



# The Creek

Volume 28 No 4, Summer 2024

*Caring for our local environment*

## LOVE OUR BERG MORNING TEAS?

**THERE'S NOW A COLLECTION OF OUR RECIPES ON THE WEBSITE!**

### BERG RECIPES

Morning teas have always been an integral part of our hard-working sessions. This time of having a chat and sharing our recipes whilst enjoying our delicious treats over a cuppa is loved by all...

So here in one convenient spot is a collection of many of those favourite recipes.



This can be added to of course!

Thanks to all who shared!

To download, click [here](#)

## SOMEONE'S AT THE GATE



*This unlikely visitor was at Sue Betheras' place, in Irvine Avenue Mt Martha. Sue didn't invite it in! Just photographed it.*

## BENEATH THE BARK

### FOSSICKING FOR INSECTS IN THE BRIARS WOODLAND

*By Angela Kirsner, Wildlife photos by Brian Bainbridge*

BRIAN BAINBRIDGE, ecologist and wildlife artist, took Friday Groupers on a wonderful exploration of the relationships between flora and fauna in The Briars woodland in November. Liz writes:

'We were fascinated to fossick and learn about the insect and animal life hidden under bark, in holes, hanging from leaves and twigs. You don't realize what's under our feet and all around us and the importance and abundance of these tiny creatures in the food chain.'

A forester by training, Brian is the Hepburn Shire's Biodiversity Officer and was previously Ecological Restoration Planner for Merri Creek Management Committee.

### Why restore bushland?

For Brian, much of the motivation is to attract wildlife back into the landscape – a passion he developed as a kid when he realised how many more birds were in the eucalypts along his local creek than in the weedy willows. Over time, he has become more and more absorbed by invertebrates, the insect life.



*Brian at the BERG workshop  
Phot Liz Barraclough*

'I realised that it didn't matter where I was, even in the middle of the city; if there was a native plant, I would find an invertebrate, and often be excited and surprised by something I've never seen before.'

The challenge he set the group was to find something exciting in The

Briars bushland – a habitat hunt to highlight how native plants, living or rotting, bring native fauna into the landscape. While some exotics attract native fauna, he pointed out

that there are many critters you won't get in your garden unless you plant local plants as well.

### Black Wattles – instant habitat

Planting Black Wattles is the fastest way to get heaps of habitat into a landscape. They grow fast, get full of bugs, fall over – and in no time you will have



*Half-band Hoverfly after nectar on  
Black Wattle flowers*

**Thank you!**  
**Mt Martha Community Bank**  
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Mount Martha  
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lots of insect life. Brian tapped Black Wattle flowers over white paper, and masses of tiny critters fell out, caterpillars and more. A great place for spiders to hunt, and heaven for little insect-eating birds like thornbills, grey fantails and weebills.

### Dead trees – a biodiversity bonanza

Many different boring beetles had left their mark on a dead wattle trunk. It was riddled with holes, large and small, the big ones probably from longicorn beetles. All the holes are now open to squatters, maybe ants or spiders, and very likely native bees, some of the many species.

We have no hive-forming native bees locally, but a solitary bee or wasp will make many cells for its offspring. It will collect nectar and pollen, mix them into a moist 'bee porridge', put a porridge ball in a hole, lay an egg on it and seal it off with a cellophane-like material or mud or propolis resin ('bee glue').

Where bark had peeled off we found beautiful scribbles, probably the tracks of moth caterpillars as they munched the juicy cambium layer below the bark. Birds looking for insects probably removed the bark – maybe currawongs or cockatoos or galahs,

Also under bark was a cockroach, one of the many native species; probably an *Ellipsidion*, beautifully patterned and coloured.

### Spider Assassin

The intriguing Spider Assassin-bug was new to Brian. It too was under a slab of bark, where there were also many different spiders. Brian posted his photo on iNaturalist, and experts rapidly identified it. Assassin bugs stalk and feed on other small invertebrates, jabbing them with a venomous proboscis. They can be devious: some will

tap a spider with their antennae, which discombobulates the spider for long enough for the bug to make a toxic strike.

### Inside a leaf

We found leaves being tunnelled out from the inside. We found frass (dung) from a caterpillar that had been scraping off and eating a leaf. We found leaves glued together with silk, probably caterpillar silk, providing a haven for maybe a tiny aphid.

From a previous workshop participant: *'It's one of the beauties of wildlife gardening, to see my plants getting eaten, with holes in the leaves! That's when I rejoice because that's when I know my habitat garden is working.'*

### At home in a Lomandra

Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) also provides five-star habitat – a hunting ground, a basking site, and food. The caterpillars of some butterflies, including the Splendid Ochre, feed only on Lomandras. We found evidence of their nibbling; they were probably in the clump we were watching unless they'd already pupated.

Damselflies were there too. These ferocious hunters of small insects are one of our best mosquito predators. The attraction at The Briars was the many flies taking nectar or pollen from the Lomandra flowers. A perfect spot to look out for a meal!

### Dragonfly

What was a dragonfly doing here, far away from the water? We watched it zip around the foliage, looking for other insects that might be hanging around nectar-rich Sweet Bursaria flowers. Dragonflies like open conditions, they patrol through pathways and around the tops of foliage, where there are lots of small insects. They are top predators in the insect world. Dragonflies are fast enough to catch all the different flies – damselflies, blowflies and more. They have huge spiky legs to catch quite large prey.

### Butterflies

Brian introduced us to a behaviour known as 'hill topping'. For a male butterfly looking to mate, the best rendezvous may well be a sunny hilltop, and 'hill topping' is the habit of a number of species including Montane Ochres and Mistletoe Butterflies. The best hill-topping site is a single clear prominence with some trees on top.

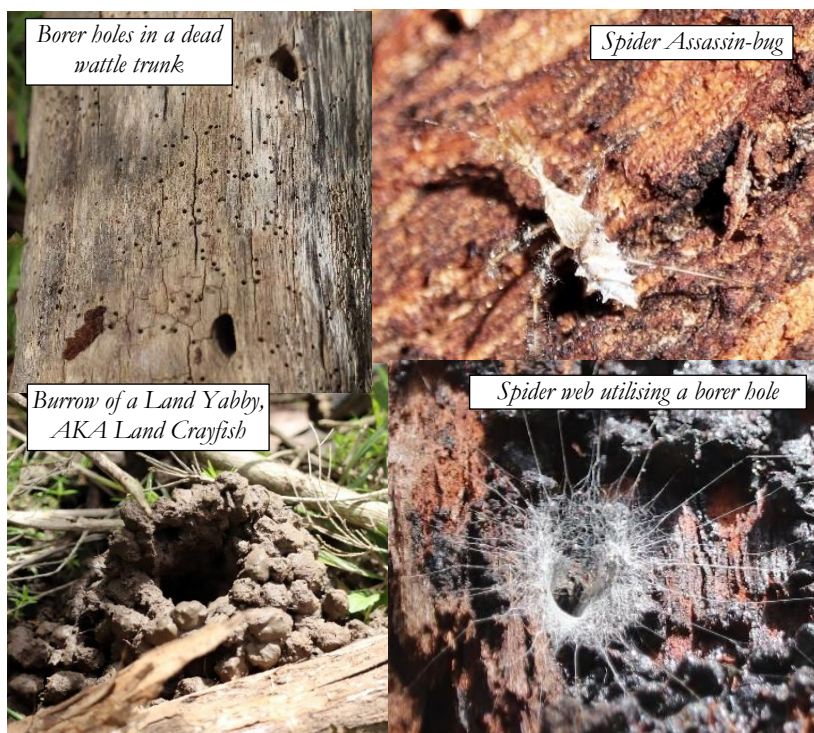
Summer is the time to gather there. The males fight for the best basking and displaying sites, whizzing about, trying to hit each other's wings, to wear each other out, and be the first to mate with any passing female.

Butterflies are most vulnerable at the caterpillar stage, but Grey Fantails or robber flies might pick off a few adults.

Dusty wings give them some protection, and when they close their wings they are well camouflaged. Some species carry toxins from food ingested as caterpillars, and they signal their toxicity with their bright colours.

### ...and underfoot

Near the wetlands were the burrows of the elusive native crustacean, the Land Yabby.



## SE WATER: WORKING WITH COMMUNITY TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

By Declan McCreesh, Group Manager Network Operations, SE Water

At South East Water we understand the importance of Balcombe Creek and Estuary to the Mornington Peninsula community and the environment, and we share a common purpose with BERG Mt Martha to protect this beautiful area.

Sewer spills are isolated but unfortunate incidents. Over the past three years, there have been five into Balcombe Creek, two caused by sewer blockages on residential properties, one by an extreme wet-weather event (significant rainfall entering the sewer network), and two by a siphon pipeline failure (at different locations).

We give great consideration and effort to our operations in Mt Martha, given the complexity of the sewer system and proximity of Balcombe Estuary and the bay. The sloping topography toward the bay results in shallow sewers. With heavy vegetation, tree roots cause blockages; and the infrastructure is older style.

### Proactive care

We do everything possible to avoid spills. Our proactive sewer maintenance and monitoring program includes 1,827 'BlokAid' sensors and systems with alarms that detect potential blockages or surcharging before they impact customers or the environment. Of the BlokAid devices, 97 are in Mount Martha including 27 near Balcombe Creek.

In the Mt Martha catchment we have renewed some 4 km of sewers since January 2021, and cleaned 3.5 km of sewers (about 54% of those

servicing Mt Martha) as part of our routine cleaning program during 2023–24.

### How we respond

When there's a spill we act quickly. Our goal is to protect the safety of the community and the health of our environment.

We immediately dispatch maintenance crews to stop, repair and reinstate the spill site. We work with stakeholders including Council and Melbourne Water and with the community to inform and spread the word. And we immediately notify EPA Victoria, the Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action, and if there's potential for a spill to impact the bay area, the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

### What you can do

#### If you notice a spill

Call us straight away on 13 28 12  
7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

Sewer blockages can result from a build-up of tree roots and/or fats, oils or grease poured down the drain, or third party damage.

For tips on how to keep your sewers clean go to [southeastwater.com.au](http://southeastwater.com.au) and click on 'About us'. Under 'Easy English' there's a guide on what you can and can't put in your sink and toilet.

Excavating near a sewer? Contact Before You Dig Australia – a free service – for the location of any utility assets in the area. You can also download SEWMap to your smartphone to view the location of SE Water's assets in the area.

## BERG VISITS SE WATER

Four BERG committee members – Peter McMahon, Eric Smalley, Geoff Pritchard and Liz Barraclough – visited South East Water's head office in Frankston in October to learn more about their operations.

Hosted by Paige-Elise Galloway, SE Water's-Community Manager, we met key employees including the Managing Director, and visited several areas of operation. We were given an overview of SE Water's assets and capabilities, we discussed BERG's priorities and our new Environmental Sensitivity Overlay, then we moved to the incident room to hear how SE Water manages incidents, how they test and manage water quality sampling, and the technology they develop to protect the environment.

We were impressed by the importance that the SE Water team places on protecting our environment, on technology advancement to achieve this, and on customer satisfaction. We came away confident of a strong collaborative relationship with SE Water has.

## ESTUARYWATCH

EstuaryWatch has been up and running again since September with the new equipment. The photo below shows Geoff Pritchard and Ian Horton testing at the picnic ground jetty. They have almost finished the bi-monthly sampling for the Monash University Port Phillip water health research project (reported in the Spring newsletter) and another project with RMIT is in the wind.

*Photo Gail Pritchard*



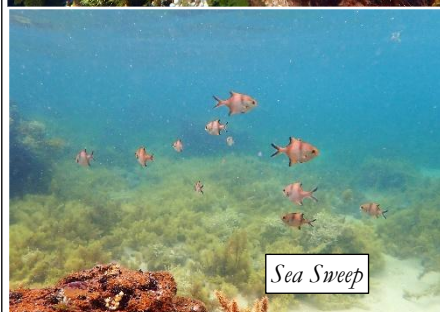
**SNORKELLING OFF MT MARTHA WITH SUE BRABENDER**



Tasmanian Blenny



White-finger Anemones



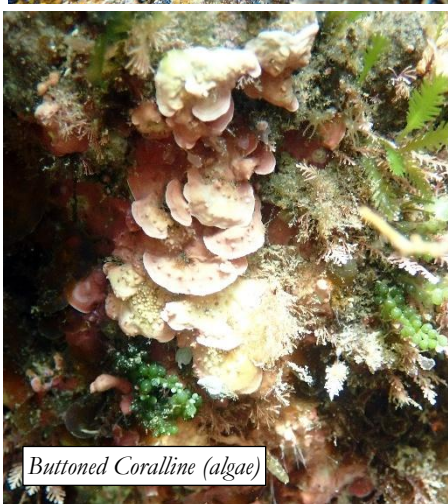
Sea Sweep



Sea Urchin & Golfball Sponge



Eleven-armed Seastar & Eight-armed Seastar



Buttoned Coralline (algae)

While bushwalking and birding keep me captivated through the year, I eagerly await the summer rise in the local sea temperature. My snorkelling season starts when it reaches 18°, though only the top 20cm of water is warm, it's much cooler as I duck-dive to look under ledges.

Over recent days I have been followed by schools of Sea Sweep, been mesmerised by an Eagle Ray flying by, watched sleeping stingrays, laughed (into my snorkel), at comical Globe Fish, and have been in awe of the growth of kelp and other plants where over the years Sea Urchins have created urchin barrens.

Fishing line continues to be an issue where people fish along our rocky shores. Removal is a priority.

Do don a mask and snorkel this summer and look beneath the water to see the wonders we have here in our 'backyard'.

**SWAN**

Verona Rawson snapped this swan on the creek under Uralla Bridge. A most unusual sighting; neither she nor your editor have ever seen one in that part of the creek.



In flower in the reserves, clockwise from left  
 Small Grass Tree *Xanthorrea minor*;  
 Yellow Star Flower *Pauridia vaginata* var. *vaginata*;  
 Tassel Sedge *Carex fascicularis*



**KINGFISHER**

In late November, an excited walker told us she'd just seen a Sacred Kingfisher by the creek below the ovals. She kindly sent us her photo, apologising for the quality. But how exciting is that!



Sacred Kingfisher by Balcombe Creek  
 Photo Lauren McIntosh

## THANKS TO OUR BRILLIANT BUSINESS PARTNERS

FEATURING



# ETCH SPARKLING

Meet Mt Martha locals,  
Andy & Jason  
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Drinks crafted locally using  
Australian native fruits &  
herbs.



**ETCH** - the acronym for  
**Every Time Choose Health**

Alcohol-free, sugar-free and super refreshing, ETCH drinks are the perfect addition to your esky or fridge this Christmas!

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ETCH Sparkling is a proud business partner of BERG.

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- Ritchies IGA
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### BERG'S BARISTA!

From Eric Smalley

One of the pleasures of our Committee meetings and Friday working bees is having our own BERG 'barista' providing coffee. Terry Moar blends his own mix of coffee beans. There are no fancy names for his offering. 'Rough Red or True Blue?' he asks, a thermos in each hand. Many of us think it's the same brew in both but Terry remains tight-lipped as he waxes lyrical about complex and nuanced flavours. It's dispensed, colour coded, in BERG's blue and red mugs. Either way, it's great to have such a treat while we carry on our BERG business.



### THANKS BRUCE



*Bev & Bruce Ferres with wine & nougat that Eric Smalley dropped in as thanks from BERG*  
Photo Eric Smalley

After seven-plus years of running BERG's EstuaryWatch program, Bruce Ferres has retired. A previous committee member and vice president, Bruce has had various helpers with Estuary-Watch including his wife Bev and Colin Wilkinson. He has been involved in discussions with the Shire, SE Water and Melbourne Water about threats to the Creek, from sewage to sedimentation. The \$500,000 sedimentation trap at Henley Ave is part of his legacy. We thank him for his major contribution to BERG and the Estuary.

### ECHO DAY

Eric Smalley reports

BERG joined other exhibitors for 'ECHO Day,' the Mt Martha House Open Day, on 27<sup>th</sup> October. The exhibitors, all users of Mt Martha House, included community groups, dance & fitness, art & craft and special interest groups – plus sausage sizzle and kids' activities. Ian Horton and Terry Moar (below) and other BERGers were there to spread the word on BERG's work.

Photo Eric Smalley



## BENEATH OUR FEET

*Geologist, botanist and Australian tree expert Leon Costermans gave a fascinating account, following our AGM, of the geology of the southern Mornington Peninsula and its influence on landforms, soils and flora. Here are some highlights from his talk.*

The Mornington Peninsula is remarkable in that it includes most of the geological forms found in the rest of Victoria – a diversity reflected in its vegetation.

Geology is an integral part of any ecosystem. Think of a sandwich, the atmosphere above, the substrate below. Life stems from the interactions between the two.

Living things need about 20 of the 90 or so known elements. Nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide and hydrogen come from the atmosphere, but the rest are all from the geology. Geology has other roles as well in ecosystems: hydrological processes – underground water is everywhere; shaping the terrain, providing anchorages and bases for flora and fauna, and providing protection through, for example joints in rocks.

### All at sea

Some 500 million years ago the eastern edge of Gondwana, the great super-continent, was about where Adelaide now is; east of that was sea underlain by basalt. By 480 million years ago, Gondwana was eroding into that sea and forming the sedimentary rock that became the basement, the bedrock, of the whole of eastern Australia.

Across the Peninsula, fossils in this bedrock trace the evolution of life in the sea, getting younger from west to east. The fossils show rapid

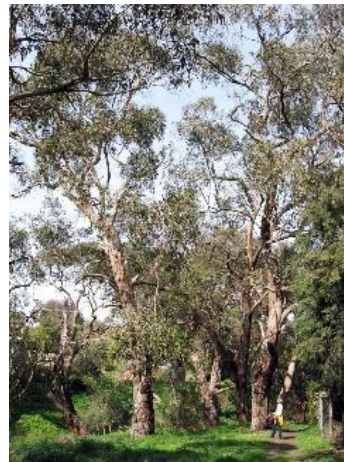


*Mt Martha Granodiorite platform covered with Neptune's Necklace'*

evolution, with noticeable change about every two million years.

### Our eucalypts

The commonest trees that grow on that basement sedimentary sandstone are the Peninsula's common trees. Three eucalypts occur in succession down



slopes. Peppermint Gums (*E. radiata*) like drier soils higher up the hills. Further down, Messmates (*E. obliqua*) like it damper with some clay; and in the moist gullies are the tall Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*).

. Seven less common eucalypts are also indigenous to the Peninsula, including Swamp Gums (*E. ovata*), which thrive in swampy areas, and interestingly, small patches of Snow Gums (*E. pauciflora*).

### Granites

About 370 million years ago molten material – magma – from the base of earth's crust intruded in bursts into the basement sedimentary rock, stopping about 5km below earth's surface to form masses of granite called plutons. That granite is visible in places today because everything above it has been eroded away.

There are three plutons on the Peninsula. One goes from Frankston almost to Mornington; its granite is visible in the gorge formed by Sweetwater Creek, in Frankston.

Mount Martha's granite, known as granodiorite, forms a rock platform near Balcombe Point, possibly the only one in Victoria; granite does not normally form rock platforms.

Arthurs Seat is the third and largest pluton, its distinctive pinkish 'Dromana granite' exposed in places but largely covered by basalt.

But think again. All this granite was once 5km beneath earth's surface.

Arthurs Seat was 5km or more higher. Everything up to the clouds has eroded away into the sea.

Another of our indigenous eucalypts, the Mt Martha Bundy (*E. carolaniae*) occurs *only* in Mt Martha's Hopeton Reserve, on the edge of the Dromana granite. It was discovered some 50 years ago by amateur botanist Pat Carolan, but

only in 2012 was it recognised as a new species and named after her.

Also on Arthurs Seat granite, on the southern slopes of Arthurs Seat, is the Silver-leafed Stringybark (*E. cephalocarpa*). There are damp heathlands on those poorly drained lower slopes because the eroding granite produces a gravel that, together with decomposed clay, forms an acidic soil.

### Red eruptions

About 40-50 million years ago volcanic eruptions from the upper mantle spewed basalt from the back of Dromana to Main Creek. It gives Red Hill its name, and can be seen along the coast from Flinders until the dramatic change to sedimentary rock at Main Creek (see photo).

### Swamped

Then some 20 million years ago, the sea covered everything. Melbourne was underwater, and rivers deposited sediment in criss-crossing patterns with the changing currents. Vegetation swamps grew in some of the young sediments; we can identify and date from pollens they left.



*Main Creek: on the east side is basalt, with a sharp transition to young sand on the west side, supporting banksia woodland.*

### The dunes of Nepean Peninsula

During ice ages, the most recent about 200,000 years ago, sea level fell to 30-40 metres below current levels and most of Port Phillip was exposed. Indigenous history tells of a lake. Strong winds blew sand to create bands of dunes across what is now the Nepean Peninsula. Remnant tops of those dunes survive from 100,000 years ago.

Calcareous shell material gives the dunes a limestone character, the reason the area's vegetation is so different to elsewhere on the Peninsula. While it supports some of the same species, there are many that occur only on the strip from Point Nepean to Cape Schanck. Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata*) dominates the landscape.

### Faulting

Faulting is the only reason the Mornington Peninsula exists. It sits between the Selwyn fault, which runs

from Frankston to Fingal's beach, and the Tyabb fault, its hills formed by the two faults.



*Above: Selwyn fault on the left, Tyabb fault on the right. Below: Selwyn Fault at Fingal's Beach*



### Creeks

Leon finished with mention of two creeks. First, a very short creek at Mt Eliza that enters the sea from a deep gorge. What cut that gorge? Not this little creek, it just trickles.

All along that coastline are similar short streams in deep gorges. There must have been extraordinarily high rainfall to cut those gorges. Take the highest rainfall that we've had, imagine it to be continuous and you probably have an idea of the rain there has been in previous times.

Balcombe Creek arises in a damp area near Moorooduc Quarry, and passes through a couple of dips as it heads south. It must have had high energy and high flow to cut those dips. Then it turns abruptly towards the sea just south of Craigie Rd. Why? Because it hit sedimentary rock.

## FIELD NEWS

*Field Officer Liz Barraclough reports*

### Two fabulous workshops

Highlights of recent months have been two Friday workshops for our on-ground volunteers. In September 15 of us learnt heaps from Gidja Walker in a workshop on indigenous planting, identification and management in relation to the existing vegetation and habitat restoration. November was Brian Bainbridge, a workshop funded by our Victorian Landcare Grant. See the article on page 1.

### Friday mornings

More weeding, and more planting while the weather still allowed – below Maude Street (under our Biolinks grant), along the boardwalk, at Uralla Bridge (freeing earlier plantings from smothering weeds) and along the path to The Briars.

With a final session on Citation Hill, the weed control and planting under our Victorian Landcare Grant is now complete. We'll follow up for weed regeneration, and gradually target the remaining Pines.

We removed scads of *Atriplex* below the ovals, and we are still targeting Forget-me-nots, before both weeds flower and seed. Maybe one day we will win!

### Store cleanup

When October rains saw a Friday working bee cancelled, a small crew totally transformed BERG's three storerooms. Writes Geoff Pritchard: 'I was amazed at the range of excellent tools, stock, boxes, bags, sticks and planting gear!' (See his photo below.)

### Sundays

In October, we spread a large pile of mulch to deter the weeds around

earlier plantings in the Rabbit Paddock, and we added 50 more tubes of Kangaroo Grass to boost the diversity of the grassland.

November saw us liberating Hop Goodenias and other plantings from the smothering Rambling Dock and Cape Ivy along Hopetoun Creek below Kotor Place.

### Blackberries

We have funding through a Victorian Landcare Grant to combat blackberries throughout the reserves. With flowering imminent, works are about to start.

### Naturelinks works on

Under our Shire Bushland Management funding, Naturelinks has done a comprehensive sweep through the weeds in many areas of the reserves, from Nepean Hwy to the estuary – spraying, pulling, brush-cutting and hand-weeding.



They have tackled Bridal Creeper, Blackberry, Cape Ivy, Spear Thistle, Italian Buckthorn, Tobacco sp. Arum lily, Flowering Angled Onion and Forget-me-not, Mirror Bush, annual grasses, even some Agapanthus, and a large patch of trumpet vine encroaching from a neighboring garden, We are indebted to them!

**Weedbuster**

We attracted lots of interest at our annual Weedbuster stall, held again with the Sunshine Reserve Group outside the IGA in September. It's a great public education and promotion event, and as always, we had a wide range of weeds on show plus indigenous plant give-aways as replacement plantings.

**BERG Mt Martha welcomes new members**  
Lauren Hillman & family

**DO YOU HAVE SPARE  
USED SHOPPING BAGS?  
(PAPER, PLASTIC, FABRIC)  
DONATE THEM TO**

**Mornington Community Support Centre**  
230 Main Street Mornington

Every Friday Oz Harvest delivers food to the Centre from local outlets and volunteers pack it into bags for locals who need support.

**This takes 100-150 bags each Friday.**

If you have shopping/clothing bags to spare, the Centre can use them!

**Call Cheryl on 0427 076 551 to arrange to drop off.**

Come along to our <b>Bushland Activities</b>	Join us at <b>WaterWatch &amp; EstuaryWatch</b>	<b>Other Local Groups</b>
<p>❖ <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month:</b> between 9.30am &amp; noon. Details emailed a few days ahead, or call Eric Smalley 0403 863 616.</p> <p>❖ <b>Coast Group:</b> fortnightly on Wednesdays, between 9.30am &amp; noon. Call Suzanne Ryan 0418 387 604. Details emailed a few days ahead.</p> <p>❖ <b>Friday Group:</b> weekly between 9.30am &amp; noon. Call Liz Barraclough 0408 388 430. Details emailed a few days ahead.</p>	<p><b>First Sunday of each month:</b></p> <p>❖ <b>WaterWatch testing:</b> meet 9.15am at Uralla Rd bridge. Enquiries to Sue Milton 0407 350 175.</p> <p>❖ <b>EstuaryWatch testing:</b> meet 9.00am at the Rotunda. Enquiries to Geoff Pritchard 0438 638 600.</p>	<p>❖ <b>BirdLife Mornington Peninsula</b> bird-watching 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. Enquiries to Max Burrows mornington@birdlife.org.au or 0429 947 893, or visit <a href="http://www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlif-e-mornington-peninsula">www.birdlife.org.au/locations/birdlif-e-mornington-peninsula</a>.</p> <p>❖ <b>Sunshine Reserve</b> working bee 9.30am, last Sunday of month. Call Pia Spreen 0437 299 847.</p>
<p><b>BERG MT MARTHA PATRON:</b> TERRY DENTON</p> <p><b>COMMITTEE:</b> • PRESIDENT ERIC SMALLEY • VICE PRESIDENT (POSITION VACANT) • SECRETARY KATHY SMALLEY • TREASURER SUE MILTON • FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER ANGELA KIRSNER • MEMBERSHIP CHERYL WILKINSON • PETER MCMAHON • MARION ORCHISON • IAN HORTON • TERRY MOAR • GEOFF PRITCHARD</p>		
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