FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA NEWSLETTER Volume 35, Number 2

March/April 2013



Fern Society of Victoria Inc.

ABN 85 086 216 704 mail: PO Box 45, Heidelberg West, Victoria 3081, Australia email: barry_white1@msn.com.au web: http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/

Objectives of the Fern Society of Victoria

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

To promote the conservation of ferns and their habitats

Office bearers

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Subscriptions

Single	\$17.00
Pensioner/student	\$14.00
Family	\$19.00
Pensioner family	\$16.00
Overseas	\$25.00 (overseas subscription
payments by internatio	nal bank cheque in \$Aus, by

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 endorsement.

payments by international bank cheque in \$Aus, by airmail please)

Subscriptions fall due on 1 July each year

Meeting venues

The Kevin Heinze Garden Centre, 39 Wetherby Road, Doncaster [Melway 47 H1] Other meetings as advertised in this Newsletter

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 Workshops and demonstrations

10:00 Close

70 Queens Rd. Proposal

President's Note

1

We're looking forward to hosting a FSV visit to our garden on Sunday 17 March. The garden has needed a lot of attention lately what with the dry summer we've had (until the burst of rain earlier this week) but there's not much use complaining about the weather – certainly it's been an improvement on the drought years up to 2010.

The day excursion to the Warburton area I mentioned in the last Newsletter was in the planning has now been set for Sunday 21 April – see the details elsewhere within. We look forward to seeing plenty of members that day. We plan to visit 2 sites there, and will facilitate some extra exploration if anyone wishes us to do so.

As members know, FSV keeps itself alert to opportunities to assist other organisations involved with horticultural and environmental pursuits with information and assistance in connection with ferns. The most recent opportunity, prompted by a telephone call I took this morning, is to assist the voluntary curator of the George Pentland Botanical Gardens at Frankson, which contains a Fern Gully area, with identification of ferns in situ and information on maintaining them. We hope that it may be possible to arrange a suitable date in April/May to visit the Gardens for this purpose. If members interested in participating in this activity would like to call me we will provide them with details when the date is settled.

Barry Stagoll

rohrobbins 3,00 met. com. a)

Cover image: Nature print "Blätter des Mann=Waldfarn" by Alois Auer (active 1840s-1850s).

Editor's Note

I have just returned from a weekend away in Sydney. Various family commitments formed the main reasons for the trip, but serendipity brought us to a little art gallery in Paddington where there were some living works of art that would have been of great interest to all FSV members. I shall attempt a description.

The artworks in question were sections of concrete pipe, standing vertically, and with the top end open and variously broken in uneven patterns. Within the pipe was growing a small but beautiful assortment of ferns and bryophytes. Sort of like the epiphytes that you might find in the end of a hollow broken branch in a fern gully. The ferns included *Pyrrosia* and, notably, *Psilotum*. I had never seen *Psilotum* in cultivation before (except at FSV shows!) and only rarely in the wild. The little microclimate looked to be very healthy, sort of part way between terrarium and fernery.

I really enjoyed these artworks although their price was way out of my reach (and transporting the very heavy item back to Melbourne would have been a major logistic challenge also). I took some photographs but I promised the gallery owner that until I get permission from the artist I won't share these with you. However I have left my contact details with the artist (who is clearly also something of a horticulturalist) and I hope to be able to publish a photo or two, perhaps with some more information, in a coming issue of the Newsletter.

I'm also starting to wonder how I could create something similar in my own garden,. If I ever come across some old terracotta drainage pipe I might start experimenting. If any FSV members have experience with anything similar, they might like to send it in to me to share in a future issue.

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1052 Whittlesea-Kinglake Road, Kinglake West Melway 510 N11 Ph/Fax: (03) 5786 5031 For full list and photos: Web: www.fernacres.com.au

7:15 pm.

Fern Society of Victoria meetings - 2013

2:30 pm, Sunday 17 March 2013 At the garden of Gay and Barry Stagoll, Mirrabooka

170 Knees Rd. Park Orchards (located centre, Melways Map 35: E5)

Phone 9844 1558, Mobile 0411 525 890

PARKING - Limited parking on site - please access via lower (north) drive entry & continue on as far as possible toward the exit.

* Roadside parking also OK (best to use this if you may need to leave early - before 5.30pm)

Topic: Growing Ferns in Hanging Baskets

viewing and discussion (participants invited to bring own plants along).

Fern competition: Hanging basket

NB there will be NO Thursday meeting at the Kevin Heinze Centre in March 2013

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(2) Picnic lunch by the Yarra), Warburton (across bridge on north side (BYO or purchase takeaway)

(3) Visit 'Rainforest Gallery' - on Acheron Way (Donna Buang Rd) Melways 290:J1

(4) Optional excursion to a ferny creek location in Warburton East adjacent to the Coastal Redwood plantation (guided)

Meeting for May is notified on page 14. Meetings for June and beyond will be notified in forthcoming Newsletters.

Book review: "Ferns. RHS Wisley Handbooks" by Martin Rickard *Review author:* Robin Wilson

Although not exactly a new book (first published in 2003) this concise introduction to ferns might be of interest to members. Main chapter headings are: Introduction (history of cultivation, naming and reproduction of ferns); Cultivation; Pests and Diseases: Ferns in the Garden (a short but useful section on landscaping ideas) and Fern Species and Cultivars (about half the book, concise comments on ferns with many photographs, arranged by genus). Published by the Royal Horticultural Society you would expect an emphasis on the UK flora, but there is a pretty even treatment of ferns from Asia, the Americas, South Africa and a few from Australia and New Zealand. Further Information (in which the FSV gets a mention as "The Fern Society of Australia"!) and a Glossary and Index conclude the book. I suppose this book will be well-known to many FSV members, and many of you will not learn much new from it. But for those members, like me, whose library is short on cultivation notes on ferns from beyond Australian shores, this might be a useful aquisition.

The book is currently on sale through various online outlets. I thought my copy was a bargain at \$4.52 including postage from www.bookdepository.co.uk/ but I note that there are second hand copies available even cheaper at www.amazon.com. There is something odd going on when it is possible to write and print a 90 page colour book and post it to the other side of the world for not much more than the price of a cup of coffee. Perhaps it is the profits from all those Bryce Courtenay novels that keep niche publishing viable; I hope so.



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Images from a recent excursion in the Warrandyte area Wayne Stagoll (photos) Barry Stagoll (commentary)

The following photographs from Barry Stagoll's son Wayne should whet the appetite of members looking for an outing nearby in the Melbourne region. The Warrandyte region is within an hour or so of most Melbourne suburbs and is a convenient destination for any nature lover. The FSV intends an excursion there later in 2013 and these photos were from an exploratory excursion of the Stagolls. Barry has provided photo captions and the editor added a link with other relevant information about scenic walks in the Warburton area.



above and below: views on the track to La La Falls. Photos: Wayne Stagoll.



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An excursion to the Warrandyte area (continued) Wayne Stagoll



above: Cyathea australis amongst Eucalyptus regnans (Mountain Ash)

below: Banks of Cement Creek. Photos: Wayne Stagoll



Members with internet access, hopefully nearly all of you, might like to visit <u>http://maps.panedia.com/4836</u> where maps, further information and panorama views of the Cement Creek area can be viewed.



above: Blechnum penna-marina, Polystichum proliferum & Calochlaeana dubia

below: Rainforest Gallery scenic site, Warburton. Photos: Wayne Stagoll.





above: *Plantation of Sequoia sempervirons* (Coastal Redwoods) - world's tallest conifer) east of Warburton. Photo: Wayne Stagoll.

Human health and bracken ferns

Barry White has forwarded to me two abstracts from recent scientific publications that will be of interest to members. The ability of bracken to respond and dominate after fires is attributed to chemicials it produces that poison, or at least inhibit the growth of, other plants. Bracken is rich in chemical warfare products, however, having long been known to be damaging to the health of cattle and other mammals, including humans through causing cancers, especially stomach cancers of animals that consume it. The following abstracts from recent articles forwarded by Barry provide details of the latest research. The Editor

The complex taxon embraced in the Pteridium genus, popularly known as bracken fern and notorious weeds in many parts of the world, is one of the few vascular plants known to induce cancer naturally in animals. It has been known for long to be acutely toxic to livestock and sublethal chronic oral feeding of bracken fronds leads to cancerous lesions in the urinary bladder, or bovine enzootic haematuria (BEH) and ileum of cattle. Bracken poisoning has been attributed chiefly to ptaquiloside, a norsesqui-terpene which is also a potent carcinogen inducing various malignancies in laboratory animals. It is capable of alkylating uncoiled DNAbases at key proto-oncogenes of selected organs. Some human populations also eat young bracken shoots and epidemiological studies in Japan and Brazil have shown a close association between bracken consumption and cancers of the upper alimentary tract. In addition, other studies reveal that the mere presence of bracken swards represents a greater risk to die of gastric adenocarcinoma for people who live more than 20 years in such areas or are exposed in childhood. This work reviews the bracken-cancer connections established by in vitro and in vivo experiments and

world, and provides insights into the possible bridges for bracken carcinogens to reach the human diet. Also, specific points where more research is needed are highlighted.

The above is the abstract from: an article titled "Human carcinogenesis and bracken fern: a review of the evidence" by Alonso-Amelot ME & Avendaño 2002 *M.Curr Med Chem.* 9(6): 675-86.

A further study, by S E Simán, A C Povey, T H Ward, G P Margison and E Sheffield published in the British Journal of Cancer (2000) 83, 69–73 reported that not spores not only of *Pteridium*, but also of other ferns (*Anemia phyllitidis*, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Pteris vittata* and *Sadleria pallida*) caused DNA damage by causing the DNA strands to break into fragments. Since there is a strong correlation between DNA damage and carcinogenesis, the authors suggest this finding may have human health implications.

Perhaps we should be more careful in handling fern spores. I am grateful to Barry White for bringing this information to our attention.

The Editor.





above: Bracken regrowth at Kinglake after fires

right: Bracken fertile frond underneath. Photos: Barry White. Fern Society of Victoria Newsletter Volume 35 number 2, page 9

Book review: "Fern

Ecology" Review author: Barry White "Fern Ecology"

"Fern Ecology" is a recently released book written by Klaus Mehltreter, Lawrence Walker and Joanne Sharpe; and published by Cambridge University Press in 2010. The 444 pages of this wide ranging book cover many aspects of fern growth and reproduction. Some of the chapters of this book include the ecological importance of ferns, nutrient aspects, adaptation to dry habitats, interactions of ferns with fungi and animals, the impact and management of problem ferns, fern conservation, and future directions.

It has a mass of fascinating information and is available from Amazon for about \$40 plus postage.

Fern Ecology

EDITED BY Klaus Mehltreter Lawrence R. Walker and Joanne M. Sharpe

The History of Ferns Jim Jaeger

Where did our oxygen in the atmosphere come from? Scientists say that the first plants to produce oxygen and cover the earth in prehistoric times were ferns. They adapted to the dry land (land not submerged by the earlier seas), and the world was quite a different place from what it is today. The seas produced clouds of moisture which rained all over the land. The moisture that dropped on the land produced the perfect habitat for the first land plants Paleo botanists have found numerous fossils of ferns. Many of these were the pre-cursors of our modern ferns. Ancient ferns and their close relatives produced the great coal deposits that fired the industrial revolution. Therefore, not only the air we breathe, but the energy we use can be credited to this great family of plants.

Nathaniel B. Ward, an English amateur botanist, realized the need ferns had for moisture and enclosed plants in glass cases. These became known as "Wardian Cases". Moisture evaporating from the plants and soil collected on the glass, provided humidity and dropped rain back onto the plants. It is a virtual microcosm of our earth's environment.

Would you like to try growing plants in this way? First find yourself a jar, an old aquarium, or make your own Wardian Case by constructing a little box enclosed by glass. You can use artificial lights and timers to reproduce day length. Make sure you keep it out of direct sun as the plants may burn. When totally enclosed, the moisture will maintain itself for long periods of time without reintroducing more water. Any sterilized soil mix, moss or even peat and perlite will do for media. Have fun and try ferns first. Then go on to other interesting plants. They will flourish.

The FSV is grateful to the Los Angeles International Fern Society for their published permission to reprint articles from their Journal; the above article was originally published in the LAISFS Journal volume 37 number 3 June 2010.

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CAMBRIDGE

Mounting and Displaying Your Staghorn Ferns By Norm Nakanishi

The FSV is grateful to the Los Angeles International Fern Society for their published permission to reprint articles from their Journal; this article was originally published in the LAISFS Journal volume 37 number 1 February 2010.

I still find that people are asking questions of: What do I do when my staghorn fern gets too big? Or how do I mount the staghorn fern that I bought in a pot at my local nursery? There are many methods and styles of displaying *Plalycerium* (staghorn) Ferns. I will simply try to discuss some of the more general methods used by several members.

A very common way of propagating staghorn ferns asexually is by removing the plant's offsets (pups) that have grown off the original mother plant from its roots or rhizomes. There are certain species of staghorn ferns that do not produce these pups off their rhizomes and can only be propagated by spore to obtain new plants. In these cases, the fern usually gets bigger in size and often needs a larger mounting structure. *Platycerium superbum* is a common staghorn that propagates by this method.

Let's start off with the materials you will need to mount your staghorn fern. These ferns can be mounted on various materials and even to trees on which they grow naturally, but the most common materials are either redwood or cedar because of their lasting qualities. One of the most readily available sources of redwood or cedar is fencing boards found at your local home improvement store. These can be cut to varying sizes and



screwed or nailed together to form a square or rectangle. It is recommended that your final size be determined by the size of the Fern you are mounting to the board. I would consider making the board width twice the diameter of the fern you are mounting. This will allow you several years of growth before you have to decide whether to divide your staghorn again or move it up to a larger sized board. Now that you have your mounting board, other materials you will need that are pretty universal are: monofilament fishing line (I prefer 40 pound test for most applications.), sphagnum moss (green moss) and a serrated knife at least 9 inches long. Depending on which method you choose, a staple gun, bird netting, hammer, and galvanized roofing nails (1/2 inch) are other materials which may be needed.

If you are going to separate several plants (offsets) from the mother plant, here are some guidelines: First make sure that the offset is large enough to support itself on its own. Many times I will wait until the offset is at least 1/4 to 1/3 the size of the mother plant. The best time to divide your staghorn is when you start to see the new sterile fronds emerging. This will minimize any damage and your monofilament line will be covered shortly. The removal of the offsets is critical to help in the transition stage to survive. Several layers of the sterile fronds need to come off with your offsets. These dead (brown) sterile leaves are important for the plant to trap water. The more leaves taken off successfully, the less stress for the pup in the new environment. Sometimes people are able to grasp several layers and pull the pup off from the mother plant. I find it easier to take a serrated knife and slice behind several layers of dead sterile fronds. Once you have removed the offset, you might want to trim and shape some of the sterile fronds to have a more aesthetically pleasing looking plant.

Mounting and Displaying Your Staghorn Ferns (continued)

Now that you have your offset, it is time for it to be mounted on your board. You will need to presoak some sphagnum moss before you begin. Also make sure you have a way to hang your specimen up before you start. Some members drill a large hole near the top of the mounting board while others create and attach a wire loop to the back. Another suggestion is to write out your plant label with the name of the staghorn and staple it to the back of the board. This eliminates labels getting lost as the plant grows.

Begin the mounting process by taking a large portion of sphagnum moss and squeezing most of the water out. Place the moss in the center of the board and sculpt it into a circular mound. Some members prefer to use bird netting and staple a square piece around the moss leaving one side open. Once this is done they will take more moss and pack it tightly under the net and then staple the open end down tightly. Many will not bother with this step and simply make a nice mound of moss in the center of the board. The next step is to place your staghom pup in the center of the moss. The most important thing to remember is to orient the staghorn the correct way. Look for the new growing points (buds) and make sure that these are facing toward the top of the board. If you mount the fern sideways or upside down, the fern will try to grow and orient itself up in the correct direction, but your fern will look odd for many years and may even die. Once you have your fern centered you can either use staples or roofing nails to secure the monofilament fishing line around your fern. If you are using roofing nails, place 6 to 8 nails, driven halfway

into the board in a "U" shape around your fern. It is not important that they be on the top portion of the board. Once this is done, tie off one end of the monofilament on one of the nails and, while pushing down on the fern and moss, string the monofilament across to another nail over the sterile fronds, wrap the line around it once and continue to another nail on the opposite side pulling down tightly each time. Caution must be taken NOT to bring the line across the new buds which may be emerging, or you might lose your staghorn fern. You should crisscross several times over the sterile fronds and the fern so it will be held tightly against the moss. When you come to the last nail simply tie it off. Once this is done, you can hammer the nails down all the way and this should tighten down the fern even more.

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Mounting and Displaying Your Staghorn Ferns (continued)

If you are using a stapler, make several small loops in your hand with the monofilament fishing line, and then take your stapler and staple down the monofilament on one side of your fern. Pull tight on the roll of line until all the loops tighten around the staple. Holding the staghorn tightly down on the moss, crisscross the monofilament line back and forth across the staghorn and continue to staple after each crossing. When you are finished with the last staple, bring the monofilament line back up in the reverse direction and staple down two or three more times to secure it in place then cut off the excess line. After this is done your staghorn fern is ready to be hung up in its new home.

If you receive a staghorn fern growing in a pot, remove most of the soil. Make a small planting hole in the middle of your sphagnum moss mound on your board. Place the fern in the hole and snug the moss back around. Follow the above process to secure it in place. Again make sure that the buds of the fern are oriented to the top of the board. The same procedure can be applied to *Platycerium superbum* ferns.

To show you how creative you can be in your mounting boards, I have included some pictures that I took at a recent fern show of the boards of a fellow LAIFS member Derick Sheldon. He does some of the most interesting mounts for his ferns and perhaps one day Derick might share his insights on how he comes up with his ideas.



Platycerium bifurcatum grown by Derick Sheldon. left: 2009 LAIFS Fern Show 2nd place; right: 2009 LAIFS Fern Show 3rd place. Buth photographs by Norm Nakanishik, LAIFS.

Fern Society of Victoria meetings - 2013

2:30 pm, Sunday 17 March 2013 At the garden of Gay and Barry Stagoll, Mirrabooka

170 Knees Rd. Park Orchards (located centre, Melways Map 35: E5)

Phone 9844 1558, Mobile 0411 525 890

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viewing and discussion (participants invited to bring own plants along).

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(4) Optional excursion to a ferny creek location in Warburton East adjacent to the Coastal Redwood plantation (guided)

2.00 pm, Saturday 18th May visit to Judy and Barry White's home at 34 Noble Way, Sunbury

Discussion on growing from spore.

Fern Competition: Asplenium

Fern Society of Victoria Spore Bank

Fern spore is free to members of the Fern Society of Victoria who donate spore. Otherwise the cost is members 50 cents per sample, non-members \$1, plus \$1.00 to cover postage and handling. Available at meetings or by mail from Barry White, 34 Noble Way, Sunbury, Vic. 3429 Australia, Ph. (03) 9740 2724. There is no charge for spore for overseas members, however to cover postage two International Reply Coupons would be appreciated; or alternatively spore may be exchanged. International Reply Coupons are being phased out in favour of PayPal via the FSV website. Overseas non-members may purchase spore at three packets for each International Reply Coupon, plus two coupons per order to cover postage and handling. There is a limit of 20 packets per order. Some spores are in short supply please include alternatives. Queries can be emailed to: Barry White <u>barry white1@msn.com.au</u>. The following list is current as of December 2012, but consult the web page at

<u>http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fernsvic/Sporlist.html</u> for updates and for details of payment options for spore purchases. Thank you to the spore donors who are listed on the web page.

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Microsorum punctatum 1/09 Oenotrichia pinnata 7/11 Ophioglossum pendulum 7/08 Pellaea cordata 7/09 Pellaea falcata 1/11 Pellaea hastata 5/10 Pellaea viridis 5/12 Phegopteris decursive-pinnata 3/12 Pityrogramma calomelanos 8/11 Platycerium bifurcatum 'Venosum' Mt Lewis 10/07 Platycerium superbum 4/08 Pleisioneuron tuberculatus 1/11 Pneumatopteris sogerensis 7/11 Pneumatopteris costata 6/11 Polypodium formosanum 10/12 Polystichum aculeatum 7/09 Polystichum australiense 10/12 Polystichum formosum 11/12 Polystichum proliferum 12/10 Polystichum retroso-paleacum 10/12 Polystichum tsus-simense 11/11 Polystichum whiteleggei 10/10 Pronephrium asperum 1/11 Pteris aspericaulis 8/10 Pteris biaurita 3/12 Pteris dentata 12/10 Pteris hendersonii 12/10 Pteris pacifica 12/12 Pteris stenophylla 4/11 Pteris tremula 11/10 Pteris umbrosa 8/12 Revwattsii fragile 3/11 Rumohra adiantiformis(Cape form) 2/12 Rumohra adiantiformis (native) 4/12 Sphaerostephanos heterocarpus 7/11 Teratophyllum brightiae 8/11 Thelypteris patens 9/09

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Microlepia firma 1/12

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