



# Australian Institute of Horticulture Inc.

*'Promoting Horticulture - the Profession of the 21st Century'*

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## Green Thumbs & Rooted Cuttings AIH NSW e-Newsletter, July 2009

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### **A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Welcome to this edition of the newsletter. I was surprised to read in Sydney Environmental and Soil Laboratory's newsletter last month that they are doubtful that agriculture offers the possibility of broadscale carbon sequestration for Australia. With Australian soils very low in organic matter, it is perhaps simplistic to suggest that the urban horticultural practices of composting and adding organic matter to soils can be easily translated to a broadacre situation (thus sequestering carbon). However, the potential is there because if the current low level of 2 - 3% organic matter in agricultural soils was doubled, then there is the potential to absorb tonnes of greenhouse gases per hectare.

There are several proponents of farming methods that work on this principle. Called by various names - Natural Sequence farming (Peter Andrews) - Carbon farming (Michael Kiely) - Biological Farming (Dr Maarten Stapper) and Wholistic Management (Allan Savory). They all offer a broadacre approach and Allan Savory offers a complete and economic outcome.

We all need to adapt and some broadacre principles can also be applied to urban horticulture. "Climate change is not a spectator sport" (Celsius website).

A big welcome to new AIH NSW members: Steve Kane, Karen MacDiarmid, Mario Charalambous, Anthony Kachenko, Tony Dorn, Brian Wilcox, Dianka Pons and Patricia Meagher.

I would like to thank both the Australian Horticulture and Hort Journal Australia Magazines for their support of the AIH in offering AIH members a discounted annual subscription and I shall be subscribing to both these magazines.

**The next State Council Meeting is on 30 July, 7.00pm, Acacia Building, Ryde TAFE.**

Richard May  
AIH NSW President  
[presnsw@aih.org.au](mailto:presnsw@aih.org.au)

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## **AIH WEBSITE**

The new AIH website [www.aih.org.au](http://www.aih.org.au) is launched and out there to play a new generational role in the support of members and the profession.

It has taken some time to put together and it will also be the first Content Managed Site for AIH. This means we are able to adjust, change and bring the site up to date with the network of AIH Member Regional web administrators. Information will be more current and will mean the site management will cost less to run. There are a few gaps at the moment and these will fill very soon to complete the site.

If you have any information you want to include please email Janine at AIH [janine@aih.org.au](mailto:janine@aih.org.au) or Richard May at [presnsw@aih.org.au](mailto:presnsw@aih.org.au)

Kim Morris  
AIH National President

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## **AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURE - SPECIAL OFFER**



As a special offer to AIH members, *Australian Horticulture* is available via a 12-month subscription at the **cut-rate price of \$54 a year**, a saving of close to \$30.

To take advantage of this offer, complete the Australian Horticulture Subscription Pack Coupon attached to this Newsletter or phone toll free 1300 131 095.

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## **HORT JOURNAL AUSTRALIA – SPECIAL OFFER**



The July issue of *Hort Journal of Australia* is the 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday of the magazine. They have worked hard to get the best writers to provide relevant information to the trade.

They now offer AIH members a **FREE trial copy** of *Hort Journal Australia* (see the attached Hort J Aust FREE trial copy for AIH members) and in addition a discounted annual subscription rate of \$51 guaranteed for 2 years. For the current issue see <http://www.hortjournal.com.au/currentissue.shtml>

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**FOXGROUND RAINFOREST WORKSHOP**  
Sunday 22 November, 10.00 am – 2.30 pm

**AIH NSW members are invited to join the Friends of The Gardens at Ann and Geoffrey Long's rainforest property in the Illawarra Ranges behind Berry to learn about sub-tropical and warm temperate rainforest species.**



*Marsdenia suaveolens* photo by Hugh Nicholson

Ecological and environmental consultant, Dr Kevin Mills will lead an interpretative walk in virgin rainforest. Please note that the walking paths are rough bush tracks so wear sensible walking shoes. Copies of Kevin's book *Rainforests of the Illawarra District* will be available for purchase.

Practise your keying-out skills and identify climbing plants using *Rainforest Climbing Plants. A field guide to their identification* by Gwen Harden, Bill McDonald & John Williams.

More information about rainforest plants can be found at Gwen Harden's site [www.rainforests.net.au](http://www.rainforests.net.au) and Hugh and Nan Nicholson's site [www.rainforestpublishing.com.au](http://www.rainforestpublishing.com.au)

**Cost is \$35 for AIH members and Friends of The Gardens (non-members \$45), includes morning tea at 10.00 am. Bring a picnic lunch. Details will be provided with booking confirmation. Numbers are limited.**

Bookings are essential and can be made through the Friends of The Gardens: 9231 8182 (please provide your AIH membership number).

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## **METROPOLITAN WATER PLAN REVIEW**

The NSW Government's Metropolitan Water Plan (MWP) is an adaptive plan that will make sure Sydney, the Illawarra and Blue Mountains have enough water now and in the future.

The plan focuses on four key areas – dams, recycling, desalination and water efficiency – which together secure our water for life providing water for people and the environment.



**At the invitation of the NSW Government, Jonathan Garner representing the AIH NSW attended phase 1 of the key stakeholders workshops for the review of the MWP due to be released in 2010.**

Attendees represented a broad range of local authorities and industries such as Sydney Catchment Authority, Local Government, Social Service NGO's, Environmental & Conservation groups, NSW Farmers Federation, Australian Water Association and the AIH.

Representatives worked in groups and were given the opportunity to express their interests, concerns & suggestions to the members of the review panel.

Group discussion topics included:

**Identifying broad sector values around water.**

Jonathan's comments were "The present prices and methods of charging for water usage is inequitable and provides no incentive for high water users to save or implement their own waste water recycling process". He proposed that every water customer (business and retail) be allotted a weekly water ration charged at a base rate. The consumer was then entitled to use their ration where, when and how they wanted. If the consumer exceeded their base price ration then they would pay a significantly higher cost for both their base ration and their excess usage. The current pricing policy undervalues the true cost of water and moroso waste water treatment.

## Water Risk and Security

The overwhelming consensus put to the review panel was that recycling of waste waters needs to be the priority. Government intends to supply the Sydney basin with 12% of its water needs from recycled waste water by 2015. Jonathan questioned why it has taken just two years for a desalination plant to be built and operational that will supply Sydney with 15% of its needs whilst it takes another 6 years of wasting water before we achieve a lousy 12%. The unanimous opinion was that it would be more appropriate for the NSW Government to achieve a 50% recycled water reusage by 2015.

## Sectoral input into the MWP process.

Jonathan agreed with all key stakeholders present that recycled waste water is a resource going to waste and the risks of permanent ocean pollution and bioaccumulation are too great to continue treating our aquatic environment like it is our own toilet. Sydney's water supply had a close scare a few years ago. We could have run out. The 30 odd attendees all agreed that Government needs to learn from this scare and must set higher goals at achieving greater savings through the water supply, conservation and waste water treatment sectors.

To have your say log onto [www.waterforlife.nsw.gov.au/haveyoursay](http://www.waterforlife.nsw.gov.au/haveyoursay)

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## SNIPPETS.....

- **Plant seeds can adapt to city life.** A study by researchers from the Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive (CEFE) suggests that the seeds of *Crepis sancta* growing in urban areas have evolved rapidly in order to adapt to the challenges of surviving in the concrete jungle. The city plants produce heavy seeds that fall to the ground rather than lighter seeds that are dispersed by the wind. The wind-blown seeds are less likely to germinate because most end up on concrete surfaces. This change has taken place in as little as 5 to 12 years. Story from BBC NEWS: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/7277057.stm>
- **Plants can distinguish self from non-self.** Findings published in Ecology Letters show that the sagebrush *Artemisia tridentata* can recognise a genetically identical cutting growing nearby. 'It implies that plants are capable of more sophisticated behaviour than we imagined' says Biologist Richard Karban. He suspects that the plants are communicating using volatile chemicals. When one plant is clipped, or comes under attack from herbivores, it emits these chemicals into the air, warning those around it to put up a defence, either by filling their leaves with noxious chemicals, or by physically moving their stems or leaves to make themselves less palatable. Story from BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/earth/hi/earth\\_news/newsid\\_8076000/8076875.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_8076000/8076875.stm)
- **Death by compost.** Rare and alarming deaths from exposure to compost underline the need for anyone working with compost, potting mixes and mulches to take precautions. Also called farmer's lung, aspergillosis is common among people who handle hay and compost. Spores of the fungus *Aspergillus fumigatus* can lodge and grow in the lungs. Story from the Sydney Environmental & Soil Laboratory - <http://www.sesl.com.au/fertileminds/200906/Death%20by%20compost.php>



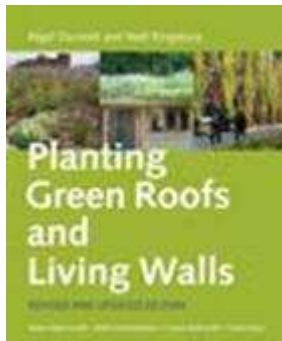
- **Grasscrete.** An alternative to concrete has been developed by Enviro Concrete & Constructions. It consists of plastic formers made from recycled plastic over which is poured concrete and then the tops of the formers are

burned away to create cavities which can be filled with soil and plants. This results in a very strong surface that can take vehicles up to 40 tonnes making it suitable to use for parking areas, permeable paving, slope protection and driveways. Story from ReNew, Issue 108, July-Sept 2009 [www.ata.org.au](http://www.ata.org.au) and <http://www.enviroconcrete.com.au/>

- **Global shift to renewables.** In 2008, for the first time, more renewable energy than conventional power capacity was added in both the European Union and United States, showing a "fundamental transition of the world's energy markets towards renewable energy." This is the finding of the Renewables Global Status Report released by REN21, a global network based in Paris. At least 73 countries have renewable energy policy targets today, up from 66 at the end of 2007. Solar tops the list of renewable energies, just beating wind power. This article can be found on the The Institute of Science in Society (I-SIS) website at <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/globalShiftRenewableEnergiesHappening.php>
- **Poo paper.** Famous for the world-first Roo Poo Paper, Creative Paper Tasmania has now developed Wombat Poo Paper. This unique range of paper products is made from animal scat fibres and recycled cotton. There is also Forest Floor Paper made from aged fibres from the forest floor such as stringy bark, Apple Isle paper made from Tassie's 'Spreyton Fresh' Apples and Red Hot Poker paper made from pure plant stem fibres. The wombat scats are donated to the company and 1kg can make 1 ream (500 sheets) of paper! Find out more at [www.creativepapertas.com.au](http://www.creativepapertas.com.au)

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## BOOK NEWS



### ***Planting Green Roofs and Living Walls* Revised and Updated Edition 2008**

**By Noel Kingsbury and Nigel Dunnett,  
University of Sheffield  
Timber Press USA. AU\$55**

#### **Description:**

The green roof industry is booming and the technology changing fast as professionals respond to the unique challenges of each new implementation. In this comprehensively updated, fully revised edition of their authoritative reference, Nigel Dunnett and Noël Kingsbury reveal the very latest techniques, materials and plants, and showcase some spectacular new case studies.

Planting on roofs and walls began in Europe but is now becoming popular all over the world as people become aware of their beneficial impact on the environment. Green roofs and walls reduce pollution and run-off, help insulate and reduce the maintenance needs of buildings, contribute to biodiversity, and provide food and habitats for wildlife. In addition to all this, they are attractive to look at and by greening up living environments enhance the quality of life of residents. In *Planting Green Roofs and Living Walls* the authors describe and illustrate the practical techniques required to design, implement and maintain a green roof or wall to the highest professional standards. They go on to explain how roofs may be modified to bear the weight of vegetation, discuss the different options for drainage layers and growing media and list the plants suitable for different climates and environments.

This informative, up-to-the-minute reference will captivate professionals with its illuminating new findings, and encourage gardeners everywhere to consider the enormous benefits to be gained from planting on their roofs and walls.

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## BOOK REVIEW

***Composting – The Ultimate Organic Guide to Recycling Your Garden* by Tim Marshall. ABC Books. RRP \$29.95**

A very complete organic guide to composting including how to build a compost heap, anaerobic composting, compost teas, compost ingredients, composting with worms and composts for specific purposes. Tim also covers biodynamic composting and has included chapters on solving compost problems, tools required for composting and an excellent guide to mulching and green manures.

Tim Marshall is based in South Australia and has been in the industry for 25 years as an organic grower, inspector, trainer and writer. He is also a contributor to the Gardening Australia Magazine.



A thoroughly worthwhile read for both the professional and amateur horticulturist alike.

*Richard May*  
AIH NSW President

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## YOUNG HORTICULTURIST OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

**ENTRIES CLOSE 31 AUGUST**

For full details and an entry form go to the AIH website: [www.aih.org.au](http://www.aih.org.au)

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## PLANT OF THE MONTH

***Afrocarpus falcatus* – Sickle-leaved Yellowwood, False Yellowwood**  
Family Podocarpaceae



***Podocarpus falcatus*** has recently had a name change to *Afrocarpus falcatus*. However, it appears that the Brown Pine that is native to Eastern Australia, *Podocarpus elatus* is still known by that name.

This highly adaptable and shapely tree is suitable for containers or the garden. It is evergreen, fast growing and can reach heights of 60m in its native montane forests of South Africa - from Western Cape Province to Limpopo Province and east to southern Mozambique. In cultivation it rarely exceeds 25 m.

Male and female cones occur on different trees and the clusters of large, yellow, fleshy fruits take a year to ripen. It is necessary to remove the flesh from the seed before sowing as the flesh contains an inhibitor which suppresses germination.

Pictured is *Afrocarpus falcatus* - sourced from the South African National Biodiversity Institute, South Africa: <http://www.plantzafrica.com/plantnop/podocarpfalcat.htm>

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## PLACES TO BE, THINGS TO DO....

### ANBG Lunchtime Talks

The Australian National Botanic Garden Lunchtime talks are held every Thursday in the Theatrette, 12.30 to 1.30pm. Forthcoming talks are:

2 July	Richard Hart	Some Trees of Westbourne Woods
9 July	Roger Good	Preserving Our High-country Flora Heritage
16 July	Brian Gunning	Plants: the inside story
23 July	Pep Canadel	Biosequestration
30 July	Michael Pickering	Aboriginal Peoples and the Environment (Bernard Fennessy Memorial Lecture)



### Le Potager – Edible Art?

**Friday 3 July, 10.30 am – 12 noon**

**Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**

French ornamental vegetable gardens or *potagers*, are places where vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers all grow gloriously together. Paul Kirkpatrick of Estate Gardening will give a visual presentation looking at the history and present day examples of both the romantic and formal potager styles, from French allotments to the grandeur of the King's Vegetable Garden at Versailles and the Chateau Villandry in

the Loire Valley. **\$18, Friends \$12, includes morning tea at 10.30 am**

### PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE COURSE

**5-17 July, Orana Steiner School, Weston ACT**

For 30 years permaculture has forged pathways toward sustainable land use and living through the application of its design principles all over the world. These courses reflect the knowledge learned in the cool to warm temperate regions of South Eastern Australia to empower participants in designing their own future in the face of peak oil and climate change. Contact John Champagne on (02) 6492 7306 or [champagnejohn@gmail.com](mailto:champagnejohn@gmail.com) or see [www.permaculturedesign.com.au](http://www.permaculturedesign.com.au) for details.



### Medicinal Weeds – Nature's Treasures

**Wednesday 8 July, 10.30 am – 12 noon**

**Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**

Herbalists and healers have used many wild plants, generally regarded as weeds, for centuries as traditional medicinal remedies. Find out how to use nature's roadside plants as part of your medicinal cabinet. Join Herbalist Ros Andrews for a demonstration on how easy it is to make your own herbal teas, creams, tonics and even edible salads. Visit Ros' website [www.gutmatters.com](http://www.gutmatters.com) for easy natural digestive health solutions.

**\$22, Friends \$16, includes morning tea at 10.30 am**



### **Project Camellia**

**Wednesday 22 July, 10.30 am – 12 noon**

**Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**

Project Camellia started in 1999 with the aims of establishing a living collection of Camellia species, to assemble herbarium specimens and to have a collection for molecular genetic studies to gain a better understanding of Theaceae evolution. This has involved many collections trips to Camellia-growing provinces in

Vietnam and China, resulting in the acquisition of about 200 living accessions, representing approximately 150 different Camellia and Theaceae species, including about half a dozen new Camellia species. Dr George Orel will give an illustrated presentation showing rare and endangered Camellia species in their native habitats and species never seen before as well as the scenery and people from the south-east Asian tropical forests. Current and past scientific work will be commented on.

**\$18, Friends \$12, includes morning tea at 10.30 am**



### **Easy Care Gardening**

**Thursday 30 July, 10.30 am – 12 noon**

**Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**

The increasingly aging Australian community means that a greater number of aged and infirm people will be living in their family homes. Support for such people is not always possible from immediate family members in today's demanding society.

Maintaining a garden becomes a chore which is beyond many capability of many and help is often required for them to live in peace and with dignity. Easy Care Garden Inc is a charity which assists aged and infirm people to maintain their garden through teams of volunteers who weed, mulch and prune so they can once

again enjoy their garden. Volunteer Peter Sadler will speak about the clients, volunteers and organisation of Easy Care Gardening Inc.

**\$18, Friends \$12, includes morning tea at 10.30 am**

## **GREEN EXPO SYDNEY**

**Rosehill Gardens in The Grand Pavilion, Rosehill**

**25 August 8.30 am - 7pm, and**

**26 August 9am - 12.30pm**

The Grand Pavilion at Rosehill Racecourse is booked out for this inaugural 'trade-only' Green Expo Sydney. GES, as this show has become known, is an exciting initiative of the Nursery & Garden Industry, NSW & ACT (NGINA) and will very firmly establish Sydney as the geographical centre of east coast horticulture. The aim is to appeal to as wide a cross section of the nursery and



garden industry as possible and NGINA will warmly welcome members of the Australian Institute of Horticulture to this expo.

Rosehill Gardens is ideally situated on James Ruse Drive in Parramatta, Sydney and is easily accessible by major freeways.

<http://www.ngina.com.au/greenexposydney>

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**If you would like to contribute to your newsletter with comments, articles, places-to-be, suggestions – or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list - then please contact the editor: Beth Stokes [beth.stokes@bigpond.com](mailto:beth.stokes@bigpond.com) The deadline for the August issue is 20 July**