

**THE
FERN SOCIETY**

**OF
VICTORIA**

Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 13, Number 5, June 1991

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 45.
Heidelberg West. Victoria. Australia. 3081.

OFFICE BEARERS:

PRESIDENT:	Robert Lee	-	Ph. 836 1528
IMM. PAST PRESIDENT:	Keith Hutchinson	-	457 2997
VICE PRESIDENTS:	Terry Turney	-	571 8169
	Barry White	-	337 9793
TREASURER:	Marilyn Wood	-	434 3978
SECRETARY:	Bernadette Thomson	-	399 1587
SPORE BANK MANAGER:	Barry White	-	337 9793
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:	John Oliver	-	879 1976
EDITOR:			
BOOK SALES:	Derek Griffiths	-	336 3157

8 Susan Court, E. Keilor. Vic. 3033.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Single - \$15.00 (Pensioner/Student - \$11.00)
Family - \$18.00 (Pensioners - \$13.00)
Overseas - A\$30.00 (by Airmail)
Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

I should like to draw your attention to three notices that appear later in this Newsletter.

One is the statutory notification of our Annual General Meeting in August, which calls for nominations for positions on the Committee of Management for 1991 - 92 and items of General Business for discussion at the Meeting. All positions on the Committee fall vacant at the Meeting and some of the longer serving members do not wish to stand for re-election. Please give some thought to whether you are able to make a contribution to the future welfare of your Society by taking a place on the Committee. Newer Members with a fresh perspective are particularly welcome.

The second notice concerns the renewal of Annual Membership Subscriptions and, unfortunately, contains the news that we have had to increase subscription rates this year after holding them steady for three years. The reasons are explained in the notice.

On a more pleasant note, the third announcement gives details of the arrangements that have been made for some working bees in the Fernery at the National Trust property "Rippon Lea". This should be a good chance to meet together socially with lots of ferns handy for discussion, while doing something very tangible to assist maintain part of our National Heritage. I hope a reasonable number of Members will find it possible to come - and that it does not rain!

Best regards,
Bob Lee

N E X T M E E T I N G

DATE: Thursday, 20th June, 1991.
TIME: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.
VENUE: The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,
 Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.
 (Melway Directory Ref. 2L A1)
GUEST SPEAKER: Dr Tim Entwisle, Botanist at the National Herbarium.
TOPIC: "Victorian Native Ferns - Rare and Endangered Species."

MEETING TIMETABLE

7.30 p.m. Pre-Meeting Activities:- Sales of Ferns, Spore, Books
 and Special Effort Tickets ; Library Loans.
 8.00 p.m. June General Meeting.
 8.30 p.m. Guest Speaker.
 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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MAY GENERAL MEETING

Sixty Members and friends travelled to Lara for our May General Meeting which was held at Chris and Lorraine Goudey's nursery. A delightful sunny afternoon added to the enjoyment of the occasion.

We first inspected the numerous glass and "poly" houses and admired the vast range of ferns they contained. A pleasant afternoon tea period followed with ample supplies of tasty morsels brought by Members. We then had a brief information and discussion session, after which Chris gave us another demonstration of his techniques for growing ferns from spore (a follow-up to his talk in February).

Chris and Lorraine very kindly donated six large ferns to be drawn in lieu of our usual Special Effort. The lucky winners were Rod Cooper, Ian Forte, Kath Brown, Paulyne Liersch, Barry White and Garnet Frost.

The meeting concluded with enthusiastic applause to endorse a vote of thanks to Chris and Lorraine for their kindness in hosting the meeting (a lot of work had gone into preparations) and their generous donation of the ferns.

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DISCUSSION REPORT - GENERAL MEETING - 18th APRIL, 1991

Discussion Leader: Bill Taylor, Honorary Life Member and former Vice President of the Fern Society.

Topic: HANDLING NEWLY PURCHASED FERNS.

This subject seemed topical as an aftermath to our annual Fern Show the previous weekend when 2,484 ferns were sold. Bill Taylor led the discussion with his usual flair and good audience participation brought forth a wealth of information.

There was general consensus on the following as a desirable strategy to follow to give the best chance of success with new ferns:

(a) Select Carefully:

Lay a foundation for success by choosing a healthy fern - one which has a good colour, looks vigorous and has new growth coming. Check it carefully for pests and disease - check stipes and rachises for scale, new growth for aphids, etc. Spraying with half-strength Carbaryl with a few drops of Rogor added will control scale and many other pests.

One pest that is becoming more common is coconut scale. This is a tropical pest prevalent in Queensland that is being brought into Victoria all the time on Aspleniums (particularly Bird's Nests), Platyceriums and palms; it attacks a wide range of ferns. Although it is tropical, the scale manages to survive through the Winter and then thrives once Summer comes. It infests the undersides of fronds, where it has the appearance of short pieces of fine white cotton or desiccated coconut. It can be recognised from the top of the frond by pale yellow washed-out spots corresponding to where the scale is on the back. Most nurseries seem to be unaware of it; if you recognise it in a nursery, you should tell the proprietor.

(b) Quarantine:

Keep all new plants separate from the rest of your ferns for a few weeks to allow further checking for pests which might have escaped observation or be in an early stage of development.

Knock the fern out of the pot to check whether it needs repotting and at the same time check for root coccids (also known as root aphids or root mealybug). These appear as clusters of white round or oval bodies which look like mealybug. They excrete fine white waxy threads which look like webbing. They can be controlled by soaking the root mass in a weak (1/4 - 1/2 strength) solution of a systemic insecticide such as Rogor or a contact one like Malathion.

A plastic pot which contained a plant infected with root coccids was passed around for inspection. The deposit on the wall of the pot illustrated the risk of infection from secondhand pots if they are not properly cleaned. A thorough scrub followed by soaking in diluted household bleach (teaspoon per bucket) was recommended.

(c) Acclimatise:

You will rarely know the previous growing environment for the fern you have bought, but it will almost certainly have been more favourable than that in the home garden. Hence, it pays to put the new fern in a protected area at first and then gradually acclimatise it to its final location over a period of 3 - 4 weeks.

(d) Seek Information:

Find out what you can from books or other sources about the natural habitat of the fern. This is generally a very useful guide to the growing conditions it will need. If in doubt, seek advice from your fellow Members.

Whether a fern is a terrestrial or an epiphyte has a major influence on how it is potted or mounted and how it is watered. For example, if a fern is from the sub-tropics it pays to hold off water in Winter. This is important for Stags and Elks, which grow up in trees and are used to drying out for long periods, and particularly so for the Silver Elk which grows in very dry regions.

(e) Repot if Needed:

Repotting should be carried out soon if the inspection of the roots shows that the plant is root-bound. However, some judgement is called for here.

The big advantage of repotting immediately into your own mix is that it eliminates one variable in assessing the watering needs of the plant. Ferns from Queensland are nearly always in a heavy, rather soggy mix and repotting of these is essential.

Another factor in favour of prompt repotting is that many nursery mixes these days are based on pine bark with no added nutrients. Plants are fed frequently with liquid fertilisers and start to go backwards quickly under home watering conditions.

If a fern bought as Winter approaches is found to be root-bound, it is probably better not to repot, or to go up the absolute minimum in pot size, as this reduces the chance of overwatering during Winter. This comment does not apply to hardy Victorian natives.

The opinions of some of our leading growers were divided on the need to tease out roots when repotting. One pointed out that the roots of ferns grow straight out into surrounding new mix, unlike other plants where roots growing in a circle in a pot continue to do so in the ground. Under this line of thinking, teasing should only be done if there are a lot of dead roots or crocks in the bottom of the root mass or the fern is being divided.

The opposing view is that it is best to get rid of as much as possible of the old mix and any dead roots so as to give the plant maximum volume in which to develop new roots.

(f) Fernery Management:

When plants eventually reach the fernery, grouping them into different areas on the basis of their watering requirements can

make control of watering less taxing. Prolonged periods of excessive wetness are likely during Winter in an open fernery under shadecloth; installing a fibreglass roof is a worthwhile measure. Likewise, fitting fibreglass to the North wall to keep out hot winds can help a lot.

There was a good deal of discussion on the question of potting mix for epiphytes, small plants of which will normally be in a typical terrestrial mix when bought. Some concern was expressed about the risk of roots drying out if transferred to a too coarse mix.

The more usual options are to either use normal mix in a fibre-lined basket which gives perfect drainage, or an open mix in a plastic basket with drainage material at the bottom (and the saucer off). The type of mix generally favoured for epiphytes is a light fluffy one containing coarse sand, peat moss and shredded leaves in varying proportions.

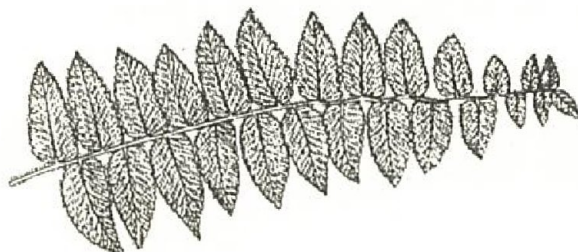
However, one Member has had outstanding success over five years with two Polypodiums in water-well pots. A normal mix was used initially and coarser material added gradually as the plants increased in size. On the other end of the scale, another Member who grows a lot of orchids uses standard orchid mix for his epiphytic ferns, with a little moss added if the plant is small. He uses spent orchid mix (after a couple of years use in orchids) for growing terrestrial ferns. Both types grow very well.

The disadvantage of using orchid mix is that more watering is required; in the open fernery a daily watering does not retain sufficient water in the mix. The solution is to put a plastic saucer in the bottom of the basket to hold a reservoir of water.

The trend in orchid mixes is towards using only pine bark on the grounds of simplicity and cheapness without reduction in performance, though some commercial mixes still incorporate other materials. These mixes have no intrinsic nutritional value and all the nutrients required by the plant, including trace elements, must be added. This is best done with slow release fertiliser pellets as the liquid feeding popular with orchids would have to be done too frequently for ferns.

The final comment of the evening was that it was important to promptly label a new plant with the date and where it came from and then add other information as appropriate, so that if the plant later died there would be a record to help decide what had gone wrong.

The President's thanks to Bill for so ably leading the discussion were supported by the acclamation of all Members present.



WORKING BEES AT "RIPPON LEA"

Monday, 1st July - 10.30 a.m. and 2.00 p.m.

Members who have visited the Fernery at "Rippon Lea" recently will have noticed that its state of maintenance has deteriorated from the high standards that prevailed in earlier times. This has resulted from the reduction in the number of gardeners employed on the property, a situation forced by the severe financial difficulties being experienced by the National Trust.

In view of the Society's involvement in the major refurbishment of the Fernery in 1985 through the donation of plants and in an advisory role, the Committee felt it appropriate to make an offer of help in the current difficulties. This was readily accepted by the Trust and agreed to by Members. The working bees planned for 1st July are the initial step.

A weekday was chosen because the "Rippon Lea" management felt that the much higher number of visitors at weekends would cause difficulties. Times in both the morning and the afternoon have been nominated to meet the wishes of Members as expressed at the May General Meeting.

"Rippon Lea" is located at 192 Hotham Street, Elsternwick (Melway Ref. 67 E2). On arrival, enter through the gatehouse and identify yourself as a member of the Fern Society. Oliver Frost will have arranged for us to be admitted without charge. He will meet us at the gatehouse at the above times, but if you arrive later come direct to the Fernery.

Bring your own small hand tools if possible, but there will be plenty of other equipment available. Oliver will have an urn set up for us and we will have some tea, coffee and biscuits available for refreshment breaks.

Please phone Bob Lee on 836 1528 if you would like any further information.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The twelfth Annual General Meeting of The Fern Society of Victoria Inc. will be held at 8.00 p.m. on Thursday, 15th August, 1991 at The National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.

Business transacted will be:

- 1 Receive and deal with the President's Report on behalf of the Committee of Management.
2. Receive and deal with the Treasurer's Report.
3. Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members for 1991 -1992.
4. General Business

(continued page 56)

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st July. An application form for renewal of Membership is included with this Newsletter.

If there are any changes to your address or other details since last year, or any errors in the current address label for your Newsletter, would you please highlight the fact appropriately on the application form (or attach the label marked with the amendments required).

It would be appreciated if all Members would write their best estimate of the date (month and year) when they first joined the Society in the blank area at the bottom left-hand corner of the form. As an Incorporated Association, we are now required by law to record this information on our Register of Members and our current records are incomplete.

The Committee has regretfully found it essential to increase subscription rates by \$2.00 this year to partially recoup the rising margin of Newsletter costs over subscription income. This is the first increase in subscriptions since 1988, when a minimal rise of \$1.00 was applied. Since then we have covered increases in costs in all areas from our other income, mainly that from our annual Fern Show. However, Fern Show profit has been declining in recent years and this year it was over \$1000 less than that last year. Even with the present increase in subscription rates we expect to have to draw on our reserve finances in the coming year to meet rising expenses. The Committee will continue its endeavours to minimise costs and advise on progress.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - (continued)

Nominations for Committee of Management.

Nominations for the positions of Office Bearers and Committee Members must be received by the Secretary not less than seven days prior to the Annual General Meeting. Nominations should be in writing, signed by the proposer and seconder, and accompanied by the written consent of the nominee. Nominations may be received at the Annual General Meeting only if insufficient have been received previously to fill all vacancies.

General Business.

Items to be discussed and voted on under General Business at the Annual General Meeting must be notified to the Secretary in writing not less than 21 days prior to the Meeting, so that details may be included in the August Newsletter which will be posted to all Members seven days before the Meeting in accordance with the Rules of the Society.

Bernadette Thomson
Secretary.

FORTHCOMING GENERAL MEETINGSJULY MEETING:

- Date: Thursday, 18th July.
- Time: Commencing at 7.30 p.m.
- Venue: The National Herbarium, South Yarra.
- Guest Speaker: Barry White, Vice President and Spore Bank Manager of the Fern Society.
- Topic: The Genus Dryopteris.

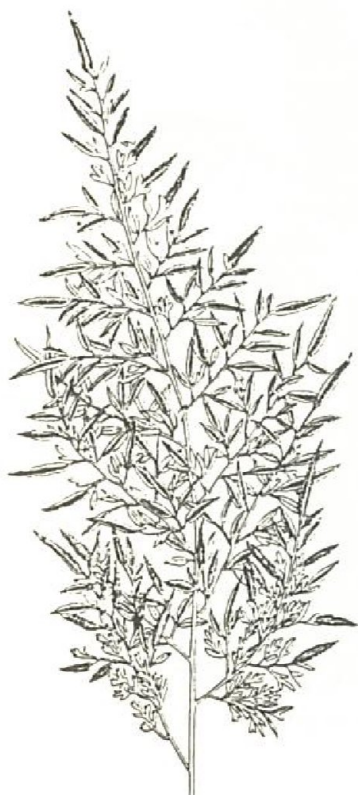
AUGUST MEETING - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING


- Date: Thursday, 15th August.
- Time & Venue: As For July.
- Guest Speaker: Chris Goudey, First President and Honorary Life Member of the Fern Society.
- Topic: Ferns of Zimbabwe and other items of interest from recent visit to Zimbabwe by Chris and Lorraine.

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The balance of the article on "How to Identify a Fern" by Barbara Joe Hoshizaki will be published next month.

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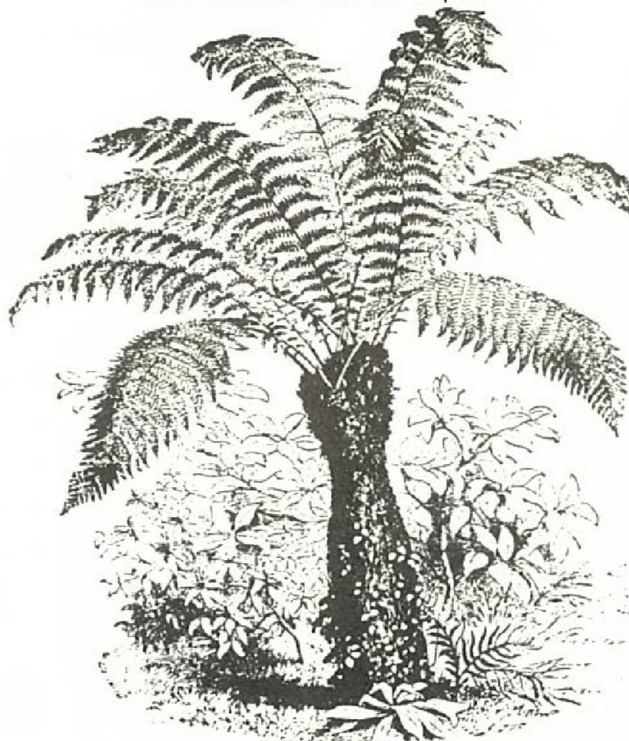
4/375 Bayswater Rd., Bayswater. Vic. 3153.
P.O. BOX 302, Bayswater, Vic. 3153. Tel. Melb. (03) 720 2200

SPORE LIST

Ordering: The following spore is free to those who donate spore.

Otherwise members 20 cents each sample, non-members 50 cents, plus \$1.00 to cover p. and p.. Available at meetings or by mail from Barry White 24 Ruby St West Essendon Vic. 3040. (Ph 03.337 9793). There is no charge for overseas members but to cover postage two International Reply Coupons would be appreciated.

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SPORE DONATIONS

Thank you to the following who have donated spore : Bill Taylor, Jimmy Punter, Keith Hutchison, Dorothy Forte, Steve Clemesha, Ray Harrison, and Ripponlea.

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.

Austral Ferns - 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.

Dingley Fern Market - 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.

Fern Glen - 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.
Weeaprounah, 3237. Ph: (052) 35 9383.
Specializing in Otway native ferns.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Jim & Beryl Geekie Fern Nursery - 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).