



FRIENDS OF Old Parliament House ROSE GARDENS



Issue 8 - Christmas edition, December 2014

President's letter

Dear Friends,

Another busy year for the Friends of Old Parliament House Rose gardens is drawing to a close, and one during which considerable change in the Gardens has begun taking place as the decade long patronage programme draws to a close.

The NCA has committed to keeping a record of the original donors when the gardens were restored in 2004, although the shape this will take is yet to be confirmed. The Friends have been discussing this matter for some time with NCA chair Malcolm Snow. As a committee, we believe that a permanent and easily accessible record of donors is imperative, representing the financial investment donors made in the gardens, as well as their emotional connections.

Friends' co-patron Richard Broinowski discussed that history when he spoke to a well attended afternoon tea at Old Canberra House on August 24 (see photos, p.2). Richard is a distinguished former Australian diplomat and his grandfather, Robert was Secretary of the Joint House, Usher of the Black Rod and Clerk of the Senate in the new Parliament's early years. It was he who founded the first rose gardens on the site, believing that Parliamentarians ought to be able to enjoy the fledgling capital, with its then barren paddocks. He arranged for tennis courts to be built and was also a compulsive gardener who believed that roses signified the ability of "civilised men and women" to shape their new environment in the alien wilds of Australia. Roses added colour to the unrelenting browns and greys of the Canberra landscape. Richard pointed out that the development of the rose gardens and the beauty they brought to the site closely matched the development of the city itself.

In 1931, Robert purchased 100 climbing roses for the Senate-side tennis courts. He wrote to national rose societies in Victoria and South Australia, and to prominent growers in Queensland, WA and Tasmania. He proposed that each state have its own section in the Senate rose garden, prominently labelled. In 1933, he broadened his search for rose donors and even the 1933 touring English Test cricket team donated roses, Richard told us. The gardens flourished in that era, and we are grateful to Richard and his family for their generous gift of time spent with the Friends.

Today work on the restored gardens is carried out by Citywide contractors with the help of the Volunteers. In early November, we

met for a propagation workshop held by Citywide's Dennis Dempsey and Nadene Edwards, who also discussed ongoing maintenance for roses during the blooming season (see report p.3). Following the practical workshop, NCA chair Malcolm Snow joined us for afternoon tea.

During his address to us following the workshop, Malcolm Snow emphasised the vital role the Volunteers play in keeping the gardens looking beautiful and in top order. In fact, it would be almost impossible to maintain them otherwise. There is an ongoing need for Volunteers in the gardens, and much pleasure to be had from the weekly working bees. If you are interested in making a small time commitment to the gardens, please contact the NCA on 6272 2962 or email nca@natcap.gov.au

In February, the Friends will hold a St Valentine's Day evening in the Gardens on the 13th. We look forward to your company then, and to an unfolding year of events, workshops and friendship among the roses during 2015.

A very Merry Christmas to all,

Genevieve Jacobs
President



Friends' co-patron Richard Broinowski with his aunt, Ruth Schmedding at the fireside chat in August.



Fred Knowler and Harold Small at the propagation workshop



Citywide's Dennis Dempsey and Nadene Edwards teaching rose propagation



Committee members with the Broinowski family at the Old Canberra House afternoon tea



Elizabeth Grant and Margaret Reid enjoy Richard Broinowski's fireside chat



Frances Rose takes a softwood cutting

A ramble through our best rose gardens

Please note in your diaries an important forthcoming event. In early November 2015, we are planning a trip to Victoria to see some of the nation's finest rose gardens and to study rose cultivation with Australian experts.

The trip itinerary is still being finalised in detail, but will include a visit to the Melbourne Cup, the State Rose Gardens at Werribee and Treloar's Roses along with a number of other destinations for rose lovers.

First preference on the tour will be given to Friends and Volunteers and places will be limited. If you would like to indicate your preliminary interest in the tour and receive further information as the plans develop, please email friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com

Growing your own

How to propagate your own roses

The Old Parliament House Rose Gardens are fortunate to be in the care of Dennis Dempsey, who heads the team, along with Nadene Edwards. On November 2, Volunteers and Friends met for a propagation workshop held in the Gardens. Here is an abridged version of their introduction to rose cuttings and budding:

The rose is one of the most cultivated plants in history, with over 40,000 registered varieties. It follows a complex history of breeding over thousands of years over much of Europe, China and the Arab worlds. Breeding new varieties meant time and patience, cross pollinating varieties and hoping for the best among germinating seedlings. When a rose with favourable qualities is grown, taking cuttings will give you an exact genetic copy of that rose.

SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS

These are taken from the current season's growth and are best taken in spring or early summer. The best canes are the ones that are flowering in bud or buds that are just opening. Softwood or tip cuttings are usually 50 to 100 mm in length and take between four and eight weeks to develop roots.

How to take a softwood cutting: Fill your plastic pots with sand or potting mix. Choose a cane from the rose you would like to propagate and take a cutting measuring around 50 mm to 100 mm. Make a horizontal cut just below a node or leaf axil, and another just above a node or leaf axil. Cut off all leaf stems except one at the top. If leaves are large, you can cut the tips off them. Dab the cutting in root hormone. Then using a dibble stick, make a hole in the pots and place the cuttings, to a depth of about one third of their length. Gently firm them in and water gently.

After care: Keep your cuttings in a protected area in a semi shaded spot away from full sun. Keep moist but not boggy as they may rot. Roots will take between four and eight weeks to develop and in this time, you can apply worm juice or Seasol. No matter how tempting, don't pull out the cuttings to see whether roots have developed, even if leaves and flower buds might be developing. You could damage the newly formed callus and roots. Wait until roots begin to show at the bottom of the pot before planting out.

HARDWOOD CUTTINGS

These are taken in winter when the plants are dormant and free of leaves. The cuttings are taken from mature wood, approximately pencil thickness. The cuttings are generally around 15 to 25 cm long and ideally have four buds. It can take a number of months for roots to develop and growth appears in spring.



BUDDING

Budding (or tee budding) is best done in mid summer. It involves two plants - the scion (the stem or root stock to which you attach the bud) and your budding wood (the stem from which you removed the buds). Budding involves removing a bud from one plant and inserting it into a cut you have made on another. You can also make multiple grafts onto one stem. It can take around six weeks for a graft to take and the bud to develop.

How to graft a bud: Select the stem or root stock to which you will attach the bud and your budding wood. From the budding wood and using a budding knife, gently make a cut below the bud, slicing up behind the bud and finishing the cut from above. The cut should be around 2 to 2.5 cm.

On your scion wood, make a horizontal cut and then a vertical cut from the centre down in a tee shape. Gently peel the flaps back, exposing the cambium. Making sure the bud is the right way up, slide it into the cut and fold the flaps back over. Using budding tape start around 2 cm above the inserted bud and wrap down the stem to 2 cm below to bud and then back up again, ensuring that the tape does not cover the bud.

After care: Keep plant healthy and watered and in around six weeks the graft will heal. If the graft has taken, the bud will swell and shoot into a healthy stem. Once the graft has taken and the bud has grown into a stem, you can remove the budding tape. If you have budded onto a rootstock to create a standard plant then you need to remove all other growth above the graft.

Membership renewal

A reminder that membership renewals are due in March. Three categories are available: join as a single member for \$35 per annum; as a family for \$40; and at a concession rate for \$30, available to pension card holders or full time students.

Friends membership brings you inclusion in our events, lectures and workshops, and helps us to raise awareness of the Gardens, to advocate for their care and wellbeing and to enhance our own knowledge of rose cultivation.

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

With thanks to our sponsors

Many thanks to our supporters, who contribute a great deal to our work in promoting and supporting the Gardens.



The Pork Barrel Cafe is unfailingly helpful to the Friends and Volunteers and we highly recommend tea, cake and refreshments among the blooming roses. Friends receive a 20% discount.



The Heritage Nursery at Yarralumla offers a 10% discount to the Friends and have been most generous in their support of our rose events.



We are also delighted to welcome aboard the **Mercure Hotel**, who have joined us this year and kindly provide assistance to the Friends through the use of its facilities for our events.



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.

For details please email
friendsophrosegardens@gmail.com