



VINC News

The Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Cooperative's newsletter.

VINC, 9482 1710
Yarra Bend rd, Fairfield.
Turn Off Heidelberg Rd
MELWAYS REF: 2D F4

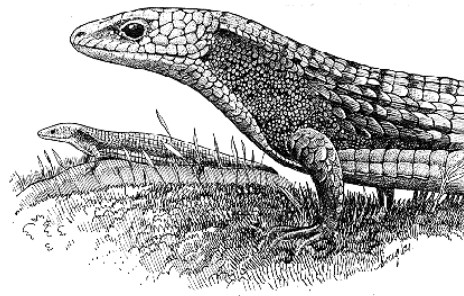
Open
9.30-4pm Monday-
Friday
12-4pm Saturday and
Sunday

Lizard Lounge

Members and propagation volunteers, with the help of Judy and Jess conducted a short restoration project in the wetland in front of VINC. The aim was to improve the habitat values of part of the site for the Blue Tongue Lizards and garden skinks that live there.

As there were plenty of saltbush plants — Einadia, Atriplex and Enchylaena already there as food sources for the lizards, we weeded, added rocks and mulch-mulch-mulched. And now, the flowering Leek lilies and Chocolate lilies look even more eye-catching against the backdrop of mulch and rocks. After just six weeks of hard work, a team member and her children came in on the weekend and saw three garden skinks sunning themselves on the rocks!

The Lizard Lounge site has now been added to the Butterfly Pathway and the Frog Ponds as a site of interest in the walk from the carpark to VINC.



Lizard: Not unlike the Bluetongue seen at VINC.

Plastic Bag Shortage

With the advent of the green carry bags available at supermarkets, we are suddenly without our usual supply of used plastic bags for the retail section. It would help us immensely if, when you come along to the nursery you could bring along your own container to carry plants home. Ice-cream containers and buckets are useful if you too are short of plastic bags.

Calico bags with VINC's birthday design are available at VINC for \$3.

The Net

Check out the VINC website, at www.vinc.net.au. It provides a map, stock list and a page for upcoming events. Photos accompany many of the plant names, and we will finish this aspect of the site over time. If any members are able to supply us with close up photos of our indigenous plants in flower we would love to

hear from you. Customers have commented on its clear, informative and artistic design. Our thanks go to Richard who has developed this site, in anticipation of making a career in website design. Richard can be contacted through VINC.

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Next issue:
Organics by Jude Larkin.

Coming Events:
 Propagation workshop with the VINC Propagation manager, Judy Allen. Judy has extensive experience in horticulture and has worked at VINC for many years. She is a qualified TAFE teacher.

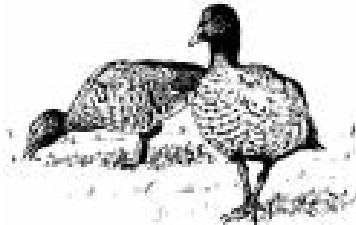
Saturday April 2 and Wednesday April 20. Both days 10-12.30pm \$25/20 concession. Pay before the day and receive 5 free tubestock plants, valued at \$3 each. Notes provided. Bookings essential.

NMIT Students at VINC

In August the NMIT Retail Horticultural students offered VINC the use of their skills and ideas to re-vamp the retail section in the nursery, in a practical assignment. Students have introduced us to concepts such as 'focal points, hot spots and pedestrian flow'. We've contributed to their education with terms such as 'indigenous tubestock nursery' and 'no money'.

However, they were not deterred, and plenty of activity followed. They have

- installed the mesh on the two baths and added plants, finishing the frog pond and wetland plants display



Ducks can be seen just outside the VINC gate.

- cleaned and painted the tables and added displays of plants
- added card holders to the table edges, allowing text information to be placed around the tables
- created a number of colourful photo cards with icons for easy understanding of the plants requirements

And there are further ideas to come —perhaps landscaping around the sand pit, or a *Microlaena* lawn? The Retail Section has never looked so good.

Thanks to all participants.

Plant of the issue: *Lomandra longifolia*

Lomandra longifolia Spiny-headed Mat-rush
by Jan Chamberlain, weekend staff member.

This large, graceful tussock plant occurs in a variety of habitats including red gum woodland, dry sclerophyll forests, grassy open forest and coastal banksia woodland. In the garden it will grow in full or part sun or full shade and grows well under established trees. Its size varies from 0.5-1m high and from 0.5-1.2m wide.

The yellowish flowers appear from September to December and are said to be scented but I have not noticed this in the local version. It is an important butterfly plant. The seed provides food for birds and insects. Remove dead wood and old or straggly growth if desired. The plant can be pruned to near

ground level to rejuvenate clumps.

Koories used the long, tough leaves for fine baskets, mats and fish traps. The leaves could also be split or scraped to provide fibre for string bags. The white base of the stems was chewed and tastes like peas. Wounds were bound by leaves after having gum applied, lessening the pain.



Special! We now have mature *Dianella revoluta* available in large pots for only \$8.50 (members \$8). Get 'em while they last!

Butterfly gardening

by Judy Allen, VINC propagation manager

Butterflies are welcome addition to any garden, and with a few simple design principles are easily attracted, making that border, nature strip or school garden come to life. There are 80 butterflies in Victoria and 24 in urban Melbourne, - and they are all native, except for that nuisance in the veggie patch, the cabbage moth. So it makes sense to attract and feed your Australian butterflies on local indigenous plants.

Nectar traps: Colourful, massed beds draw butterflies in and keep them happily moving through the garden. They particularly like blue, yellow and red, but are attracted to a large range of colours, with bold clusters of flowers more effective than single plants dotted through a garden

Flowers: The shape of the flower is important too, with simple, flat flowers easier for butterflies to extract nectar. Double flowers with their multiple petals are too complex, but daisies, native pelargoniums and bluebells, saltbush plants, and pea flowers are especially useful.

Host plants: Incorporate host plants for the butterflies to lay her eggs. The caterpillars are generally few and shy, and won't devastate the garden with excessive munching. Popular indigenous plants include Bursaria, Wattles and the Mat rush, and grasses such as Kangaroo grass, Wallaby grass and Tussock grass.

Position, position, position: Butterflies use the early morning sun to warm themselves and retreat to cooler, shadier places during the heat of the day. Providing a sheltered position that combines warmth and protection from the wind is ideal, such as corners and courtyards. Also consider adding flat rocks for butterflies to bask and to court each other. Water can be provided as either mud puddles, which can also provide essential salts, or as a dish of damp sand.

And where possible, position your butterfly garden near a window, for your viewing pleasure.

“Popular indigenous plants include Bursaria, Wattles and the Mat rush, and grasses such as Kangaroo grass, Wallaby grass and Tussock grass.”

Butterfly Information

by Judy Allen

The flowers that are easiest to feed from are the simple, flat ones like daisies, Australian bluebells, and pea flowers.

Colourful displays of red, yellow and blue flowers are particularly attractive to butterflies

They drink at mud puddles and take in essential salts at the same time, and, like lizards, they like to bask on rocks.

As they are not strong fliers, they can often be found in quiet corners of the garden, and even courtyards away from the wind.

Grasses, wattles and the Sweet Bursaria are favourite plants to lay their eggs on.

Path borders, the back of the garden and the nature strip all make great places to build a butterfly garden.



Australian painted lady.



Help Desk

**I have removed ivy from strangling my gum tree, and now I want to plant under it, what do you recommend?
Jan, Northcote.**

Staff and Volunteer News

After much hard work, Jess Hard has completed her traineeship at VINC — Certificate 3 in Horticulture. Jess attended classes at nearby NMIT, as well as gaining relevant on-the-job training at VINC. Congratulations to Jess, from all the staff and volunteers at VINC.

Jess will continue to work at VINC as a fully trained and valuable staff member.

Congratulations also to weekend staff member Jude Larkin who has recently completed Certificate 4 in TAFE teaching. Jude is now teaching an Organics course at SPAN community house. Her article about Organics will appear in the next VINC newsletter.

Gardens under mature gum trees presents a great opportunity for planting as there are many plants that appreciate the dappled light of trees.

If you want a massed grouping of one single plant consider the Wallaby grass, *Danthonia linkii*. It grows to 30cm, and has masses of white fluffy seed heads in summer. Planted at 20-30cm spacings it will fill the gap in no time.

The Spear grass, *Stipa scabra* spp *falcata*, would also look good with its very fine foliage, and its silvery-pink flowers. It forms elegant tussocks 50cm tall by 40cm.

For seasonal color, add the Tufted Bluebell, *Wahlenbergia communis*, or Flax lily, *Dianella longifolia*. Plant in clusters for best effect. Planting in spring will be fine if you water your plants in well. Do a follow-up watering every 3-4 week over summer, or more often if it's hot. After the first summer the plants should be established and seldom require watering.

If you have a gardening problem you would like solved in this newsletter, please contact the nursery by letter or email us at vinc@vicnet.net.au

VINC's 21st Birthday Celebrations

On Sunday the 3rd of October, VINC celebrated its 21st Birthday. Kelvin Thomson, Shadow Minister for the Environment, spoke at the gathering about the value of community groups, especially in the development of environmental works.

Liz Fenton, one of the first VINC volunteers was also at the celebration and talked about how volunteering at VINC had inspired to her start her own indigenous nursery. Go Liz!

Participants at the celebration also planted the Lizard Lounge up, which had been weeded and rocks had been put in anticipation of the birthday.

Much to spectators delight, a blue tongue lizard was then spotted sunning itself, a sure sign the Lizard Lounge was off to a fantastic start.

VINC has produced memorabilia for the birthday — a mug and calico bag both sporting an original environmental design by staff member Jess Hard are for sale.

The hand-printed-by-Megan calico bag costs \$3 and the celebratory mug \$7.50. These collectors editions are not to be missed!