

Golden

Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society
Latrobe Valley Group Inc.
No. A0045337C

Issue No. 305 – February 2022

Grevillea chrysophaea – Golden Grevillea

This Month

Event	Outdoor meeting, walk around Lake Hyland and group discussion.
Location	Mathison Park, Mackeys Rd, Churchill.
Date	February 10
Time	Arrive at 10:30 AM

Our first meeting for the year is a chance to catch up, have a chat, and to map out our events calendar. Raffle plants will be provided. Bring your own lunch and a drink. To get to Mathison Park, take Tramway Rd towards Churchill from the freeway or the highway at Morwell, then into Mackeys Rd at Churchill. The carpark is on the right a couple of hundred metres along Mackeys Rd

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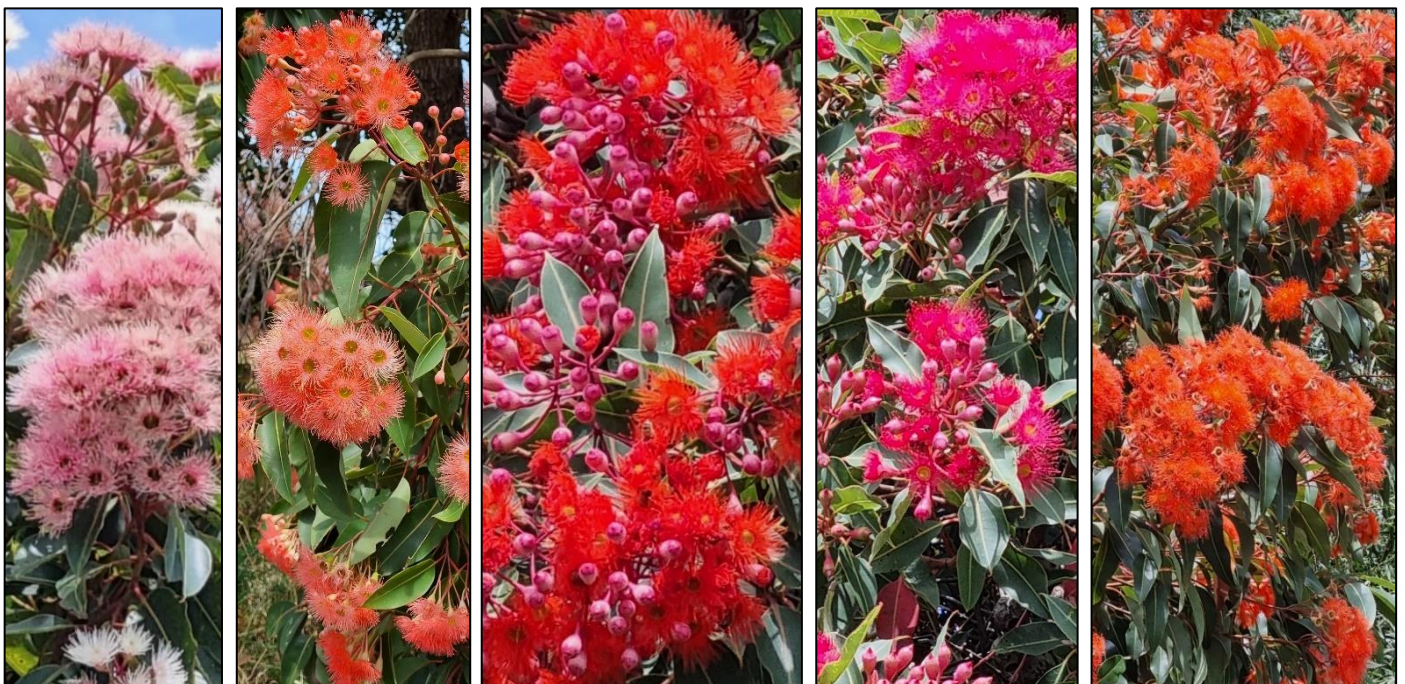
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We are looking forward to our first meeting for the year. It will be held at Mathison Park, Churchill on Thursday February 10. Details on page 1. As well as a welcome get together, this meeting is about discussing the programme for the year, especially regarding the preference for day or night meetings. With some members still working or with weekend commitments, it is impossible to suit everybody, but hopefully a combination can be arranged. Suggestions for garden visits, speakers or excursions will be welcome to add to the ones we have in mind.

I'm sure I'm not the only one to have enjoyed the damp spring and the resulting growth in our own gardens. An added bonus has been the spectacular Jacarandas (almost rivalling Grafton) and the Red Flowering gums. Regarding the latter, it is almost time for the Ficifolia Festival in Drouin. Now known as *Corymbia ficifolia* and planted along Princess Street, these stunning natives have been featured in a festival that is now in its 34th year. An initiative of the Combined Churches Committee of Drouin, to celebrate the life of the town and culminating in a church gathering on the final day. On Saturday, the 19th of February there will be various stalls and activities on the football oval. Whether you go to the festival or not, it is always worth a drive to see the trees.

Corymbia ficifolia (commonly known as the Red-flowering Gum, even though it's not always red and there are many other gums with red flowers) is a tree which can grow up to 12 metres in the wild and produces a wide range of colours from creamy white to orange and deep red. It has become widely grown as an ornamental tree in cooler parts of southern Australia, with many grafted cultivars and hybrids commercially available in sizes and colours making it suitable for a range of environments. Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*) is generally used for grafting. It is recommended that it is best to purchase a grafted specimen to guarantee colour.

My personal thanks to Colin (and Mike who sent his contribution in 2 weeks ago) who has emerged from hibernation to produce yet another years' newsletters with the help of your input.

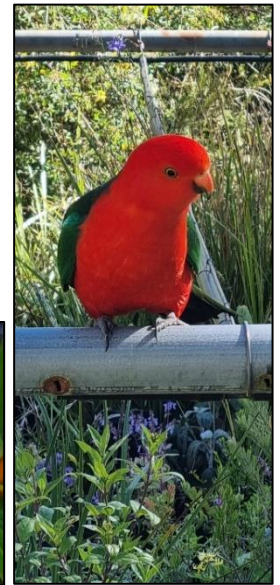


Here we are at the start of 2022, ready to venture into whatever this year brings. While we are promised that there will be no more lockdowns, I suspect we may limit ourselves with what we are prepared to do as far as meeting other people.

The summer break has been eventful in the garden. I had a King Parrot visitor at my plant stand one day, where we had a short discussion. He spoke about the possibility of getting some free food and I talked about plants that I liked. As you can guess, the discussion didn't last long and he went elsewhere. Mary also found a group of native bees clustering in the bracts of some of the paper daisies one

afternoon. The daisies were partly open and

would probably close overnight, so I am not sure if they stayed there. While on the subject of bees, I have decided to take up beekeeping. Not the native type, but the stinging feral ones that produce honey. I check 'my girls' each morning to make sure they are hard at work and sometimes sit beside the entrance and watch the comings and goings. I have been stung twice but that was on very hot days, and I can empathise with that. I get a bit grumpy on hot days too.



Flowering at this time of year is my *Pandorea jasminoides*. I took this as a cutting from my parent's property some 12 years ago, where it completely covered a concrete water supply tank. I had similar ideas so planted it beside my shed tank. So far, it has only found enough vigour to produce a few flowers and try to intrude into my propagating shelter. Ah...such is the difference between rich volcanic soils and my impoverished Jeeralang clay.



I have updated the rainfall charts for 2021 with the added contribution of Peter and Sue from Mirboo North. Normally Drouin comes in with the highest figures but this year we have had a real mix of rainfalls. Wayne recorded the highest rainfall at 1416mm but there seems to be high and low figures all over the place. I guess thunderstorm cloudbursts are probably the explanation for this.



Those of you who won a position in the 2022 calendar will be on my list for the usual 'photo blurb'. I don't mind if you send them in early as I will definitely harass you when they are due. And don't forget, I am always scrounging for more newsletter articles. Let's see if you can find something in your garden (or elsewhere) that could be good for a few words and a photo.

Species: *Anigozanthos manglesii* x *flavidus*.

Family: Haemodoraceae.

Derivation:

Anigozanthos: The derivation is obscure, as La Billardiere did not explain it when he described this genus. The most likely option is from the Greek *anisos*, meaning unequal, and *anthos*, meaning flower, referring to the irregular corolla of the flowers, with the g added for euphony.

manglesii: After Robert Mangles, the brother of Captain James Mangles and an English horticulturalist in whose gardens the type specimen was grown from seed transported from WA.

flavidus: A Latin word meaning yellowish, referring to the flower colour.



Common Name: Hybrid Kangaroo Paw.

Distribution: This is a presumed hybrid of garden origin and thus doesn't have a natural distribution. That's not to say there aren't similar hybrids in the areas where both the parent species co-exist, namely between Mandurah and Albany in south-west WA.

Description: Some Kangaroo Paws (such as *A.flavidus*) are vigorous, clumping perennials with strap-like leaves to 1m long and 4cm wide, with branching flower stems to 2m tall. Others (such as *A. manglesii*) are not so vigorous, tend to be short-lived in nature, have shorter leaves to 0.5m long and 3cm wide and shorter unbranched flower stems to 1m tall. The former generally has yellow-green tubular flowers to 4cm long, while the latter has bright red and green tubular flowers to 7cm long. My plant is somewhere in the middle of these two, with clumping strap-like leaves to 75cm long and 3cm wide, semi-branching flower stems to about 1.5m tall and small dull red tubular flowers with dull green throats to about 4cm long. And my plant is definitely not short-lived!

Opinion: Why am I calling my plant a hybrid? Cos it is! Many years ago, in the foggy past I had a massive Yellow Kangaroo Paw planted in my backyard, which did well for a number of years until gradually disappearing into the overgrowth (yes, I've been guilty of being terrible at pruning for decades). It may well still be there, struggling along, but I haven't seen it for years and suspect it has succumbed to the lack of light. Around the time it was in its prime, I also had a Red & Green Kangaroo Paw in a pot, sitting on a bench a few ►

metres away, back when I was still hoping I could keep one alive for more than a year. Plant romance (or porn?) must have occurred at some point, as a seedling appeared underneath the bench, which looked very much like a Kangaroo Paw. I dug it up, as it wasn't in a position where I wanted it to be and moved it to its current position on the western wall of the house, where it has never looked back.

It is currently nearly a metre wide and tends to die off in the middle (as a lot of Kangaroo Paws tend to do), sending up new leaves each season around the outside of the clump. With the new leaves come the new flower stems, all a bit untidy, but very attractive to any honeyeaters nearby. It's not unusual for the big Wattlebirds to clamp onto a stem, with their weight enough to bend the stems down onto the neighbouring path, where they stay for me to trip over next time I wander by. The flower stems hold their colour for a long time, well after the individual flowers have finished, but eventually I get tired of falling over them and prune them all off ready for the following season.



Sources: Elliot & Jones – Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, Volume 2.
Sharr – WA Plant Names and their Meanings.
Online – FloraBase: Flora of WA.

Spring/Summer Garden Disasters

By Col Jackson

With a very wet winter and spring and a forecast that it would be a wet summer, I was lulled into a sense of security that turned out to be false. While the wet spring initially seemed to boost growth everywhere, when it came time for the *Dianellas* to flower, I noticed that the usual sprays of buds were coming out as deformed clumps and lumps. While I have noticed this on some *Dianella* species in previous years, last spring it was widespread across all species of *Dianella* in my garden.



Further troubles came with several newly planted *Eremophilas* all dying, presumably from some root rot fungal problem as the wet soil started to warm. Even a grafted *Eremophila* from the Port Augusta Botanic Gardens succumbed after struggling for three years.



My next disaster was entirely of my own making. I had been using an old 240 litre recycling bin to drown weeds in. All manual weeding I had done through the Winter and Spring had ended up in this bin, with water filled to cover the weeds. Having run out of space in the bin, I carefully decanted the (rather stinky) water and removed and buried the organic material under some future garden soil. Having recently planted 25 new daisies (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*) in our daisy patch, I decided to give them a boost and water them in with the 'weed tea'. Big mistake! Within a few days I noticed my new plants keeling over, ultimately with only 6 of the more mature ones surviving. Not sure what the cause was, it could have been some introduced pathogen, or maybe just too much nitrogen. In the past I have successfully used this 'weed tea' to spread broadscale over established garden beds without harmful effects. In future I will be more careful how I use this resource, diluting it if used directly on new plants or just spreading on established gardens as I have in the past.

My final disaster was also of my own making. Through various reasons, a lot of my planting was in the spring. "Not a problem" I thought to myself. "Wet summer forecast, new plants will make it through no worries". With that happy thought, I turned to other priorities, mostly Christmas. When I next took the time to look at the garden, I noticed two of my recently bought nursery plants wilted and definitely looking sick. Desperate watering over the next few days didn't work. Alas, they were gone, long before their scheduled time, thanks to



my negligence. What happened to our wet summer? It turns out we had barely a spit of rain through December, but I didn't take the time to notice.

The good news is that some of the *Dianellas* have had a second go at flowering now that it has dried out a bit and the flower stems are looking normal again.

Looking for a place to visit over the Summer months? Somewhere cool and green on a warm day? Somewhere nearby where you can get back to nature and ignore the hustle and bustle for a few hours? Why not head off to the Lyrebird Walk, a lovely little park accessed from the Strzelecki Highway a few kilometres north of Mirboo North and straddling the headwaters of the Little Morwell River? Here you will find some picnic tables adjacent to the carpark, with the stream nearby and an information board showing you the options for a couple of walking tracks through the Reserve and the adjacent forests. No toilets though, but it is only a few minutes' drive to Mirboo North for those who can't hold on or would kill for their morning coffee.

You don't even have to leave the picnic ground to get your nature fix. Birds are abundant in these forests, and you are likely to see several species from the driver's seat of the car – Crimson Rosellas, Superb Fairywrens, Laughing Kookaburras, Pied Currawongs and Magpies like to frequent picnic grounds! To see (or hear) a greater variety though, it's best to take a wander along one of the tracks. If you're not feeling energetic, then just meander

along the stream and back. But if you have energy to burn, take one of the longer loop tracks up the hill and you will increase your chances of seeing something a little less common, maybe a Golden, Olive or Rufous Whistler, or a King Parrot, a Gang Gang Cockatoo, a Sacred Kingfisher, an Eastern Whipbird or yes, you guessed it, a Superb Lyrebird!

Many critters live in these forests, too – Wombats, Brushtail and Ringtail Possums, Sugar and Greater Gliders, Koalas, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Swamp Wallabies and very rare marsupials such as Tiger Quolls, Bandicoots and Antechinus. But you are unlikely to see most of these in daylight hours, as they are mainly nocturnal as well as very shy. Spotlight walks may well be your best chance if you wish to track these down.

And don't forget the plants! Fern gullies are part of the forest, there are Hairpin Banksias on the slopes and many species of colourful wildflowers to be found in all seasons. Keen eyes should be able to spot some of the late Summer-flowering orchids that grow in this



area – the Rosy Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium roseum*) will be the most obvious, with its bright pink flowers on brown or green stems up to a metre tall standing out in the undergrowth. ►



More difficult to find are the two species of Tongue Orchid (Large *Cryptostylis subulata* or Small *C. leptochila*) that can also be quite tall but will blend into the shrubbery. They both have leaves that look a bit like gum-leaves growing directly out of the ground, so these might be easier to see. And lastly, there is the tiny Elbow Orchid (*Thynninorchis huntianus*) which doesn't have leaves and is very cryptic, looking like a small hairy insect dangling from a twig. You might find these scattered in the leaf litter in open areas beside the track. Good luck!



2022 Calendar Spot – February

By Cathy Beamish

We found many *Drosera*'s whilst wandering around places of interest in the Brisbane Ranges with Cathy Powers.

We were predominately looking for orchids (of course, cos' when aren't we!) but I seem to remember there being a lot of sundews around as well.

I am kind of fascinated by these plants. They can make for a great photo if you can manage to get the light shining through the dew drops at the right angle. I am forever trying, but rarely get it right. The plants can vary a lot from tiny little rosettes to very straggly creepers. Their flowers can be amazingly big in comparison to the plant size. I can still remember being stunned at how many wonderfully different species there were in WA, when we were there in 2016. Oh, how time flies by even when you are in the middle of a pandemic.



The Vagaries of Boolarra Weather

By Mike Beamish

Isn't the weather strange? For most of 2021 we felt like we were underwater, but in the last 3 weeks of the year it turned hot and dry, seemingly overnight, and a heap of my plants in the nursery, and a couple in the garden, couldn't cope and turned that uncomfortable shade of crispy brown. Here's the figures - Yearly total 1098mm, about 150mm more than our 30-year average. Wettest month - September 186mm, double the average. Driest month - December 34.5mm, half the average. Above average - January, March, June, September. About average (within 10%) - April, May, August, October, November. Below average - February, July, December.

With regards to temperatures, it seems we are trending slowly upwards as far as averages are concerned, but the extremes weren't felt in 2021. Winter nights weren't as cold for lengthy periods and summer heat wasn't as extreme nor as sustained as in previous years. Coldest night was -1 degrees C on May 31st, no other night was below zero in my garden. Hottest days were 36 degrees C on January 11th and 25th, and December 31st. We have already beaten that this year, as it was 37 degrees on New Year's Day! A cursory glance compared to 2020 seems to indicate that nights were slightly warmer but daytime average maximums were about the same in 2021.



Lantern Bushes of Australia

By Chris Clarke

Trevor Blake's new book "Lantern Bushes of Australia; Thomasias & Allied Genera" has been published!

It has excellent botanical drawings of each species as well as colour photos, up to date botanical descriptions and cultivation notes. Trevor is a life member of the Australian Plants Society Victoria, and we heartily congratulate Trevor for completing this epic work. The book has been beautifully edited by Jane Canaway and published by the APS Keilor Plains group. In my totally biased opinion, it is a 427-page masterpiece with a double page spread on each species of Thomasia, Androcalva, Commersonia, Guichenotia, Lasiopetalum, Lysiosepalum and Seringia. Botanical keys are included for each Genera and key distinguishing features of each species are highlighted with a distribution map included.

The book price is only \$50 per copy via APS Keilor Plains (plus postage) as it has been produced on a purely not for profit basis. (Prices in nurseries and shops will be higher).

Bill and Sue, the booksellers for APS Victoria also have copies at a discount for Australian Plant Society members. Members can e-mail Bill and Sue at apsvicbooks@gmail.com

Coming events of interest

Note: Please check the Vic APS website for cancellations before attending.

11 – 16 September 2022, ANPSA Biennial Conference 2022 – Kiama, New South Wales. Preliminary details of the Conference, pre- and post-Conference tours and the beautiful town of Kiama can be found on the APS (NSW) website.

26 to 30 September 2022 - 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress, Melbourne. *Influence and Action: Botanic Gardens as Agents of Change.* Includes a youth program for future gardens' leaders aged 18 to 24.

15 & 16 October 2022 – 14th FJC Rogers Seminar. Topic: Fabulous peas (the typical 'pea-flowered' plants from the sub-family Faboideae. York on Lilydale in Mt Evelyn. Expressions of interest and queries to fabulouspeas2022@gmail.com

LV Group special occasions

While we were all busy with Christmas and the holiday break there has been a wedding within our group. With the ability for Marilyn's family to travel to Victoria from Queensland, Marilyn and Pete were married on the 27th of December. Note the posy of Everlasting Daisies. Congratulations and best wishes to you both.



And congratulations to Brian Hetherington who has had a birthday of special note. Happy 80th birthday, Brian. Here he is playing with his new present – a battery powered Stihl chainsaw.

2022 Latrobe Valley Group Events Calendar

Month	Day	Date	Activity	Time
Feb	Thursday	10	Outdoor meeting at Mathison Park in Churchill.	10:30

Rainfall for 2021 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)	92	57	78	88	65	143	73	83	128	180	113	28	1125
Brian	Drouin (east)	83	58	80	64	68	134	87	44	174	130	106	26	1054
Carolyn	Yarragon	79	30	60	65	75	117	73	102	151	93	88	20	951
Wayne	Tanjil South	108	37	89	77	175	195	90	95	207	167	112	64	1416
Peter	Mirboo North	92	53	107	81	101	274	88	78	170	87	96	45	1272
Judy	Moe South	97	25	89	79	75	175	79	83	197	101	93	37	1130
Mike	Boolarra	95	43	81	66	84	181	67	92	186	88	83	35	1098
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	79	35	98	63	71	266	56	114	120	136	117	26	1178
John	Traralgon South	83	16	135	35	26	229	58	68	91	75	68	33	915

Rainfall for 2022 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Diane	Drouin (west)													
Brian	Drouin (east)													
Carolyn	Yarragon													
Wayne	Tanjil South													
Peter	Mirboo North													
Judy	Moe South													
Mike	Boolarra													
Mary	Jeeralang Junction													
John	Traralgon South													

<https://apsvic.org.au/aps-latrobe-valley/>

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Title page photo: *Grevillea chrysophaea* at Holey Plains State Park by Mike Beamish