



# **Friends & Volunteers Activity Reports for 2024 AGM**

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## Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra – 2024 Annual General Meeting

### Guides' Report from National Arboretum Canberra

National Arboretum Canberra (NAC) recognises the important role of Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra and each Guide's much valued support throughout the year in meeting the needs of visitors to the Arboretum.

It has been great to see a consistent demand for our Guided Tours and activities throughout the year. This financial year has seen over 570,000 visitors through the Village Centre doors. It is always lovely to see how visitors interact with the Arboretum. As well as witnessing how the Guides and Visitor Services team support visitors in the interpretation of the site.

In July 2023, the Community Engagement Officer, Cally Earnshaw, went on secondment. Since then, recruitment was finalised for the position and Rhu Donald was deemed successful. She has been backfilling the role since and is currently working remotely.

Recent recruitment has been completed to bolster the Visitor Services team, with a number of new team members starting in May 2024. It will be great to have the Guides and VSOs work together to share knowledge and skills to better the visitor experience we provide.

#### **Guides' hours basic snapshot:**

Volunteer Activity	Coach/ Walking Tour	Concierge /Greeter	Forest Walks	Long Forest Walks	Ngala bus tours	Welcome Walks
July 2023	-	2	7	-	31	56
August 2023	-	4	2	-	6	56
September 2023	14	-	9	-	23	53
October 2023	8	-	14	3	48	57
November 2023	2	-	4	-	30	55
December 2023	-	-	6	-	35	47
January 2024	-	-	4	-	74	72
February 2024	3	-	5	-	14	63
March 2024	7	22	7	2	27	54
April 2024	6	3	6	5	55	25
Total summary hours	40	31	68	10	343	538

	Number of Welcome Walks delivered	Number of participants Welcome Walks	Number of participants in Forest Walks
July 2023	41	189	4
August 2023	37	150	9
September 2023	43	233	38
October 2023	41	275	34
November 2023	41	158	20
December 2023	30	130	19
January 2024	48	160	30
February 2024	34	121	13
March 2024	58	209	29
April 2024	17	87	26
Total summary hours	390 Welcome Walks delivered	1712 visitors participated in a Welcome Walk	217 visitors participated in a Forest Walk

In broader volunteering activities, we would like to acknowledge our outgoing volunteer coordinators: Jane Cottee from STEP, Dr Marc Norman from the Cacti and Succulent Society, Alison Purvis for Frogwatch, Dr Roger Hnatiuk, Peter Dugard and Sharon McAuliffe overseeing Wollemi Seed Counting, Vicki Woolley and Desmond King as Working Bee Coordinators, Ange McNeilly from the Kitchen Garden and Maggie Hawes as the Harvesting Group Coordinator.

A huge thank you to the Friends of the Arboretum for their ongoing support. The Arboretum has grown so much in the last 11 years and the Friends have played a vital role in this growth. Through the ongoing support of the Friends, the Arboretum is able to strive for greater and achieve more across this multifaceted site.

In my first year as the Community Engagement Officer, it has been an honour working along side the Friends Council and I would personally like to thank each of you for your support and guidance during this time.

This report has focused on Guides activities as the Guides' report is supplied for the Friends of the Arboretum AGM. The Community Engagement Officer wishes to recognise the vital role that volunteers play across the whole of the Arboretum including, the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection, supporting kite making and education programs, Harvest Group, Working Bees, Citizen Science, STEP, Ngala tours, Warm Trees, Volunteer and Volunteer Coordination meetings and so many more.



## NAC Working Bee (Tuesday and Thursday) May 2023 – April 2024 2023-24 Report for Friend's AGM

A typical working bee commences with the horticultural team describing and demonstrating the session's activity. They work alongside the bees, provide guidance, and educate with answers to the bee's questions.



Working bees revolve largely around a whole of forest makeover/maintenance approach where a number of tasks are completed in the one forest before moving on.

Attendance has ranged from 7 – 17 with an average more recently in the 10 – 15 range. New and returning bees warmly welcome to participate in the activities after signing-up with NAC.

Activities this last year included spreading mulch, planting, weeding, checking, and repairing irrigation, epicormic growth removal, installation and removal of tree guards, pruning low branches and removing dead wood. Pruned the 700

carpet roses in front of the Village Centre and those in the Zig Zag gardens.



In the last 12 months the bees worked in the following forests and gardens:

Bunya Pines	Wattle grove
Kurrajong and Bottle trees	Californian Fan Palms
Japanese Snowbell	Acacia host of Toothed Lancewood
Japanese Flowering Dogwood	Persian Ironwoods
Chinese Tulip Trees	Liquidambar
Jelly Palms	Wollemi Pines
Chilean Wine Palm	Totara and Kowhai
Japanese Crepe Myrtles	River Birch
Franklin tree	Clanwilliam cypress
Canary Madrone	Radiata Pine
Chinese Mahogany	Grass tree
Zig Zag Garden	Soap Bark Tree
Euphrates and Yunnan Poplars	South Esk Pines
Silk Floss Tree	Queensland White gums
Small leaved lime	Small leaved gum
Horse Chestnut	Toromiro and Pagoda tree
Japanese Zelkova	Silver Birch
Giant Sequoia	Lawson cypress
Roble de Santiago	Drooping she oak
Eastern Red Bud	Himalayan cedar
Sugar Maple	Yoshino cherry
Burr Oak	Village centre rose garden
Remnant trees	



On behalf of the working bee volunteers, thankyou horticultural team for your friendly and helpful approach, providing a range of activities for us throughout the year.

Des and Vicki  
(Tues and Thurs Co-ordinators)



# Harvest Group & Discovery Kitchen Garden Report Friends AGM

## HARVEST GROUP

The Harvest Group's long-time Team Leader and initiator, Colette Mackay OAM, resigned from the position after many successful years at the helm. Many thanks go to Colette for her collaboration and friendship over the years and particularly during the Friend's Wollemi Pine Propagation Project.

Maggie Hawes has now taken on this vital role, which includes the coordination of the fig harvest as well as the market stalls and below is her contribution to this report:

*"Without the amazing contribution of the Discovery Garden and Fig Harvest group our ability to fundraise for the Friends would not be able to achieve such impressive results."*

*"This year we had a good crop despite a dry season and the lack of water to the fig trees. To make the most of the fresh figs it was decided to have pop up stalls to sell them fresh, which proved most successful and raised \$1,770. As well, this reduced the amount of cooking that had to be done by the wonderful women who spend hours chopping and making jams, chutneys, paste and sauces."*

*The market stall was most successful with a wide range of products for sale and raised a further \$2,341. To achieve this the volunteers put in many hundreds of hours and in the future we will no doubt be able to increase our range of products. This year we added paste from the Japanese Dogwoods and by next year, we should be able to harvest the Jelly Palms, which produce a delicious fruit that has many medicinal benefits."*

*My thanks and gratitude for the friendship, assistance, and hard work goes to all who have given up so much of their time." Maggie*

There were 10 market stalls held in 2023 and along with the usual delicious profusion of fig jams, chutneys, relishes and pastes and savoury offerings of tomato relish, eggplant chutney and pesto, there were also lots of seeds and plants on offer from seedlings of vegetables, flowers, and herbs to the special topiaries and mixed succulents in terracotta pots. There were also botanical wreaths offered for sale. Hundreds of hours were spent by the many indefatigable Harvest Group volunteers to prepare and attend these stalls which raised a total of \$15,211 for the Friends. The table below shows market stall dates and takings for 2023.

### Harvest Group Market Stalls 2023

Market Stall Date	Takings
4/3/23 (Lanyon)	\$850
25/3/23 (Bonsai Reshaped Market w/end)	\$463
26/3/23 (Bonsai Reshaped Market w/end)	\$552
30/4/23	\$2,330
7/5/23	\$2,470
25/6/23	\$2,000
20/8/23	\$1,883
23/9/23 (Lanyon)	\$2,470
14/10/23	\$1,716
19/11/23	\$1,832
<b>Total Market Stall Fundraising</b>	<b>\$15,211</b>



Above: Tralie, Ange, Lyn, and Lorraine at the market stall in April 2023

### Harvest Group Market Stalls 2024

Market Stall Date	Takings
17/2/24 (pop-up stall)	\$842
24/2/24 (pop-up stall)	\$928
1/3/24 (pop-up stall)	\$631
24/3/24	\$2,341
5/5/24 (incl sale of 14 Wollemi)	\$2,620
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,362</b>

Table above: Market stalls dates and takings to date in 2024

### Future Market Stalls 2024

Sunday, 14/7/24
Sunday, 22/9/24
Sunday, 1/12/24

Right: Cathie and Debbie





## DISCOVERY KITCHEN GARDEN

There are 15 dedicated volunteers on the garden team working diligently to maintain the garden looking good all year round. Sadly, we lost a valued team member last year with the passing of Julie Asquith following a serious illness. Danielle has resumed attending the garden on the first Saturday of each month.

Visitors often remark at the variety and abundance of plants growing in the garden and say that it inspires them to try those plantings in their own gardens. The mild conditions this autumn has seen plants flourishing and has enabled saving seeds of warrigal greens, French marigolds, and climbing spinach. Overall, the volume of produce was lower than in some years and eggplants in particular were low yielding. However, there was a bountiful harvest of English lavender in January 2024 including the lavender growing at the base of the Visitors Centre, which had copious amount of seed (some of which has germinated and been potted). Below are tables containing statistical data for the garden.

### Discovery Kitchen Garden Funds Allocation & Expenditure 2023-2024

Month/Date	Item	Allocat'n	Expenses	Balance
31/1/23	Expenditure		Nil	\$185.50
28/2/23	Expenditure		Nil	\$185.50
21/3/23	Expenditure		\$52.25	\$133.25
30/4/23	Expenditure		Nil	\$133.25
17/5/23	Expenditure		134.83	-\$1.58
30/6/23	Expenditure			-\$1.58
31/7/23	Expenditure			-\$1.58
31/8/23	Expenditure			-\$1.58
23/9/23	Funds Allocation	\$500.00		\$498.42
28/9/23	Expenditure		145.44	\$352.98
26/10/23	Expenditure		131.04	\$221.94
30/11/23	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
31/12/23	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
31/1/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
29/2/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
26/3/24	Expenditure		\$64.54	\$157.40
30/3/24	Unspent Balance			\$157.40



Above: Cynthia and Tralie working in garden.

### Discovery Kitchen Garden Volunteer Hours 2023

Month 2023	Volunteer Hours
January	86 hrs 40 mins
February	93 hrs 45 ins
March	137 hrs 50 mins
April	82 hrs 50 mins
May	76 hrs 50 mins
June	55 hrs
July	69 hrs 20 mins
August	63 hrs 55 mins
September	81 hrs 45 mins
October	77 hrs 45 mins
November	76 hrs 30 mins
December	72 hrs 20 mins
<b>Total 2023</b>	<b>974 hours 30 minutes</b>



Above: Vale Julie Asquith



Above: Sandra and Nikki harvesting.

The Harvest Group and Discovery Kitchen Garden provide interesting and fun opportunities for volunteers to participate at the arboretum, which not only make significant contributions to fundraising but also provide a rich diversity of activities to enjoy in this wonderful location.

**Ange McNeilly**

*On behalf of the Harvest Group and Discovery Kitchen Garden*

8 May 2024

## Wollemi Biodiversity Research continues at the Arboretum

By Roger Hnatiuk

Long term studies of the biodiversity of the Wollemi Forest 32 at the Arboretum continue. Long term studies are the gold standard of ecological research. They focus on following the same individuals through time, giving a strong foundation for discovering and understanding changes in such a group.

There are currently three programs in the Wollemi Biodiversity studies at the Arboretum:

1. *The Census* – once a year, all the Wollemis in Forest 32 are recorded for their height, and the number of male and female cones. Studies of the development of secondary trunks have been reduced from annual to 5-yearly. The Census is showing us how the young trees mature from seedlings to saplings to fully sexually mature individuals. The variation amongst individuals is clearly seen. The shift in cone production numbers and locations with respect to the weather, the age of the trees, and the growth form of the trees is becoming clear.
2. *Seed Production* – annually, the female cones are bagged to allow the seeds to be collected. The seeds form the core of the conservation program of the Arboretum. They are made available to not-for-profit botanic gardens and *bona fide* research programs. The bulk of the seed is sent to the Mt Annan Botanic Garden for safe storage and distribution. We are finding that seed production is highly variable. Discovery of patterns will be the challenge for the analysis of the data collected. But again, comprehensive, long-term studies of the same individuals will provide a strong basis for such studies.
3. *Morphology* – Tree growth rates and sizes are the focus of the third biodiversity study at the Arboretum. Here, we build on the years of observations that there is considerable variation in the sizes of trees in Forest 32, despite them growing in similar conditions. Some individuals have grown very tall, while others have only grown much less, with most individuals in-between. While this follows the expected pattern of most biological things, our studies have focussed on the small end of this variation. We are isolating individuals that are particularly small and developing methods to propagate them. They have the potential to satisfy the interest of many home gardeners who lack the space for the usual very large size that Wollemis grow to.

All this biodiversity research relies on the support of a wonderful group of citizen scientists, drawn from the Friends membership. Without their unswerving and capable help, these projects would not be progressing as they do. Long term research requires many hours of work over many years to yield the gains in understanding that come from such work. A very strong and deeply felt thanks to all who participate in these studies. Also, the continuing and strong support of our partner, the National Arboretum, is enthusiastically acknowledged.

May 2024



## Frogwatch at the Arboretum 2023

Frogwatch at the Arboretum had its 13th year in 2023 and continued to provide valuable information about the local frog population and the ecology of the Arboretum.

Frogwatch aims to engage citizen scientists to make recordings of frogs and take observations. Frogs are extremely sensitive to changes in the environment and can give scientists valuable insights into how an ecosystem is functioning.

During 2023, five Frogwatch events were held at the Arboretum. Two events were held in Summer, one in Autumn, one in Sprinter (August-September), one in Sprummer (October-November) and one late in Spring. Volunteers arrive after sunset and visit the Larch, Cork Oak and Gingko Dams and the STEP ephemeral wetlands on foot to take observations and recordings.

2023 was a drier year than 2022 as the springs that emerged across the Arboretum landscape during the wet years slowly disappeared. Less species diversity and lower frog numbers were recorded with four species of frogs recorded at our Frogwatch sites during the year. They were *Crinia signifera* (Common eastern froglet), *Crinia parinsignifera* (Plains froglet), *Limnodynastes tasmaniensis* (Spotted grass frog) and *Uperoleia laevigata* (Smooth toadlet).

Five Frogwatch volunteers joined me for the events. Particular thanks to Roger Hnatiuk and Beth Gibson who stepped in to run the August survey while I was away and who come rain or shine to every Frogwatch evening they can. We were also joined in 2023 by Julia Stringer, Lorraine Tomlinson and Tim De Wan. My thanks to all these wonderful, curious citizen scientists.

Frogwatch at the Arboretum is supported by the ACT Frogwatch Coordinator Anke Maria Hoefer from the ACT and Region Frogwatch Program. Our results are provided to this program and pooled with others from about 230 Frogwatch survey sites across the ACT. Anke Maria checks our recordings and confirms the species heard. I extend my thanks to Anke Maria for her valuable assistance. The excellent ACT 2023 frog census can be found at <https://ginninderralandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2023-reportv5-FINAL-with-title-page.pdf>

In 2023 Frogwatch at the Arboretum found:

- Fewer frogs this year than in the last few very wet years. The drying of the landscape and warmer weather makes it more difficult for frogs to breed. The reduction in water levels also leads to poorer water quality in our dams;
- *Crinia signifera* (common eastern froglet) and *Crinia parinsignifera* (plains froglet) were the most abundant species at the Arboretum in 2023. These species are highly adaptable to disturbed and altered landscapes; and
- there was an increase in traffic noise at all dams at the Arboretum. The effect on the frog population is an area for further study.

Further research of the frogs would be valuable. As suggested last year, the installation of 24 hour recording devices would allow for further citizen science and a possible scientific project for a student wanting to develop basic skills in data collection, Artificial Intelligence analysis of call identifications and writing of scientific reports.

Reduction of mowing so that a buffer of about five metres around the dams would also be worth exploring to see if that practice would aid retention of water in the landscape, and, in turn assist with frog breeding.

It continues to be a great privilege to walk in the Arboretum at night recording our frog inhabitants. Please come and join us for a stroll after dark. You'd be very welcome.

Alison Purvis  
May 2024



**Warm Trees 2023**  
**Report for the 2024 AGM**  
**Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra**



Warm Trees is an annual event in July at the National Arboretum Canberra (NAC), where volunteers knit and crochet scarves that are then wrapped around the trees in the forests and on the Events Terrace. The volunteers also make the display mounted on the cutting wall leading to the Village Centre.

The main purpose is to provide some interest and colour, and thus encourage people to visit the Arboretum and walk in the forests, at a time of year when they might not otherwise come. An indication of its success is that the number of visitors in July 2023 was 106,275, which was 31,687, or 41%, more than the number of visitors in June 2023 (figures supplied by NAC).

Other benefits are that the scarves are taken down at the end of July, washed and made into wraps that are donated to local charities. The volunteers have an opportunity to show their creativity, as well as meeting new and old friends at the workshops and during the installation and deinstallation at the start and end of July. Last year our oldest knitter was 90, and our youngest were two 10-year-old pupils from a Canberra school. Another final year high school student created scarves from reusing old material from charity shops, as her International Baccalaureate project.

Each year the Friends partner with an Embassy or High Commission, and volunteers are encouraged to knit scarves in the colours of the flag of the country. The display on the cutting wall features national symbols and other information relating to the partner country. For 2023 our partner was the South African High Commission whose flag has eight colours. The display on the cutting wall featured the national symbols of South Africa, namely: king protea (photo above), blue crane, and real yellowwood (tree planted in Central Valley). Other items included the red huilboerboon flowers (planted in forest 28) and some of South Africa's 21 sunbird species.

Approximately 700 scarves were installed in the same forests as in previous years, as well as on all the trees on the Events Terrace. We also installed scarves on the silver birch trees nearest the road (forest 44). Following comments from people who drove elderly friends and relations around the Arboretum to see the scarves, this year we intend to install more scarves on trees that border the roads (subject to safety issues), so that people who are unable to walk very far can still see them.

Another change last year was to recycle the cable ties, used to attach the scarves when wrapped around trees. We also 'repurposed' the display items, with the large ones going to the South African High Commission and the smaller individual proteas going to a Canberra preschool. For this year we have encouraged people to seek opportunities to reuse wool, such as from old jumpers and other knitted items, from charity shops or from their own wardrobe.

Our partner embassy this year is Chile, our first country from South America. Seven of the Arboretum's forests have trees that are native to Chile.

*Jan Morgan*  
*Warm Trees Convener*

## **National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia – Report to Friends 2024 AGM**

During 2023, volunteers at the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection provided a premium visitor experience to nearly 200,000 visitors to the Arboretum.

Volunteers in the Bonsai & Penjing Collection are skilled at ensuring the safety of the displays, providing educated information and interpretation of the compositions, and assisting staff with maintenance tasks required to keep the Collection looking fantastic throughout the year. Volunteers are an invaluable asset to the NBPCA providing over 5000 hours of their time per year.

At the end of March, volunteers were able to get involved in a variety of activities during the annual Bonsai Reshaped Event here at the Arboretum. Four days of activities including workshops, demonstrations and discussions, displays of bonsai ceramics, and a bonsai marketplace. International bonsai artist, Nik Rozman was joined by the NBPCA's very own Sam Thompson on stage during the Bonsai After Dark evening event where both artists transformed raw material into bonsai master pieces in front of a large crowd of volunteers, bonsai enthusiasts, and the curious while enjoying catering by Ginger.

This event was sponsored by the Bonsai Trust Fund. A number of items were auctioned during the evening donated to the Bonsai Trust Fund.

The NBPCA Artist in Residence program saw two great Australian bonsai artists visit the Arboretum to share their knowledge with staff and volunteers. In May, Jarryd Bailey from Hobart, Tasmania provided a great workshop, demonstration and presentation with a topic of ethical collection of wild material for use in bonsai practices. In August, Luke Yeoward from the Gold Coast, Queensland also provided a workshop, demonstration and a presentation on his journey with bonsai and how it relates to his health and well-being. Both artists were very well received and volunteers who were able to get involved in the activities benefitted greatly.

In November, a delegation of staff and two volunteers, Bruce Sullivan – Chair of the Collection Advisory Committee, and Grant Bowie – past Curator of the NBPCA, travelled to Japan to witness the signing of a collaborative agreement with the Omiya Bonsai Art Museum in Saitama. This memorandum of understanding forms a sister museum agreement where both parties will share knowledge, skills and resources for the benefit of bonsai in both countries. Volunteers will benefit from this arrangement when curatorial staff from the Museum in Omiya visit in coming years as part of a staff exchange.

The 2023 Bonsai Volunteer of the Year was Charlie Dearling. Charlie received the award for his diligent and enthusiastic approach to volunteering with the NBPCA. In particular, providing an in-depth visitor experience, along with undertaking maintenance tasks, including many, many watering cans full of fertiliser every couple of weeks as the trees require it.

Charlie often assists filling the roster at late notice and has made a substantial difference to our volunteer program. Charlie was presented with an award accompanied by a gift voucher to the Curatoreum, sponsored by the family of Joe Mifsud (past volunteer of the NBPCA).

Leigh Taafe and Sam Thompson would like to thank all volunteers for their time and commitment to the NBPCA.

Leigh Taafe  
10 May 2024





## FRIENDS of the National Arboretum Canberra – AGM May 2024

### STEP REPORT

The **Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP)** is a regional botanic garden, education and conservation centre demonstrating plants from the Southern Tablelands of NSW and ACT. STEP is situated in Forest 20 of the Arboretum (at the bottom of the lower carpark).

The STEP community of volunteers works in partnership with the Arboretum to create and maintain this garden and is grateful to the Arboretum's horticultural team for its support.

STEP has had a very good year. After two years of damaging rains, overland flows and excess weed cover, the past year has many beds repaired and replanted. For example, about thirty trees, mainly *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*, *E. rossii* and *E. mannifera maculosa* have been replanted. A 'Parade of Peas' garden has been established.

The result is that STEP, including the Bush Tucker Garden, is looking at its best, with lots of colourful and healthy plants in the gardens and the ephemeral wetland. Forest 20 has become a haven for many species of birds, mammals, frogs, reptiles and insects. Visitors seem to be on the increase and often give very positive comments. A second garden seat (in a beautiful location) was installed this year to encourage visitors and make them welcome.

A highlight of the year was to have some young helpers at one of the working bees. Ambarish Natu and his daughters Arushi and Avni, plus their school friend Maria helped to plant 43 new plants. The girls had raised funds by taking old cans and bottles to a local recycling facility and generously donated \$500 to STEP to buy the plants.

STEP volunteers meet every Thursday morning and activities include planting, propagation, path-making, watering and weeding. It is a very relaxed and sociable morning which includes a delicious morning tea with much lively conversation. Typically, there are about twenty volunteers each Thursday. New STEP volunteers are warmly welcomed.

Quarterly newsletters and monthly flowering plants sheets continue to be produced and enjoyed.

Hugh Milloy  
STEP representative on Friends Council  
22 April 2024



## **Sponsorship Report for Seats and Picnic Settings for the financial year January - December 2023**

Beginning with my thanks....

To the Friends Treasurer for keeping track of donations and issuing receipts.

To Alison Stewart, NAC management and Project Officer, assigned to work with me on the Seat Sponsorship project.

To Matthew Platt, NAC management, Field Maintenance Manager for assisting with locating seat locations, driving sponsors to these locations to get the feel of where the seat will be placed, suitability etc.

As I've reported in previous reports, this is a slow business but nonetheless less, one that yields considerable funds that go in to our Trust Account which eventually go to the NAC on future projects.

6 seats sponsored in 2023 = \$60,000  
0 picnic settings in 2023

2024 off to a good start with one seat and one picnic setting sold already.

The Friends intend to sponsor a picnic setting with Mike currently liaising with NAC.

Trish Keller OAM  
Donations and Sponsorship Manager  
for the Friends

8 May 2024