

**THE  
FERN SOCIETY  
OF  
VICTORIA**

**Inc.**

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**NEWSLETTER**

VOLUME 14 Number 10, November 1992

# FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

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

OFFICE BEARERS:

President:	Barry White	Phone	337 9793
Imm. Past President:	Robert Lee	"	836 1528
Vice President:	Terry Turney	"	807 4886
Secretary:	John Hooper	"	434 1239
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Editor:	Robert Lee	"	836 1528
Book Sales:	Derek Griffiths	"	336 3157
	(8 Susan Court, East Keilor, Vic., 3033)		

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Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

**November Meeting:** The topic for this month's meeting is "Ferns of Fiji", presented by Mary Frost and the group who visited Fiji several months back. Fiji is a popular tourist destination and it also has magnificent ferns. Mary and her group will be presenting some of the fern and other delights that confront the visitor to Fiji.

**Fern Competition:** The fern competition category for this month is a *Polystichum*. We have had a good display of ferns each month for the fern competition; keep up the good work. I re-emphasise that the competition side is the less important aspect. The prime aim is to have a good range of ferns on display. So do not be put off if your fern is not as good as it might be, particularly if it is one which may be a little unusual.

**Visit to Chris Goudey:** Keep in mind the visit to Chris and Lorraine Goudey's place on Sunday, 22nd November - from 1.00 p.m. onwards. Chris has the best collection of ferns in Australia and no-one should miss the opportunity to be overwhelmed by the variety of ferns and their quality. To find the Goudeys' place head down the Geelong Highway, take the Lara turn-off and head south on Avalon Road towards the Bay. The second road on the right is Cozens Road and the Goudeys' is the first place on the left in Cozens Road.

**Book Sales Officer:** As indicated at the last meeting, Derek Griffiths is resigning as Book Sales Officer. Derek has served the Society well for a number of years. He served three years as Secretary, having taken on that job as a new member of three months, and now has served three years as Book Sales Officer, and has also acted as Publicity Officer for the Society. Our sincere thanks go to Derek for his efforts on behalf of the Society.

The Society now needs someone to take over as Book Sales Officer. It  
(continued opposite)

**NEXT MEETING**

**DATE:** Thursday, 19th November, 1992.

**TIME:** Commencing at 7.30 p.m.

**VENUE:** The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,  
Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.  
(Melway Directory Ref. 2L A1)

**TOPIC:** FERNS OF FIJI

**SPEAKERS:** Mary Frost and others.

**MEETING TIMETABLE**

7.30 p.m. Pre-Meeting Activities:- Sales of Ferns, Spore, Books  
and Special Effort Tickets ; Library Loans.

8.00 p.m. November General Meeting

8.20 p.m. Topic of the Evening

9.30 p.m. Fern Competition Judging  
Fern Identification and Pathology  
Special Effort Competition

9.45 p.m. Supper

10.00 p.m. Close.

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:** (continued)

is not an arduous job and does not involve attending Committee meetings. If no-one can be found to take on the role, book sales will have to go into limbo. If you think you may be able to assist or would like more information, please let me know.

'Rippon Lea' Weekend: The Society worked in with the National Trust in promoting the fernery at 'Rippon Lea' over the weekend of 24th and 25th of October. We mounted a small display and conducted tours of the fernery. The number of visitors over the weekend was disappointing; however, there were a number of competing attractions. My thanks go to Jack Barrett, Bernadette Thomson and Bob Lee for their assistance.

Christmas Present: Please keep in mind the opportunity to give membership of the Society as a Christmas present. A gift membership at Christmas will have the added bonus of continuing through to the middle of 1994. You pay for one year and they will get a year and a half's membership. It would be an excellent present for a friend or relative with an interest in gardening.

Regards,  
Barry White

SPEAKER REPORTS - GENERAL MEETING - 15TH OCTOBER, 1992

We were treated to slide-illustrated talks by two speakers:  
 - Barbara Joe Hoshizaki, leader of a group of visiting American fernists, and  
 - Chris Goudey, Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

(a) FERNS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGOby Barbara Joe Hoshizaki

Trinidad and Tobago are adjacent islands in the West Indies off the coast of Venezuela. Vegetation here has a mixture of Central American and South American elements. Ferns from New World areas tend to be less dramatic in frond shapes than Old World ferns and are more difficult to cultivate.

The islands have a tropical climate, being located about the same distance from the equator as the tip of Cape York. The terrain in the mountainous areas is very similar to the rainforests of northern Queensland with buttressed trees, vines and Strangler Figs. There are frequent similarities between the ferns which fill corresponding ecological niches in the two areas. However, flowering plants have developed different themes, with a lot of Orchids in Australian forests but Anthuriums and Tillandsias in Central America.

The first fern illustrated was *Polybotrya osmundaceae* which roots in the ground and then climbs a tree, similarly to *Stenochlaena palustris* in Australia. It is an interesting fern but its fronds are too far apart for it to be of use as an ornamental.

*Lygodium volubile* scrambles on the forest floor like our *Lygodium reticulatum*. They are very similar in appearance, except that the veins of *L. volubile* are not reticulate. There are several other *Lygodiums* in the area, including *L. microphylla*, *L. japonica* and *L. palmata*.

*Polypodium latum* occurs frequently on trees and is found in both narrow and broad forms. Our *P. polycarpon* (*Microsorium punctatum*) fills the same ecological niche. Similarly, *Polypodium triseriale* has its Australian ecological counterpart in *P. subauriculatum* (now *Goniophlebium subauriculatum*).

*Asplenium serratum* is like the Australian Bird's-nest Fern, *Asplenium australasicum*, but is serrate along the margins.

Several species of *Elaphoglossum* occur on the islands and *E. lingua* was shown. The only Australian species are *E. callifolium* and *E. queenslandicum*, both from NE Queensland; the latter is endemic.

*Cyathea hirsuta* is one of a number of tree-ferns (mostly tender) in the region, occurring mainly on the slopes. On the ground are different species of *Dicranopteris* and *Gleichenia*, which occur in sunny exposed places on banks which have been cut away.

Filmy-ferns are found on damp slopes as they are here. Two shown were *Trichomanes osmundaceae* and *T. elegans*. A close-up of the latter showed a little trigger coming out of the sori with a little tube-like or trumpet-like indusium.

Beside a beautiful pool was *Hypoderris brownii*, a very coarse and not very attractive fern but of interest as it is found only on Trinidad and is in a genus by itself. It is characterised by having a strange little black structure around the sori.

A contrast to the surrounding beauty was a large *Bufo marina*, well known to us as the Cane Toad which is spreading so rapidly.

Plants of *Hemionitis palmata* were seen growing on a roadside and a rock. This is a delightful little fern with a maple-like frond, which is very easy to grow but needs greenhouse conditions in cool areas. A characteristic feature of *Hemionitis* is that the sporangia follow the veins. Some are proliferous along the margins and can be propagated by breaking off the buds.

A number of *Tectaria* species grow prolifically and a slide of *T. incisa* was shown. Four or five species of *Tectaria* are found in northern Queensland. Most *Tectarias* are easy to grow from spore.

Several Maidenhairs were shown. *Adiantum concinnum* grows as a weed throughout Trinidad and Central America but requires a heated glasshouse for cultivation in temperate areas; its ecological equivalent in Australia would be *A. aethiopicum*. *A. raddianum* also occurs in this region and it will grow outside in California though sometimes with difficulty: *A. capillus-veneris* is the most cold-resistant of the *Adiantums* from this area. *A. latifolium* is an attractive fern, but it is not common in cultivation as its running rhizome makes it more suitable for the garden and it requires tropical conditions. The beautiful *A. macrophyllum* is popular in tropical fern collections. In nature, it is always found near streams and in very humid areas. New growth on plants in the wild is quite red.

*Blechnum occidentale*, the fern on the cover of Barbara's book "Fern Growers Manual", is very common on Trinidad and varies a lot. She grows it as a garden edging plant as it does not grow very tall and its spread is restrained.

The island has a wide variety of brilliant flowering plants of which we saw several, including giant Anthuriums, Torch Ginger (widespread but not a native) and Hot Lips, which has an exotic name but less pleasant associations as a relative is used in the preparation of the emetic Ipecac.

The presentation concluded with a view of a sunset in Tobago.

(b)

#### AUSTRALIAN TREE-FERNS

by Chris Goudey

The total number of tree-fern species in the world is uncertain, but there are about 650-800 *Cyathea*s, 25 *Dicksonias* and 12 *Cibotiums*. The *Cyathea* genus has 17 species and one sub-species in Australia (including Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands) and seven species in New Zealand (including the Chatham Islands). There are three *Dicksonia* species in Australia and three in N.Z. There are no *Cibotium* in either country.

Professor Tryon from Harvard University split the *Cyathea* genus into  
(continued page 119)

AMERICAN VISITORSby Barry White

The visit by the six Americans (Barbara and Takashe Hoshizaki, Susan MacQueen, Denia Mandt, and George and Janet Keyes) was very successful from our viewpoint, and I believe also from their's. We had the best crowd for quite a while to the October meeting, the talks by Barbara Hoshizaki and Chris Goudey were excellent, and the supper was well appreciated. Thanks go to Bernadette Thomson for arranging the eats.

The Friday excursion to the Otways saw sixteen of our members and two from the Fern Society of South Australia join the Americans. The weather remained fine, an almost miraculous event considering our record-breaking wet weather and the fact that the Otways is the wettest area of the State. The Goudeys' place was the first stop, and it took an hour and a half for a rushed look through the fernery. It was then on to Turton's Track for lunch and Melba Gully in the afternoon, familiar places to most of our members. The final stop was at Ray Edwards' place near Lavers Hill. Ray runs a wholesale fernery, propagating ferns on a large scale from spore and selling trays of small ferns. Ray has a unique building for his fern propagation. It is basically a large trench about 100 metres long cut through the top of a hill, and then roofed over with pine logs cut from his property and covered in plastic - a relatively cheap and very efficient structure. One member estimated that Ray had about 250,000 young ferns in his greenhouse.

It was too much to expect to have two fine days in a row and the Saturday indeed saw its good share of rain. Chris Goudey met the Americans and first took them to 'Rippon Lea' - another spot which cannot fail to impress the visitor whether they be fern lovers or not. Fortunately, the weather cooperated to the extent that most of the rain occurred while the visitors were in the bus. From 'Rippon Lea' the group went to Dingley Fern Market, where they admired the tree ferns, and then headed up into the Dandenongs for a walk up Sassafras Gully, which despite the slippery nature of the track was still enjoyed by the visitors. The final stop was at Bob Fletcher's nursery where again the visitors admired the range and quality of the ferns.

Despite their interest in ferns, or perhaps because they had been exposed to so many, the two items which attracted a lot of attention from the Americans were the Bottle Tree at 'Rippon Lea' and the insectivorous plants at Dingley Fern Market. They were also very appreciative of all the hospitality shown to them during their stay in Victoria.

The members of our Society who attended the meeting or went on the Otways trip very much enjoyed the opportunity to meet the fernists from America, and the contacts made will no doubt be very useful in the future.

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A FERN ODYSSEYby Ray Best

Many years ago I had a visit from a young lass who was interested in the cultivation of ferns. She brought with her an early British work on ferns titled "European Ferns" by James Britten. This was a beautifully produced edition, leather bound and embossed in gold with gilt edged leaves, that had been left to her by her favourite aged maiden aunt. This somewhat eccentric aunt lived in a large house on a big block of land in Victoria.

Knowing my interest in ferns, the lass brought the book for my assessment of its worth. Although I assured her that such a treasure should forever remain her property, she insisted on leaving it with me for my assessment. This proved very fortunate for me as the section on propagation gave a detailed description of *Osmunda regalis*, along with several well-presented black and white line engravings of each year's development. A close inspection of these revealed a marked resemblance to an Australian native Violet for the first five years of life.

Up to this time I had made several attempts to cultivate *Osmunda regalis* from fresh spores airmailed to me by A.R. (Matt) Busby of Aston University, England, a fellow member of the British Pteridological Society. Matt personally handled the fresh supply of these green spores, which are viable only for short periods.

All fern propagators experience from time to time what are called "ring ins" that appear in spore mixtures. One of these in our area is a native Australian Violet which is, of course, removed when it appears. In this manner we were destroying our cultures of *Osmunda regalis*! Add to this the fact that these English ferns are deciduous, disappearing each winter to appear again in spring and only resembling the mature fern in the sixth year of growth, and successful propagation becomes difficult. Mr Britten suggested that it was much quicker to carefully remove a mature plant from its natural habitat - not a suggestion I would now recommend.

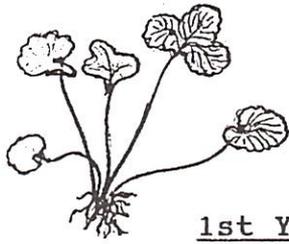
Armed with this new information, I finally managed to develop a new plant of *Osmunda regalis* from spore. From this I made a colour photo print and then prepared two watercolours to illustrate the details. Copies were sent to Matt Busby, who was thrilled to find that his fresh spores had proven viable. I am sure that without the information in the book success in propagation would have evaded me.

I have decided to include here a poem that concerns this fern. As some doubts existed about the naming of this species, an examination of early folk lore in Scotland revealed a story that became the subject of this poem by Edith E. Warren of the British Pteridological Society ('Fern Gazette', Vol.7, No.5):

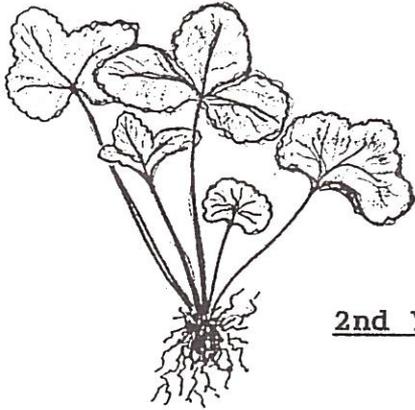
*Osmunda regalis*, "The Monarch of Ferns" !  
 Growing in woods and by damp mossy burns,  
 A fern with a story for youth and for age,  
 A fern with a legend on history's page.

On the banks of Loch Tyne lived Osmund the bold.  
 He worked as a ferry-man so we are told,  
 Ferrying passengers over the wave,  
 Osmund the bold or Osmund the brave.

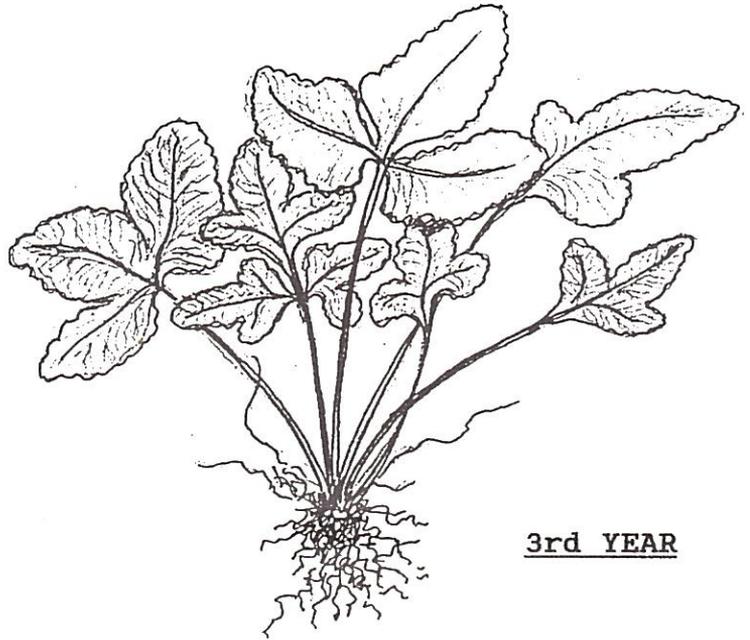
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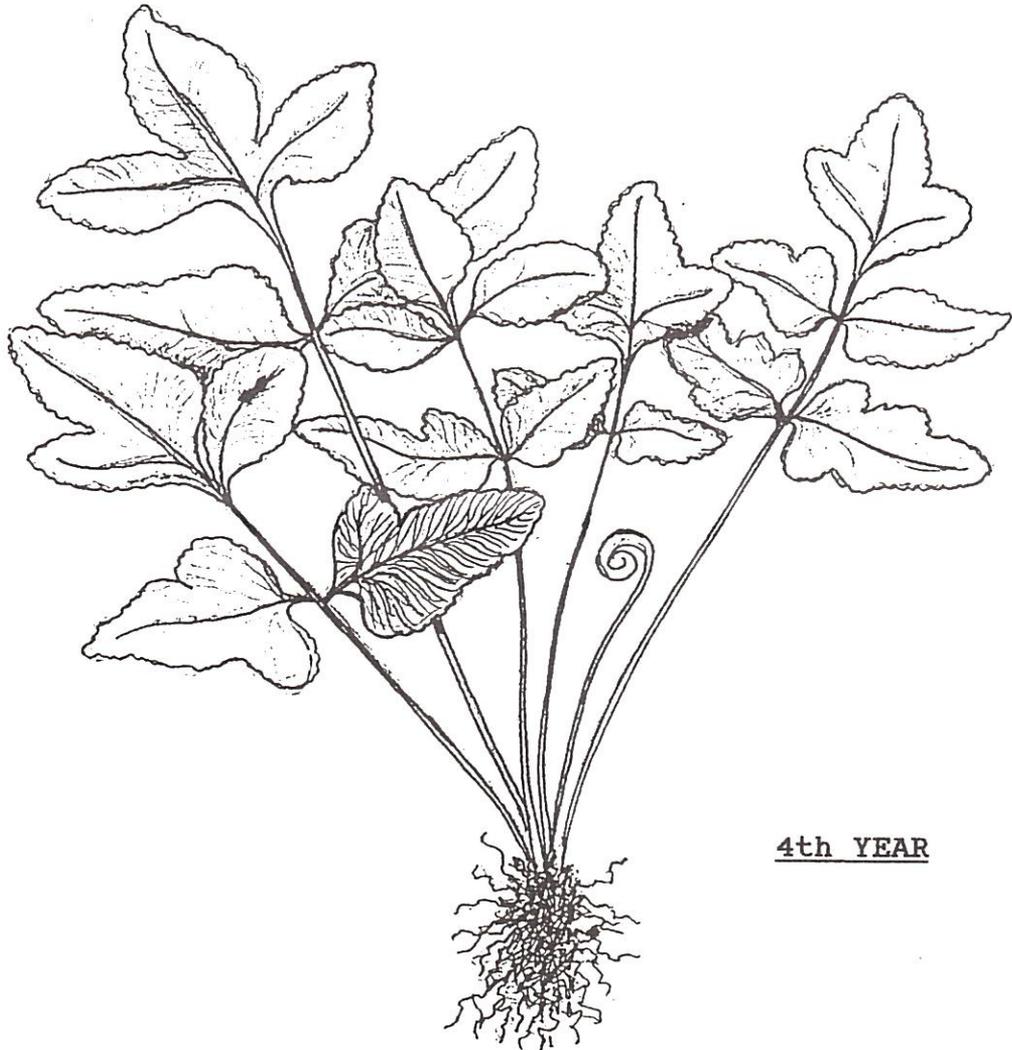
1st YEAR



2nd YEAR



3rd YEAR



4th YEAR

OSMUNDA REGALIS - 1st - 4th YEARS



OSMUNDA REGALIS - MATURE PLANT

In a cot by the shore lived his daughter and wife.  
 They were the light and the joy of his life,  
 Brave Gerta his wife both virtuous and fair,  
 And Hilde his young daughter with red golden hair.

Fair Hilde loved the lake side and fleet as a faun,  
 She would haste from the cot in the shimmering dawn,  
 To watch her dear father depart o'er the blue,  
 Waving and waving a loving adieu.

Then humming and singing would slowly return,  
 Through the King Fern that crowded the banks of the burn,  
 Their tall gallant fronds so green and so fair,  
 With blossoms as golden as Hilde's pretty hair.

One morning, Oh horrors!, a fugitive band  
 Came hurrying to tell them there were Danes in the land,  
 Then onward in terror they fled them away,  
 But Osmund all fearful looked round in dismay.

One moment he wavered then quick as a flash,  
 "To the boat, Hilde and Gerta" and thither they dash.  
 He rowed to an island with Fern Royal smothered  
 And bade them lie there with fern safely covered.

Then back to his cottage full fleetly he hied,  
 Not a glimpse of his daughter or his wife he spied,  
 As he sped o'er the waters and back to his cot,  
 Not a moment too soon e'er the Danes reached the spot.

They did him no hurt for they wanted his aid,  
 To ferry them over the waters unpaid!  
 But gladly he worked the whole of that day,  
 To ferry those troops safely out of his way.

With the evening came respite and there by the shore,  
 His best and dearest in safety once more,  
 He knelt down to thank the good father above,  
 With Hilde and Gerta who both shared his love.

In the far years that followed how often they told  
 Of that long day so bleak and so cold.  
 Said Hilde "My good King Fern must have a new name",  
 So "Osmund the Royal" the King Fern became.

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#### DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting will be held on the usual third Thursday evening, i.e., 17th December, in spite of the proximity to Christmas.

Keith Hutchinson will give a talk about his overseas visit in May to the World Horticultural Floriade in Holland (held only at ten-year intervals), followed by visits to a number of famous gardens, including the Keukenhof Tulip Gardens in Holland, and Wisley Gardens and Kew Gardens in England.

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AUSTRALIAN TREE FERNS

(from p.113) six different sub-genera and placed most Australian species into *Alsophila* and *Sphaeropteris*. *Cyathea leichhardtiana* and *C. celebica* did not fit properly into the *Sphaeropteris* group and were later placed by the late Professor Holttum of Kew into a new sub-genus.

Chris showed slides to illustrate the Australian and New Zealand tree-ferns plus some from other countries:

*Cyathea australis* (Rough Tree-fern) is the most common species in south-east Australia and is endemic to this country. It occurs in Tasmania, King Island and right up the east coast to SE Queensland.

*Cyathea cunninghamii* (Slender Tree-fern) is the only species of tree-fern we share with New Zealand, where it is called the Gully Fern. It occurs in Tasmania, Victoria, as an isolated patch in Lamington National Park in SE Queensland, New Zealand and the Chatham Islands. It always occurs in very low-light, wet places. Although it germinates well and spreads fairly quickly in areas where it is established, it is officially classed as an endangered species in Victoria because of its limited distribution.

(to be continued)

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FERN COMPETITION

The category for the fern competition at the October meeting was a Victorian native fern. Congratulations to the following winners:

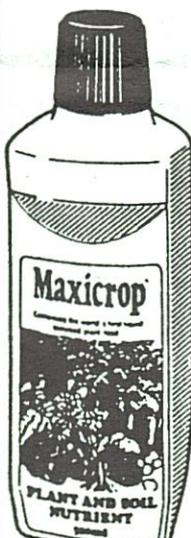
First:	Ian Broughton	<i>Psilotum nudum</i>
Second:	Les Vulcz	<i>Cyathea marcescens</i>
Third:	Ian Broughton	<i>Pyrrhosia rupestris</i>

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SPECIAL EFFORT WINNERSOctober General Meeting

Barry White  
Ray Harrison  
David Griffiths (2)  
Betty Allgood  
Simon Hardin  
Don Fuller  
Joy Horman

\* \* \* \* \*



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Opinions expressed in articles in this Newsletter are the personal views of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the Society.

## BUYERS' GUIDE TO NURSERIES

### VICTORIA:

Andrew's Fern Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.  
Melbourne Road, Arcadia, 3613. Ph: (058) 26 7285.  
Large range of ferns for beginners and collectors.  
Open daily 10 am - 5 pm except Christmas Day.

Austral Ferns - Wholesale Propagators. Ph: (052) 82 3084.  
Specialising in supplying retail nurseries with a wide range of hardy ferns; no tubes.

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

Fern Acres Nursery - Retail.  
Kinglake West, 3757. Ph: (057) 86 5481.  
(On main road, opposite Kinglake West Primary School).  
Specialising in Stags, Elks and Bird's-nest Ferns.

Fern Glen - Wholesale and Retail. Visitors welcome.  
D. & I. Forte, 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 Tuesday, except on public holidays.

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

Viewhaven Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.  
Avon Road, Avonsleigh (near Emerald), 3782. Ph: (059) 68 4282  
Specialists in Stags, Elks, Bird's-nests and Native Orchids.

### NEW SOUTH WALES:

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

Kanerley Fern Exhibition and Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.  
204 Hinton Road, Nelsons Plains, via Raymond Terrace, 2324.  
Ph: (049) 87 2781. Closed Thursdays and Saturdays.  
Groups of more than 10 must book in advance, please.

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

### QUEENSLAND:

Moran's Highway Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.  
Bruce Highway, Woombye (1 km north of Big Pineapple; turn right into Keil Mountain Road). P.O. Box 47, Woombye, 4559. Ph: (074) 42 1613.