

Hi Everyone,

First of all, a big thank you to Rima who has faithfully provided morning tea for us at every meeting for many years. Rima has now retired. If you still want your cuppa before the meeting, we need one or two people to take on this job. It is not difficult, only about 20 cups to put out and wash up, and I have the tea and coffee to bring you.

Our congratulations to Helen Harkness and John Hicks who have attended every talk this year. You are both due a chocolate fish. I hope I remember to bring them to next year's first meeting.

Rusty Acres was an interesting place to visit with all the strange sculptures littered around the place. What an amazing man and again, what amazing weather we had for it. It was lovely to see a decent turnout for it. Thank you.

I hope we get an equally good day for the bus trip to Castle Hill with Kate Pedley. We still have a few seats left so let me know if you'd like to be added to the list or know of anyone else. \$25 for Geo/Bot members and \$30 for others. That will be our last time for this year. I think it has been a successful one.

We already have a few ideas for next year, but any suggestions are welcome, especially for bus trip destinations. Keep thinking.

Latest Trip

15th October

Rusty Acres Garden

This garden at Mandeville was started 35 years ago from a bare paddock. Every tree and shrub has been planted by Allan O'Loughlin, and he has transformed it into a sheltered series of garden spaces.

He is also a renowned sculptor using steel as his medium. He starts with steel rods, builds a frame and then covers it with sheet metal. He tries to do one each year and there are over 80 items scattered throughout the site. At every spot you need to look around, look up, and in some cases look down.



Lockdown.. He built a little house a day during the 1st lockdown. There are 48. The padlock was made during the 2nd lockdown



Tortured love. 2 people pulling

Teapot brazier

Figures



Latest Talk

3rd November 2025

Toxic Plants

Prof Ian Shaw



Ian cited many of our common garden plants as being very toxic. Starting with oleander, with its toxin oleandrin, a cardiac glycoside, if you eat the flowers or chew the leaves you could be unconscious within half an hour. Laburnum was another with seeds like peas and a toxin called cytisine. The lupin plant tries to deter insects from eating it. Its alkaloids are poisonous to humans and livestock. In humans, the toxins can cause symptoms like dizziness, confusion, and a dry mouth.

If your zucchini or courgette plant is a hybrid it may grow a poisonous fungal infection, cucurbitacin, or mildew.

The swan plant, *asclepias fruticosa* is poisonous to all insects except the monarch caterpillars. They are voracious and to conserve the energy of the plant may be put onto pumpkin slices while they grow and finished back on the swan plant. The colouring of caterpillars and butterflies warns predators that they are toxic too.

Hemlock, *conium maculatum*, is very poisonous. It stops the neurotransmission from the brain to the muscles. Socrates, 469-399BC, was poisoned with hemlock. He had 10 phials of it and drank 3 of them.

Periwinkle, *vinca major*, is very common and pretty. Its poison is vincristine and the plant is hardly ever eaten by animals. Vincristine is used in cancer treatment as it attacks any cells that are dividing. It does cause hair loss and trouble in the small intestine but its good outweighs these bad effects. Yew, *taxus baccata*, has a toxin taxol. Yew was planted in churchyards to ward off evil spirits. The red berries, arils, are OK to eat but not the black seeds inside. Birds eat them and discard the seeds. Docetaxel is used to treat prostate cancer.

Tutu, *coriaria arborea*, every part is poisonous. One leaf, 1.5mg, is fatal. Beekeepers are warned not to put hives near it.

The castor oil plant, *ricinus communis*, is toxic, but the toxin is not soluble in the oil.

Wormwood, *artemisia absinthium*, has a liver toxin causing liver failure. It is a good insecticide and kills woodworm. However, absinthe is a good drink!

Ian also briefly mentioned some toadstools like the deathcap, *amanita phalloides* or *amanita muscari*, saying if they have a skirt they are unsafe to eat. Check carefully.



Future Dates

Wed 19th November Trip to Castle Hill with Kate Pedley.

Meet at 9am, MacCormacks Bay Road. Pick Up half an hour later opposite Villa Maria on Yaldhurst Road.

Bring lunch, chairs, warm clothes depending on the weather.

Cost is \$25 for members, \$30 for outsiders. We still have room if you know anyone else who would like to come.

Next Year

Monday 2nd February Flowers of Tibet by Carol Halstead

Wed 18th February Trip to Montana Wild Flower Meadow.

Our new bank account is **Gillian Fountain 03 1599 0139475 000**

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