale will be accepted on the Friday afternoon through to 9.00 p.m. and (by special arrangement) may also be accepted prior to Show opening times on the weekend.

For member's interest a site plan of the Centre is provided to show the main features and the layout of our Show activities.

# Horticultural Centre SITE PLAN



# SPEAKER REPORT - GENERAL MEETING 13th FEBRUARY, 1986.

Speaker: Miss Carol Curtis, Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Topic: "Soils ain't Soils".

Q. Why do people use soils for potting mixs?

Years ago good rich top soil was readily and easily available in this country. It had been accumulated by Nature over countless years and contained organic matter and a host of forces working within the environment which provided plant life with it's every need.

Good top soil is much scarcer now; it is much more expensive and is prone to contain certain transferrable diseases. Natural top soil behaves quite differently when taken up and placed in a pot. Here the forces of gravity through watering soon leach nutrients out of the soil and compact it.

Potting mixes are quite different to soils and it is essential that you are aware as to what properties are needed to make a workable mix. These essential properties are water holding, nutrient holding, aeration and drainage; all at adequate and desired levels capable of producing good plant growth.

Q. When growing ferns in potting mixtures, what ingredients should we use and what chemical factors must we consider?

Porosity of the mix affects the drainage, aeration, water holding capacity and water penetration. If physical factors are not right, water can sit on the pot, not draining at all. Water can also drain down the sides of the pot and not soak through the mix thus starving the plant of moisture. Water can run straight through a mix so quickly that the plant roots cannot take it up.

Miss Curtis explained an experiment aimed at ascertaining the water holding capablities of various ingredients. These ingredients were sand brown coal, sawdust and pine bark.

The result showed that after four days, pine bark had a better water holding capacity than the others.

(a) Coarse sand - plant in poor condition

(b) Brown Coal - plant satisfactory.

(c) Saw dust - good, had good water holding capacity(d) Pine bark - good, had good water holding capacity

In the matter of chemical properties, brown coal is capable of holding nutrients in a mix. On the other hand it would be quite useless putting fertilizers with a 100% component of Pearlite. In such a mix the fertilizer would be quickly washed out and not available to the plant.

The ability of ingredients to hold nutrients helps to keep the  $\underline{PH}$  of the mix in balance, i.e. neither too alkaline nor too acidic.  $\underline{PH}$  of less than 7 is acidic, (e.g. for azaleas), 5-6 (e.g. for most plant growth and an alkaline  $\underline{PH}$  is greater than 7. (e.g. for lavenders).

The most important factor about PH is that it provides the plant with the ability to take up nutrients. If the PH is too high or too low there will be certain elements which will not be taken up by the roots, e.g. if the PH is too high the plant may develop an iron deficiency or manganese problems.

Toxicity: Pine Bark when fresh produces a toxin called Phenol. If pine bark is kept too wet, not enough oxygen is retained in the mass and fermentation occurs. These by products cause pine bark to decrease its' PH to such a level that it becomes too acidic for good plant growth.

Pine bark must be composted for a period of six to twelve weeks before use. During this time it should be kept moist but not wet and the mass turned continuously.

Continued over . . . .

# THE TEN BASIC INGREDIENTS.

- 1. Peat Moss has high water holding capacity, high nutrient holding capacity, is acidic and light in weight. It must be regarded as expensive.
- 2. Pine Bark is available in different screened sizes. Choice of size aim at providing voids to assist aeration. Pine bark is an organic material and as such breaks down in time. To compensate for this the size range of particles should measure 2 mm to 6 mm. If pine bark is allowed to dry out, add sand to it to assist re-wetting.

When buying in potting mixes which contain pine bark, guard against toxins by setting some of the material aside in a tray and sowing radish seeds in it. Watch then for the germination rate and later the rate of growth in the plants. You will find that if the pine bark component has been composted the germination rate and growth of roots is good. If the pine bark is new and toxic, the results will clearly spell out a warning.

- 3. Saw Dust is an organic compound which in New South Wales is used extensively. It has problems: composting is essential before use and nitrogen in the form of urea must be added. However, it has reasonable ability to hold nutrients in a mix. No more than 20% should be used in a potting mix.
- 4. Sand needs to be coarse, composed of 2mm diameter granules. If the sand is fine and dense the mass becomes heavy and prevents effective aeration.
- 5. Pearlite has no nutrient and is very porous. Both fine and course grades are available; the finer for water holding and the course for increasing aeration. It is very light in weight.
- 6. Vermiculite is similar to Pearlite but holds more water. Use one or the other in a mix; there is no need for both.
- 7. Scoria is good for hydroponics. It is not pleasant to work with and is heavy when wet. Its' main function is to improve aeration and water holding.
- 8. Rice Hulls are organic and should have nitrogen added. They are low in water holding capacity but do improve aeration. They are not heavy.
- 9. Peanut Shells are light weight and good for binding within a mix. They should have nitrogen added. Their main attributes are: good water holding, drainage and aeration.
- 10. Brown Coal has the ability to hold nutrients and water. It has a PH of 6 but its' component part of a mix should not exceed 30%. Brown coal is known as Liguum peat in the nursery trade.

#### THREE POTTING MIXES.

These are standard potting mixes of only three components. They are suitable for growing a large range of plants and provide the physical properties of good drainage, aeration etc. discussed earlier.

Mix 1. 8 parts (by measure) 6mm pine bark Standard 3 parts washed river sand Knoxfield 1 part brown coal Mix

- Mix 2. As above except that brown coal is deleted and replaced with 2 parts mountain top soil.
- Mix 3. As above except that mountain top soil is increased to 3 parts.

Miss Curtis observed that mix 3 tended to clog because of the increased mountain soil component.

Continued over . . .

Conclusion: Having regard to all that has been discussed, it is obvious that ingredients can and need to be varied to comply with plant species, local environmental conditions and availability of ingredients. Do your own experimenting but keep in mind the factors of nutriment, aeration, moisture holding, drainage and a balanced PH.

President Keith Hutchinson moved a vote of thanks to Miss Curtis on behalf of Members. He was supported by the enthusiastic applause of the large audience.

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# FOR SALE.

AZALEAS .. . . . . . . . . All sizes 4" - 10"

BILL & JOAN TAYLOR

1 Princetown Road,

MOUNT WAVERLEY. 3149

Telephone: 277 4310

ALSO RHODODENDRONS, CAMELLIAS AND FERNS.

# FERN SOCIETY WANGARATTA EXCURSION 5th & 6th April 1986

The details have now been finalised for the weekend excursion to Wangaratta and are as follows:-

The Moorland Coach will depart from out the front of the Gas & Fuel building in Flinders Street, Melbourne at 8.00am on Saturday 5th.

Any passengers who live on route will be picked up at prearranged stops. We will meet up with country members, Mary and Garnet Frost at Glenrowan (toilet stop) who will escort us to Paradise.

We will view the ferns and have a barbecue lunch at Paradise before proceeding onto Norma's Fernery for the afternoon.

Overnight at Noonameena Lodge, Porepunkah with breakfast and dinner included. On Sunday morning we will meet up with members from the Wangaratta Garden Club to view the fernery in the Wangaratta Gardens.

After viewing the fernery we will then proceed onto Mary and Garnets to view their fern collection.

A barbecue lunch will be provided by the Bus Company at Mary and Garnet's property. We will leave at approximately 3.00pm for Melbourne.

The all inclusive costs are as follows:-

45 people ......\$59.00 35 people .....\$62.00 30 people .....\$66.00

# TASMANIAN TOUR 7th to 16th March 1987

The details for the Tasmanian Tour have also been finalised and will be published later in the year. I will be able to give full details at the March meeting 20.3.86

# "SOLUTION TO OUR FEBRUARY FERN CROSS WORD"

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"THANKS TO RAYMOND GREGORY FOR HIS DESIGN AND PREPARATION OF THE FERN CROSS WORD".

#### CAMPTOSORUS RHIZOPHYLLUS - WALKING FERN

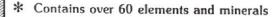
A native to North America and north-east Asia, this is a small, hardy, terrestrial fern that is happy with its roots among limestone rocks. The long tapered fronds form new plants when their tips rest on the soil and it will quickly colonise a sheltered rock garden. It makes an easy care and attractive potted plant.

THE MARCH "CAN YOU NAME THIS FERN?" (Illustrated below)



# Maxicrop

"Goodness from the sea"



- \* Safe and easy to use.
- \* Made from fresh growing seaweed.
- \* Ideally suited for ferns

Maxicrop

\* Maxicrop is available from nurseries and other places where garden products are sold.

# Maxicrop

4/375 Bayswater Rd., Bayswater. Vic. 3153. P.O. BOX 302, Bayswater, Vic. 3153. Tel. Melb. (03) 720 2200

# PROFILE - DES MORAN.

Des Moran - Proprietor "Moran's Highway Nursery"
Fern Specialists - Woombye, Queensland.

Des retired from the Queensland police force just over four years ago but after just six weeks relaxation realized he needed a good interest. The Highway Nursery was for sale, although run down due to the poor state of health of the owners. Des bought it and with the help of his wife Daphne, son Stephen and daughter-in-law Jenny set about re-establishing the nursery.

The family had little knowledge of growing ferns although Daphne had always shown a keen interest in plants - the first two years were quite an uphill battle. Gradually with the aid of books and a lot of hard work they learned the latest methods of spore propogation and plant nutrition and with some assistance from other growers the nursery began to flourish. Now a very large range of high quality ferns are available with bigger numbers being produced from imported spore, also with the increased interest in local native species Des intends to give more attention in future promotions.

With a wonderful climate, approx. 70" annual rainfall (almost twice that of Brisbane) and a good cloud cover during many hot summer days Woombye is almost perfect for the cultivation of ferns. Many Victorian Fern Society members have called at the nursery and enjoyed a very warm welcome. Some leave the children and non fern fanciers to enjoy themselves at the big pineapple just 1 km south whilst they spend a whole day amongst the ferns.

The nursery is located 110 km north of Brisbane turning right into Kiel Mt. Rd. off the Bruce Highway. Des recently helped form the Sunshine Coast Fern Society, now about 30 members meet on the 3rd Wednesday each month.

A wholesale or retail list of ferns will be forwarded on request. P.O. Box 47, Woodbye, Queensland. 4559.

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# Fern Lesson of the Month.

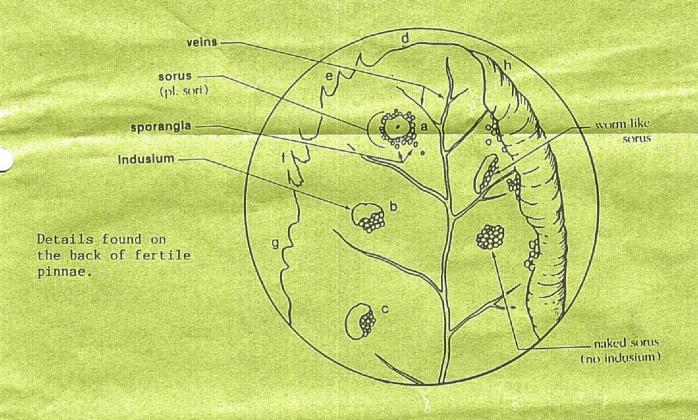
#### ARACHNIODES Simplicior

# BUZZER CHIPS AND FERNS - By Don Johnston

Something members might like to try. I have a small fernery between the garage and side fence, with a fibre glass roof. All under the shade of a majestic, ancient gum tree. I keep my small plants and sporelings here, and to keep the moisture up and the cost down I covered the floor with 10cm of buzzer chips - the hardwood/Kiln dried shavings from the local carpenter-joiners workshop. They wet down well, give a lovely aroma, keep moist for days even in summer, cost nothing (carpenters throw them in the tip) and the snails and slugs get all covered in dust and small chips which they hate. No snail problems there for years now!

Spores are the tiny objects by which most ferns reproduce themselves. Sori are clusters of tiny, spore-bearing sporangia found on the backs or undersides of fertile fronds. To the beginner they are often misidentified as a pest or disease attacking the fern. Sori are often covered by membrane-like indusia which may be circular (a); hooded (b); or horse-shoe shaped (c).

The Pinna edges may be smooth (d); toothed (e); spine-tipped (f); scalloped (g); or curled to form a false indusium(h).



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#### TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN DESCRIBING FERNS

acuminata — ak  $\bar{u}$  min  $\bar{a}$ 'tå. Acuminate, tapering to a slender point. acuta — å  $k\bar{u}$ 'tå. Acute, distinctly and sharply pointed, but not drawn out. articulata — år tik  $\bar{u}$  l $\bar{a}$ 'tå. Articulate, articulated, jointed, separating easily. bipinnata —  $b\bar{i}$  pin  $\bar{a}$ 'tå. Bipinnate, twice pinnately divided.

biserrata - bī ser a'tà. Biserrate; serrate, with the teeth being again cut.

bulbil. A small bulb borne on a frond and developing into a plantlet.

capsule. A dry spore case.

caudex. The stem of a fern plant; a tree fern trunk.

cordata - kor da ta. Cordate, heart-shaped.

creeping. Running along or on near the surface and rooting at the nodes.

Reproduced with the approval of the South Australian Fern Society.

# DIARY DATES.

20TH MARCH - TASMANIAN FERNS - CHRIS GOUDEY.

APRIL - PRACTICAL NIGHT - 3 MEMBER SPEAKERS

MAY - BEGINNERS NIGHT - DOUG THOMAS.

20th March venue, Herbarium. April & May Venue: Burnley.

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

# BUYERS' GUIDE TO FERN NURSERIES.

#### VICTORIA.

# ALLGOOD PLANTS & FERNS.

Main Road, Emerald, Victoria Closed Mondays. A.H. (059) 68 48 58 Retail

#### "FERN GLEN"

Garfield North, Victoria Ferns - Wholesale & Retail Visitors welcome Phone: (056) 29 2375

#### BEASLEY'S NURSERY

195 Warrandyte Road, Doncaster East Phone: (03) 844 3335

# COOL WATERS FERN NURSERY.

(Wholesale Propagators)
Beech Forest 3237
Phone: (052) 37 3283
Specializing in cool climate native ferns.

# THE FERN SPOT.

Cnr. Princes Hwy. and Fotters Rd. Longwarry Nth. Fh. (056) 299364 40 Min. from Dandenong. Melway map 256 T6 open 7 days

# R. & M. FLETCHERS FERN NURSERY

62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139
Phone: (059) 64 4680
(look for sign on Warburton Highway
300 m east of Seville Shopping Centre)
(Closed Tuesdays except Public Holidays)

#### AUSTRAL FERNS.

(Wholesale propagators)
Specialising in supplying retail
nurseries with a wide range of hardy
ferns - no tubes.
Phone: - 052 823084

# VICTORIA.

# MT. EVELYN FERN CENTRE.

63 York Road, Mt. Evelyn (Mail orders welcome) Phone: 736 1729

# ALLANS FLAT PLANT FARM.

Tomkins Lane.
Allans Flat.
(25 km south of Wodonga on the Yackandandah Rd)
Specialising in ferns and Indoor plants.
Open daily (except Wednesday) and all public holidays.
Phone (060) 27 1375.

# NEW SOUTH WALES.

# MARLEY'S FERNS.

5 Seaview Street, Mt. Kuring-gai 2080 Phone; (02) 457 9168

#### MARGLEN FERN NURSERY.

108 King Street Shortland 2307 Phone: (049) 51 1445 LARGE RANGE OF FERNS.

#### QUEENSLAND.

### MORANS HIGHWAY NURSERY

Box 467, Woombye, 4559 1 km north of Big Pineapple Turn right into Kell Rd, Woombye Wholesale & Retail Phone: (071) 42 1613