

# THE FRIENDS OF THE WAITE ARBORETUM



## NEWSLETTER

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### **MADE FROM WOOD - an exhibition by Woodgroup S.A.**

On 8 October, 1995 we had the pleasure of an exhibition from members of Woodgroup S.A. and others, opened by Mr Malcolm Campbell and attended by a crowd of Friends and lovers of woodworking. The many items displayed represented pure sculptural and ornamental works, useful platters, bowls, pens, goblets and vases, boxes, a clock and a barometer, furniture and even a child's hiking stick. Most were for sale and prices were so reasonable that many items were sold on the first day.

We were very fortunate to be able to house this exhibition. It was an excellent adjunct to the Arboretum itself for so much of the timber used can be seen growing there and it was an opportunity to appreciate the splendid craftsmanship of this gifted group. Skills to be remarked upon were marquetry and inlaid work using a variety of timbers, carving and turning and intricate design in both furniture and smaller works. We should like to thank the exhibitors for this inspirational display. Perhaps some of us will be moved by this example to try woodworking for ourselves.

Barbara Crompton

### **GENERAL MEETING on Monday, 9 October 1995 at 8 pm**

Our meeting on this evening was closely tied to the current exhibition, for our speaker was Neville Sanders, a prominent member of the Woodgroup, whose work was displayed. As a Friend of the Botanic Gardens he is well known for the range of beautiful goblets, which he has turned from a variety of different native timbers and are held in the Museum of Economic Botany in the Botanic Gardens. The subject of his talk was Australian Timbers. Firstly he spoke of the age and size of trees, their value as home and food for many animals, including man. They are 10 times older than grasses, their strong, flexible leaves sustain the tree, nutrients from the soil nourish the tree and in its turn it has provided us with fruits, seeds and nuts, building materials, varnishes, gum, rubber, spices, cellulose for paper and fibres ... an endless list which indicates the place of the tree as a foremost provider of natural products as well as its vital shade.

Neville came to his craft late upon reading an article on making a two column candlestick. He bought a lathe at a sale and still hasn't made that candlestick. His aim has been to make a collection of turned articles to demonstrate the beauty of wood. He joined the International Wood and Collectors' Society in 1980 and that has led to a better knowledge of the world through correspondence with overseas members and exchanging samples of wood. He believes that Australia has the most beautiful timbers in the world but many are endangered and not available. 'Woodies' as he calls his colleagues, are mostly 'greenies' too and only use wood from trees which have fallen or have to be felled. They often have the opportunity to obtain precious samples from groups like ETSA, the Botanic Gardens and the Waite Arboretum.

Neville brought with him a number of timber samples from the Arid Lands Garden at Port Augusta which had been especially prepared for him. He spoke about many of them and I think many of us will look with fresh respect at the vegetation in the desert parts of our state. There were some very handsome grains and colours and his descriptions illustrated the landscape of their source.

There were many questions about seasoning and finishing wood, about individual trees and their properties. Blackwood is one of his favourite woods to work on; *Acacia ramulosa* has a beautiful fiddlewood; eucalypts, *Hakea* and Australian oaks are all hard wood but *Acacia pauce* is the hardest wood of all Australian timbers; *Toona* has been a favourite since early settlement. Each wood has great variations within its own species. We had a wonderfully enlightening evening with Neville Sanders and the Committee were happy too at the good attendance at the meeting. We do thank the Woodgroup for the pleasure they have given us all.

Barbara Crompton

#### **A THOUSAND FLOWERS - an exhibition by *CONNECTED THREADS***

This exhibition was subtitled *Visualisations of the Arboretum in Textiles* and it attracted admiration from those who came to Urrbrae House to view it between 12 November and 10 December. This group of ten weavers are women who will be remembered for the Women's Suffrage Centenary Tapestries which now hang in the chamber of the House of Assembly. The exhibition pieces included woven loom work, quilts, rugs, printed wall hangings, clothing and tapestry weaving. The group were inspired to create this wonderful variety of work after a walk in the Arboretum and in Urrbrae House. What a delightful recollection of these places has been forged.

#### **FROM THE COMMITTEE - Meetings on 26 September and 31 October**

- Sub-committees for Exhibitions and Publications are underway and interested Friends are encouraged to offer their help. We are finding that there are so many activities going on that current helpers are unable to support Jennifer as much as they would like.
- Pruning has not been undertaken in the Arboretum since the very early days (when all specimens were pruned up to a height of 2m). The trees have been allowed to grow as in nature [except that many come from an entirely different environment]. It is clear that pruning is necessary for the safety of increasing numbers of visitors and we are planning pruning demonstrations in the Autumn for Friends to observe.
- The resignation of Barry Dangerfield from the committee has been received with regret. We are grateful for his past support.

## CONGRATULATIONS

It is with such pleasure that we give our warm congratulations to David Symon for his notably well-earned Doctorate in Science which will be conferred in next year's Commemoration Ceremonies. This honour has been awarded for the body of his publications during his lifetime. He is more than a Friend of the Arboretum and our first Honorary Life Member; his policies during the 30 years of his management have been the most influential in the Arboretum's history.

## NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new Foundation members: Dr M. Anderson, Netherby; Dr J. Ascher-Ellis, Mt Osmond; Mr P. Barclay, Glen Osmond; Ms J. Barge, Parkside; Mrs E. Bennett, Mitcham; Mr M. Beruldsen, Magill; Bird Family, Mitcham; Ms B. Chandler, Colonel Light Gardens; Andrew Davidson Family, Fullarton; Angus Davidson Family, Crafers; Mrs S. Daugherty, North Adelaide; C. Davidson Family, Aldgate; T. Davidson Family, Fullarton; Ms J. Dyster, Bridgewater; Ms H. Fulcher, Norwood; Ms E. Gardner, Elizabeth; Mr J. Harris, Campbelltown; Hatter Family, Plympton; Ms B. Hogan, Athelstone; Mr J. Ingham, Urrbrae; Jones Family, Clarence Gardens; Lawrys Landscapes and Nurseries; Lohmeyer Family, Norwood; Dr P. Mares & Ms R. Tyndale, Prospect; Dr D. McCulloch, Forestville; Mr C. Parsons, Flagstaff Hill; Ms J. Pastok, Gepps Cross; Miss J. Pfitzner, Valley View; Phillips Family, Toorak Gardens; Ms B. Rennison, Kensington Park; Mr R. Robinson, Athelstone; Mr M. Roche, Williamstown; Ms E. Rogers, Beaumont; Mr J. Sandham, Glenalta; Mrs A. Smith Elphick, Glenunga; Ms A. Thelander, Belair; Mr R. Wood, Springfield.

The Friends now number over 200 with 44 Family, 102 Individual and 5 Institutional members. A complete list of Foundation Members is enclosed.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Subscriptions to the Friends for 1996 became due on 1 January. Your ongoing support is much appreciated.

## ARBORETUM NEWS

Volunteers provide valuable assistance in the Arboretum and the gardens of Urrbrae House. I would like to especially thank the following for their help over the past year: Vern Akers, Betty Ashton, Leon Camens, Margaret Daly, Kit Franklin, Jeannie Moffatt, Jenny Newell, Susan Patterson, Cate Paull and Una Wagner. More volunteers are *urgently* needed to help water the new plantings of banksias and palms which cannot be reached by the water tank as well as assisting with pruning and other tasks. Please contact me on 303.7405 if you would like to help.

Over the last three years, more than 770 trees have been planted. In December, four students from Roseworthy Campus volunteered some time to start mapping the trees and their efforts are much appreciated. However, many more trees remain to be mapped before the new Catalogue can be published. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to give a few hours to this most important job.

Thanks are extended to the volunteers who staffed the Arboretum display at the Burnside Village Community Expo on 16 - 18 November. It generated considerable interest and some new Friends. Thanks also to everyone who donated plants for Open Day on 19 November. Although the number of visitors was well down on previous years and sales were slow, the donated plants raised \$280.

The Arboretum guides have had a busy year. In addition to the regular guided walks offered on the first Sunday of every month, there have been 25 tours booked by clubs, societies and school groups. In addition a number of special walks were given in conjunction with the Timber Exhibition, the Rose Festival, Open Day and other special events. The guides - Anna Cox, Cate Paull, Isabella Rawnsley, Tommie Siekmann, David Symon and Mary Tester are to be congratulated for making the walks they give so enjoyable and informative. The guides not only point out to visitors some of the treasures in the collection but by their enthusiasm they promote the Arboretum and the Friends. Additional guides are needed to meet the increasing demand for guided walks. A short training session will be held soon for new guides. Please contact me if you are interested.

An association of mutual benefit has been formed with Woodgroup S.A. Members have access to fallen timber in the Arboretum and in return, carved and turned items from some of those timbers will be donated to form a permanent Arboretum collection. The first few items to be received are a sculpture by Leonie Warmington and a carved plaque by Robin Giesecke both from *Schinus terebinthifolius* and a turned bowl by Brian Foreman from *Pistacia chinensis*. In addition a collection of prepared timber samples has been started. Following the very successful exhibition 'Made from Wood' last October, it is hoped to make this a regular event.

Two more seats have been installed: one donated by Leonie and Harold Woolhouse, the other by the Saunders Family in memory of Judy Saunders (1918 - 1995) a knowledgeable and enthusiastic birdwatcher. Judy's last observations of birds in the Arboretum was published by the Adelaide Ornithologists Club Inc. in the March 1995 issue of *Bird Talk*.

Speaking of birds, two Cape Barren Geese have been in residence in the Arboretum since early September last year and have been banded. Other birds which have been seen recently at the lake include White Ibis, Black Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant and White-faced Heron. It is hoped that the floating island and waterplants recently planted around the verge will provide suitable habitat and a sanctuary to attract many more birds to the Arboretum. A child-proof security gate has been recently installed to allow public access to the lake.

It is proposed to establish a Friends plant propagation scheme to grow material for the Arboretum. This will give Friends the opportunity to assist the Arboretum in a practical way. Seeds, soil, labels and pots would be supplied. Please contact me if you would like to participate in this scheme. I am also seeking a volunteer to coordinate the project and maintain the records.

Jennifer Gardner

## ANOTHER TREE IN THE ARBORETUM

by B. Crompton & J. Gardner

### *Ficus sycomorus* sycamore (of the Bible) or mulberry fig

*Ficus sycomorus* is a member of *Ficus*, the most prominent genus of the Moraceae family. Other well known members of this family are *Morus*, the mulberry and *Maclura*, the Osage orange.

The genus *Ficus* has approximately 1,000 species. It probably originated in the fertile areas of Southern Arabia, whence it spread to most of the tropical and subtropical world with a few species also found in temperate regions. Use by man of this genus dates from earliest times and *F. carica*, the member of the genus which provides us with the most palatable fruit, is now grown wherever it can be provided with the warmth and moisture it needs.

The fig is not a fruit in the strict botanical sense but a syconium, a fleshy receptacle which encloses the tiny flowers and later the numerous true fruits or 'seeds'. There are both male and female flowers and sometimes sterile flowers as well in the same receptacle. In some species male and female flowers are on separate trees.

In many figs pollination is effected by a species-specific gall wasp of the family Agaonidae. The pregnant female enters through the ostiole (the opening of the receptacle which is closed by overlapping bracts). She removes the pollen from pollen pockets and pollinates up to hundreds of stigmas. She also oviposits in some of the female flowers, a single egg in each, and then she dies. In the oviposited flowers, the ovules are stimulated to produce only endosperm on which the grubs feed. The male wasps hatch first and fertilise the emerging females which fill their pollen pockets from the newly opened anthers. The females leave through the ostiole or holes in the syconium wall cut by the males, who then die, having never left the fig. Thus the cycle is repeated. If there is no pollination the syconium aborts (except in parthenocarpic cultivars of *F. carica* in which figs develop without pollination and seed formation). However, when pollination does occur, not every female flower contains a wasp egg, so the remaining pollinated flowers develop fertile seeds. This is one of the most remarkable plant - insect interactions in which neither species can procreate without the other.

*Ficus sycomorus* can be found in the Waite Arboretum at D9 where two specimens were planted in 1973. The name *sycomorus* stemmed from the Greek *sykon* = fig and *moron* = mulberry. The species is native to South and tropical Africa and was brought in antiquity to the Mediterranean in cultivation for its edible fruit.

It was a sacred tree of ancient Egypt and drawings of it appear on the walls of a temple in Karnak. Biblical references are well known - Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree in Jericho, the better to see Jesus as he passed by. Amos was described as a dresser of sycamore trees. This task entailed incising the figs to accelerate ripening. As recorded in Cruden's *Complete Concordance* (1737) Pliny and other naturalists observed that if the fruit was rubbed with an iron comb, it ripened in 4 days. [The mechanism for the success of this treatment is now understood to be that any injury to fruits will cause the evolution of ethylene gas which stimulates ripening.]

*F. sycomorus* is drought tolerant and will survive in sand dunes and the stormy sea gales of the Middle East. The trees live long and grow up to 46 m tall in tropical climes with trunks circumferences to 12 m. The edible fruit grow in leafless clusters from trunk and large branches. The yield is huge, providing from ancient times a valuable food source for both animals and humans in the deserts. With canopies up to 27 m wide, the sycamore fig also provides much valued shade to travellers in rigorous climates.

Surprisingly, considering its softness, the wood of the sycamore fig has been used since antiquity for coffins and ceilings. Its light weight and porosity have proved to be of benefit against damp and rot. Pharaoh's sarcophagi several thousand years old have been found intact in excavations and museums in Cairo show statues carved in sycamore wood.

References Hortus Third (1976); Mabberley D. J. C. (1987) *The Plant Book* p. 227 & (1992) *Tropical Rain Forest Ecology* p. 178; Palmer, E. & Pittman, N. (1972) *Trees of Southern Africa* vol 1 pp. 439-444; Randell, B. (1995) 'Figments of imagination' in *Garden Journal* Spring 1995, pp. 48-9.

**FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND DIARY DATES** - see enclosed fliers for details

**Guided walks of the Arboretum - 11 am - 12.30 pm first Sunday of every month** (meet in front of Urrbrae House).

**General meetings:** 8 pm on Monday 12 February, 29 April, 12 August, 28 October

12 February: Speaker: David Lawry - New technologies in advanced tree production  
29 April: Speaker: Andrew Beale or Andrew Fielke - Australian Native Produce

**Fringe events** - a series of 3 chamber concerts followed by guided tours of the Arboretum:  
11 am - 2 pm on Sunday 25 February, 3 March, 17 March

**Timber Week** - special timber walk 11 am Sunday 24 March

**Joint special events with Urrbrae House and Carrick Hill:**  
10 am - 5 pm Sunday 18 February, 21 April, 13 October, 24 November

**Trip to Golden Grove** to look for fossils: probably March (a flier will be circulated):

**Botanical Art Exhibition in Urrbrae House:** opening: 6 pm Friday 11 October.