

## May 2016 Visit to Australian National Botanic Gardens

Report on last meeting by Margaret Lynch

Photos are from Sue Grahame and Karen Cockerill



Our group, which included some guides from ERBG, gathered for a cuppa on a delightful autumn morning at the ANBG café.

There we met our guides for an informal chat before heading off into the Gardens.

Following the disappointing news that we were not able to visit the nursery due to an outbreak of myrtle rust, we instead were shown the

“Growing Friends” propagation area where plants sourced from the collection are grown for sales each spring and autumn.

We then divided into groups for a pleasant and informative stroll

***The main path at ANBG***

through the older displays of Myrtaceae and Proteaceae



***Admiring the sculptural cauliflower Hakea, Hakea corymbosa from W.A.***



***Asteraceae garden ANBG***

then continuing on to the Sydney Region Gully. The Gardens undertook major earthworks in 2013 to remodel the entrances as “sandstone country” using a crushed sandstone growing medium which has allowed the iconic sandstone species to flourish.

This natural gully area is a haven for birds and a delightful ecological display. The Red Centre Garden with its striking red sand and landscape design representing ecosystems from desert plains to rocky escarpments is unquestionably a considerable achievement and major attraction.



After a delightful morning we regrouped on the eucalypt lawn for a picnic lunch to the sounds of music wafting across from a musical festival. After lunch we continued through the rock garden, the gymnosperm plantings and then through the amazing rainforest gully. It was agreed a wonderful opportunity to spend a leisurely day with knowledgeable guides viewing a wide variety of Australia's native flora.

***Thorny Devil sculpture at the Red Centre garden, with Chris, Jenny, Jenny and Peter, and Sue***

## **Saturday May 7<sup>th</sup> National Arboretum, Canberra**

On another beautiful autumn day in the capital we met our guide and STEP member at the National Arboretum for our viewing of Forest 20, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park.

On the way an interesting walk through the *Quercus engelmannii* (evergreen oak) forest, a rare species of North American oak classified as vulnerable.

Unfortunately the neighbouring forest of *Acacia caerulescens* (Buchan blue), also a threatened species from a small area in Gippsland was doing poorly with many trees dead (possibly water issues).



***STEP Garden with guide Tony Lawson***

The STEP area, unlike the other forests of the arboretum displays understorey shrubs, grasses, herbs and ferns. Our guide outlined the history and development of STEP as a regional botanic garden designed to help educate visitors about the flora typical of the southern tablelands. Sixteen species of eucalypts along with *Brachychiton populneus* and *Allocasuarina verticillata* represent the trees of the region. These and the other plants have been placed in their relative landscape positions from low lying grasslands to the more elevated dry and wet sclerophyll forests. While the arboretum provides some support the area is worked and managed by an enthusiastic band of volunteers.

**After a short break we then joined another guide for an autumn tones walk.**

This walk was specially devised for Tree Week to showcase autumn colour and was enhanced by a selection of poetry readings.

Our guide led us to 6 vantage points to take in the vistas and forests.

In keeping with the "wide brown land" sculpture, "Australian Autumn" by **Dorothea Mackellar** was one of the poems recited:

**This is the gentlest season of the year.  
From mists of pearl and gold  
The slow sweet hours unfold  
To crystal colours, still  
As a glass, but not so chill.**

**All birds speak softly in the Autumn  
bush.  
One bellbird from the deep  
Like a call heard in sleep  
Chimes in the bronze-gold gloom  
Cool greenhood orchids bloom.**



Two glorious autumn days in which to enjoy two of Canberra's wonderful attractions.

***Guide Anna talks about the work at the  
Arboretum***