THE FERN SOCIETY

OFVICTORIA

Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 13, Number 3, April 1991

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 45.

Heidelberg West. Victoria. Australia.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Single \$13.00 (Pensioner/Student - \$9.00):

Family - \$16.00 (Pensioners - \$11.00): Overseas - A\$30.00 (by Airmail): Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

This year the British Pteridological Society celebrates its Centenary and will mark the occasion with two major events. The first will be an International Symposium on the Propagation and Culture of Pteridophytes, which will be held in London on 8th -11th July. This will be followed by a Centenary National Tour of British Gardens with Hardy Fern Collections on 13th -19th July.

We have written to the British Pteridological Society to offer them the congratulations of the Fern Society of Victoria Inc. on reaching this very significant milestone.

Our Society also reaches a small milestone this year in that our 1991 Fern Show on 13th and 14th April will be our tenth Show. The event will probably be over by the time this Newsletter reaches most of you, but perhaps it will serve as a last reminder for some. I hope to be able to report in the next edition that the event was a success in all areas, especially from the social viewpoint.

You will see opposite an announcement about arrangements the Committee has made to perpetuate the memory of Albert Jenkins. I trust that this action (which originated from a suggestion by Derek Griffiths) meets with the approval of all members.

Please note the new telephone number for our Secretary in the listing at the top of this page.

> Best regards, Bob Lee.

NEXT MEETING

DATE: Thursday, 18th April, 1991.

TIME: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

VENUE: The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens

Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.

TOPIC: Group Discussion on

"Handling Newly Purchased Ferns."

MEETING TIMETABLE

7.30 p.m. Pre-meeting Activities: - Fern, Spore, Book @ Special Effort Ticket Sales; Library Loans.

8.00 p.m. March General Meeting.

8.30 p.m. Group Discussion.

9.30 p.m. Fern Identification and Pathology.

9.40 p.m. Special Effort Competition.

9.45 p.m. Supper.

10.00 p.m. Close.

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MEMORIAL TO ALBERT JENKINS

To provide a lasting tribute to the immense contribution made to this Society by Albert Jenkins, our late Honorary Life Member, arrangements have been made with The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for one of his ferns to be planted in the Fernery at the Trust property "Rippon Lea" with an appropriate commemorative plaque.

One of the tree ferns in Albert's garden, a Cyathea woollsiana, will be purchased from his family by the Society and donated to the National Trust for the purpose. All costs incurred in removing and replanting the fern and installing the plaque will be met by the Society. The wording on the plaque will show that the fern was donated by the Society in Albert's memory.







SPEAKER REPORT - GENERAL MEETING - 21st MARCH, 1991

Guest Speaker: Keith Hutchinson, Immediate Past President and

Honorary Life Member of the Fern Society.

Topic: Photographing Ferns.

Keith began his talk with a quotation from the leading photographer Freeman Patterson:

"I photograph for the same reason that I scratch - because I itch! My best work is done when I am consumed with interest and enthusiasm in my subject. The subject is usually Nature in some form. Nature is the stimulus and the catalyst, and has been for a long while."

Such sentiments apply to fern lovers, who often itch to take photographs of fern subjects. However, there are a number of problems in photographing ferns, especially in natural settings.

Ferns are usually found in shaded dark places and being nearly all green do not give much colour variation. The background trees, shrubs and grasses are also predominantly green, so a good deal of thought is often needed to obtain a good photograph of ferns. As there is often not a lot of time to take a photograph - especially on bus trips! - it is important to have the basic principles well in mind to allow a shot to be composed quickly.

Camera and Film:

Because of their ease and speed of use, many people are moving to the compact automatic cameras with auto-focus and built-in flash in preference to the single lens reflex (SLR) cameras. The SLR is more versatile but bulkier to carry and slower to use.

Focussing an auto-focus camera on the relatively open rachis area of a fern can present problems, as the lens tends to focus on the more solid background. The solution is to focus on the base of the fern, hold the shutter button half way down to freeze the focus and then move the camera to compose the photo.

Fern photos generally have to be taken at a slow shutter speed to get sufficient depth of focus. The SLR camera on a tripod is the optimum here, as it allows the use of a slower speed film which guarantees freedom from grain. However, very good results can be achieved with automatic cameras by using a faster film - say, 400 ASA instead of 100 ASA.

Modern films do not give graininess problems with slides up to 400 ASA and results with print film can be acceptable even up to 800 ASA. Keith considers that Fuji slide film gives the best reproduction of green colours and has the further advantage of excellent slide mounts. Kodacolor Gold also gives good results.

Artistic Content:

The artistic content of a photograph is in many ways its most important aspect. It has five main factors:

- -Composition and Balance
- -Lighting and Contrast
- -Focus and Depth of Field
- -Interest and Impact
- -Use or Non-use of Flash.

Composition and Balance: Keith used the white board to illustrate various principles in the layout of a photograph.

One of the most important of these is the "thirds principle" under which the main point of interest in the subject should be located one third of the way in from one edge and one third from either top or bottom of the frame. For example, a rosette-shaped fern such as a Polystichum photographed from above should have its centre located one third of the height from the bottom of the photo and one third of the width in from one side. This allows a few complete fronds to arch across the centre of the field and show the detail while the rest are cut short. The same subject taken with the centre of the fern as a "bullseye" in the centre of the photo looks much less interesting.

Similarly, a tree fern should preferably be located with its top one third down from the top of the frame with the trunk one third in from the side. Ground ferns across the bottom of the picture combine with the tree fern to make an attractive L-shaped arrangement, and it is desirable that there be some material of intermediate height (preferably some smaller tree ferns) at the opposite side to add balance to the composition. The base of a tree fern should be included wherever possible to show its full height.

A path always adds interest to a scene. It should preferably enter from the lower left and lead towards the back of the scene so as to lead the eye into the photograph. A path going from left to right across the lower part of a scene tends to lead the eye quickly out of the photograph away from the main subject.

Where a scene includes the horizon it should never be located in the centre of the photograph. This tends to be one of the commonest mistakes made by beginners.

Keith stressed the importance of never using even numbers of the same subject in a photograph. This point is taken very seriously by judges in photographic contests.

An arrangement which often proves successful is the classical Japanese bonsai design with three points, nominally representing heaven, earth and man, arranged as an assymetrical triangle. Davallias often lend themselves to this layout.

Hanging baskets tend to be difficult and locating them centrally in the photograph is generally the only solution. It is best to include the supporting hook in the top of the photo, but if this is not feasible try to cut the wires off close to the basket. Lighting and Contrast: Contrast of light and shade is essential for a good photograph; nothing looks worse than a monotone green. A mirror can sometimes be of use here to reflect light in from the side of the scene on to the subject, as can a piece of white cardboard or paper.

Focus and Depth of Field: Achieving sufficient depth of field to get the whole fern in focus often requires a rather small lens aperture. This generally means using the slowest exposure speed possible under the poor lighting conditions frequently encountered. The risk of camera shake with slow exposures can be minimised by leaning against a rock or tree, bracing the elbows back against the ribs or using a bipod, which is much lighter to carry than a tripod.

Interest and Impact: This is an area where some preliminary thought pays dividends. You may, for example, want the photograph to tell a story about the environment where a fern grows and so need to consider what features should be included.

Nearly all fern scenes benefit from added colour. Some ferns have red new fronds but this is only at certain times of the year. A few autumn leaves or other coloured debris dropped on to a fern can add a useful amount of contrast.

Having people in a fern scene helps give a perspective on the size of the ferns. If people are present they should be in brightly coloured clothes, preferably red or a very bright blue; both these colours lift the photo and give a good impact. Care should be taken that people are not located directly in front of tree ferns or other tall objects so that these do not appear to be growing out of their heads!

A photo does not necessarily need a lot of detail to have interest and impact. Keith showed one very effective shot of the bottom half of a partly open door in the sunlit front of a house, where the darkened opening formed a classic L-shaped layout with the bottom of the door and colour and texture were provided by just a few autumn leaves scattered on the floor in the sunlight.

Texture is an important aspect of a photograph. Rocks with good texture and colour can often add a lot of interest to a fern scene.

Use of Flash: Flash often does not work out very well in photographing ferns. Shiny or wet fronds tend to reflect the light and come out white instead of green. Standing further back from the subject sometimes helps here, but smaller flash units are of little use beyond a maximum of five metres.

Keith proceeded to show a number of slides which illustrated the points he had made and proved that attention to these details was indeed the key to producing excellent photographs.

These were followed by slides that Keith had taken during the Society excursion to Marysville last October and some taken by Barry Stagoll on the day trip to Mount Worth State Park in November.

President Bob Lee thanked Keith for a very instructive and entertaining presentation. Members present endorsed these thanks by acclamation.

PROFILE OF COMMITTEE MEMBER

John Hodges

John attended our Fern Show in 1985 and whilst viewing the display, Dorothy Forte invited him to join our Society. Fortunately the invitation was accepted by both John and his wife Norma and have been active Members ever since.

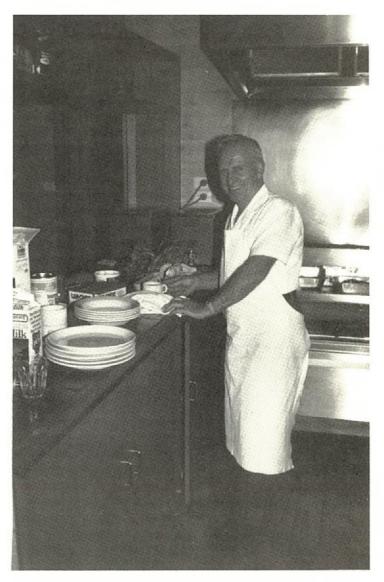
John is our Slide Bank Manager and vital member of our excursion team, always organizing the barbecue, food and drinks etc. In fact we would never think of planning excursions without first making sure John is

available. Whilst on our New Zealand trip, John cooked all our meals at the Motels including a great batch of scones!! With constant travelling we developed good appetites but John always met the challenge with a super meal. (Most N.Z. Motels have cooking facilities).

John and Norma live in Blackburn North, have 1 daughter, 4 sons and 5 delightful grandchildren. Although John is a very busy person with his job as a cleaner at Blackburn Primary School and family commitments, he can also find time to assist one day each week at the Kevin Heinze Centre for Handicapped people.

John also grows ferns comparable with the experts and had adapted some novel ways to display his ferns to great effect at our shows.

Finally during a rather long hike at the base of Mt. Ruapehu in New Zealand, we arrived back on the road only to find we were several kilometres from the carpark. Some of the older members were feeling pretty weary when suddenly our car pulled up beside them! John had quietly made his way back to the carpark and driven back. His first thought is always to help others.



John at work on behalf of Fern Society Members at Wilsons Promontory.

Keith Hutchinson

(John has been a Committee Member for five years and is also a member of the Show Committee. - Ed.)

THE PLATYCERIUMS OF NORTH QUEENSLAND IN THE WILD AND IN CULTIVATION

by Ralph H. Hughes

Horticultural Practices (continued) :-

Insects and Diseases:

The staghorn ferns commonly grown outdoors in Florida are cultivars. They grow mostly free of damage by insects and diseases to form clusters 4 to 6 feet in diameter in 10 to 20 years. Leading the list are P. bifurcatum 'Florida', P.bifurcatum 'Netherland', P. willinckii 'Lemoinei, and P.willinckii 'Payton' (P. sumbawense of trade).

Fungi attack nonacclimated introductions, particularly broad-leaved forms of var. hillii, and nondescripts of the trade subjected to artificially high humidity. Leaf spots and blotches are at their worst under still, warm conditions especially where the surface of fronds is regularly wet. A proven way to control leaf spot disease caused by Cercospora and closely related species is to improve ventilation, space plants farther apart, and remove and burn affected tissue. Spray 1 tbs./1 gal. water of Benomyl, Benlate or Dithane alternated at intervals of 10 days to two weeks.

Conversely, low humidity indoors encourages mealy bug infestations. To enhance their control, avoid crowding, provide adequate ventilation and circulation. Apply Malathion 1 tbs./l gal. water when insects appear, repeat applications when necessary.

Environmental Factors

Climatology:

The home gardener should strive for show winners that equal their optimum growth in the wild. Rarely is this accomplished because, at best, care given cannot be as selective as are growth requirements peculiar to each of the several species in nature. Weather records, however, suggest that growth requirements are attainable in the home garden.

The warm season rainfall pattern at selected stations in North Queensland and southwest Florida is seasonal: 8 to 18 inches in Cairns and 8 to 9 inches per month in Fort Myers. Each location has a relatively cool, dry season of 1 to 3 inches' rainfall per month. Cultivars self-propagate at both locations and grow profusely during the rainy season on rough bark of evergreen trees.

Adaptation involves a change of hemispheres from the tropics in Cairns to semitropics in Fort Myers. Mean monthly temperatures vary only from 70° F (20°C) to 80°F (30°C) in Cairns, to a more temperate mid 60's(15°C) to mid 80's (27°C) winter-summer in Fort Myers. (Fig. 2).

Growth Calendar:

Season of growth points up the need for diversity in management of staghorn ferns. An irregular growth pattern persists for the several species. The grower, therefore, must resort to selective hand-watering and/or other management practices to meet optimum growth requirements.

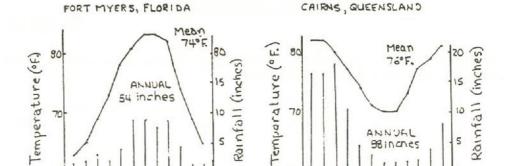


Fig. 2 - Monthly temperature and rainfall for species in cultivation at Fort Myers, Florida and Cairns, Queensland.

Courtesy the U. S. and Australia Weather Services.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	0	N	D
Rainfall						Inch	es -					
Ft. Myers	1.6	2.0	3.1	2.0	4.0	8.9	8.9	7.7	8.7	4.4	1.3	1.3
Cairns	16.6	16.6	18.1	10.4	4.3	2.9	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.0	3.9	8.0
Temperature						- °F						
Ft. Myers	63	65	69	73	78	81	83	83	82	74	69	65
Cairns	82	82	80	77	74	71	70	70	73	77	79	81

Inception and continuance of growth in cultivation is seasonal, varying from year-long for base fronds of <u>P.superbum</u> and foliage fronds of var.<u>venosum</u> to a short spring-summer season for foliage fronds of <u>P.superbum</u>. Growth of var.<u>veitchii</u> is in a 4 month spring-summer season, and ssp.<u>willinckii</u> is in an extended 6 month summer-fall season.

Rest periods are irregular and without consistent regard for season of rainfall. These occur concurrently only by the two varieties, bifurcatum and hillii, with 3 to 5 month spring periods of no growth of both basal fronds and foliage fronds.

Phenological records are scanty for plants growing in the wild. More field work is needed to better relate changes in nature with those in the home garden. For several introductions, acclimation is proving to be a continuing problem, whether propagation is through spore culture or by division of the parent plant. (continued)

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TIME RELEASE FERTILISERS - A Word of Caution

The following thought-provoking article comes from the Newsletter of the South Florida Fern Society Inc.:

"Some discussion on the time-release fertilisers (like Osmocote) indicates that there can be a hazard in using these types of fertilisers because of harmful salt buildup in the soil in the pot. From observation, the only time this seems to be a problem is when the grower has a misting system for their ferns which comes on several times a day. This keeps the little fertiliser balls constantly wet and so constantly releasing their fertiliser.

If you have a <u>watering</u> (not misting) system that comes on once a day, its heavier watering helps wash the excess salts right out of the soil and the balls have a chance to dry and stop the release of more fertiliser until the next day. Considering the high cost of these types of fertilisers, it doesn't make much sense to use them where they will be spent out long before they're supposed to anyway."

BOOK REVIEWS

by Barry White

"A Field Manual of the Ferns and Fern Allies of the United States and Canada" by David Ellinger.

The author is curator of ferns at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, which Institute also published the book in 1985.

The stated purpose of this book is to aid in the identification of all native or naturalised ferns and fern allies in U.S.A. and Canada (except Hawaii), a total of 406 species, subspecies and varieties. There are keys for identifying families, genera, species and subspecies.

The large majority of the book is devoted to descriptions of individual species giving a reasonably detailed botanical description, the distribution in U.S.A. and Canada (but no indication of occurrence elsewhere in the world), and a brief comment on cultivation.

The book includes 387 small colour photographs of ferns as a further guide to identification.

It is interesting to note the genera which are well represented in North America. For example there are 89 fern allies including 35 Selaginella, 20 Isotes (Quillworts), 20 Lycopodium (Club Mosses) and 13 Equisetum (Horsetails). Other genera with a good number of species include Asplenium - 27, Botrychium (Moonworts) - 25, Cheilanthes - 25, Thelypteris - 24, Notholaena - 23, and Pellaea -15.

The book (390 pages, approx. cost \$45) is an excellent one for information on, and assisting in the identification of ferns of U.S.A. and Canada.

"GENUS POLYPODIUM IN CULTIVATION" by Barbara Joe Hoshizaki.

The author is a very well credentialled fern expert. The publication covers a complex genus and the author includes 8 subgenera including Colysis, Microsorum, Phlebodium, Campyloneuron.

As the title states, it only includes those ferns in cultivation. It is also written from a U.S.A. perspective and therefore some Australian species are not included. There are some black and white photos but most illustrations are drawings which are quite useful.

There is a brief description of each fern, with a comment on the country of origin and with a comment on the country of origin its hardiness. Keys are provided for keying its hardiness and individual species.

Ppublished 1982, 2 small volumes 100 pages in total, approx. cost \$13.50. A useful publication but, as it is not comprehensive, of limited value. B.White

POLYPODIUM angustatum

FORTHCOMING GENERAL MEETINGS

MAY MEETING:

Date:

Sunday, 19th May.

Venue:

Chris and Lorraine Goudey's Fern Nursery,

No.25 Cozens Road, Lara.

(Melway Directory Ref. 222 H9)

Timetable:

1.30 p.m. Inspection of Ferneries.

3.00 p.m. General Meeting and Afternoon Tea.

Note:- Please bring your own food for Afternoon Tea.

Tea and Coffee will be provided.

JUNE MEETING:

Date:

Thursday, 20th June.

Time:

Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Venue:

The National Herbarium, South Yarra.

Guest Speaker: Dr Tim Entwisle, Botanist at the National Herbarium.

Topic:

"Victorian Native Ferns" - with special reference to

rare and endangered species.

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SPECIAL EFFORT WINNERS

March General Meeting

George Start

John Hodges

Bernadette Thomson

Marilyn Wood

Simon Hardin

Barry White



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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).