



FRIENDS OF Old Parliament House ROSE GARDENS

Issue 6 December 2013

Message from the President

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this Christmas newsletter from the Friends of the Old Parliament House Rose Gardens.

At this year's Annual General Meeting, I was delighted to be elected president of the Friends, having watched the development of the Gardens with great interest for some years.

This year has been one of renewal and growth for both the Gardens and the Friends. As you will read elsewhere in this issue, we have held a number of very successful functions including a pruning workshop at the Gardens in late winter and an afternoon tea with patron Tamie Fraser as the roses were coming into full bloom this spring.

We have also been in the process of renewing our membership list, and I hope all members will have by now received their renewal notice. Some contact details may have changed, so please don't hesitate to contact our membership officer Wendy McLeod on fophrog.membership@gmail.com or use the membership form in this newsletter and send to PO Box 213, Curtin, ACT 2605.

It is important to note that unless membership dues have been received, it is not possible to continue sending the newsletter or invitations. To this end, we have reduced the membership cost as a one-off incentive to join the Friends, and you can now join at the reduced rate of \$30 concession, \$35 individual membership and \$40 family membership. Membership is valid until March 2015.

We also have some rose themed souvenirs and memorabilia for sale. These include "There's Something About a Rose", an anthology of rose poems and artwork compiled and edited by Dr Malcolm Beazley with the assistance of Judith Pugh; "Sunshine and Roses", a CD of rose themed music (perfect for the summer garden party), retailing at \$15 from the Friends, and now a range of



From left: Acting head, National Capital Authority Andrew Smith, Genevieve Jacobs, former NCA CEO Gary Rake, Wendy McLeod, Dr Malcolm Beazley, Sarah White, Anne Knowler, Jacky Luby and Fred Knowler.

beautifully photographed cards depicting the Gardens in full bloom.

These images have been made by gifted photographer Margaret Weir and include close detail and landscape shots of the Gardens. They are available either as individual cards at \$4 each or at \$15 for five. Please order them via the form in this newsletter, or email friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com. Postage is \$3.

Dates to watch for in the calendar include a St Valentine's Day evening of hearts and roses in the Gardens on Friday, February 14, speakers on roses and history during the winter and a planned Melbourne Cup function.

It's my hope as president that the Friends will continue to bring together lovers of roses, history and the national capital, and to foster friendships in the course of supporting and promoting these beautiful gardens.

Genevieve Jacobs
President

Afternoon tea in the Gardens with Tamie Fraser

An enthusiastic crowd of rose lovers met in glorious spring sunshine on October 18 when the Friends patron, Tamie Fraser AO joined us for afternoon tea in the Ladies Garden. Mrs Fraser was delighted by the Gardens' evident good health and appearance, commenting on how refreshing it was to see them well loved and well cared for. She took the opportunity to re-plant a standard of the Australian-bred "Cathedral City", a vibrant red floribunda rose planted among bush specimens of the same cultivar. The rose had originally been planted by Mrs Fraser when the Gardens were restored in 2004, and she took to the shovel with some gusto.

We were also joined by Andrew Smith, acting head of the National Capital Authority. Andrew explained that the initial phase of the Rose Gardens



restoration and patronage programme was approaching completion and that there are some changes afoot. The original signage denoting the names of donors and friends or relatives has suffered from wear and tear over the years and a number of the plaques have become illegible.

The names of individual rose species and cultivars will remain, but as the patronage programme ends, the individual patrons' plaques in the flower beds will be removed and replaced with four plaques, two in the House of Representatives Garden and two in the Senate Garden. In recognition of their invaluable support, these will list every patron associated with a rose or roses in each of the Gardens. In this way, the connection patrons enjoy with the roses when visiting the Gardens will continue into the future.

The Friends' committee is grateful for the continuing support of the Pork Barrel Cafe, which provided a delicious and plentiful afternoon tea. We strongly suggest that those in need of repast after visiting the Rose Gardens should pop across the road for refreshments.

Rose pruning workshop

About 20 rose lovers gathered on a very brisk but clear Canberra afternoon on August 4 for a rose pruning workshop held by the Friends.

We worked under the guidance of City Wide's Dennis Dempsey, who was in the process of tackling no less than 10,000 roses in the parliamentary triangle with his team.

Approaching the rose, Dennis says that it's important to begin by understanding its individual habit. Many of the roses immediately surrounding Old Parliament House are hybrid teas, but the approach will vary with old fashioned roses, species roses and climbers. Bush and tea roses respond to heavy pruning in the winter dormant period, while floribundas should be pruned lightly in winter and again after they have flowered. Landscape roses can be cut back heavily with hedge



trimmers in winter, while once flowering roses should only be lightly tidied up in winter, leaving the main pruning after flowering.

A number of the roses in the Gardens had suffered from poor pruning in the immediate past, so we began the practical workshop by cutting out dead and diseased wood and crossing branches. The aim is to open up the centre of the rose, enabling good airflow in and around the foliage.

The workshop group pruned several dozen roses at the front and sides of Old Parliament House, working cheerfully under Dennis's direction: even the most experienced gardeners learned a great deal from the experience. As we pruned, Dennis pointed out the many rings in the wood of some of the oldest roses planted at the front of Old Parliament House, some of which would have seen almost 80 years of Prime Ministers and parliamentarians pass before them.

From the Gardens

FOHRG committee member and Rose Gardens volunteer Fred Knowler writes about the new maintenance programme in the Gardens.

The Old Parliament House Rose Gardens have been a mass of bloom and colour, presenting a magnificent sight this season. They are greatly admired by the many visitors to the Gardens and those people using them as a short cut on their way to work. Volunteers are frequently greeted by these people and congratulated on the displays on hand. A tremendous amount of effort by both the volunteers and the Gardens' contractor, City Wide has been used to create this magnificent showpiece.

The arrival of Dennis Dempsey as head of the City Wide contractors team early on in the year has greatly improved the health, care and maintenance of the plants and beds, and has increased the knowledge and enthusiasm of the volunteers and staff, with results for all to see.

Volunteers have been re-trained and encouraged with the aim of assuming more responsibility for the appearance and wellbeing of each garden. Pruning was largely completed by the volunteers under Dennis's guidance, although assistance from City Wide staff was needed as temperatures rose in late August and untouched roses began shooting new growth.

All 4,222 roses under our control in the four Gardens were pruned over an eight week period. Special attention was given to the climbing roses around the tennis courts and pergolas and their stems were re-shaped and aligned against their supports. All now look spectacular, with masses of blooms and wide coverage.

Under Dennis's direction, volunteers welled the soil around each rose to prevent collar rot and at the same time took the opportunity to clear the beds of weeds - no small task when creeping oxalis and onion weeds had begun sprouting profusely in warmer conditions, and paspalum was endeavouring to take over in every bed.

In fact, the Rex Hazelwood Garden was swamped by such large infestations of weeds that the problem was too great to control by hand. The team there is attempting to beat the infestation by layering a cover of newspapers under

the soil to stifle the growth. The alternative was spraying weedicides over the infected area near the roses - a dangerous practise and certainly not allowed in these Gardens.

As soon as pruning was completed, the roses were sprayed with an organic insecticide made to a formula developed by Dennis (recipe follows). This is a cheap, effective and safe method for controlling black spot, powdery mildew and pests including aphids, but is harmless to the plants. A soil fertiliser consisting of pulverised turkey manure was added to the soil around the root area and the application has been repeated at six weekly intervals.

In September a thick coat of mulch was laid on all beds to prevent weed development and retain moisture. Ongoing maintenance this spring has included removing suckers and broken stems, securing excess growth on climbers and continuing weeding and deadheading as the season developed. Volunteers have found it very satisfying to see the results of their efforts in the Gardens this year.

Vale Graham Evans, former gardener at Old Parliament House, who died earlier this year.

DENNIS DEMPSEY'S ORGANIC ROSE SPRAY

3 level teaspoons bicarbonate of soda

1 dessertspoon dishwashing liquid

1 litre of water.

Mix bi-carb and dishwashing liquid with a small amount of water until smooth and add to pre-measured amount of water. Agitate thoroughly before and during use - if for any reason spraying is delayed, it is important to re-combine the contents as they will separate while standing. For larger quantities, use 250mls of bi-carb and 50mls of dishwashing liquid per 100 litres of water using the same method, but beware that excess bicarbonate of soda will have adverse effects on roses. This spray will combat black spot, powdery mildew and aphids. Heavy infestations may require follow up treatments within two to three weeks.



Greeting cards

A range of beautifully photographed cards made by gifted photographer Margaret Weir.

Includes close detail and landscape shots of the Gardens. They are available either as individual cards at \$4 each or at \$15 for five plus \$3 for postage and packaging.

Membership

If you would like to become a member of the Friends, please complete this form and post to:

Friends of the Old Parliament House Rose Gardens
PO Box 213
CURTIN ACT 2605

Membership category (please tick)

Single (\$35) ☐

Family (\$40) ☐

Concession (\$30)* ☐

**Pension card holders or full time students*

Concession Card number

Contact details

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Telephone _____

Payment (Please tick)

Cheque ☐ Direct deposit ☐

For payment by direct deposit:

BSB: 082 902

Account number: 16770 7016

Account name: Friends of Old Parliament House Rose Gardens

Place your order

I wish to order (Please tick)

There's Something About a Rose

☐ \$15

Sunshine and Roses CD

☐ \$15

Greetings cards

☐ \$4 each or
\$15 for five

Number of copies _____

Total amount _____

Contact details

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Payment (Please tick)

Cheque ☐ Direct deposit ☐

For payment by direct deposit:

BSB: 082 902

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All proceeds go to support the work of the Friends.