
GARDENS GAZETTE

FEBRUARY 2026

Newsletter for Friends of the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens Inc



**LISMORE
RAINFOREST BOTANIC
GARDENS**



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge those who are supporting us financially and/or with their knowledge, skills and experience.

Andrew and Jeni Binns,
Bruce Jobson Plumbing,
Fair Dinkum Constructions,
Ginger Blue Graphic Design,
Graham Cook
Hugh & Nan Nicholson,
Interactive Landscapes
Janelle Saffin,
Jenny Dowell,
Lismore City Printery,
Matthews Fabrication,
Millars Metal Imaging,
Paul Boxsell LCC Sign Shop,
Peter Gow Electrical
Richmond Sand, Gravel & Landscaping,
RBG at Mt Annan,
Southern Cross Uni,
Susan Oliver Graphic Design,
Vicki Brooke,
Waste Facility staff

and all who have supported us in any way including some who have requested to remain anonymous. We couldn't do it without you - THANK YOU!

To plant a garden
is to **BELIEVE** in
tomorrow

Audrey Hepburn.



This newsletter contains active links to websites, email and references. Just click the coloured text to be directed to an external site.



FLRBG Greeting Cards

Perfect for birthdays, thank-yous, and everything in between.

Set of 12 cards - \$6.00

12 beautiful full colour cards featuring photos, taken by the Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens, of local plants and animals.

Cards have been left blank for you to write your own message. Our card set makes a perfect and thoughtful gift too!

To purchase a set, send an email: publicity@friendslrbg.com.au

Card 1: Red-Headed Honeyeater
Myzomela erythrocephala
Photo: Phil Jarman

Card 2: *Syzygium moorei* Coolamon
Photo: Florence Treverrow

Card 3: *Mischarytera lautereriana*
Corduroy Tamarind
Photo: Florence Treverrow

THE FLRBG COMMITTEE

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Nursery Manager - Jenny Wilson

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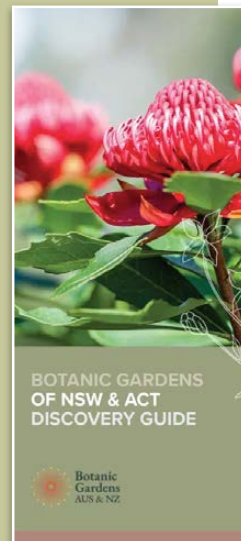
Cover photo:
Firewheel Tree, Stenocarpus sinuatus
currently in flower at the Gardens.

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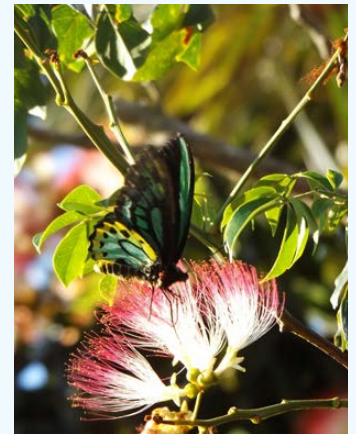


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – YOUR YEAR TO VOLUNTEER

2026 is International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, designated by the UN General Assembly. *'Your Year to Volunteer'* is also the theme for Australia's **National Volunteer Week (NVW)**, from 18th to 24th May, 2026. This coincides perfectly with the **BGANZ Botanic Gardens Week 2026**, which is aptly themed *'The Health & Wellbeing Value of Botanic Gardens'* and our own **Open Day on Sunday 24th May**. Save the date! Come along and feel yourself relax in our Hoop Pine Forest Walk, soak up the peace of the labyrinth and listen to the birds.

Some of the many life-changing benefits of volunteering are socialising, sharing, belonging and encountering new ideas. In volunteering at a Botanic Gardens, another very important benefit for me is being in nature. There is a tangible and visible feeling of making a difference, however small. Every plant enjoys the attention.

One of our goals for 2026 continues to be improving and updating the database of plants. Curator **Peter Gould** and Lismore City Council horticulturalist, **Damian Butler** have been steadily auditing our collection. We have also applied for grants to build an equipment shed, an irrigation system and to improve the archives, facilities and library in our office.



Our Wednesday Work Coordinator, **Ros Little**, has been the quiet and generous leader of our volunteers for over fifteen years. A valued committee member, with her hands firmly planted in the workings of the gardens, she is present to welcome us all every Wednesday morning, shed door swung wide and cheerful smile on her face. Without any obvious direction, Ros calmly ensures everyone is doing a job they love and that all the jobs are done. Ros also coordinated monthly Sunday work days for many years. Her botanical and stained-glass art works adorn the Gardens, on signage and as features in the sensory garden. Unfortunately, Ros will be leaving to live closer to her family and we will miss her kindness and creativity. We wish her all the best for the future.

We also recently farewelled **Damian Butler**, the horticulturalist working in our team from Lismore City Council. Damian was a font of knowledge about local rainforest plants of the Big Scrub and was always willing to share his expertise. He helped undertake studies in the Gardens which are aimed at eradicating myrtle rust and was instrumental in keeping our plants thriving. He was involved in training guides and to support volunteers in the nursery and on our plant stall on Open Days. We already miss him very much.

One hundred QR-coded new plant signs will be launched on **Wednesday 25th March at 10 am** at the Gardens. To be placed in the **Uncommon Plants Garden**, these signs are linked to *Plantnet* and give botanical information about each plant. A very generous donation by **Vicki Brooke** has made this improvement possible and the Friends are grateful for this lasting educational gift to the public who visit.

Keep up to date via the website and facebook with news about our **Spring Sculpture Exhibition**. We are finalising details. More details are in this newsletter. We'd love to see what you can create with natural and recycled materials.

If you are coming to the Gardens in February or March, you will need to park near the **Environmental Education Centre**, as road works will be underway at the waste facility. There will be plenty of parking (turn right just before the weighbridge) and pedestrian access up the ramp nearby. Gates will be closing at 1pm each day while roadworks are underway. See you at the Gardens soon.

Images above L to R: Wednesday work coordinator - **Ros Little**.
Damian Butler, Horticulturalist at the gardens for over 20 years, guiding students from U3A.
One of our new QR coded plant signs, knowledge at your fingertips.
Archidendron grandiflorum Pink Lace Flower with Richmond Birdwing Butterfly. Photo: Robert Porritt

Tracey Whitby
publicity@friendslrbg.com.au
FLRBG February 2026

NEWS FROM THE NURSERY

Up in the Nursery perched on the hill, we often see and hear birds above the hum of the Waste Facility and have become very aware of the butterflies, especially when they appear to be checking out our plants as potential hosts for their larvae. This prompted us to identify the plants we have available that are known host plants and the butterflies that are attracted to them.

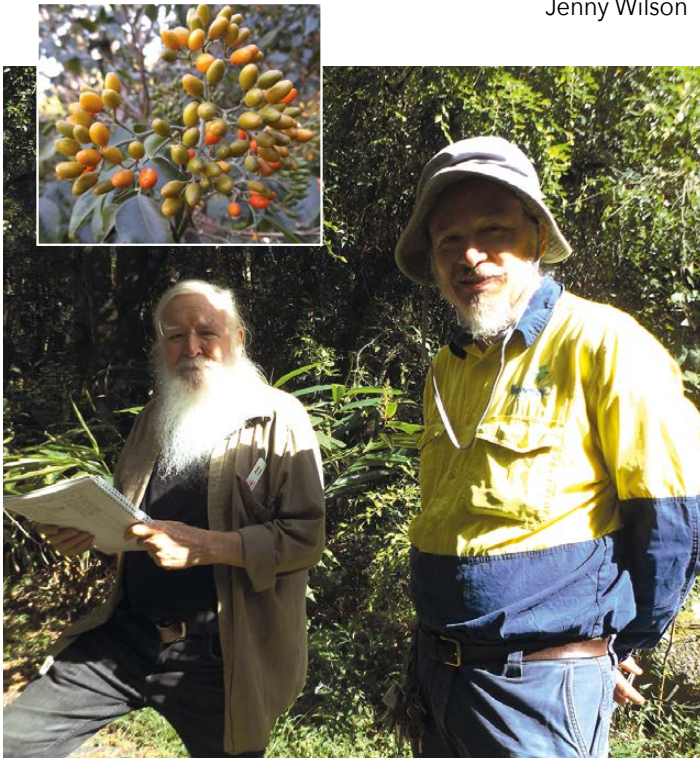
One such plant is *Micromelum minutum* (Lime Berry). This is a fast-growing shrub to small tree that thrives with warmth, good drainage, water and fertiliser, in sun or shade. The leaves are aromatic when crushed. The bundles of flowers are scented and the fruit changes from lime green, to yellow, then orange and red.

Micromelum minutum attracts many birds, almost all butterflies and other insects to its flowers and fruit that can appear at most times of the year, as well as serving as an important host plant to three of the citrus-feeding Swallowtails. Two of these are the *Orchard Swallowtail* and the *Capaneus Swallowtail*.

It is with a great deal of sadness that we must farewell **Damian Butler** who has recently moved on from his position as a horticulturalist with Lismore City Council.

Damian was always our go-to person when we needed help identifying plants. But he didn't stop there - he loved sharing the stories behind them too, from Indigenous uses to the ways plants connect with insects, birds, animals and other plants. His enthusiasm and depth of knowledge inspired us all. We wish Damian every success in his future adventures and hope to one day welcome him back here in the Northern Rivers.

Jenny Wilson



Inset: *Micromelum minutum* Lime Berry fruiting in the Gardens. Photo: Florence Treverrow. **Damian** and **Peter** working on the plant audit, September 2025

Currently in the Nursery we have *Micromelum minutum* for sale at half price in tubes, as well as many other butterfly host plants. We are open from 9.30 am to 12pm every Wednesday. Cash only please.

PARTING THOUGHTS....



We caught up with **Ros Little**, our wonderful Wednesday work coordinator, to hear how she first became involved as a volunteer at the Gardens and to reflect on her time here.

- **Why did you start volunteering at the Gardens?**

I had just moved to Lismore in 2006 when someone recommended the Gardens to me. At the time, I knew absolutely nothing about rainforests! Back then, volunteering only happened on Sundays. Before long, a few of us felt there was more that could be done, so we started a Wednesday volunteer group to allow for more regular work and watering. I stepped up as the organiser, helping Marie and Denis Matthews coordinate and share out the jobs.

- **What is the best part of being a volunteer?**

Seeing what was once wasteland grow into the beautiful place it is today has been incredibly rewarding—especially areas like the Useful Plants and Uncommon Plants Gardens. They used to be so open and hot, and now they're wonderfully shady and inviting. We once had to water constantly, but now the forest largely sustains itself. Just as special has been the people. I've loved working alongside them, we get on so well and really feel like a family.

- **What will you miss most?**

The camaraderie and the people - every single volunteer. Having something regular to look forward to each week meant a lot to me.

- **What would you like to see changed/improved when you come back to visit in the future?**

Continued growth and future decisions to keep the gardens moving forward. If I came back, I would walk up through the rainforest, just to feel it again. I'll miss my own garden too, but I'll still have nature nearby, especially as I will be living near a lake. My project will be to make my little space a better garden.

Ros has recently been conferred Honorary Life Membership of the Friends LRBG.

SOIL IMPROVEMENT AT THE GARDENS

It has been apparent for some years that the soil in the botanic gardens is not the best for thriving trees and is the main contributing factor to the poor survival rate of new plantings. When writing the new *Management Plan* for the gardens, it was decided that soil testing should be a high priority.

A soil auger was purchased in August 2024 and soil samples were obtained from **Rooms 1 to 4** and the *Wilson's Park Species* planting. The soil sampling was itself quite challenging due to the number of rocks and it also quickly became apparent that there was only a thin layer of topsoil over a thick layer of dense clay. Curator, **Peter Gould** was helped by a couple of volunteers but it was still a laborious process.

The soil sample results were returned in November and I was given the task of trying to work out what the results meant and what we should do. Basically, the pH of all samples was satisfactory, but all samples were deficient in nutrients and microbial activity and all had a relatively high level of magnesium. At first, I thought gypsum might be a good soil additive to help improve the clay structure but a simple test demonstrated that this was not the case.

Peter was very keen to improve biological activity, preferably by using Biochar. Unfortunately, good sources of Biochar were hard to find and expensive and adding compost in sufficient quantities would be difficult because of the constraints of volunteer labour. However, it was found that we could order bags of worm castings from *Norco* so we decided to go with that as well as mulching with a thick layer of hay. It was also decided to try to aerate the soil using a fork at frequent intervals.

As worm pellets are relatively expensive and we needed a lot more organic fertiliser than concentrated fertiliser for a given area, it was decided that we should try some different combinations:



Top: Ros and Florence fertilising rainforest rooms - November 2025.

R: Ros hard at 'fork work' fertilising the rainforest - February 2025

- **Room 1** - aeration, worm pellets, hay
- **Room 2** - aeration, concentrated fertiliser, hay
- **Room 3** - aeration, organic fertiliser, hay
- **Room 4** - concentrated fertilizer, hay
- **Wilson's Park Planting** - concentrated fertiliser

One of our major constraints is always having enough people to get the work done since we only work at the gardens on Wednesday mornings.

This has meant that the treatments were applied over most of 2025 rather than within a month or two. However, we are still hoping that one or more treatments will stand out as the most promising and we can work on refining our approach.

If none of the treatments work, this is still a useful result. We will know that we must rethink our strategy and having some direction is way better than the ad hoc approach we have been using up to now.

Florence Treverrow



WALK AS ONE AT ONE

The 18th Annual World Labyrinth Day (WLD) will be held on **Saturday, May 2, 2026**, featuring the theme "Walk as One at 1". This global initiative encourages participants to walk a labyrinth at **1:00 p.m. local time** to create a "rolling wave of peaceful energy".

Labyrinth in the Hoop Pine Forest
Photo: Michelle Garrett



The labyrinth is located at the summit of the Hoop Pine Forest Walk at the Botanic Gardens. Enter the main gates to the Lismore Waste facility, turn first right into the Botanic Gardens. Parking is at the Visitor's Centre. Walk through the eucalypt forest to the entrance of the Hoop Pine Forest. Follow the unpaved path to the summit (approx 200 m). The labyrinth is made of stones among the trees.



The 'Uncommon Plants' Garden at the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens is named in honour of our former Curator, Pat Offord.

Pat was a major mover in the growth of the gardens, from the original vision to the planning and the realisation of that vision. As well as the many plantings she implemented, Pat helped develop the invisible structure of the gardens - our plant database, planting

protocols and important contacts and alliances with National Parks, other botanic gardens and researchers. She was central to the building of our reputation for scientific credibility and the inclusion of some of the world's rarest plants in our collection, the legacy of the former Big Scrub rainforest.

Peter Gould
Curator



Above: The sign in the Uncommon Plants Gardens.
Top right: Pat receiving the Handbury Award in 2020.



The love of gardening
is a seed once sown
that never dies

Gertrude Jekyll



Coastal Banksia and Dianella drawn by Ros for educational signs and materials
Don and Ros with their stained glass and recycled wood sculptures

SAVE THE DATE



For a community
based

SCULPTURE EXHIBITION

LISMORE RAINFOREST
BOTANIC GARDENS

Provisional date:
20 September to
18 October 2026

Working title:
'FROM BIG THINGS
LITTLE THINGS GROW'



Everyone is invited to submit an expression of interest to design and create a fun, easily portable outdoor exhibit! The exhibit should be able to withstand all weather and be made using natural materials, found objects and recycled materials.

Schools (from pre-school to Year 12), TAFE, university groups and community groups are all warmly encouraged to get involved. **To register your interest**, please email publicity@friendslrbg.com.au. Please include a contact phone number and email for you or your nominated representative.

More detailed project information will be sent out in due course, and U3A members will be kept informed along the way.

Hazel Bridgett and Liz Terracini
on behalf of the Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens

Art from recycled materials, often called upcycled art, transforms discarded items – plastic bottles, cardboard, metals, and textiles – into creative, sustainable and often profound, new works. This art form reduces landfill waste and raises environmental awareness, with techniques including sculpture, collage, and large-scale, detailed installations, sometimes featuring everyday objects like bottle caps or shredded paper.



BGANZ CONGRESS 2025

I was fortunate to receive a grant to attend the **BGANZ Conference** in Canberra in November last year. The gathering brought together Botanic Gardens staff from across Australia and New Zealand, and for me, the highlights were the *Education and Engagement* sessions. In particular, I valued the practical ideas shared around guiding, and building meaningful connections with community and schools. There was also a clear and encouraging emphasis within BGANZ leadership and the wider community on conservation and climate resilience.

The keynote speakers were both inspiring and thought-provoking. **Professor Stephen Hopper**, a Western Australian botanist specialising in conservation biology and vascular plants, shared insights drawn from an extraordinary career. He is the author of eight books and more than 200 publications and has previously served as Director of *Kings Park* in Perth and Director of the *Royal Botanic Gardens*, Kew. Professor Hopper spoke with deep respect about the knowledge of Indigenous peoples south of Perth and their enduring care for Country.

Dr Paul Smith from *Botanic Gardens Conservation International* reflected on his life's work as he prepared to retire from some of his professional roles. Trained at Kew's *Millennium Seed Bank*, Dr Smith has over 30 years' experience in plant conservation, including seed conservation, survey and inventory, vegetation mapping, species recovery and ecological restoration, primarily in Africa. His clear and compelling message underscored the urgency of preserving endangered species.

Dr Bec Stanley, Director of *Auckland Botanic Gardens* since May 2025 and formerly Curator for nine years, shared a deeply moving account of her collaborative work with local Māori communities. Her reflections on listening, learning, and taking time to truly understand different perspectives offered a powerful reminder of the positive outcomes that can emerge from genuine partnership.

My sincere thanks go to BGANZ, particularly CEO **Cassandra Nicholls**, and to the committee of Friends LRBG, for granting me the privilege of attending the Congress.

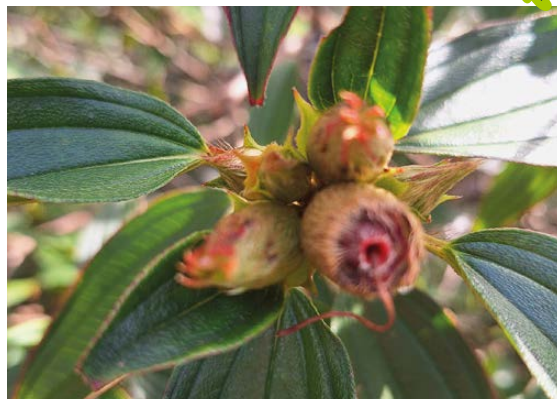
Tracey Whitby

GENEROUS DONATION TO FRIENDS' LIBRARY

In November we were thrilled to receive a generous donation from **Hugh and Nan Nicholson**, a selection of books for our library. This includes a full set of the '*Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants*' and several volumes of the '*Students Flora of North Eastern New South Wales*', published by the University of New England. Our thanks to Hugh and Nan for this wonderful addition to our library.

All the books will be available for borrowing by current members of the Friends at the Friends LRBG office near the Visitor's Centre. Borrowing can be arranged by calling **0450 596 405**. Pick up and return is on Wednesdays between 07:30am and 11:00am.

Ian Ball



Keep an eye out for the beautiful flower and fruit starring in Sensory Garden now!

Melastoma affine
Blue Tongue



Will's BRIDGE



This wonderful new bridge was designed by talented volunteer **Will Evans** and constructed by **Will** alongside **Don, John, Dave and Graham**. The team marked the official opening on December 10th, 2025, celebrating their hard work with a very well-deserved morning tea.

After several creek fords and crossings were damaged by fast-flowing water during extreme weather over recent years, it's fantastic to finally have a new bridge in place. It now makes it easy for visitors and volunteers alike to enjoy a beautiful walk through **Rainforest Rooms 5 and 6** once again.

Heading left along the *Discovery Trail*, walkers will be rewarded with a stunning **Giant Fern *Angiopteris evecta***, a peaceful creek bed, and an impressive fallen log blanketed in lichen – a lovely reminder of just how special this area is.

Top L: Rainforest Rooms 5 to 6 Bridge opening Dec 2025
Top R: Will, Don, John, Dave and Graham, the bridge building team with Vice President and Projects Officer of the Friends LRBG, Hazel Tracey (President) with Will Evans, team leader of the bridge building project.

The volunteers work mornings are **every Wednesday - Gardeners** start at 8am and finish at 11am, **Nursery Group** begins at 9am and finishes at 12pm.

Wear long sleeves and pants, hat, gloves and bring your morning tea.



RED BRIDGE RESTORED



Our much-loved **Red Bridge** is back and looking better than ever! Designed and built by the wonderfully talented **Don Woodley**, this iconic feature has recently been restored—much to the delight of visitors and volunteers alike.

The restoration wasn't just a simple touch-up. It involved some rather fancy geometry to gently lessen the slope of the section visitors walk over, making it more comfortable and accessible, while carefully re-integrating the changes into the bridge's distinctive red side panels. A tricky balance of form and function.

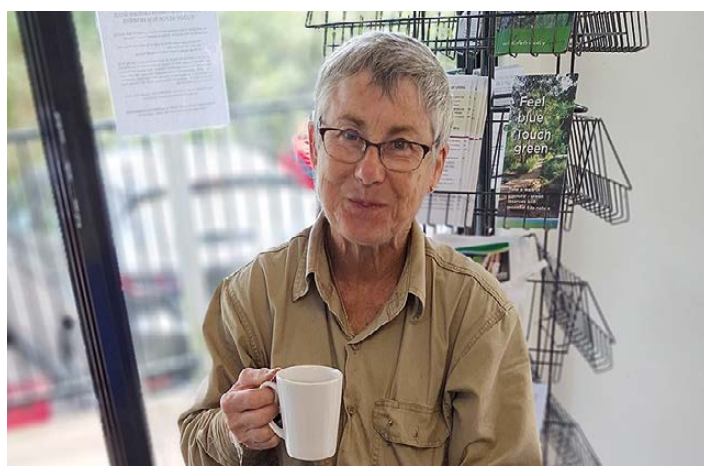
"Easy," says Don, though the rest of us might beg to differ!

The result is a bridge that stays true to its original character, while being safer and smoother to cross. If you haven't wandered across it lately, now's the perfect time to stop by, take a stroll, and enjoy this much-admired feature of the Gardens once again.

Photos below top L: **Don** and **Ros** discussing the details of the restoration of the Red Bridge. R: Bridge repairs in progress.

Bottom L: Beautiful Bolwarra in flower in September.

sR: **Susan**, weed warrior with a well-deserved cuppa after the Weeding Blitz in the Hoop Pine Forest 6th Sept 2025



THANK YOU FOR LENDING A HAND!



We were joined by a wonderful group of volunteers for our Weeding Blitz at the Hoop Pine Forest on Saturday, 6 September 2025. Volunteers included FLRBG members, **Susan, Anne and Ken** (and their granddaughter), **Bec and John**, and **Theodora**.

We met at the Visitor's Centre at 8:30am, well prepared with sturdy shoes, long sleeves, gloves, hats and insect repellent. Some parts of the forest were steep and had us scrambling like mountain goats, but spirits stayed high. A delicious morning tea was the perfect way to finish a rewarding morning of teamwork and care for the forest.



RICHARD'S JANUARY GUIDED WALK GROUP MEGAFAUNA TO MICROPLASTICS



PLANT PROFILE – Peter Gould

Macleay Laurel is an attractive shrub or small tree, occasionally reaching a height of 20m and a stem diameter of 20cm, often single stemmed when young.

It is found in Subtropical, Warm Temperate and Cool Temperate Rainforest communities north from the Comboyne Plateau to the McPherson Range.

It is often found on the edge of rainforests where it receives good light but not necessarily direct sun. Soils are moist and cool, well drained and friable with high levels of organic matter.

Leaves

Leaves narrow-oblongate, mostly 10-30 cm long and 2-4 cm wide with juveniles often much larger. The leaf's apex is acuminate, the base is often reddish and tapering into the petiole. Leaf margins are bluntly toothed, lamina glabrous or sometimes with scattered hairs on lower surface, the petiole is 10-40 mm long and usually reddish.

Bark

The bark is dark brown, smooth but with numerous raised, elongated lenticels.



Anopterus macleayanus in flower.

Flowers

White flowers appear in terminal racemes from October to December. Individual flowers are 10 to 15 mm in diameter and bell shaped. Pedicels are 10-40 mm long, calyx 3-4 mm long and the petals are 8-12 mm long.

Fruit

The fruit is a hard, dry capsule, 2-4.5cm long, 5-8mm in diameter, and strongly tapered at one end. It contains winged seeds 10-20mm long.



FOR YOUR DIARY - CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025!

DATE	EVENT	WHAT + WHERE	TIMES
Sunday 22nd February	Guided Walk	Native Bees as Pollinators with Graeme	10.00am till 11.00am \$5 adults
Sunday 29th March	Guided Walk	Our Wilson's Park Species Garden with Tim	10.00am till 11.00am \$5 adults
Sunday 26th April	Guided Walk		10.00am till 11.00am \$5 adults
Sunday 24th May	Botanic Gardens Open Day	Plant stall, guided walks, talks and children's activities	9.30am till 1.00pm \$5 adults
September	Sculpture Exhibition	Details to come	

We welcome private groups and school bookings. For more details please email: publicity@friendslrbg.com.au