



Friends & Volunteers Activity Reports for 2025 AGM

CONTENTS

- 1. Guides' report**
- 2. Working Bees' report**
- 3. Harvest Group & Discovery Kitchen Garden report**
- 4. Citizen Science**
- 5. Frogwatch report**
- 6. Warm Trees 2024 report (and 2025)**
- 7. National Bonsai & Penjing Collection of Australia report**
- 8. Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) report**
- 9. Sponsorship and Donations report**

Our thanks to all contributors

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA – 2025 AGM

GUIDES ACTIVITY REPORT 2024

In March 2025, the Arboretum celebrated success at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards 2024, winning Gold for 'Ecotourism' and Silver for 'Excellence in Accessible Tourism'. These awards recognised the collective efforts of many, especially the Friends and volunteers, including our hard- working volunteer Guides.

Volunteer Guides continued to make a significant contribution to the visitor experience at the Arboretum in 2024. During the reporting period, more than 1,200 volunteer hours were contributed across a range of guiding activities:

- Welcome Walks
- Guided Forest Walks
- Concierge
- Special Events
- VIP Tours
- Ngala Discovery Tours (bus drivers and Guides)
- Coach Tours.

We now have a pool of around 70 registered volunteer Guides, of whom 35% are currently active. There has been increasing interest in guiding over the past 6 months, with six new Guides signing up in that time and several new registrations pending.

More than 60% of volunteer Guides are over 70 years old and 20% are over 80. The Arboretum's new volunteer framework aims to increase diversity within our volunteer program including guiding activities, with a focus on engaging young volunteers, multicultural volunteers, and volunteers with disability.

Sandra Linsley recently returned to volunteering at the Arboretum after an extended break and has been busy updating the Guides Orientation Training program. This program has not been offered for several years and will recommence in August 2025.

Ngala bus tours were paused in October 2024 pending a review of the viability of the service. The review found that, despite the service being valued by visitors, particularly those with limited mobility and their carers, the Ngala bus tours are not economically or practically viable at this stage. An alternative service or externally operated commercial product/s will be explored.

Last year saw the resignation of one of our pioneering Guides, Janet Duncan. We thank Janet for her dedication and many years of service, and we wish her well for the future.

Thank you too to our talented Guides for continuing to share the history and stories of the Arboretum and enhancing the visitor experience.

Diane Mutch
Community Engagement Officer

May 2025

NAC WORKING BEE (TUESDAY AND THURSDAY) MAY 2024 – APRIL 2025 REPORT FOR FRIENDS 2025 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 several tasks are completed in the one forest before moving on. 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, fertilising, checking, and repairing irrigation, epicormic growth removal, installation and removal of tree guards, pruning low branches and removing dead wood. The bees also pruned the 700 carpet roses in front of the Visitor Centre and instructed and guided in the construction of the gabion walls in the Himalayan cedars.

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

Bunya pines	Californian fan palms
Kurrajong and Bottle trees	Persian silk tree
Japanese snowbell	Persian ironwood
Japanese flowering dogwood	Liquidambar
Chilean myrtle	Wollemi pine
Jelly palm	Parana pine
Cork oak	Blue grass tree
Japanese crepe myrtle	Mesa oak
Franklin tree	Radiata pine
Chilean cedar	Golden rain tree
Chinese mahogany	Soap bark tree
Zig Zag Garden	South Esk pine
Yunnan cypress	American yellowwood
Silk floss tree	Toromiro tree
Giant sequoia	Himalayan cedar
Chinese rubber tree	Yoshino cherry
Black tupelo	Visitor centre rose garden
Small leaved lime	Rocky outcrop

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 STALL REPORT.

The latter part of 2024 was most rewarding as we managed to raise \$6,902 for the Friends. My thanks to go all those who have offered their time and enthusiasm in helping to make our market stalls such a great success.

Being able to advertise the items for sale on 2CC has been a wonderful way of getting the information out to the public on the day, thanks to Pauline's support of the Arboretum. I only hope that reminding the public that the figs are in fact the property of the Arboretum and should not be picked by the public.

At the beginning of 2025 I handed over the organisation of picking, cooking, selling and assisting Ange McNeilly to Rosy Pate with the assistance of Caroline Thomas who have done a wonderful job with of course the assistance of many willing helpers.

My thanks go to go to all who have been so supportive, and I trust the in future selling the fresh figs on the day of picking may continue and hopefully the public realize that they are used as a fund raiser for the arboretum.

Maggie Hawes

HARVEST GROUP & DISCOVERY KITCHEN GARDEN REPORT FNAC AGM 2025

Harvest Group

The Harvest Group leadership has changed once again, as Maggie Hawes stepped down due to ill health. Rosy Pate has taken on the role with assistance from Carolyn Thomas, in particular, with the fig harvest and the coordination of market stalls.

There were three pop-up fresh fig stalls and five market stalls held in 2024 with the usual delectable array of fig jams, chutneys, relishes, pastes, and pesto. A range of other items offered for sale included packaged seeds, seedlings of vegetables, flowers, and herbs as well as dried packaged herbs. Special topiaries, mixed succulents in terracotta pots and botanical wreaths were also on offer. Harvest Group volunteers devoted many hours preparing for and attending these stalls, which raised over \$14,200 for the Friends. The table below shows the market stall dates and takings for 2024.

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 (includes sale of 14 Wollemi)	\$2,620
14/7 24	\$2,164
22 /9/24	\$1,984
1/12/24	\$2,754
Total Market Stall Fundraising	\$14,264



Above: Three very happy fig pickers with their abundant harvest!

Harvest Group Market Stalls To Date 2025

Market Stall Date	Takings
22 February (fig pop-up stall)	\$686
1 March (fig pop-up stall)	\$258
15 March	\$2,591
3 May	\$2,351
Total	\$5,886



Future Market Stalls 2025

Saturday, 12 July
Saturday, 20 September
Saturday, 6 December

Left (clockwise) At Market Stall: Rosy, Helen, Jeanette, Tralie, and Cynthia.

Handbury Award to the Friends Harvest Group

In September 2024, the FNAC Harvest Group was presented with the Handbury Award Category 2, Contribution by an Organisation, "For major contribution to community engagement, horticultural endeavour and fundraising through volunteer effort".



Discovery Kitchen Garden

The garden team continued their meticulous care of the garden during the year and the mild weather allowed plants in the garden to thrive thereby providing productive harvests for making preserves and enhanced seed saving capacity. The twice-yearly soil augmentation, particularly the application of crushed rock minerals in spring coupled with mulching, resulted in very robust plant growth.

Discovery Kitchen Garden Funds Allocation and Expenditure 2024

Month	Item	Allocati on	Expendit ure	Balance
31/1/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
29/2/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$221.94
31/3/24	Expenditure		\$64.54	\$157.40
30/4/24	Expenditure		\$62.66	\$91.44
31/5/24	Expenditure		\$123.65	-\$32.21
30/6/24	Expenditure		\$22.80	-\$55.01
31/7/24	Expenditure		\$28.95	-\$83.96
21/8/24	Funds Allocation	\$600.00		\$516.04
31/8/24	Expenditure		\$68.08	\$447.96
30/9/24	Expenditure		\$79.54	\$368.42
31/10/24	Expenditure		\$178.69	\$189.73
30/11/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$189.73
31/12/24	Expenditure		Nil	\$189.73



Above: Debbie working

**Discovery Kitchen Garden
Volunteer Hours 2024:
859 hours and 20 minutes.**



Above: Ange and Cathie with lavender.



Tralie

Volunteer Awards



Congratulations to Cynthia and Tralie Kimlin, who each received a Sterling Silver Award in 2024 for their dedication and commitment to the Discovery Kitchen Garden. Maggie Hawes also received a Sterling Silver Award as Team Leader of the Harvest Group and for coordinating the fig harvest and Market Stalls.

Left: Cynthia and Tralie with their Awards

Ange McNeilly (Harvest Group and Discovery Kitchen Garden)

CITIZEN SCIENCE AT THE ARBORETUM - 2024-25

Report to the AGM, 13 May, 2025 by Roger Hnatiuk

Wollemis

Seed Production and Wollemi Conservation

- a. The annual program of collecting seeds for the Conservation Program continues. Volunteers assisted in bagging about 430 cones in January 2025 and collected over the following two months. 19 Volunteers then worked to sort out the potentially viable seeds from each cone. The work is intense and not to everyone's taste, thus we have about 14 strong and continuing volunteers in this program. We are extremely grateful for their contribution to this program.
- b. While this year's work is only about three quarters complete, we have collected just under 1000 seeds for the conservation program. This is less than some years. Several main factors can contribute to this: unfavourable weather conditions (drought), inaccessibility of cones too high on tree to bag, and unfortunately cones 'disappearing' (stolen?) from the trees before they are harvested.
- c. In conjunction with the seed collection, valuable biological information on the Wollemis is also collected. This includes which trees are producing cones, how many and where on the tree they are produced. We will be able to track the history of cone and seed production for each tree over time and see how it relates to weather, horticulture and, for some, potential differences relating to which original wild tree they came from.

Annual census

- d. In mid-year (end June-early July), the entire population of trees in Forest 32 is recorded for the presence and numbers of male and female cones. The males are the cones that will be ripening in October of that year, while the female cones are the ones pollinated last October and will be mature the following Feb-April. Tree heights, cone numbers and locations are recorded. From these data, we will be looking for patterns in maturity and growth of individuals as well as the whole population.
- e. To date, we have the intriguing observation that trees isolated by more than about 20 m from the nearest other trees, seem to be producing fewer seeds than most others. Certainly, at distance of over 200m, and almost no seeds are produced. Is this a function of limited pollen availability?

Araucaria Monitoring

For several years now, we have been monitoring the *Araucaria* Forests to see how soon the production of female cones occurs. This has both practical and botanical and horticultural values.

Reports from other places and times tend to indicate that first coning starts about 15-25 years after seed germination. At the Arboretum, our records are showing it is closer to 8-10 years of age when the first individuals produce cones. After that, there is a slow and steady increase in the number of maturing individuals.

Araucarias are also known for producing cones in large numbers in some years and many fewer in intervening years. Our *Araucaria bidwillii* Forest (73), bunya pine,

layout design in fact plays on this idea, with rows of relatively dense trees separated by two of less dense trees, reflecting the heavier coning about every third year.

This year seems to be a year of heavier production, actually stating which year is the heavy year is a bit complicated. Cones are initiated near the start of one year, pollenated 10 months later, and ripened may months later.

To date, we have aimed to map which trees are females and which are males. Most trees are either one or the other, with respect to cone production. The numbers of cones are also counted.

This year's monitoring is not complete for all Forests, but a sample of the results is in the following table.

Species	No. of trees recorded	No. female trees (%)	No. female cones: new (old)	No. male trees	No. male cones: new (old)
<i>Araucaria angustifolia</i> paraná pine	262	29 (11)	155 (24)	76	1646 (744)
<i>Araucaria bidwillii</i> Bunya pine	405	119 (17)	702 (0)	1	0 (1)

Note: *A. angustifolia* recording for 2025 not complete. Male cones from last year appear to rapidly fall off the tree when pollen production ceases in *A. bidwillii*, but are largely held on the tree in *A angustifolia*.

There are about two thirds of trees that are still indeterminate as to sex, so there is still a lot of maturing to occur. Since male cones on the bunya trees fall soon after shedding pollen, we will need to do our census of them in spring. The data in the table shows that recording in autumn is not satisfactory for this character.

There is an indication of the pulse in coning occurring. Where I could see and count cones from this year versus last year, the numbers have greatly increased this year.

Knowledge of the distribution of female trees will be particularly useful for warning visitors to the bunya Forest in years to come. These cones are noted for their large size, heavy weight, and propensity to fall intact, thus posing a serious risk should they hit a person. On the other hand, knowledge, of where the coning trees are, can assist the Friends Harvest Group should they decide to collect seeds when they become available, as they are a delicacy in their homelands. At present, the bunyas do not appear to be producing viable seeds yet, despite the production of cones. This seems odd and needs closer observations.

FROGWATCH AT THE ARBORETUM 2024

Frogwatch at the Arboretum had its 14th year in 2024 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 2024, six Frogwatch events were held at the Arboretum. Two events were held in Summer, one in Autumn, one in Winter, one on the cusp of Spring in late Winter and one 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. 2024 was a much drier year than 2023 and as a result the dams become very low. 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).

Three Frogwatch volunteers joined me for the events during the year. Particular thanks to Roger Hnatiuk and Beth Gibson who come rain or shine to every Frogwatch evening they can. We were also joined in 2023 by Ruth White for two of our evenings. My thanks to these wonderful volunteers.

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 in 2024 were pooled with others from 219 Frogwatch survey sites across the ACT. I extend my thanks to Anke Maria for her valuable assistance. The excellent ACT 2024 frog census can be found at <https://ginninderralandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-report-FINALFINAL-with-title-page.pdf>

I attended a very informative workshop presented by Anthony Waddle during September 2024 teaching participants how to build frog saunas. Frog saunas aid frogs to fight the deadly chytrid fungus that has decimated frog populations across the world. This workshop was a precursor to the reintroduction of the green and gold bell frog into the ACT where it has been extinct for some years. We are looking forward to the success of this program and hopefully hearing this frog at the Arboretum in years to come.

In 2024 Frogwatch at the Arboretum found:

- Fewer frogs this year than last year. The drying of the landscape and warmer climate 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 again the most abundant species at the Arboretum in 2024. These species are highly adaptable to disturbed and altered landscapes; and
- there was an increase in traffic noise and light pollution at all dams at the Arboretum.

With the increase in light pollution and traffic noise and housing coming closer it would be interesting to survey the dams around the periphery of the Arboretum. A longitudinal study of the effect of this encroachment on the number and behavior of frogs in the Arboretum could give some insights to the effects of increased population on biodiversity. Reduction of mowing so that a buffer of about 5m 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 with other curious frog watchers recording our frog inhabitants and discovering the creatures that come out at night. New volunteers are always welcome to join us.

Alison Purvis

WARM TREES 2025: REPORT FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA AGM



Warm Trees is an annual event in July at the National Arboretum Canberra, 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 Visitors Centre (gabion wall).

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.

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.

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 2024 our partner was Chile, and the display featured the national symbols of Chile, including the Chilean bellflower (photo above) and the Andean condor. Our volunteers made a full-sized condor which was mounted on the wall behind the kitchen garden (photo below).

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), and also installed 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. Other changes last year included providing specific information about the seven trees that are native to Chile that we have growing at the Arboretum. We also provided a map showing the locations of both the scarves and the Chilean forests.

Our partner embassy this year is the Republic of Korea. Ten of the Arboretum's forests contain trees that are native to Korea. And the installation, including the displays inside and outside, will be up until mid August.

Jan Morgan
Warm Trees Convener

Right: Condor display on the gabion wall



NATIONAL BONSAI & PENJING COLLECTION OF AUSTRALIA – REPORT TO FRIENDS 2025 AGM

During 2024, volunteers at the National Bonsai & Penjing Collection (NBPCA) 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.

In April, 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 artists, Marija Hajdic and Morten Albek were 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. Numerous items were auctioned during the evening donated to the Bonsai Trust Fund.

The NBPCA Artist in Residence program saw Australian bonsai artist from Ballarat, Joe Morgan-Payler, visit the Arboretum to share their knowledge with staff and volunteers. Joe provided a great workshop, demonstration and presentation with a topic of ethical collection of bonsai tree refinement. Joe was very well received and volunteers who were able to get involved in the activities benefitted greatly.

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

Leigh Taafe

6 May 2025

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA – AGM MAY 2025

SOUTHERN TABLELANDS ECOSYSTEMS PARK (STEP) REPORT

The Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) community group works in partnership with the Arboretum to present Forest 20 as a regional botanic garden, education and conservation centre that demonstrates native flora from the Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT.

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 morning tea with much lively conversation. Typically, there are about twenty volunteers each Thursday. STEP volunteers work closely and effectively with the Arboretum's horticultural team and are grateful for this support.

The past year (2024-25) has presented STEP with challenges, due to the prolonged period with below-average rainfall and warmer temperatures. Notwithstanding the need to provide water to newly established plantings, Forest 20's gardens have continued to grow, flower and provide habitat for a diverse range of native insects and birds.

Our newsletter and monthly photosheet '*Of interest at Forest 20*' reflect that diversity and we are grateful to Andy Russell for producing these for many years. In April 2025 STEP farewelled and warmly thanked Andy for many years of voluntary service from before STEP started at the Arboretum.

STEP has continued to participate in the Harvest Stalls, lead guided walks, and facilitate other groups to visit Forest 20. Examples are:

- a well-attended Women in Nature visit organised by Landcare ACT that explored Forest 20 and undertook educational and mindfulness activities;
- a walk to raise awareness of the importance of native grasslands was held during the ACT's Festival of Nature; and
- a group of artists from NatureArtLab, who used our ecosystem plantings (in particular, the peas and wattles) for inspiration and research.

Our visitor numbers continue to increase and attract new volunteers to our activities. We value our membership of the Friends Council and look forward to participating on future activities.

Jane Cottee
President
Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (Inc).

SPONSORSHIP REPORT FOR SEATS AND PICNIC SETTINGS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024

Thanks:-

To the Friends Treasurer, Lyn Rees, in her inimitable efficient and accurate style, for keeping track of donations and issuing receipts.

To Alison Stewart, previous NAC Seats Project Officer, for all her assistance while she was in that role. I wish her much success in her new interstate job.

And to Matthew Platt and Pete Sealy, replacing Alison as NAC Seat Project Officers. Their assistance with driving the prospective seat sponsors in the Ngala bus to view the various possible locations has been much appreciated and a real feature of the Program. Mobility often is an issue for sponsors. I have appreciated the liaison role they undertake with the tradies who build the plinths and install the seats; the installation of the plaques; and their liaison with the Friends and outside businesses to ensure there are sufficient seats to meet requirements.

As in previous reports, this is a slow business but nonetheless, one that yields considerable funds which go into the Friends' Trust Fund and are eventually used in Arboretum future projects.

Seats sponsored in this financial year Jan – Dec 2024 =	1	\$10,000
Picnic settings sponsored =	1	<u>\$15,000</u>
Total =		<u>\$25,000</u>

Trish Keller OAM
Donations and Sponsorship Manager for the Friends

May 2025