

Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

# NEWSLETTER



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**Vol. 25, Number 1**  
**January/February 2003**



# **FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.**

**POSTAL ADDRESS:**

P.O. Box 45, Heidelberg West, Victoria, 3081

**E-mail:** [http://gardenbed.com/clubs/clubs\\_vicferns.cfm](http://gardenbed.com/clubs/clubs_vicferns.cfm)

## OUR SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES.

The objectives of the Society are:

- \*to bring together persons interested in ferns and allied plants
- \*to promote the gathering and dissemination of information about ferns
- \*to stimulate public interest in ferns and
- \*to promote the conservation of ferns and their habitats.

### OFFICE BEARERS:

President:	Ian Broughton	Phone	(03) 5964 6402
Imm. Past President	Chris Goudey	"	5282 3084
Vice-President	George Start	"	5962 5059
Secretary	Barry White	"	9337 9793
Treasurer	Don Fuller	"	9306 5570
Membership Secretary	Rex Gresham	"	5796 2466
Spore Bank Manager	Barry White	"	9337 9793
Librarian	David Radford	"	9598 8398
Book Sales	Ivan Traverso	"	9836 4658
Editor	Lyn Gresham	Ph/Fax	5796 2466

"Kilpara", Selectors Road, Mangalore, Vic, 3663. E-mail <lynrex@mcmedia.com.au>.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Jean Boucher 9707 1592, Jack Barrett 9375 3670,  
 Gay Stagoll 9844 1558, Norma Hodges 9878 9584. Brenda Girdlestone 9390 7073  
 Mirini Lang 9886 6109

### SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Single -	\$14.00	Pensioner/student	\$11.00
Family -	\$16.00	Pensioner Family	\$13.00
Organisation	\$16.00		

Overseas - \$21.00 - Payment by international bank cheque in \$A please. Sent by Airmail.

### MEETING VENUES:

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre is at 39 Wetherby Road, Doncaster (Melway 47; H1).

Others at members' gardens or as advertised on the following page.

**Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.**



Opinions expressed in this newsletter are the personal views of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Society, nor does mention of a product constitute its endorsement.

### TIMETABLE for EVENING GENERAL MEETINGS:

- 7.30 Pre-meeting activities - Sale of ferns, spore, books, merchandise and Special Effort tickets. Also library loans and lots of conversation.
- 8.00 General Meeting.
- 8.15 workshops and demonstrations.
- 9.15 Fern identification and pathology, Special Effort draw.
- 9.45 Supper and another good yarn.
- 10.00 Close.



## 2003 Calendar of Monthly Events

Thursday 20th February 8.00pm at Kevin Heinze Garden Centre

### Preparation Of Ferns For The Show

A General Discussion Led by Don Fuller

Competition: A well-groomed fern.

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Thursday 20th March 8.00pm at Kevin Heinze Garden Centre

### Islands of Ferns.

Terry Turney

Competition:

\*\*\*\*\*

Thursday 17th April 8.00pm at Kevin Heinze Garden Centre

### Problem Fern Forum

Competition: Most challenging problem.

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26th and 27th April

### Fern Show

The excitement is mounting.....THE SHOW is not far off!

See page 5 for information and ideas about ways you can get involved in the big event!

# *Are you still with us?*

**If the wrapper of your LAST newsletter had a coloured spot on it, and you haven't paid your subs recently, you are reading your final newsletter. Please send your subs very soon to Don Fuller to regain membership of the Fern Society.**

**We would certainly miss you and don't want to lose you.**

**The editor apologizes to Don and to members that this note was omitted from the November/December newsletter.**





# THE PRESIDENT'S PLACE

Greetings, and the very best wishes for the new (although now not so new) year.

If you live in south-eastern Australia, with little doubt many of your ferns look as though they have spent a few hours in an oven. Yesterday (25th Jan) the temperature here was on 42° for most of the afternoon, it dropped to 27° overnight and at 5.30 this morning climbed back to around 35°, and we were cool compared to some of you. Chris Goudey told me that they got to 46° in Lara - that's nearly 115° Fahrenheit! And some of our members will have spent the last couple of weeks with the constant threat of losing their homes to the bushfires raging through the region.

As we are closing down our nursery, we have had two trips to Sydney in the last two months to deliver plants from our collection to a number of people there. During the first trip, we had a meal with a family in Wollongong, in a cloud of smoke and constant rain of ash from a bushfire just a few kilometres away - they were evacuated later that night but, fortunately, their home and fabulous collection of tree ferns were spared. On our way home, we were held up for about an hour on the Hume Highway as a fire cut the highway and raced through Mittagong. On our second trip, we spent one night at Terrey Hills in the northern suburbs of Sydney - there was a small bushfire not far away the next day. As we were heading south from Sydney on the Saturday evening, we drove for a couple of hours in the most dreadful pall of smoke, I found it very sobering to realize that we were breathing the remains of some of the hundreds of homes that were destroyed in Canberra that day. Soon after driving out of that smoke we were heading into another column of smoke and, as we drove into Yass to stay the night, we heard on the radio that there was a major grass fire south of the town - fortunately far enough south to not pose an immediate threat to the town. The next day we drove for a couple of hours through southern NSW in the dense pall of smoke from the fires through the Victorian Alps - at times visibility was down to 1-2 Km even when we were 150 Km from the fires!

With these experiences, and with the bush and forests in our own area becoming so dry that many trees are in advanced water stress, and with the weather we had yesterday - I thank God that our area has not yet experienced the fires that much of Vic and NSW have.

I expect that all of us who are suffering these conditions have many ferns that are looking decrepit to say the least. What can I say but mulching and

watering - patiently, in hope of the promised return to above average rainfall and below average temperatures that has been promised by our weather bureau as the El Nino breaks up.

I thoroughly enjoyed our November talk on Dahlias by Rex Gresham (especially seeing I won one of Rex's dahlias - it is doing very nicely and flowering well, thank you Rex). The photos were fabulous and the information very helpful and I think I can almost understand why you would give up a small corner of your garden to grow one or two Dahlias instead of more ferns - but don't overdo it!

Our Christmas break-up was relaxing, as usual, and a fun time. A really big thank you to Norma who organised the meal and to Rex for running the auction - we all had a lot of fun and raised \$324 to be shared between the Society and the Kevin Heinz Garden Centre.

At our February meeting, we will have a discussion on preparing your ferns for the Show and competition. PLEASE BRING IN FERNS FOR IDENTIFICATION OR IF YOU NEED ADVICE ON PRESENTATION FOR THE SHOW. The competition category for the evening will be any well groomed fern of any variety - or any badly groomed fern(!) - all these plants will be used as the basis of our discussion.

The speaker and topic for our March meeting are yet to be finalized.

I hope you and your ferns survive the rest of the summer season.

Best wishes

*Ian Broughton*



**The best fern to grow this year?**



# Fern and Vireya Rhododendron Show

Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th April 2003

The Fern Show in 2003 will again be a joint venture with the Australian Rhododendron Society (this is our 6th) and will be held on the weekend of the 26th 27th April 2003. The venue will again be the Mount Waverley Community Centre (cnr. Miller Cres. and Stephenson Road, opposite the Mount Waverley Railway Station).

The Show will be open 10-00am to 5-00pm on Saturday and 10-00am to 4-00pm on Sunday. The admission charge will be Adults \$4-00, Concession \$3-00 and Children under 15 free. Members of both societies who contribute to either the competition or display, plus those acting in an official capacity for the day will be admitted free. For other members the admission charge will be the concession rate of \$3-00.

To conduct a show in 2003 will provide us with many challenges. One is the fact that the only suitable and available date will require us to set-up on Anzac Day (Friday 25th April). However our greatest challenge will be overcoming the loss of the excellent display, and the considerable number of sales ferns, supplied in previous years by Ian Broughton, which will not be available this year. Because of the higher level of participation, and the good membership response from the last show your committee was of the opinion that we should accept the risks associated with conducting a show in 2003 and challenge our members to respond accordingly.

The Show provides us with our best opportunity of attracting new members which is essential for our survival as a society. It is therefore of great importance that we ensure its success. We ask all our members to seriously consider the following ways that can help achieve this success.

1. **Contribute to the fern display and competition.**
2. **Grow ferns (or sell your excess ferns) for the sales bench. We will welcome small numbers.**
3. **Attend the Show and assist with its activities.**
4. **Publicise the Show.**

We would especially request those members unable to attend our monthly meetings to come along and contribute to the display and competition. Advertising flyers will be available at the February

meeting and will be included in the March/April newsletter. They will also be obtainable by contacting Don Fuller.

The Fern Competition will again be held and it would be great to have even more members entering into the spirit of the competition. Please remember that to be eligible to enter a fern you must have owned it for 6 months. The categories are as follows

1. **Adiantum**
2. **Asplenium**
3. **Davalliaceae**
4. **Victorian Indigenous Fern**
5. **Polypodiaceae**
6. **Fern in container 150mm or less**
7. **Any Other Fern**

Our special feature display will be Victorian Indigenous Ferns and we would like to have a large number and variety of these ferns, including the common ones. The committee is very interested in receiving any ideas on how we might display these ferns.

The Show provides a great opportunity to display your best and most interesting ferns so please start selecting and grooming them now as time passes quickly.

Please ensure that all plants are free of pests and are clearly labelled with their botanical name. If you are unsure about the name you may be able to get help at our monthly meetings.

Members who enter ferns in the competition and/or display have the opportunity to bring in ferns for sale on a commission basis. We are most interested in having some of the rarer and more unusual ferns available for sale.

The members of the Show Committee are  
 Jack Barrett 9375 3670,  
 Ian Broughton 5964 6402,  
 Don Fuller 9306 5570,  
 Brenda Girdlestone 9390 7073,  
 Fran & Ray Harrison 9337 7573,  
 Norma & John Hodges 9878 9584,  
 Bernadette Thomson 9399 1587,  
 Barry White 9337 9793.

More details in March/April Newsletter.





## Interesting Fern Sites on the Internet

*Thanks to Barry White for this information and for setting up and maintaining our web site.*

*This is a repeat of a 1999 article; some information may have changed. If you know of changes or other sites of interest, please send it to me by the 1st of March for inclusion in the March issue.*

### **Fern Society of Victoria**

<http://gardenbed.com/vicferns>

General information about our Society, an article on establishing a fernery by Chris Goudey, some basic information on ferns, and a spore list. It is proposed to add new information to the site on a regular basis

### **Fernet**

[macjoromo@koning.ecsu.ctstateu.edu](mailto:macjoromo@koning.ecsu.ctstateu.edu)

This is a world wide discussion group where questions, answers and comments come in from fern growers and botanists. Anyone can belong. To subscribe send an E-mail to the address above with the following message; **SUBSCRIBE FERNET**  
**First Name Last Name**

### **British Pteridological Society**

[http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted\\_sites/bps/index.htm](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/bps/index.htm)

Information on the BPS, Information and images of ferns, details of pteridological projects organised.

### **David Nicholls, Canberra**

<http://www.home.aone.net.au/byzantium/ferns/gallery/index.html>

Contains information about the wild ferns in the Canberra region, where they grow, their ecology, with many photos and detailed descriptions. It also contains a selection of fern images from the Cairns region.

Well worth a visit.

### **Peter Richardson, U.K.**

<http://www.angelfire.com/nv/PeterR/index.html>

Photo of ferns from New Zealand and Hawaii, cultivation of Gleicheniaceae, in-vitro culture of ferns, a page on Lord Howe Island, Peter's backyard, Three photos of Ely Cathedral. Also well worth a visit.

### **American Fern Society**

<http://www.visuallink.net/fern/index.html>

Information on the American Fern Society spore

exchange, basic fern biology, growing tips.

### **San Diego Fern Society**

[www.inetworld.net/sdfern/society.htm](http://www.inetworld.net/sdfern/society.htm)

Information on the Society, fern growing information, fern identification experts, fern plant and spore sources, fern societies worldwide, fern book resources.

### **Hardy Fern Foundation (USA)**

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~sueman/>

Information on the Society.

### **Los Angeles International Fern Society (LAIFS)**

<http://www.southwest.net/users/mrmcd/laifs1.htm>

Contains information on the Society, basic fern information and picture gallery.

### **Fern society of South Africa**

<http://mzone.mweb.co.za./residents/vdlindea/homepage.html>

Information on the Society, spore bank, information on Southern African ferns and fern allies.

### **Japan Pteridological Society**

<http://133.95.154.17:591/pterid/index.html>

Contains a flora of Japan database, an index to chromosomes of Asian pteridophytes & a page on isoetes. □

### **OTHER FERN SITES**

<http://www.LM.net.au/~kerogers>

<http://fancyfronds.com>

[www.users.lantic.net.opperla](http://www.users.lantic.net.opperla)

[www.anbg.gov.au/projects/fern/fernlinks.html#T1](http://www.anbg.gov.au/projects/fern/fernlinks.html#T1)

<http://www.geocites.com/platycerium.andinum/>

[www.chariot.net.au/saufern](http://www.chariot.net.au/saufern)

<http://naturepark.freesevers.com/staghorn/varies.htm>



## Fernet Tidbits

# Staghorn fronds.

Q: I collect platycerium ferns and someone recently asked me if they could cut off old or damaged fronds. I do not do it with my plants believing that the plant still uses whatever is left of the frond for photosynthesis and will eventually draw whatever it needs from the frond and then drop it when it is done with it.

*Louwrens Oppennan South Africa*

A: I only have 15 years worth of experience with Platycerium so I can only say that I remove a frond or two in the spring to help the plant direct its energy into new shields and fronds. On older plants, I will remove a frond when the tips turn black. Most of the time, the plant will drop them when they are no longer needed.

Remember, I am not an expert but my good friend, Miles Goodman, is and I have seen him pull old fronds from his Platycerium. So if the professionals do it, I guess it is OK for you and I to remove them.

One more thing, if fronds block the light from getting to the bud, my plants seem to produce fewer fronds. Based on my brief tenure, my plants need the sun's motivation to bring forth new fronds. In addition, low light levels produce long fronds that hang down while filtered sun produces shorter and more erect fronds.

*Dan Clemons Escondido CA USA*

A: As a Platy grower too (but I can only relate to the Australian species) I reluctantly remove some of the damaged or dead fronds early as well, but mainly for show purposes.

I also consider I perhaps over fertilize (well, more than they get in their natural surroundings)

so the fern has ample nutrient. With the odd pruning they get, it does not appear to harm them in any way.

What I do with *P. superbum* is remove the true fronds just as the new ones emerge as you can damage the newer ones by doing it later.

With the Platy growing on a flat board or Plaque just before the next new shield frond grows I remove some of the lower parts of the last or dead shields, allowing the new one to sit flatter.

In a later comment from Dan C, re sunlight. The Australian species are mostly in dappled sunlight. *P. veitchii* in almost as much as a full days full sun except for the latter part of the afternoon.

Roy Vail and I saw a large *P. superbum* on a huge exposed rock with perhaps only afternoon shade from the sun.

Another comment, *P. superbum* especially in the warm to cool Temperate and Sub Tropical regions has been suffering from overwatering\* in the drenching rains in Australia recently. This species likes buckets of water in the warmer months, but almost nothing in the cool to cold times.

If you get great or extended rains, it may be necessary to cover or tie back the upper shield fronds so overwatering does not occur.

*Keith Rogers Mannum South Australia*

- *Editor's comment; What a difference a year makes!! Overseas readers may not know that most of Victoria is suffering a crippling drought and we are on strict water rationing.*

### THE BUSH HOUSE NURSERY WHOLESALE AND RETAIL



#### Visitors welcome

Lorraine Deppeler  
Phone (03) 5565 1665  
18 Hermitage Drive,  
Allansford 3277

### AUSTRAL FERNS

#### Wholesale Propagators.

Phone (03)5282 3084.

- || Specialising in supplying retail nurseries with a wide range of hardy ferns; no tubes.





# Mystery in Fernery

One of our members, a very experienced fern grower, had a *Dicksonia antarctica* tree fern which had developed multiple heads. As she said, where she once had one fern she now has triplets and wonders why. She also has one which has set a new crown halfway down the trunk, which she is sure is not a sporeling.

Ian (el Presidente) has seen some in ideal growing conditions in the Otway Ranges with ten to twelve heads (or crowns) so divisions at the crown are not unknown.

I believe this species quite commonly grows multiple crowns in Tasmania, both in the rainforest and in gardens.

Ian also reported that he has seen a *Cyathea cooperi* on Mt. Lewis with eleven or twelve crowns, and also a *C. robertsiana* which had divided into a "V", the two trunks each a couple of metres long.

One opinion was that there's no rhyme or reason to it, it just happens.

Another theory was that the crown had suffered damage ie., from a branch falling on it from a tree above. While it was conceded that it could be that, it didn't account for all the known instances, especially those whose history was known because they grew in gardens.

Ian recounted the process of dividing he observed in one of his *Cyathea brownii*. It began as an absolutely normal tree fern, then the crown went from round to oval and he got a bit excited, then it formed a figure eight and he got really excited, and finally divided into two separate crowns. This happened over a period of about twelve to eighteen months.

*Dicksonia squarrosa*, a New Zealand tree fern, can divide into multiple trunks, too. □

## FERN COMPETITION and RAFFLE RESULTS

### November 2002 Blechnum

- First:** John Hodges  
*Blechnum cartilagineum*  
**Second:** Ian Broughton  
*B. attenuatum*  
**Third** Fran Harrison  
*B. fluviatile*

**Raffle for competition entrants:**  
Ian Broughton.

**Main raffle:**  
Mavis, Dick Kissane, Don Fuller,  
Keith Hutchinson, Jack Barrett (2),  
Brenda Girdlestone (2), Margaret  
Radley.

### December 2002 Christmas Function

On offer was a nice selection of prizes:

- **The now traditional Decorated Fruit Cake**  
From Mavis Potter,
- **A Hanging Basket**  
and
- **A Collection of Multicrop Garden Products.**

The winners were:

Bernadette Thomson, Fran Harrison and  
John Oliver

I guess everyone there was a winner as it was a lovely day, with lots of good company, good food and auction lots to tempt us. Special thanks to Norma and her band of caterers.

### ANYWAY.

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centred - forgive them anyway.  
If you are kind, people may accuse you of self-fish, ulterior motives - be kind anyway.  
If you are successful, you will win some false friends and true enemies - succeed anyway.  
If you are honest and frank, they may cheat you - be forthright anyway.  
What you spend years building, they may destroy overnight - build anyway.  
If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous and scornful - be joyous anyway.  
The good you do today, they often will forget tomorrow - do good anyway.  
Give the world the best you have, and it will never be enough - give the world the best you've got anyway.  
You see, in the final analysis it is between you and God - it was never between you and them anyway. ●



# Stumperies

Martin Rickard, Pear Tree Cottage, Kyre, Tenbury Wells, Worcs. WR15 8RN.

There are many ways of staging ferns in a garden. The most common is probably in a shady border with or without flowering plants. The ferns look good but some may argue they need that little something extra to set them off.

I have toyed with rockeries, or, more precisely, placed small rocks strategically amongst the ferns. The ferns have enjoyed the shelter provided by the stones and the damp root run underneath has been a godsend in droughts. There are problems though; rock is expensive, a ton does not go very far, and can be heavy and difficult to manoeuvre. Residents of the major population centres are usually a long way from good rock supplies and so generally make do without, or use old bricks and clinkers - rarely to pleasing effect. In rocky areas rock gardens can be stunning - the water-washed limestone rockery at Linda and Jeremy Kaye's nursery at Silverdale is a classic example of just how to use rocks. Here alpine and ferns live together in harmony.

For the rest of us, what other ideas are there for adding that rustic atmosphere to our fern areas? I think one answer is to make a stumpery.

I am not sure when the word stumpery was coined. Certainly all the Victorian books I have consulted refer to the use of roots, stumps and old wood but not specifically stumperies. Ferneries are referred to by name in the first half of the nineteenth century. Interestingly rockeries seem to be referred to as rock-work, which makes me wonder when the word rockery was coined, or when it came into common use?

The earliest reference I can find to roots and stumps being promoted as suitable for the garden is in the 1840s. Jane London in *The ladies companion to the flower garden*, c. 1844 says: 'Two or three large stools of trees grouped together on a lawn with mould and plants placed in their interstices, form a striking contrast to the smoothness and high art displayed on the general surface of the lawn.' She makes no specific reference of ferns, but soon many books were suggesting roots and stumps as ideal for the fernery. Notably in 1848 Thomas Moore in *A handbook of the British ferns*, talks about using the 'stumps of old trees' for the culture of *Polypodium vulgare*. B S Williams says in *Ferns and Lycopods*, 1852 - 'Stumps often look well laid down in different parts of the fernery with common ivy overrunning them, and the polypode (sic) planted on top.'

About this time Joseph Paxton built a large

stumpery at Chatsworth in Derbyshire. It was described thus; 'From the conservatory we pass through a rustic arch and find ourselves in a deep cutting of the shale, through which the carriage drive is made, the lofty sides of which are strewn with immense roots and trunks of decayed trees, as if they had been heaped for ages by some convulsion of nature, some of them erect, and the whole of the bank planted solely with British ferns.'

One of the most famous stumperies, both in history and today, is the one at Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire. The garden belonged to James Bateman, whose designs were inspired by his friend Edward Cooke during the 1840s and 1850s. Tree stumps were piled up and secured to a height of 10 or 12 feet on either side of the winding path, meeting overhead in places. Root work also featured on a steep bank. Here Kemp was impressed by the way Bateman, 'with a judicious disregard for petty criticism', had planted dead trees upside down in the ground, with their roots 8 to 10 feet in the air, and had trained ivies to grow over them. Possibly as a result of seeing the garden at Biddulph Kemp became quite an advocate of stumperies, suggesting in his book that 'In places where stone is not easily procured or where it abounds so much that some other material would be preferable, the rugged stumps or roots of old trees may be substituted and will yield quite as much picturesqueness'. Today the stumpery at Biddulph is still in remarkably good heart. I believe most of the original stumps have disintegrated but there is still an abundance of beautiful stumps on site adorning either side of the path. Unfortunately the original root arches have gone but there are plans to reinstate them and to add to the fern plantings in the near future.

By the mid 1860s the fortune of stumperies seems to have been in decline. Their suitability in the garden was assaulted by virtually all fern authorities from then to the end of the century and beyond. The principal objection was the pests and diseases they harboured. Right back in 1863, *The fern manual* said: 'We deprecate wood (tree stumps) for such work (rockeries) under glass, although some people say they are first rate materials for the purpose, but we have not found them to be such. They may be very well where a collection of Fungi is desired, or to suit the fancy of those who like to do a thing one day and alter it the next. Wood rots, and the stones that are above or on it fall, and the work has to be done over again at a time when the plants are about their best. Moreover the plants do not thrive on them as they will do without them, which no doubt is owing to the venomous threads of the various Fungi



that harbour there destroying their roots...' Shirley Hibberd in *The fern garden*, (1869), agreed: 'Outdoor ferneries are usually formed of tree roots and banks of earth, picturesquely disposed and planted with ferns severally adapted to the sites and positions the scheme affords. Where there are living trees on or near the spot (and the shade of large trees is desirable), the use of roots is objectionable, because of the quantities of fungi which are sure to be produced, the mycelium from which may find its way among the living plants and commit vast havoc. But even this danger is worth risking sometimes in cases where roots and butts are plentiful on the spot, and it is undesirable to incur any great expense.'

Much later in *Ferns and fern culture*, (1892), J Birkenhead, the leading nurseryman of the time joined the chorus: '(Making rockeries) Sometimes tree roots are used, but they soon commence to decay, so they are not at all suitable for a fernery which is to be of a lasting character. Not only so but the rotten wood encourages the growth of fungus which spreads through the soil and not infrequently destroys the ferns planted therein.' That other popular writer F G Heath was similarly critical in *Garden rockery, how to make, plant and manage it*, (1908): 'Rockery is not .... a mixture of tree stumps and miscellaneous pieces of stone. Where stumps of wood are employed a warm and sheltered asylum is at once formed for myriads of small insects which, naturally, look upon the plants immediately surrounding them as placed there for their use and enjoyment; as, in fact, an easily accessible store house of food.'

So what is the situation? Are stumperies bad for your ferns? I find it difficult not to take the warnings of great growers like Birkenhead seriously but my feeling is that stumperies do have a place in modern gardens, albeit gardens trying not to look modern! The criticism in *The fern manual* is referring to ferneries under glass - not relevant to most of us today. The idea of supporting rock on wood is obviously a non-starter, so we are left with the multiplication of pests in the shelter under the wood and in the rotting tissues. I am surprised this is a problem. Ferns

grow abundantly on woodland floors as long as light levels are not too low, and as long as it is neither too wet nor too dry. Woodland floors are surely littered with rotting wood? I can see the introduction of parasitic fungi like *Armillaria mellea* would be a problem to other woody plants - but surely not to ferns? In addition what about leaf mold? It has proved a great soil improver in ferneries, and leaf mold I have collected is often full of fungal mycelia so how can stumps be any more harmful? The durability of stumps is cited as a problem by Birkenhead but this is no problem, in practice it is a simple matter to add new stumps on top of the old ones as they rot down.

Stumperies have recently been given a huge boost. Probably the best one ever constructed now stands triumphantly in the garden of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales near Tetbury in Gloucestershire. It was built about 1995 by Julian and Isobel Bannerman. It is well illustrated in the recently published *The garden at Highgrove* by The Prince of Wales and Candida Lycett Green (2000). Here stumps are piled up to form banks and one walk-through arch. The gothic mood of the stumpery is very effectively enhanced by two temples made of rough wood with their pediments filled with small roots - somewhat reminiscent of antler horn. A wide range of ferns grow amongst the stumps but most are larger woodland species and cultivars, clearly choice alpine are not suitable. To complement the ferns the Prince has planted quite a few hostas and miscellaneous woodland plants but ferns predominate - I am pleased to say!

I think stumps are wonderful when used to set off ferns. If there is a downside from pests and fungi, I for one am prepared to put up with it! My advice therefore is why not try a stumpery in your garden? Anticipate possible problems, only use woodland ferns that are likely to be tolerant of fungi and insects, do not pile rock on top of stumps and be prepared to add new stumps as old ones shrink with age. Add a little bit of flair and skill in the arrangement of the wood and stumps and you will have your own intriguing garden feature. Ground Force eat your heart out!!

#### APPENDIX:

##### Some suggested ferns for planting in your stumpery with some notes on their use:

*Asplenium scolopendrium* cultivars - best near the front as they are not very tall.

*Polystichum setiferum* cultivars - ideal throughout.

*Dryopteris filix-mas* and *D. affinis*, cultivars of both - excellent towards the back.

Other *Dryopteris* species - *D. goldiana*, *D. erythrosora*, *D. wallichiana* or most other large species, excellent towards the back.

*Cyrtomium fortunei*. - excellent contrast.

*Adiantum aleuticum* or *A. venustum* - leaning towards the alpine end of the spectrum but I think both should do well.

*Polypodium vulgare* and *P. x mantoniae* (and possibly *P. interjectum*?) and cultivars - perfect in hollowed out stumps.

*Onoclea sensibilis* - perfect in wet areas, if a little invasive.

*Osmunda regalis* and cultivars - perfect in wet areas.

*Matteuccia struthiopteris* - perfect in wet areas but like *Onoclea* a little invasive.

*Athyrium filix-femina* and cultivars - perfect in damp areas.



## Stumperies *continued*

*Blechnum spicant* - on acid soils, best near front.

*Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and the cultivar 'Plumosum' - excellent, will be invasive but so attractive!

*Dicksonia antarctica*, *D. fibrosa* and *Cyathea australis* - tree ferns make excellent accent plants, remember they will need some winter protection.

*Woodwardia fimbriata* - good tall fern, ideal for planting between large logs.

### Ferns that might be best avoided:

*Woodsia* species—all.

*Asplenium* species - all dwarf rock species.

Smaller *Polystichums*.

*Cheilanthes* species.

*Cystopteris* - some species may be worth trying but not one to start with.

*Polypodium australe* and cultivars - likes lime and free drainage, may not like the acid conditions created by rotting wood.

*Athyrium niponicum* - perhaps a bit too prone to slug attack.

Pteridologist, Vol. 3, Part 6 - 2001 ☐

## Buggy solution

by Bill Timm

In 1995, a Spring Intern at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Jesus Fernandez from Cordoba, Spain, reported in his intern project a unique bug spray that is reported to be effective for a wide range of insects. It is a home-made spray, easily made by anyone brave enough to try it.

Collect 1/2 cup of the problem bugs or worms, mash them with a mortar and pestle, add 2 cups of water and strain. Dilute 1/4 cup of this "yummy" liquid with one to two cups of water and spray on the infested plants.

Mr. Fernandez says to use the spray the same day it is prepared, or freeze the leftover liquid to prevent bacteria and spoilage. Be sure to label the container clearly before placing in the freezer.

This was reported in Volume 3 Number 2 of *Bromelia*, the quarterly publication of the Bromeliad Society of Brazil.

If any of you try this, let us know how well it works for your bug problem. I'm going to try it myself. So far, after 3 years of collecting, I've got about 1/6 cup of white flies. If it works, I'm going to try it on my thrips problem.

TP&EPS Newsletter, March 2002

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## A True Fern Yarn

Told by one of our 'more mature' members.

This happened when we (the Society) had a display at the Royal Melbourne Show many years ago. Two of us were standing there, telling people about the ferns and skiting about how wonderful they—and we—were.

In the afternoon there was a terrible thunderstorm. It rained, it hailed - it was awful. Well, as you would expect, people started crowding into the pavillions for shelter. Among them came two gentlemen in their long coats and Akubras - you only had to look at them to know they were cow cookies.

One of them came up to me and said, "What do you do with those things . . . What are they?"

I replied, rather surprised, that they were ferns.

"What do you do with them?" he asked again.

I spluttered a bit and said, "You GROW them."

"Can you eat them?"

"No. Well, you can if you like but I wouldn't advise it."

"Huh! They're no good to ME."

"Oh well, that's a matter of opinion."

"I can't get over what you'd do with them. Now, if they were potatoes there might be something in that."

I said, "Huh! What's in growing potatoes?"

He looked at me silly and I said, "My son has got a property up at Kinglake and we grow potatoes up there. I don't know how many potatoes I've helped seed, plant etc."

He looked at me astonished, and asked, "Really?"

I said, "Yes."

He got down on his knees, took both my hands in his and said, "Darling! Will you marry me?"

I laughed, "It'd serve you right if I accepted!"

His mate grabbed him and said, "Hey, come on Bill, get out of here quick!!"

Look what can happen when you're looking after ferns!!! □

## A Consuming Passion for Ferns.

Have you wondered what you could do with your ferns if ever you lost interest in them? Just let them die? Give them away? Have a garage sale or market stall?

Now I'm presenting you with another option ..... EAT them! Certain parts of certain ferns have been utilized for food, many requiring careful preparation to render them edible. And some still are eaten today. While the following is not an exhaustive list, it introduces a few ferns for human consumption.

**I Caution you to not try these ferns until you have been advised by someone with good knowledge, of the correct preparation methods.**

***Polypodium glaucophyllum*** is eaten in some South American countries. It tastes like the artificial sweetener aspartame and is carried to work by forestry workers to be consumed as an excellent energy source.

***Adiantum capillus-veneris*** was used in the south of France to make a syrup which, being perfumed with orange flowers, was called *capillare* and known throughout Europe as a refreshing cordial.

This Maidenhair was probably used to also make a herbal tea which was widely believed to be a cure-all. The true identity of the species used is unclear, because in the 17th to 19th centuries Aspleniums were confounded with Adiantums.

***Pteris aquilina*** was used along with malt to brew ale in Finland.

***Cyathea medullaris*** pith was eaten by Maoris of New Zealand.

***Marattia*** (Potato fern).

Bracken (***Pteridium esculentum***) rhizome, if prepared correctly is edible. DO NOT try it without knowing how to treat it.

(Continued on page 13)



(Continued from page 12)

**Diplazium esculentum** foliage is eaten in Asian salads, much as we eat lettuce. (*Esculentum* means 'edible'.)

**Marsilea** (Nardoo) is edible when given lengthy

and specific preparation. Aboriginal Australians who live in Nardoo territory have this knowledge. Not a favoured food, being hard to prepare, pretty tasteless and not terribly nutritious, Nardoo is nevertheless a reliable backstop in the dry season or even drought when other foods are scarce. ■

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## Drynaria rigida 'White!!'

### Comp. winner's cultivation tips.

Don fuller

The plant sits in strong light on a fibreglass-covered terrace facing North, well protected from wind (though it does get breeze), so it's reasonably warm and dry.  
 Like almost everyone Don has a struggle to get the plant to form nest fronds; it has only done so once

in nine years! He has heard that the plant needs to be dry and rather neglected before it will form nest fronds, so he plans to try that to see what happens, now that he has a 'spare' plant on which to experiment.

**Drynaria rigida**  
 'White!!'  
 (Above) pinnae  
 (Left) nest frond.



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