

FRIENDS OF THE MCKAY MEMORIAL GARDENS

NEWSLETTER

February

2010

Put this in your calendar
Planting Day.
Saturday 19th June
10am-12noon
McKay Memorial
Gardens

Gloves and boots recommended.
Everyone is welcome.

SNAP SHOT

Introducing Rosyln Savio, the landscape architect appointed by Brimbank City Council and responsible for the planting and path design of the current restitution of the McKay Memorial Gardens.



Growing up in northern Victoria, Ros developed an interest in botany and wildflowers. She graduated in architecture from Melbourne University in 1979 and then spent time in Britain, Asia and Russia developing her interest in landscapes before returning to Australia to practice.

She has worked for private development companies, numerous local councils and the Urban Land Authority.

Her work has previously received awards from the Urban Development Institute of

Australia's Victorian Branch and she has also contributed a chapter on indigenous plant communities in *Flora of Melbourne* 3rd edition. Ros has been of great assistance to the Friends and we look forward to continuing to work with her.

INFORMATION

Sometimes generous people ask the Friends if they can donate their surplus plants or trees to the gardens. While we appreciate the thought, putting plants into the Gardens can be quite a complicated business.

Because the Gardens are Heritage Gardens, the types of plants that can be included is governed by (among other things) the advice of Heritage Victoria.

As a general rule, preference is given to species that date from the Edwardian period of the Gardens 1909 – 1926 and where possible we opt for the older versions of these species rather than more modern cultivars. One of our sources of information about appropriate species is the 1916 version of *The Australian Gardener* by F.H. Brunning.

While some newer species have been introduced, our aim is to restore the general Edwardian feel of the Gardens.

SEEKING ARCHIVIST

The Friends are seeking someone interested in compiling an archive record of images, documentation and interviews for the production of a CD. The Friends have modest funds for this purpose but we need someone with the time and ability to carry the task out. Anyone interested should contact us at:

contact@mckaygardens.org

GAZANIA

(common name: treasure flower)

By Helen Reid.

Surely one of the most uplifting sights of early spring is to find on a sunny day, the many bright yellow daisy-like flowers of Gazania opened up and shining near the ground as Winter shivers its way to a close.

Gazanias have their place in the H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens because of their hardiness, and colourful display.



You can find them growing along what we know as the Straight Six, that path that runs parallel to the railway line and reaches from the main gates to the ramp over the railway line.

An African genus named for the medieval scholar Theodore of Gaza (1398-1475), a 15th century botanical translator, this plant is in the ground cover range. The plants seldom reach higher than 30-40 cm but will spread sometimes into a mat of about 80 to 100 cm wide. The leaves are elongated, narrow, dark green on top and silvery, hairy beneath, whilst the flowers are numerous and appear in shades of predominately yellow.

Modern hybrids have given us flowers borne singly on short stems, with blends of pink, beige, tan, white and orange petals, with a black circle around the centre or base of the petals.

Flowers open up in the morning sun and close up in the late afternoon. As in Chrysanthemums, Gaillardia, Doronicum and Cosmos, for example, the centre of the flowers consists of tiny styles and pollen stamens, usually yellow but sometimes with black rimmed white markings, followed by fluffy seeds, which can be sown in late Winter. Bees love to frequent them to gather nectar. Propagation is usually by division or cuttings. Prune after flowering is over to rejuvenate. Branching is generous, reaching in all directions as long as there is sun. Having their back to a wall with a microclimate of reflected heat and light suits them well.

Cultivation needs to be simple, Gazanias do best in sandy soils but are hardy and will grow in heavier soils equally well, but probably not so well in clay soils. They like moister in dry periods, but don't mind our current dry and good drainage is

appreciated. Mulch is acceptable but not essential. A light application of slow acting balanced fertiliser will obtain more vigorous plants. Prune back if the foliage mat becomes larger than required for the space.

Gazania species to be found are gazania x hybrida, or Sunshine Hybrids, the showy G. ringens, and G. uniflora, a trailing Gazania. The township of Sunbury has many small, spontaneous outbreaks of Gazania plants beside the road, indicating that perhaps, without care, this plant could become an undesirable weed in the future. But for the moment, Gazania has its place in the landscape for those who like a little dazzles and is recommended for any sunny spot.

Put this in your calendar

Next Friends Meeting
Saturday 27th of February
10am -11am
Church meeting Rooms
Anderson Rd, McKay Memorial
Gardens
Everyone is welcome.

Sunshine Garden Club
celebrates its centenary
2010

The Friends of the McKay Memorial Gardens would like to wish the Sunshine Garden Club congratulations on its centenary.

State of the Gardens

The recent rains have been extremely welcome and the Garden is looking green and lush at the moment. It's particularly pleasing to see that the bunya bunya, donated by the



McKay Family for our centenary, has put on a lot of new growth this season and is looking very healthy. The new growth is easily discernible by the lighter shade

of green. Many of the garden beds are also flowering vigorously at the moment. Well worth a stroll through the Gardens.

Unfortunately the Gardens did suffer some damage in the tropical storms that hit the area recently. One large tree along the southern boundary lost a limb but fortunately there was no damage elsewhere.

Like most other public Gardens, ours are subject to the constant annoyance of graffiti. We encourage anyone who notices graffiti (even small amounts) in the Gardens to call the Brimbank Council information line 9249 4000 and ask that a cleaning crew be sent to remove it.

Council is usually fairly prompt in removing it. It is important that this material not be allowed to accumulate. If there is some graffiti it merely encourages more. So we are endeavor to have it removed as quickly as possible.