THE FERN SOCIETY

OFVICTORIA

Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 13, Number 1, Jan/Feb. 1991

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I am afraid I have to begin our first Newsletter of 1991 with an apology to those Members who did not receive their copy of the last one for 1990. Our Membership Secretary, John Oliver encountered major computer problems when printing the address labels for the December issue and a number of names were missed. Hopefully the list is now correct after a lot of cross-checking work, and all missing December Newsletters should be delivered with this issue.

Our December Meeting and the Christmas supper which followed made an enjoyable evening. There was active participation in the discussion on epiphyte cultivation, ably led by Bill Taylor in his usual friendly and knowledgeable fashion. Thanks very much Bill. A mammoth Special Effort followed with prizes of a Christmas cake made by Mavis Potter and Beth Ward, six hampers, several ferns and three tree fern planters donated by George Start. One of our Members had suggested earlier that the proceeds of our December Special Effort should be donated to an appropriate charity, and our Committee recommended to the Meeting that this year it should be sent to UNICEF, the United Nations fund for children. The amount raised was approximately \$50.

Many thanks to all those who donated prizes for the Special Effort, items for the hampers, brought ferns for display, food for the supper, and who contributed in other ways to the enjoyment of our December meeting.

A sad note for December however was the sudden death of our Honorary Life Member, Albert Jenkins. Albert was universally liked and respected by those who knew him and was a major figure in the life of this Society. There is an obituary later in this Newsletter which describes his love for ferns and for the Fern Society. A donation in lieu of flowers at the funeral was sent in Albert's memory to World Vision - his favourite charity.

It seems ages since the day excursion to Mount Worth State Park last November, but this has been the first chance to acknowledge the efforts of John Hodges in organizing the event. Thank you very much John.

It would be a pity to have only items of an historical nature in my first message for 1991, so in conclusion I should like to direct your attention to a major coming event, viz; our 1991 Fern Show, an article about which appears later in this Newsletter.

Best regards. Bob Lee.

NEXT MEETING

DATE: Thursday, 21st February, 1991.

TIME: 7.30 p.m. Pre-Meeting Activities: Buy your Ferns,

Books, Spores and Special Effort Tickets until 8 p.m.

8.00 p.m. Meeting Commences.

<u>VENUE</u>: The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,

Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.

GUEST SPEAKER: Chris Goudey; First President of the Fern Society and

Honorary Life Member.

<u>TOPIC</u>: "The Cultivation of Ferns from Spores".



A FERN SOCIETY STALWART PASSES.

The sudden death of Albert Jenkins occurred on the 5th December, 1990. Albert was aged 76. He died after suffering a massive heart attack.

Albert would be known to our Members as one of our most capable and experienced speakers. His practical demonstrations and advice on the cultivation of ferns has helped untold numbers of Members to grow better ferns.

Albert was deeply religious, having an important basic belief. He believed in Divine Creation and never ceased to marvel at the wonders of Nature. This was always evident in the way he loved his ferns. His Christian attitude was such that money he obtained from selling his surplus ferns was channelled to World Vision.

At the Feneral Service in the Gospel Chapel at Montmorency, the Fern Society was represented by thirteen Members. Chris Goudey, a close personal friend of Albert's, contributed in part to a Eulogy on behalf of the Society. Here is a copy of that contribution:-

"I first met Albert 15 years ago at a Royal Horticultural Society meeting and our friendship grew over the years. We both shared a love for ferns.

Early in 1979 a small group of people got together with a view to starting up a Fern Society. When looking for recruits Albert was at the top of my list - he was glad to join our steering Committee.

In our first year Albert was Vice President and Treasurer, he also served on the Committee for a further five years, only retiring because of Aldyth's ill health. He was a dedicated Member rarely missing a Meeting. He took part in Fern Shows and displays and gave countless talks and demonstrations, not only to our Society Members but also to other garden clubs and Church Groups. In recognition of his Services to the Society, he was awarded a hand painted plate in our early days and later on an Honorary Life Membership. His enthusiasm never once abated - he loved his ferns and his Fern Society.

He was a very dear friend to me and my family and was always there when we needed a hand, or just a friend."



THE 1991 FERN SHOW - SATURDAY, 13TH APRIL AND SUNDAY 14TH APRIL.

Firstly please note the corrected dates for the Show. The dates in the December Newsletter were one day out of place, probably as the result of a quick check on the 1990 calendar when writing the article.

The Show will again be held at the Nunawading Horticultural Centre and will be open to the public on the above dates for the usual hours of 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Sunday. Setting up will begin at 12 noon on Friday, 12th April. Further details on times for this day will be given in the March Newsletter.

One area of preparation for the Show where <u>everyone</u> can help is publicity to inform the public of the event. The Show Committee will be organizing as much publicity as possible through the media, but the well publicised financial problems and cut backs in many media organizations almost inevitably mean that publicity from these sources will be less than usual. Hence we must gain maximum promotion from our advertising leaflets and word-of-mouth publicity. The leaflets will be available at the February Meeting and everyone attending is asked to take some and arrange to have them displayed in places where they are likely to attract the attention of potential visitors to the Show. Please also try to promote the Show at every opportunity over the coming weeks by any other means that occur to you.

The Members of the Show Committee responsible for organizing the event this year are :

Bob Lee (Chairman) - Ph. 836-1528

Betty Allgood - Ph. (059) 68-4858

Julian Basser - Ph. 592-8944

Ian Broughton - Ph. (059) 64-6402

Derek Griffiths - Ph. 336-3157

John & Norma Hodges - Ph. 878-9584

Barry & Gay Stagoll - Ph. 844-1558

Bill Taylor - Ph. 754-8275

Bernadette Thomson - Ph. 391-5517

Barry White - Ph. 337-9793

We should like to hear reasonably soon from Members willing to help in the Show activities - setting up and staffing the display, helping in the fern sales area providing the tea and coffee service, etc. - so that a roster can be arranged to cover all periods adequately. It is important for the continuing vitality of the Show that there is a regular influx of new participants into Show activities, and we particularly encourage new Members to join in. The Show is an ideal opportunity to get to know other Members and to improve your knowledge of ferns. Feeling that you do not yet have an adequate knowledge of ferns should not deter you from joining in. There is always plenty of back-up available in the event of a difficult question - and you will learn from the answer.

We need many ferns to make a good display and hope that many Members will contribute (again with a special invitation to new Members and to those who have not been involved before). Now is the time to make this decision so that selected plants can be brought into prime condition before Show time. While large spectacular ferns always stand out as highlights in a display (and we will be hoping for a proportion of these), the Show is really intended to generate an enthusiasm for ferns in the visitors by presenting a wide range of varieties of well grown and well groomed specimens, with quality more important than size. So do not be too modest in assessing the suitability of your plants for the purpose. If in doubt, talk to one of the Show Committee.

Please ensure that all display ferns, especially uncommon ones, are clearly named. We have been embarrassed at times, trying to answer questions about spectacular, unusual ferns that are not identified. If you are not sure of the name, try to have the fern identified in advance, rather than hope that someone at the Show will recognize it.

Members who plan to sell ferns at the Show must tell us of their intention in advance, so that the necessary arrangements can be made. The only qualifications on plants offered for sale are that they are healthy, free from pests and that they must be grown on by Members - not just acquired for re-sale. There is no limit, either high or low, to the number of plants that can be brought along for sale and we would encourage anyone with a few suitable surplus plants to participate.

However, we cannot accept small tubes as the difficulty and effort of handling them are disproportionately high. Please note also that people selling ferns are expected to contribute a reasonable number of plants to the display in proportion to their sales volume. Where plants of small size are offered for sale, it would be a great help if a specimen of each type and reasonable in size, could be brought along for inclusion in the display - to give customers a better idea of what the more mature fern looks like.

Finally, we should be grateful if Members who intend coming to the Show would save up and then bring to the Show any smallish cardboard boxes that they acquire - these could then be used for packing sold ferns.

Please do not hesitate to contact a Member of the Show Committee for any further information or help with any difficulties. We should be very pleased to receive suggestions for improvements at any time.

Bob Lee.

Chairman - Fern Show Committee.

FORTHCOMING GENERAL MEETING.

DATE: Thursday, 21st March, 1991.

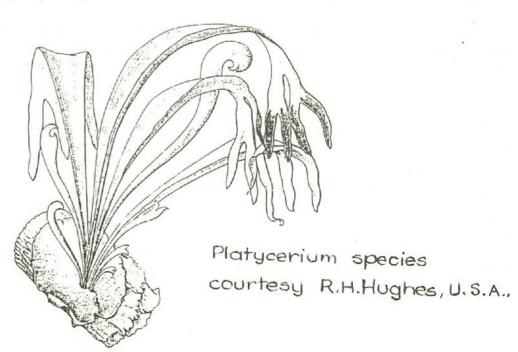
TIME: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

VENUE: The National Herbarium, South Yarra.

GUEST SPEAKER: Keith Hutchinson; Immediate Past President and

Honorary Life Member.

TOPIC: Photographing Ferns.



DISCUSSION REPORT - General Meeting - 11th December, 1990.

DISCUSSION LEADER _ Bill Taylor: Former Vice President and

Honorary Life Member.

TOPIC _ Fern Epiphytes.

The scene at this meeting was typical of Christmas meetings of the past - a very large attendance, an excellent display of Members' epiphytic ferns and a discussion feature extremely well orchestrated by Bill Taylor.

A large steel frame had been erected in the Hall and upon this the epiphytic ferns were hung and shown to their best advantage.

The following notes describe some of the cultural highlights which emanated from the discussion.

- 1. <u>POLYPODIUM FORMOSANUM</u> (Crested Caterpillar Fern). A possible cure for a fungal disease which infects this species is a mixture of Benlate and Rogor applied at regular intervals.
- 2. A fern of the <u>DAVALLIA</u> genus was shown and described as being a native of Taiwan. It is growing well in an unheated glasshouse with special care given to watering. Fairly dry to slightly moist in Winter and constantly moist in Summer.
- 3. A <u>DAVALLIA</u> species submitted for identification was named Davallia Solida Ornate Ruffles.
- 4. Another <u>DAVALLIA</u> of miniature status from Malaysia was also submitted for identification. After nine years of growth in an unheated glasshouse this fern still appears miniature. It's rhizomes are similar to those of Humata, but the absence of fertile fronds made a check of the indusium hinging mechanism impossible.
- 5. <u>DAVALLIA PYXIDATA</u>. Cultural information on this species indicated that if it is grown as an epiphyte, having scant soil and dry conditions, it will not produce large fronds. Yet if grown in a tub of mixture in a well lit position in the fern house it will become lush and fruitful.
- 6. <u>PLATYCERIUM VEITCHII</u>. A self sown specimen was shown firmly established on soil to one side of a terra cotta pot. The fern is ten years old and has never been re-located in that time.
- It is positioned in a fern house where afternoon sun penetrates. A suggestion was made that the silver elk produces much better colour when exposed to some direct sunlight.
- 7. <u>MICROSORIUM DIVERSIFOLIUM</u>. Grown in an open situation under a shade cloth canopy. This specimen had been set up in a wire basket with rotting pieces of tree trunk mixed with a potting mixture. Fertilizer in the forms of Osmocote slow release and diluted Maxicrop had been used.
- 8. <u>DRYNARIA KNIGHTII</u>. The owner of this specimen recommended that this species does best when repotted in late Summer (February), and is watered twice a week throughout the year but more often in Summer. Also that this species should be underpotted rather than overpotted. This plant is kept in a back patio in cool, airy conditions.
- 9. A <u>LYCOPODIUM</u> species from Fiji. Kept in a heated glass house this species appears to do best if not disturbed. The specimen on display is sparingly fertilized with Osmocote. Very little other maintenance had been implemented.

- 10. <u>HEMIONITIS</u> or <u>DORYOPTERIS ELEGANS</u>. This fern originates in Mexico and is tropical to sub tropical in it's natural habitat. The specimen displayed had been grown for three years in a well lit unheated glasshouse. It had not spored but had grown into a very attractive plant. The mixture was described as coarse being composed of a cymbidium orchid mixture laced with 50% leaf mould, a little charcoal, some peat moss, river gravel with strawy fowl manure as fertilizer. Although this fern had been treated as an epiphyte, some doubt exists as to whether this is so. The owner felt that exotic tropical ferns may grow better in the temperate to cool Melbourne climate if treated as epiphytes.
- 11. A very well grown specimen of <u>DAVALLIA MARIESII</u> was shown. This plant had grown beautifully, hanging under the protection of a back verandah.
- 12. An excellent specimen of <u>PLATYCERIUM</u> species came next. This plant was supported on a back board and had been housed in a shade cloth enclosure. Apart from rain water which penetrates the shade cloth, this plant received very little artificial watering. It is maintained by applications of rotted leaf mould when needed. No fertilizer is provided.
- 13. An attractive $\underline{\text{DRYNARIA}}$ species attached to a piece of tree fern trunk was discussed. The owner waters it by dunking the whole mass into a tub of diluted Maxicrop when needed.
- 14 A well grown MICROSORIUM SCOLOPENDRIUM had been planted in a wire basket and left on the floor of a heated glasshouse. The owner admitted that this plant had responded to his neglect by growing beautifully. The potting mix used is 80% pine bark mixed with graded quartz sand; the wire basket had been lined with perforated plastic.
 - ASPLENIUM AUSTRALASICUM. This gorgeous fern had been purchased eight months ago, at which time it's fronds measured just six inches. It was planted in a mixture of litter collected from a rose bed and a standard type compost. No fertilizer was added and the fern had been kept indoors, although favoured by morning sun during the Winter months. In the warmer months it was placed under a back verandah where it is exposed to some sun.
- A HUMATA species from Bougainville mounted on a slab of cork was discussed. It's owner felt that epiphytes recover from root disturbance much more quickly when mounted on Sphagnum Moss. This fern had been given a light dressing of Osmocote slow release fertilizer when needed.
- 17 <u>BLECHNUM OCEANICUM</u> from New Caledonia. Although this species originates in the soil it does not mature until it has climbed up tree trunks into the upper foliage canopy. In this instance the fern had been set up in a wire hanging basket in a mixture simulating the leaf litter, moss and liverwort debris of the New Caledonian rain forests.
 - PLATYCERIUM BIFURCATUM. (Mount Lewis species). From a discussion which this fern generated, a method of mounting these and other young elk species was recommended. The method is as follows:— Use a half wire basket—one which is designed to fit against a wall. Insert a fibrous liner and cut a hole through both the wires of the basket and the liner, big enough to pass the root ball of the fern through. If the wire basket is galvanized keep the growth area from touching the wires. Fill the basket with an epiphytic mixture and hang in a suitably protected position. Watering is applied to and through the mixture.

Other fern species displayed but for which no growing techniques were advanced were :-GONIOPHLEBIUM SUBAURICULATUM cv KNIGHTII (tissue culture specimen), TERATOPHYLLUM species (New Caledonia), ASPLENIUM FLACCIDUM (new Zealand), MICROSORIUM LYCOPODIOIDES (South Africa). NIPHIDIUM CRASSIFOLIUM (Central America) and ASPLENIUM LASERPITIIFOLIUM (North Queensland).

President Bob Lee thanked Bill Taylor for his capable and tactful leadership and the Members for their contributions of epiphytes and knowledge; all of which made the evening a resounding success.

THE FERN SOCIETY BASICS PAGE.

Essential Factors - continued

(c) <u>Liquid</u> <u>Fertilizers</u>.

Liquid fertilizers are those which are made from a mixture of inorganic chemicals readily dissolved in water. Because of this solubility, liquid fertilizers are very useful indeed for ferns, particularly in the growing season i.e. from September through to April in southern Australia.

During this time, potted ferns fed with these fertilizers on a regular basis produce a steady and pleasing growth rate. Another advantage of the ready solubility of liquid fertilizers is that nutrients become immediately available to the fern roots when applied.

Some fertilizers in this group can be used as foliar sprays through which nutrients can be absorbed through the leaves of plants.

Examples of liquid fertilizers which are popular with fern enthusiasts are :-

MAXICROP: Maxicrop is a product of sea weed. It is available in liquid form and has a high concentration of elements and minerals. Maxicrop is easy to use and to prepare - simply add it to a quantity of water until the desired strength is obtained. A reliable, if somewhat naive formula for mixing Maxicrop is to make it commensurate with the strength of tea, i.e. weak, medium or strong.

Apply diluted Maxicrop during the growing season at three week intervals. It is not advisable to feed liquid fertilizer in Winter, which is the time of year when most fern species have a period of dormancy. They are entitled to a rest.

<u>AQUASOL</u>: Aquasol comes to us in a crystalline form containing Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium and other elements. It is readily soluble and for ferns should be diluted at the rate of one level teaspoon in ten litres of water. Aquasol can be applied to potted or basketed ferns at fortnightly intervals during the growing season. It is also useful as a foliar spray at the same strength and will stimulate good steady growth.

If newly emerged sporeling ferns become pale-coloured or yellowish in their sterile containers, they can be restored to green by spraying a fine mist of diluted Aquasol over them. It is advisable to use boiled water when making the dilution in this instance.

There are numerous commercial brands of liquid fertilizers available, all of which are similar to the two examples given. Readers are in no way obliged to accept that these examples are the best procurable.

Manures of poultry, horse, cow or sheep can be converted to liquid fertilizer by placing a quantity of manure in a hessian bag, tying the open end with string and suspending the bag in a drum of water. After 3 or 4 days the nutrients in the manure will have been released through the bag changing the fresh water into liquid fertilizer. When the liquid has been drained off it can be used, either as it is or further diluted if required. Add fresh water to the drum and fresh manure to the bag and set the whole process in motion once again.

Use liquid manure sparingly, i.e. at six week intervals dressing for both potted ferns and those growing in the garden. It should not be applied to the point of saturation.

beneficial times of day to apply liquid fertilizer and foliage sprays, are in the early morning or late in the especially These are the times of day when humidity is highest and ferns are most responsive to taking up nutrients.

Never apply foliage sprays on very hot days.

.o be continued.

DECEMBER MEETING WINNERS, 1990

CHRISTMAS CAKE:

Mary Frost.

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS:

George Start (2) Kath Brown Ian Broughton Chris Goudey Keith Hutchinson John Hodges

SPECIAL EFFORT:

Joyce Hutchinson, Margaret Radley (2), Renee Shiels, Doug Thomas, Mac Gregory, Keith Hutchinson, Diane Mayne, Barry White, Brian Nicholls.

Terry Turney, Don Fuller, Leon Irwin, Beth Ward, Ian Broughton, Margaret Fuller,

"Goodness from the sea"

- * Contains over 60 elements and minerals
- * Safe and easy to use.
- * Made from fresh growing seaweed.
- * Ideally suited for ferns
- * Maxicrop is available from nurseries and other places where garden products are sold.

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

HUGE FERN SALE:

Maxicrop

THE COLLECTION OF FERN WELL KNOWN SPECIALIST, THE LATE Mr. ALBERT JENKINS WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION ON SATURDAY 9TH MARCH, 1991 AT 11 A.M. AMONG THE SPECIES FOR SALE ARE SILVER STAGS, ELKS, MAIDEN HAIRS, TASSELS AND POLYPODIUMS. CASH OR CHEQUES ONLY.

VIEWING OF SPECIES WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE PREMISES AT 11 MORWELL AVENUE, WATSONIA, PRIOR TO THE AUCTION.

TELEPHONE (03) 459 5705.

THE PLATYCERIUMS OF NORTH QUEENSLAND IN THE WILD AND IN CULTIVATION.

by Ralph H. Hughes.

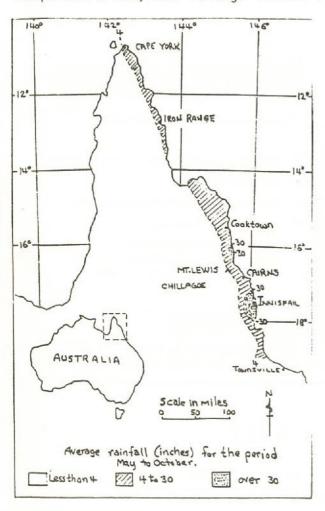
Continued from last issue.

Horticultural Practices.

Temperature:

Although accustomed to the tropics, with minimal protection from frost and wind chill, all the species are hardy outdoors in semitropical climates, i.e. warm, humid parts of Florida, California and Texas (Plant Hardiness Zone 10).

Similarly, the recent imports of var. <u>venosum</u> may be classified semihardy in warmer temperate areas, the foliage fronds remaining evergreen following cold snaps to 35 deg.



Cool "dry" sesson rainfall in North Queenslandcourtesy Australia Bureau of Meteorology,

and 60 to 80% for var. $\underline{\text{hillii}}$.

F (2 deg. C.) (Both base fronds and foliage fronds of \underline{P} , superbum are evergreen). Periods of no growth are apparent, even with high humidity, if daily minimum temperatures are below 50 deg. F. (10 deg. C.) However, damage is not apparent in temperatures of 40 deg. F. (4 deg. C.) to 50 deg. F. (10 deg. C.) following extended cold snaps.

In greenhouse culture, these are non-hardy ferns able to coexist with hardy ferns. In the home, rooms kept cool - below 68 deg. F. (20 deg. C.) - support ferns better than warmer ones do, probably because more heat means drier air.

Table 1. Compatible Environmental Conditions in Cultivation.

	Min/Max Temperature		Min/Max Shade	Humidity	
Designation				Winter	Summer
	F.	<u>c.</u>	%	%	%
bifurcatum	30-100	0-40	40-80	50	80
hillii	30- 90	0-30	60-80	60	80
superbum	40- 90	5-30	30-60	40	60
veitchii	25-100	-5-40	0-40	40	40
willinckii	30- 90	0-30	30-80	60	80
var.venosum	30- 90	0-30	40-60	80	80

Light:

Staghorn ferns prefer less shade and are compatible with more light than most other ferns as well as the array of exotics that ply the nursery trade. Various grades of plastic cloth tested give 30 to 80% shade (high to low light). Minimum-maximum shade requirements vary widely, from 0 (no filtering) to 40% for var. veitchii

Filtering is usually needed in sunny climates to prevent sunscald, a plant disease resulting from excessive transpiration. Damage varies with leaf form, season of year, and time of day. Broad-leafed forms of var. $\underline{\text{bifurcatum}}$ and var. $\underline{\text{hillii}}$ are most sensitive. If exposed to full sun, they need the most shading between noon and 4 p.m. when the sun is the hottest and brightest, and during the high sun summer months starting in May, to provide protection against added intensity resulting from seasonal change in the sun's angle.

To be continued.

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BUYERS' GUIDE TO NURSERIES:

VICTORIA:

Allans Flat Plant Farm - Retail.
Tomkins Lane, Allans Flat, 3691. Ph: (060) 27 1375.
(25 Km south of Wodonga on the Yackandandah Road).
Specializing in ferns and indoor plants. Open daily, except Wednesdays, and all public holidays.

Andrew's Fern Nursery - Retail.

Cosgrove Road, Invergordon, 3636. Ph: (058) 65 5369.

Large range of ferns for beginners and collectors. Open daily, including public holidays, except Saturdays.

<u>Austral Ferns</u> - Wholesale Propagators. Ph: (052) 82 3084. Specializing in supplying retail nurseries with a wide range of hardy ferns - no tubes.

Cool Waters Fern Nursery - Wholesale Fern Propagators. Beech Forest, 3237. Ph: (052) 37 3283. Specializing in cool climate native ferns.

<u>Dingley Fern Market</u> - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (03) 551 1868. 233 Centre Dandenong Road. Dingley. 3172. Specializing in Ferns, Palms, Indoor Plants, Orchids and Carnivorous Plants. Open daily except Xmas Day.

Fern Acres Nursery - Retail.
Kinglake West, 3757. Ph: (057) 86 5481.
(On main road, opposite Kinglake West Primary School).
Specializing in stags, elks and birdsnest ferns.

<u>Fern Glen</u> - Wholesale and Retail. Visitors welcome. Garfield North, 3814. Ph: (056) 29 2375.

R. & M. Fletcher's Fern Nursery - Retail.
62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139. Ph: (059) 64 4680.
(Look for sign on Warburton Highway, 300m east of Seville shopping centre). Closed Tues. except on public holidays.

Mt. Evelyn Fern Centre - Retail.
63 York Road, Mt. Evelyn, 3796. Ph: (03) 736 1729.
Mail Orders welcome.

Ridge Road Fernery - Wholesale and Retail. Weeaproinah, 3237. Ph: (052) 35 9383. Specializing in Otway native ferns.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

<u>Jim & Beryl Geekie Fern Nursery</u> - Retail: 6 Nelson Street, Thornleigh, 2120. Ph: (02) 484 2684. By appointment.

Marley's Ferns - Retail. 5 Seaview St., Mt. Kuring-gai, 2080. Ph: (02) 457 9168.

QUEENSLAND:

Moran's Highway Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.

P.O. Box 467. Woombye, 4559. Ph: (071) 42 1613.

(1 Km. north of Big Pineapple. Turn right into Kell Road).