

Asteraceae Garden

The Asteraceae Garden was financially supported by the Friends. It was opened by Friends' Patron Lady Cosgrove on 24 November 2014.



'... this project is innovative in a design sense. The ANBG began as a scientific institution featuring taxonomic sections. The Asteraceae project is a return to this tradition but as a taxonomic section it is radically different in being very consciously a garden, a place of quiet enjoyment, of public engagement and education, of immersion of visitors in the sights, aromas and textures of the genus.'

Asteraceae Garden opening
from right: Lady Cosgrove,
Sally Barnes (Director of National Parks), David Taylor (ANBG Curator),

Don Beer in *Fronde* August 2014 p.19

Daisies Galore

By Naarilla Hirsch, Jonette MacDonnell and Don Beer, *Fronde* December 2014 p.3

The new Asteraceae Garden is now ready to show its true colours. In September (2014), a group from the Friends helped Gardens' staff put the first 3,000 plants into the ground, as part of the massed displays of daisies that are a feature of this garden.

The Friends have strongly supported development of this new Garden, including through funding of just over \$13,000 to help fund construction, and are represented on the Asteraceae Working Group.



Photo: Andy Rawlinson

Design of the Asteraceae Garden has focussed on displaying the huge diversity of this plant family. Daisies are found in most habitats in Australia, from deserts to rainforest fringes, coastal sand dunes to alpine areas. This is reflected in the Garden's design, with water harvesting measures creating wet areas through an undulating landscape. Combinations ranging from wet depressions to raised well-drained mounds and full sun to shade will allow specific species to be matched with their preferred conditions. For example, the endangered *Leucochrysum graminifolium* (Pagoda Rock Daisy) will be on a mound between rocks, similar to its usual habitat of exposed sites in Blue Mountains heathland.

A feature of the Garden's design is the central circular area surrounded by five 'petal' beds. Each of these beds will contain one or two species illustrating one of the five different types of daisy flowers, with explanatory signage.

One of these, *Microseris lanceolata* (Yam Daisy, Murnong, Native Dandelion) was a staple part of the Indigenous diet in areas of south-east Australia (even though daisies were not

commonly used as food plants). The tubers were generally cooked in baskets and were available all year round, although less palatable in winter.

Another is the endangered *Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides* (Button Wrinklewort). This local species has been grown by the Gardens and replanted on a biodiversity offset block of box-gum woodland at Williamsdale. Its genetics have been studied in detail by Andrew Young and others at CSIRO, providing useful insights into preservation of the species.

Nearby will be *Xerochrysum bracteatum* (Golden Everlasting Daisy), which was one of the earliest plants grown by Napoleon's wife Josephine at Malmaison. When exiled to St Helena, Napoleon took up gardening for exercise and interest, and planted this daisy. Today it is found all over the island, having spread from Napoleon's walled garden to the hills and valleys.

Another interesting plant we will see is *Calomeria amaranthoides* (Incense Plant, Plume Bush), a tall biennial herb with large reddish plumes as flowers and sticky leaves that exude an aromatic scent. This plant was introduced to England from Sir Joseph Banks' collection and was placed in ballrooms there because the scent was thought to be an aphrodisiac. Recent research has suggested that extracts from this species may be a deterrent to ovarian cancer.

The Asteraceae Garden promises a great sensory experience. The mass plantings will be spectacular when in flower, and there will be plenty of interest during the rest of the year. In the longer term the Gardens hope to be able to display some of the more weird and wonderful daisies in pots.



Blooming daisies (photo: Murray Fagg, ANBG)