

February 2018 Minutes

A few brave souls ventured to the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens on Tuesday 20 February in the heavy (hopefully) drought breaking rain and severe traffic problems to find a very warm welcome from the HRBG Team.

Despite our current drought conditions the Botanical Gardens looked superb, well organised and with healthy 'happy' plants.

Pat welcomed us and gave a very informative talk about the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens – outlining the different areas of the gardens, the themed gardens, the wide range of plants both exotic and native while maintaining diversity of the plant collection.

Areas include the succulent garden, the orchid houses, Native collections, Educational areas, Rainforest and Hunter Regional plants and the Herbarium which houses the collection of dried plants for archival reference for students and researchers while maintaining a record of plants ground in the Hunter region since the 1960's.

I am sure that PAGG will return as the Gardens but in the meantime have a look at the webpage - <http://www.huntergardens.org.au/> and visit if you get a chance – for \$2 it is great value for money. And they are having a Rare plant sale on 22 April – could be worth a visit.

Managing the dry

Penny Kater said it was the worst drought conditions she has seen in the 50 odd years she has been coming to the Gresford district and she understood how sometimes it was 'hard to keep going' looking after our gardens. But she added, it did 'sort out what will survive'. I have combined our general discussion with Tips for Drought conditions Penny discussed last year!

Watering

- Remember to water at night or early morning.
- Don't waste water by spraying up in the air.
- Don't water foliage – wet foliage will scorch in the heat.

Remember plants lose water through their leaves and drink through their roots

With a limited amount of water here are a few priorities:

- Any plant that is showing signs of wilt, incurved pale or drooping leaves needs water to the roots, you can't rehydrate leaves by watering them
- Severely wilted leaves will drop off and new leaves will form if the plant survives
- Some plants recover from severe wilt, others don't

Mulch

If you haven't already mulched and have access to it, put it on

Plants

After the drought is broken and as possible options for future gardens, here is a random list of plants that are surviving well in our gardens.

Chinese elm, English elm, Lacebark, Flame tree, Waterhousea, Lilly Pilly, Crepe Myrtle, Eucalypts, prickly Paperbarks, Bottlebrush, Banksia, Fig (finding they won't fruit well without water), Native fig, European olive, Wisteria, Dietes, Aggies, Xylosma, Roses are amazing but need a sip now and then – Barbara suggests a bucket of water each once a week, Camellia family generally survives, Gordonia, Persimmon, Grape, While many gum trees will often

drop their leaves, they are quick to recover. Maree Foster recommended the Ivory Curl Tree (*Buckinghamia celsissima*) which is growing so well in her garden.



Membership Guidelines

Initially when PAGG formed in April 2012 it was recommended that to become a member of PAGG, prospective members needed to attend 2 PAGG meetings prior to becoming a member - somewhere along the years this seems to have fallen by the wayside. Following the updating of the PAGG members list for 2018, we would like to reintroduce this policy. Our reasoning for this was the number of people who sign up on the first visit and then we don't see them again.

