

**THE
FERN SOCIETY
OF
VICTORIA**

Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 16, Number 8 September 1994

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

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

OFFICE BEARERS:

President	(vacant)		
Acting President:	Barry White	Phone	337 9793
Imm. Past President:	Robert Lee	"	836 1528
Vice-President:	Terry Turney	"	807 4886
Secretary:	(vacant)		
Treasurer:	Don Fuller	"	306 5570
Membership Secretary:	John Oliver	"	879 1976
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	(25 Ewing Street, Brunswick, Vic., 3056)		

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

The elections at the Annual General Meeting were a little disappointing. We still have a good committee and I welcome onto it two new members in Bill and Bev Gouge. Don Fuller is continuing on as treasurer, Terry Turney as vice-president, and Bernadette Thomson, Margaret Radley, George Start, John Hooper, Simon Hardin, John and Norma Hodges as committee members. Our thanks go to all of these. John Hooper is not able to continue as secretary, and also my term as president has come to its statutory end. Unfortunately we were not able to fill these two critical positions and it will be up to the incoming committee to sort matters out. In the meantime I am serving as acting president.

There was some interesting discussion last month on conservation issues. The Society has never got involved in conservation issues but there has often been the feeling that we should, and at the 1992 A.G.M. a new set of Objectives of the Society were adopted and these included the phrase "to promote the conservation of ferns and their habitat". In May 1990 the Department of Conservation and Environment produced the publication "Rare or Threatened Plants in Victoria". The list included 43 species of ferns of which six are on the endangered list, the remainder are in the rare or vulnerable category. As a fern society we should be concerned about this, and taking a keen interest in the care and preservation of the fern habitats in the State. However any such involvement should be based on strong factual information and as a starter the Society should be assisting in gathering this information whether it be from the literature or by undertaking some of the actual work. Particular points of interest would include determining the status of individual species, the significance of different areas as ferns habitats, and the effect of various forestry practices on the fern population.

(continued on page 89)

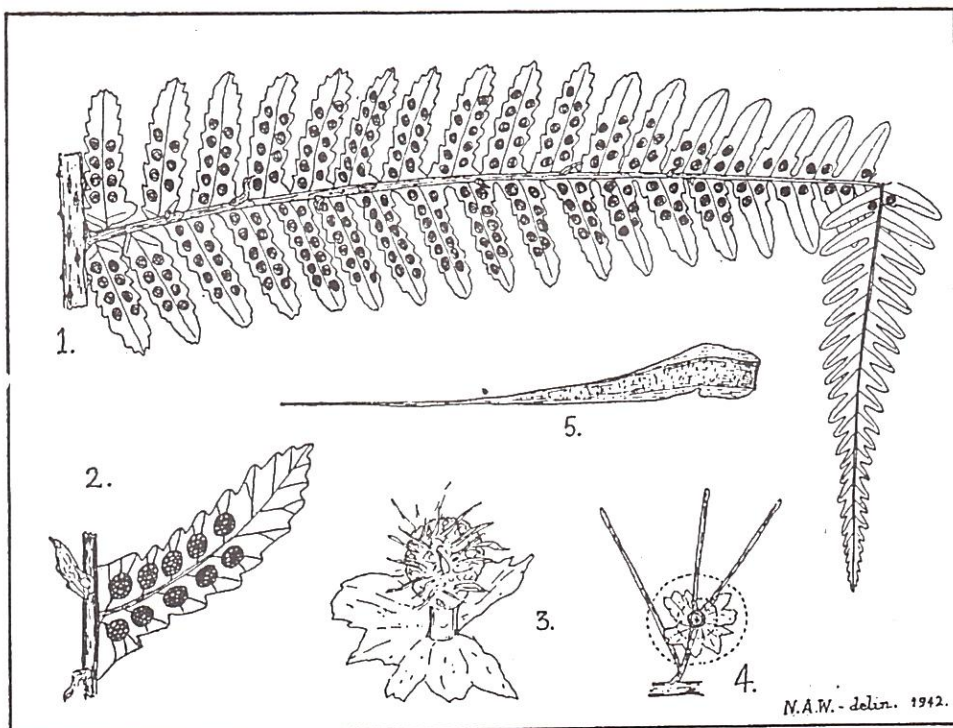
NEXT MEETING

- DATE:** Thursday, 15th september, 1994.
- TIME:** Commencing at 7.30 p.m.
- VENUE:** The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,
Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra.
(Melway Directory Ref. 2L A1)
- TOPIC:** **TREE FERNS: HARVESTING, EXPORT AND MARKETING**
- SPEAKER:** Neil Pike, Fern World Nursery

MEETING TIMETABLE

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 7.30 p.m. | Pre-Meeting Activities:- Sales of Ferns, Spore,
and Special Effort Tickets ; Library Loans. |
| 8.00 p.m. | September General Meeting |
| 8.30 p.m. | Invited Speaker |
| 9.45 p.m. | Competition Judging
Fern Identification and Pathology
Special Effort Competition |
| 10.00 p.m. | Supper |
| 10.15 p.m. | Close. |

FERN COMPETITION: The category for this month is any fern native to Victoria.



Skirted Treefern, *Cyathea marcescens*

- 1—Secondary pinna, 2—Pinnule, 3—Receptacle and indusium, 4—Position of sori on veins, 5—Scale from butt of frond.

SPEAKER REPORT - GENERAL MEETING - 18TH AUGUST, 1994

Speaker: Gillian Dunk

Topic: HISTORY OF FERNS & FERNS IN CONTAINERS

(Report by Ray Harrison)

Despite her well known book "Ferns for the Home Garden, first published in 1982 and reprinted many times, Gillian herself disclaimed being an expert but preferred to describe herself as a "passionate amateur". Be that as it may, she unquestionably revealed herself to be a most knowledgeable fern lover with a very broad interest in and a deep fascination for the beauty of ferns. She was billed to talk on "Growing Ferns in Containers" and chose to deal with the subject /through the history of ferns and more or less obliquely dealt with ferns in containers. This was achieved through her beautiful slides. Some of the pots were display pieced fit for an art gallery. She must surely have left the message that our lovely ferns deserve to be recognised by display in appropriate containers, the one enhancing the other.

We were taken from the giant mosses of Devonian times (about 390 million years ago), through the 30 metre high *Archeopteris* ferns of the Carboniferous era (350 million years ago) through to the present day fern forests of the high country of Victoria., The early ferns and fern allies are ancestral to our modern ferns although a few, like *Angiopteris*, are still extant with relatively little modification. A number of slides showed fossil ferns from Australia, which has a rich heritage of fossil ferns. Gillian commended two good books on fossil history: "The Greening of Gondwana" by Mary White and "Time in Our Hands".

She took us into the "secret life" of ferns, as an example of which the moonwort, *Botrychium lunaria* was supposed to have magical powers, including the ability to impart invisibility. But the second "secret life" of ferns is associated with their croziers and we were shown a number of examples showing the tension in their uncoiling.

Among her examples of terrariums were her two lovely glass domes with ferns and *Selaginella*. She thought *Selaginella* grew better in terrariums than did ferns. Her pictures of *Marsilea* and *Azolla* were enhanced by the lovely large bowls used for containers. She repeated a warning of one of her friends who cautioned that these plants should never be grown in ponds at ground level as several of his visitors had stepped onto his pond and he suspected several were still there under the fronds.

The beauty of ferns has inspired much art, especially as revealed in old paintings. Gillian showed pictures of art objects with fern motifs, including ironwork patters, a teacup, a silver crumb tray with an etched fern pattern and an old teapot of hers, (which incidently makes excellent tea). If you liked Gillian's 1982 book on ferns you will find her new edition which has been brought up to date, is simply called "Ferns" (Angus & Robertson, 1994), and is certainly presented in a more upmarket way. It would make a good book for a fern enthusiasts coffee table or a gift to a new fern grower.



The fern case was popular for species requiring extra humidity and protection

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from pg 86)

September meeting Conservation issues are also very relevant to the September meeting. Neil Pike will be talking about aspects of harvesting tree ferns from the bush, replanting practices, and the marketing of tree ferns in the U.K. and Europe. It may be a pity to see the tree ferns bull-dozed during timber harvesting, but if it is well controlled then some good can come from it. Anyway Neil is developing a thriving business in this area and it will be interesting to hear his story. The fern competition category for September will be a "Victorian Fern", i.e. any fern native to Victoria.

Please remember the September meeting will be the last one at the Herbarium until February as the Herbarium is putting on a special three month display. We do not want members turning up at the Herbarium only to find that there is no meeting.

October Excursion To repeat the advice in the last Newsletter, on Sunday 16th of October we will have an excursion to the fern nursery of Andrew Francis in Arcadia. As well as his commercial fern nursery Andrew also runs Castle Creek Orchids. The nursery is located on the east side of the Goulburn Valley Highway 20 k south of Shepparton. Transport will be by private car; if any member requires assistance with transport please let me know and transport will be arranged.

We will meet at Andrew's nursery at 11 am. Lunch will be provided but bring your own chair. After lunch we will visit the ferneries of two of our Avenel members - Dot Miniken and Lyn Gresham. To assist with the catering it will be necessary to have an approximate idea of the number attending. We will be taking names at the September meeting, alternatively please phone me on 337 9793 or Don Fuller on 306 5570.

And keep in mind the excursion to Chris and Lorraine Goudey's fernery at Lara on Sunday 27th of November.

Barry White

Acting President

A Visit to "TASSELDOM"

Keith Hutchinson

Before returning from holiday at Broadbeach Qld., I felt I must make a trip into the hinterland as I had not been there for about 3 years. I noticed a few more restaurants and craft shops but the big surprise was the Fern Farm at Eagle Heights. Denise and Dennis Drysdale have built a superb new building for craft sales and Devonshire teas. It is quite unique and a very pleasant spot to enjoy tea or coffee whilst looking out upon the fernery.

After looking around at some very nice tassel ferns and *Drynaria* hybrids with plenty of nest fronds!, Dennis took me into a giant dome house some 15 or so metres high to view his private fern collection. Tree ferns in excellent condition were abundant. A beautiful specimen of *Cyathea youngii* with stipes covered in bronze red hairs glowing in the sunlight, also a *Cyathea cooperi*, although 3 metres high still had all fronds intact right down to its base. Many other rare tree ferns were spread throughout the walk which takes one under a waterfall. The centre piece a massive tree trunk (it fooled me as its made of concrete) just covered in stag ferns in perfect condition. Ground ferns and baskets of epiphytes were also plentiful.

This was a most enjoyable experience and I'm sure if any members were to visit Eagle Heights, Tassledom should be your first call. It is only about 35 mins from the coast, and my sister, who is a connoisseur of Devonshire Teas, vows Tassledom has the best on the coast. I've no doubt Denise and Dennis would make you feel very welcome.

THE "PLASTIC" FERN

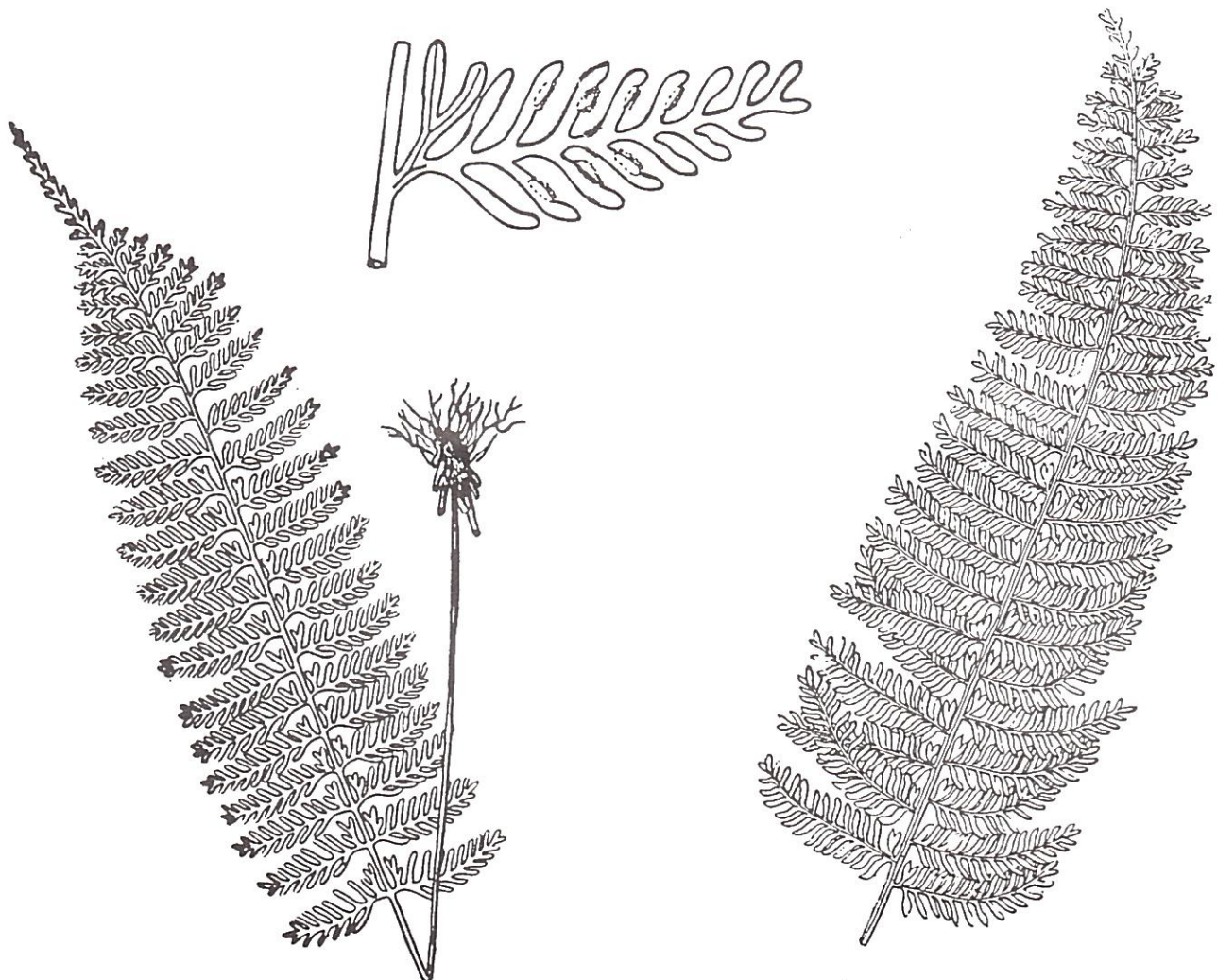
Terry Turney

A couple of months ago the fern competition was won by Fran Harrison, with a small specimen of *Asplenium belangeri* also known as the "plastic" fern. The name has come from the feel of those fleshy and shiny fronds - almost as if made of plastic! The fern is an ideal basket fern and prefers a fibrous free draining potting mixture. It forms a spongy mass of roots which serve as a water reservoir (like its close relative, the more common *Asplenium tenerum*). Moreover, those leathery fronds may look delicate but they will survive considerable drying out without permanent damage.

This beautiful fern is native of Malaya, Indonesia, Borneo and Thailand and is generally found as an epiphyte, growing on mossy trees or rocks, by streams or other wet places in tropical forests. In temperate areas such as Melbourne, it appears to appreciate some heat in wintertime - not recommended for planting in your garden! It also seems to have received a five-star rating in the Good Food Guide for snails - they really love this species!

It is easily propagated from spore or from buds on the underside of the frond which readily develop into young plantlets. This plant is well worth the effort growing.

Incidentally, it is another case where there has been a recent name change. It was originally improperly named by the botanist, Bory, in 1833. Its correct name is now *Asplenium thunbergia*.



1994 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is my third and final report to you as president. It has been a privilege and I thank you for the honour.

MEMBERSHIP Twenty five new members joined the Society during the year. It is essential that we keep up the flow of new members into the Society to compensate for some inevitable loss each year. All members should be acting as recruiting agents for the Society. In particular, our Newsletter may suffer if membership is not maintained.

FINANCIAL Our financial position has shown improvement although we still have some way to go to get into a balanced situation. Don Fuller as Treasurer has done excellent work in keeping track of our financial records and he is well supported by our auditor Ron Angwin.

MONTHLY MEETINGS This is a core function of the Society and I believe it is functioning well except that attendance at monthly meetings is disappointing considering the quality of the talks. The average attendance is about 40, which is about a sixth of our total membership. Suggestions on how to attract more members to meetings would be welcome. The majority of speakers last year came from within our own ranks, and we had two speakers from interstate.

EXCURSIONS Two excursions were held during the year. The first was the weekend in Gippsland last November. The main focus of the trip was the Tarra-Bulga National Park.

A day excursion was also held to the Acheron Way on the 29th of May. This trip was capably lead by George Start who knows the area like the back of his hand. Both excursions were blessed with good weather and plenty of ferns.

SHOWS The Fern Show was held at the Herbarium on the 16 and 17th April, and as we did not hold one last year it was imperative that we have one this year. We nearly didn't because of a lack of a chairman, but again thanks go to Don Fuller who stepped in and did an excellent job in this role. Our thanks also go to the many people who assisted, the participation of so many not only lightened the work load but added significantly to the success of the Show as a social function. Despite some disappointment with the public attendance the Show was quite successful and worked well at the new venue. The Society also co-operated with the National

Trust in mounting a small display and information stand during the Rippon Lea "Focus on the Fernery" Oct 23 and 24th last year. Don Fuller took capable charge of this function when I departed the scene for a stay in P.N.G.

NEWSLETTER I frequently receive very positive comments about the contents of our Newsletter. The quality of the Newsletter is most important, the Newsletter is the chief link with the majority of our members, and thus has a major role in keeping members informed. The editing of the Newsletter each and every month except January is a major job and the Society is deeply indebted to the editor Bob Lee. The major lack in the Newsletter is the limited number of contributors, this is up to you, the general members of the Society, to correct.

Thanks also go to those who have assisted in the production and mailing of the Newsletter: Jean Trudgeon, Margaret Radley, and John Oliver.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT The Committee of Management has functioned well over the year. We did have the sad loss early in the year with the death of the newly appointed vice-president Henry Rossell. Henry had only recently joined the Society but was prepared to hop in straight away and assist in the running of the Society.

My thanks go to all the committee members for their contributions over the year - Terry Turney (Vice-president), John Hooper (Secretary), Bob Lee, John and Norma Hodges, Bernadette Thomson, Margaret Radley, George Start, and Simon Hardin.

LIBRARY David Radford has continued to look after the library and to lug the increasing number of books along to the meetings and we thank him for his efforts. The Society spent about \$600 on books this year thus adding considerably to the value of the library as an information source. The expenditure cannot be maintained at this amount but the policy is to add continuously and steadily to the library.

BOOK SALES Stephen Ziguras has continued on in the role of book sales officer. There has been little in the way of new books recently but the

ociety is still able to offer new members books at a considerably reduced price. Our thanks to Stephen for looking after this on behalf of the Society.

SPORE BANK The spore bank is an important aspect of the Society's work as it provides members with a cheap source of spore for a fascinating aspect of fern growing. The work of John Hooper as assistant spore bank manager is appreciated. Donors of spore are also much appreciated as the spore bank could not exist without them.

MERCHANDISING At our meetings over the past year the Society has been providing Osmocote, Maxicrop, baskets, basket liners, labels and pens at a discounted price. This is an extra service to members and provides a little bit of profit to the Society. I thank Keith Hutchison and Don Fuller for organising the sales.

OTHER NON-ELECTED POSITIONS A good number of other people have contributed to the success of the Society over the year. The suppers

are an important part of each meeting and our thanks go to Norma Hodges, Jean Boucher, and Nancy Perry for their work in providing supper every month; to Margaret Radley and Joy Horman for the selling the raffle tickets; to John Oliver as property manager and keeper of the membership records; and in particular to Chris Goudey for undertaking the sometimes contentious role of fern judge, for providing ferns for sale at an attractive price at the meetings, and for freely making himself available as a source of information to the Society. I also wish to thank members who bring along ferns for the fern competition, or for the fern table. The presence of a variety of ferns adds much to the atmosphere of the meetings.

Finally I thank all members for their support over the year, and I look forward to the continuing development of the Society.

Barry White
President



ANTROPHYUM LATIFOLIUM BL.

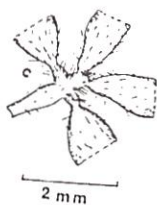
AUSTRALIAN FERNS AND FERN ALLIES

NEW SPECIES AND NAME CHANGES

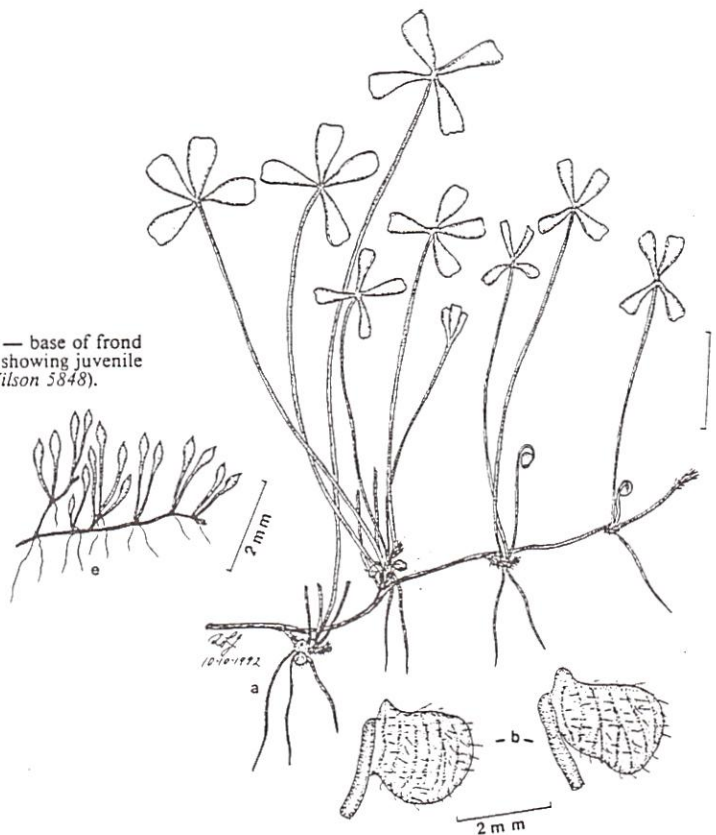
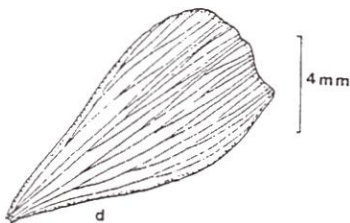
Two well known Australian botanists, R.J. Chinnock (Adelaide Botanic Gardens) and David Jones (Nat. Botanic Gardens in Canberra) have recently published some notes on Victorian pteridophytes. These revisions will be included in sections in both the forthcoming *Flora of Victoria* and the *Flora of Australia*.

1. *Marsilea costulifera*¹

This is a new species of "nardoo", found mainly in the western parts of Qld, NSW and Vic and extending into Sth Aust. Like other species of nardoo it is found growing in mud or shallow water on the edges of swamps and billabongs. It is locally common and in the past has been considered to be a variety of the Narrow Leafed Nardoo (*Marsilea angustifolia*). However, the new species is quite different, in having much smaller fronds and shorter, broader pinnae. The ranges of the two species are also quite separate, with the Narrow Leafed nardoo confined to the tropical regions of NT and WA. The name "costulifera" means "bearing little ribs" and refers to the small ribs found on the "seed capsule" (sporocarp).



Marsilea costulifera D. Jones. a — portion of a plant. b — sporocarps. c — base of frond showing arrangement of leaflets. d — leaflet. e — portion of young plant showing juvenile fronds. (a-d from the Type collection; e from Booberoi Ck, NSW, K.L. Wilson 5848).



3. *Isoetes drummondii* subsp. *anomala*²

This sub-species of the Plain Quillwort has also been recorded in several localities in Victoria as well as WA, SA and NSW. It differs from the common species again in the shape of its megaspores and in not generally producing microspores.

4. *Tmesipteris obliqua*²

This is suggested as the new name for the Long Fork-fern, formally known as *Tmesipteris billardieri*. The species is the largest and most robust of the Australian fork-ferns and is known to grow up to 70 cm long. It is common in southern NSW and in Vic. on the bases of treeferns and on *Todea barbara*.

(continued next Page)

¹ D.L. Jones, *Muelleria*, 8, 65 (1993).

² R.J. Chinnock, *Muelleria*, 8, 57 (1993).

AUSTRALIAN FERNS AND FERN ALLIES - (Cont.)

NEW SPECIES AND NAME CHANGES

2. *Isoetes pusilla*²

Very little has been recorded about this quillwort species, which has been collected only four times in shallow rock pools in the Beechworth, Wimmera, Hawksdale and Chiltern areas of Victoria. At first glance, quillworts look very much like grasses and are easily overlooked as fern allies. These plants are quite unusual in producing two types of spores - large "megaspores" and much smaller "microspores". These spores then produce separate "female" and "male" prothallia, with the male fertilising the female prothallus to produce a new plant. The clubmosses (*Selaginellas*) behave similarly.

Isoetes pusilla resembles the more common *Isoetes muelleri*, but differs mainly in the shape of the megaspores, and also in producing many more microspores. The species name "pusilla" refers to the smaller size of the species relative to *I. muelleri*.

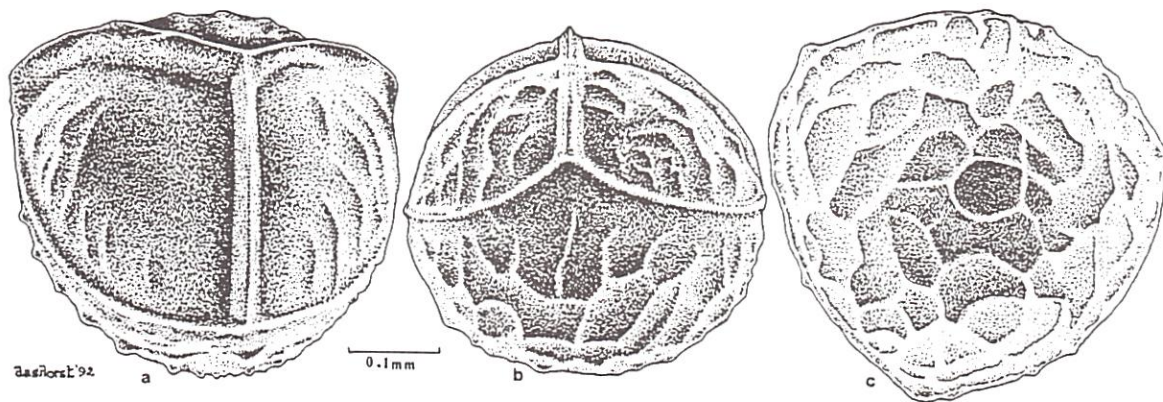


Fig. 1. *Isoetes pusilla*. a — proximal view, b — side view, c - distal view of megaspore. Drawn from scanning electron micrographs of isotype (MEL).

MORE ON DRYNARIAS

Coral Lindbeck, Kanerley Fern Exhibition and Nursery

A quick note to add to the bank of information on Drynarias. I feel, though, that if Rod Pattison were to contribute his thoughts on the matter, I would quickly be likened to someone describing a flood to Noah!

I feel that young Drynarias are quite happy in solid pots (as opposed to penetrable fibre-lined baskets) for at least two, and maybe more, growing seasons at our latitude 200 kms north of Sydney. Once a good ball of rhizome is established, then transfer to a fibre, bark or scotchbrite lined basket. The rhizome will quickly emerge and the nest, or basket, leaves will surround the liner within a couple of seasons. If using bark or coconut fibre, this will mean that a replacement liner won't be necessary. Alternatively, vegetative divisions can be put straight into scotchbrite lined wire baskets and will not require any major attention for years and years. If the liner is the type that has slits for overlapping, the rhizome will usually find these, but a few nicks with a sharp knife in obvious places will allow an escape route.

A well established basket of nest leaves is very attractive on its own, but of course, the combination of both types of fronds is spectacular. These ferns are always conversation pieces. They grow well here amongst trees in dappled sunshine, as well as under shade cloth, and also totally indoors provided the indirect light is good. I use 9 month slow release Nutricote after pruning in Aug-Sept and water as necessary - obviously less in cold weather. They are easy to grow and require minimal care. There are many varieties available, some of which have huge, showy fronds up to 6 or 7 foot long.

DISCOUNT SUPPLIES TO MEMBERS

As a special service to members attending our meetings, the Fern Society has recently purchased in bulk, several items for sale at prices considerably lower than normal retail prices.

- * Plant labels (90 mm, 3½") in packets
- * Labelling pens (black, ultra-fine)
- * Maxicrop Plant and Soil Nutrient
(Please bring along your own 500ml, 1 or 2 litre liquid container)
- * Wire hanging baskets and liners (various sizes)

Members who are unable to attend our regular monthly meetings may contact Don Fuller [Ph: (03) 306 5570] for further details.

AUGUST FERN COMPETITION

The category for the fern competition for the August meeting was a Fern and Container. Congratulations to the following winners:

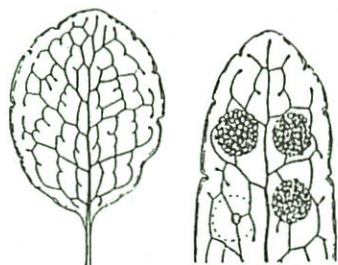
First:	Don Fuller	<i>Davallia sp.</i>
	Dick Kissane	<i>Asplenium sp.</i>
Second:	Jack Barrett	<i>Assorted ferns in bamboo pot</i>
	Jack Barrett	<i>Asplenium aethiopicum</i>
Third:	Jack Barrett	<i>Assorted ferns in ceramic pot</i>

The draw for the exhibitors' fern prize was won by Dick Kissane.

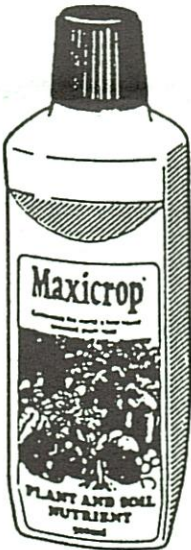
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SPECIAL EFFORT WINNERS August General Meeting

F. Harrison
M. Potter
A. Whytcross
D. Mayne
M. Radley



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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, nor does mention of a product constitute its endorsement.

BUYERS' GUIDE TO NURSERIES

VICTORIA:

Andrew's Fern Nursery / Castle Creek Orchids - Retail. Ph: (058) 26 7285.

Goulburn Valley Highway, Arcadia, 3613. (20 km south of Shepparton).

Large range of ferns and orchids for beginners & 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.

Coach Road Ferns - Wholesale. Monbulk. Ph: 756 6676.

Retail each Saturday and Sunday at the Upper Ferntree Gully Market (railway station car park),

Melway Ref. 74 F5. Wide selection of native and other ferns. Fern potting mix also for sale.

Fern Acres Nursery - Retail. Ph: (057) 86 5481.

Kinglake West, 3757. (On main road, opposite Kinglake West Primary School).

Specialising in Stags, Elks and Bird's-nest Ferns.

Fern Glen - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (056) 29 2375.

D. & I. Forte, Garfield North, 3814. Visitors welcome.

R. & M. Fletcher's Fern Nursery - Retail. Ph: (059) 64 4680.

62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139. (Look for sign on Warburton Highway, 300m east of Seville shopping centre). Closed Tuesday, except on public holidays.

Kawarren Fernery - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (052) 35 8444.

Situated on the Colac - Gellibrand Road, Kawarren (20 km south of Colac).

The Bush-House Nursery - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (055) 66 2331

Cobden Road, Naringal (35 km east of Warrnambool). Ferns - trays to advanced. Visitors welcome.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Jim & Beryl Geekie Fern Nursery - Retail. Ph: (02) 484 2684.

6 Nelson Street, Thornleigh, 2120. By appointment.

Kanerley Fern Exhibition and Nursery - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (049) 87 2781.

204 Hinton Road, Osterley, via Raymond Terrace, 2324.

Closed Thursdays and Saturdays. Groups of more than 10 must book in advance, please.

Marley's Ferns - Wholesale. Ph: (02) 457 9168.

5 Seaview Street, Mt. Kuring-Gai, 2080. All Fern Society members welcome. By appointment.

QUEENSLAND:

Moran's Highway Nursery - Wholesale and Retail. Ph: (074) 42 1613.

Bruce Highway, Woombye (1 km north of Big Pineapple; turn right into Keil Mountain Road).

P.O. Box 47, Woombye, 4559.