

## Autumn Update – March 2012

The garden survived summer relatively unscathed this year. We have had a brilliant display from our *Trachelospermum jasminoides* Star Jasmine, the *Crassula falcata* Propeller plant with its stunning vibrant red flower in our succulent bed and the *Lavandula angustifolia* English lavender. Only one plant died, a *Correa reflexa* var. Tall, and that was because its root system could not cope with the very hot days, followed by days of soaking wet soil. Correas are drought tolerant plants and prefer dry soil.

Each autumn the garden volunteers cut back the foliage of the *Iris unguicularis* Californian Iris, and give it a good dose of potash. Then in winter it flowers spectacularly and because the foliage has been cut the flowers can be seen to full effect.

You might notice our lawn and thanks to Citywide it is looking the best it has for years. We have gone from having the worst lawn around to having the greenest and best. The gardeners at Citywide cored it (removed plugs of soil that allows the oxygen and moisture in), top-dressed it and then

sowed seed. Luckily, not all the seed was eaten by the birds and it is now looking lush, green and beautiful.



*Crassula falcate*

Work has been continuing on sourcing plants that were available to La Trobe in the 1840s/50s. We have acquired two *Philadelphus coronarius* from the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, a *Salvia patens* from the Salvia Society and an *Alocasia macrorrhizos* Elephants ears to put in our new wine barrel. The barrel was kindly donated to us and being a red wine barrel we are sure that La Trobe would approve of it. (NB See picture of wine barrel on last page.)

We have also discovered a vulnerable species named after La Trobe called *Glycine latrobeana* Purple clover. We are working with the Anna Murphy of the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Bendigo Office, and are hoping to plant some in our garden and bring its plight to people's attention.



*Glycine latrobeana*



*Platylobium obtusangulum*

Through Anna's access to the Herbarium database, we have been able to discover two plants that were actually collected by La Trobe. He would have collected them on his horseback sojourns through the countryside. The two plants are:

- *Derwentia perfoliata* Diggers speedwell, from the Upper Loddon, 1850, and
- *Platylobium obtusangulum* Common flatpea, from the Port Phillip District, 1842.

Many of our plants have interesting provenance – some we can prove, others are hearsay, but whichever it is, the stories are very interesting and help create a connection to La Trobe, his friends and the garden.

## The Olive

The Olive *Olea europaea*, as previously mentioned, was a cutting taken from Ballam Park that was owned by the Liardet family in the late 1840s. Georgiana McCrae gave her friend a cutting from one of the olive trees growing in her orchards at Arthur's Seat. At that time, the Liardet family was preparing an orchard at their then new property, Ballam Park in Frankston. Today the tree at Ballam Park still stands and is very old. ('Olive Tree Returned to McCrae Homestead', National Trust Victorian News, November 2010.)



*Pelargonium inquinans*

## Pelargoniums/Geraniums

We know La Trobe loved geraniums and he mentions them in a letter to daughter Agnes in 1847. So with the help of the Pelargonium Society at the Geelong Botanic Gardens we have been able to source some older species that he may have had. They were: *Pelargonium acetosum*, *Pelargonium cucullatum*, *Pelargonium inquinans* and *Pelargonium triste*. We are hoping to replicate the geranium hedge that La Trobe mentioned to Agnes in a letter in 1845 using *Pelargonium inquinans*.



*Pelargonium tomentosum*

## Geranium *Pelargonium tomentosum*

These plants were grown from cuttings originally taken from a plant in a garden near what was left of La Trobe's Cottage by Mr Doug Gunn, who during the 1960s worked at the Bedggood shoe factory at Jolimont and lunched in the garden there. (Personal communication, Doug Gunn to Helen Botham). Doug's friend,



*Aeonium arboretum*

Stewart Bradley propagated these plants and subsequently gave cuttings of them to Helen, who grew the plants that now grow around the Cottage. There is no evidence that the original plant was at the Cottage in La Trobe's time, but this species was certainly available and is seen in many old gardens around Victoria.

## Succulents

We also know that La Trobe loved succulents and had a magnificent rockery near the entrance to his estate. Many succulents are able to self propagate and it is quite plausible

the succulents along the railway at Jolimont originated from the rockery. Cuttings of *Aloe arborescens*, *Aeonium arboretum* and *Agave americana* were procured from there and have now been planted in the garden.

### ***Acacia latrobei***



We have several *Acacia acinacea* syn. *Acacia latrobei* Golden fields wattle donated to us from Jenny Happel, a relative to Georgiana McCrae who was a close friend of the La Trobes. In a letter to his friend Mr Ronald Gunn (8 October, 1852), La Trobe says that there is a *pretty little dwarf acacia flowering abundantly in its native soil at Jolimont*, which has been distinguished with his name. La Trobe jokes that he will go down in prosperity in another form than that of the withering curse '*Flying Pieman*'. He seems to realise that he was not popular with some sections of the community.

*Acacia latrobei*

### **Two Exciting Developments**



*Alocasia macrorrhiza*

Using the Edward La Trobe Bateman picture of the rockery which include a planted up wine barrel and the help of the firm Garden House Decor, who donated it, we have been able to recreate part of the picture. We cannot rebuild the rockery but we can reinstate a wine barrel. In Bateman's sketch the plant looks like an *Alocasia macrorrhiza* Elephant Ears, so we have put one in our barrel.



Another exciting development is the discovery of this gorgeous little frog in our water pot. We put a pot under our garden tap to catch the excess and discovered that the locals like it too. She/he is very happy in our pot with some leaves floating on top to protect her/him from hungry birds flying by.

This is an excellent sign that our garden is healthy.

***If you or your group would like to book a garden tour please contact***

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*Salvia patens*