

THE WEEKEND *flame*

19 May 2023



Keeping community news alive



Narelle Happ

Sharing a love of gardening
and super bush food

www.theillawarraflame.com.au

Meet the garden designer celebrating bush food

By nature writer Amanda De George



"A lot of our native bush foods exceed the nutritional value of exotic food."

– Narelle Happ,
owner of
A Garden For Life

As a horticulturalist, landscape and educator, if it's flora based, Narelle Happ can do it. She has a passion for designing havens for homeowners and teaching people how to grow and then use native bush foods. At the heart of her work lies the belief that being in nature, getting our hands in the soil or even simply having a plant on the windowsill leads to better health, both mentally and physically, and she's sharing this knowledge through her very popular workshops.

Narelle has gardening in her blood. Her grandparents were farmers and her parents owned a property that backed onto the bush where her father only permitted native plants to be grown. She noticed, however, that her grandfather, who started gardening in the 40s, "grew all these weird and wonderful things but never grew a native bush food. I found that really fascinating".

Nowadays there's a real appetite, figuratively and literally, for bush food. Narelle said, "I asked permission of some of the local Elders if I could teach people how to grow the plants because obviously that's my expertise and it just took off. People really wanted to know."

She teaches everyone from preschoolers, some of whom are lucky enough to have thriving bush food gardens on school grounds, to the kids at

Campbelltown's Juvenile Justice Centre, where they've recently added a sensory garden.

As to the importance of getting to know these plants, Narelle says, "Bush food sustained Indigenous people for more than 65,000 years. We are always looking for the next super food, often turning to food from overseas.

"We have super foods here.

"A lot of our native bush foods exceed the nutritional value of exotic food. Bush food plants grow well in our climate as they are endemic to here. The stories behind the food, the ceremonies, totems, medicinal uses and dyeing qualities make them an extraordinarily important part of the history of this country."

Narelle also runs regular workshops with the not-for-profit group Women Illawarra encompassing everything from how to start a herb garden to weaving with recycled goods. And she believes that time spent gardening and out in nature can be beneficial for everyone.

"Nature is an important therapy," she said. "There's all these studies that show even five minutes in nature can lower your cortisol levels, can help with anxiety, with sleep... It's a really important part of your life. Even if you've just got a plant on your windowsill."

For workshops details, visit the A Garden for Life page on [Facebook](#).



DIARY DATE



15 OCT
Cultural
Immersion
Day
at Mt Keira

Bohmer's Blog: Thunderstruck!

By Clive 'Bohmer' Woodnutt of Bohmer's Tree Care



Thanks to local
award-winning
family business
Bohmer's
Tree Care for
sponsoring
this article

WATCH



**Bohmer
in action
after the
storm**



We were recently called to an Emergency Job in Wollongong after lightning had hit a family home's tree hard, causing it to crack, split down the middle and its canopy to fall – resulting in a potentially dangerous situation as it had multiple trees, houses, large gardens and walkways surrounding it.

A thunderous crack had been heard in the area the previous night, with locals wondering what the loud bang was –

now we know what it must have been!

Watch our video with the team inspecting the site, explaining the damage done and what work needs to be carried out to make the home, garden and neighbouring areas safe, on our YouTube channel along with other emergency jobs.

For more information, visit the Bohmer's Tree Care website, call 0432 789 530 or follow @BohmersTreeCare



WEED WISE

Look out for Dietes

By Merilyn House of Helensburgh Landcare

Dietes spp. – also known as butterfly iris or just dietes – is in the Iris family. It is native to eastern and southern Africa. Dietes has recently been appearing in bushland in south-eastern Australia. It still seems to be planted by Councils.

Grow Me Instead

Grass flag (*Libertia paniculata*) – Australian native that forms a grass-like clump with masses of white flowers in spring;

Blue flax lily (*Dianella* spp.) Flax lily is native to Australia and many of the garden cultivars stem from four of the native strains;

Kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthus* species and varieties.) These originate in Western Australia.

More information at
www.helensburghlandcare.org.au

Library to capture a legacy

By entertainment writer Tilly Kidd



"He used to tell all of us young people coming through the theatre that it is so important to be brave when it comes to your art."

– Adam O'Brien on the late Gordon Streek

The founder of Shellharbour's Roo Theatre Company, Gordon Streek, founder of Shellharbour's Roo Theatre Company, was an icon of the Illawarra theatre scene, a close friend of many and an inspiration for young actors.

His outstanding professional theatre productions are celebrated and cherished, with one of his popular works, *Wild: The Rainforest Musical*, held at the National Library of Australia.

Over several decades working in community theatre, Gordon influenced many emerging theatre-makers, including Adam O'Brien, now the owner of The Dire Theatre Company, based at The Forge in Gwynneville.

Adam was 10 years old when he enrolled in a drama class that Gordon taught at Roo Theatre. His teacher became his mentor, playing a key role in Adam's formative years and adult life.

Gordon's passing in 2021 was a devastating loss for the theatre community and, in his honour, Adam is now creating a library from Gordon's vast collection of plays so that his knowledge and legacy will live on in the Illawarra.

"The promise I made was, I'll happily take them [the plays], I'll make sure that they survive, but I'll also make sure that they are available to anybody who wants to learn from them," Adam said.

Adam's commitment to keep the plays accessible is his way of giving back to the community. Gordon instilled in Adam many of his philosophies. "He used to tell all of us young people coming through the theatre that it is so important to be brave when it comes to your art. And that's something that I keep with me now. It's a big part of why I do what I do."

The Dire Theatre's company ethos is to "incite change without fear" and, thanks to Gordon's mentorship, Adam works to remain truthful in the art he makes.

He said performance is such a personal medium because it must start from "within you, where you can't lie" and that can be a challenge when it is exhibited so publicly. Adam believes it is important to honour Gordon and people like him, who offer so much to our community. "Their memory and the lessons they teach are more valuable than the work we are producing."

Adam is busy uploading the plays to an electronic database and once that is complete The Forge will have visiting hours for the drop-in library one weekend each month, where members can sit and drink coffee, read the books or borrow them to take home.

Updates via Dire Theatre's [website](#).

Pictured top left: Adam with Gordon.



Tiny tree

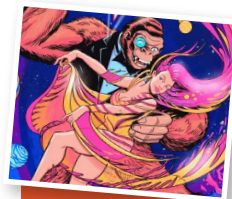
By Emma Rooksby,
coordinator of Growing
Illawarra Natives

People often ask me for recommendations for a 'small tree'. And it's just so hard to answer.

But this weekend as we were walking along the coastal tracks at Puckey's Estate, we saw the perfect tiny tree and I just had to share.

This gorgeous little creature is a Tree Broom-heath (or *Monotoca elliptica*). And it's just the most beautiful, shapely thing.

[Read more](#)



NOW

19 May
Native Plant
Sale

19 May
Cosplay Ball

20 May
Volunteer
concert for
Flame Tree
Coop

20-28 May
Fragility
exhibition

21 May
National
Motoring
Heritage Day



LATER

24 May
National
Simultaneous
Storytime

27 May
Sydney Writers
Festival Live
and Local

2-4 June
Thirroul Seaside
& Arts Festival

Find more
community
events on the
**Flame's
calendar**

Dance On Film

Saturday, 20 May



AUSTI. Dance and Physical Theatre invites you to attend their first fundraiser event in 5 years! 'DANCE ON FILM' includes a film showcasing AUSTI's past triumphs and performances, the NSW debut of Sue Healey's dance film 'Meeting Place', which features 2022 company artists, live guest performances by comedian Andy High and Circus/Vaudeville performer Heidi Hillier, plus an auction hosted by a special guest presenter.

When: Saturday, 20 May, 7-9:30pm

Where: The Music Lounge -
Wollongong Town Hall

Tickets: merrigong.com.au

'Fragility' opens

Saturday, 20 May



There are three artists in this exhibition: Helen McCosker, who assembles found mixed media on her exploratory drawings; Susan Tindall-McDonald, who mosaics colourful abstractions of glass and ceramics into native flora and fauna; and Nikki Main, who turns, blows, fuses and warps glass into organic representations of the natural world.

Fragility will be at Clifton School of Arts from May 20-28; open daily 10-4pm.

Join the artists for the exhibition opening on Sat 20th from 3-5pm.

With an introduction by Zanny Begg.

[Read more](#)

Art in the Shops begins

By Kim Morris on behalf of Thirroul Seaside & Arts Festival

The Thirroul Seaside & Arts Festival is all set to go on the first weekend of June. But before that happens, residents and visitors will get a preview of local art with "Art in the Shops"!

Art in the Shops will launch this Saturday, May 20. More than 30 Thirroul businesses will support the festival by displaying a local artist's work in their windows or inside their shop.

Here's an idea ... make a Festival date with a mate. There's heaps of fun things to do so here's a few to choose from.

Date #1: Wander around the shops on both sides of Thirroul. You'll not only get a taste of what the local vendors offer, you'll also be able to view art at each of the participating businesses. Stop for a coffee or something to eat and continue your artistic journey. Discuss which pieces you like and why. Maybe you'd like to make one your own by purchasing it.

Date #2: Make a plan to attend the opening of the festival's Art Show on Friday, 2 June from 7pm at the Thirroul

Community Centre. \$20 entry each will get you wine, nibbles and first choice in purchasing quality art.

Date #3: Décor, plants, gifts, jewellery, crafts ... all sorts of market stalls, pony rides, dodgems, skating, carnival rides, food trucks and free live entertainment. That's what awaits you on Sunday, 4 June from 9am to 3pm at the Thirroul Beach Reserve. This is a sensational day for all the family to enjoy ... and it's free entry.

[See the Art in the Shops trail maps](#)



Sketch by Christine Hill

Turn muesli into a wholesome slice

An extract from *The Small Kitchen Cook* by Ashleigh Butler (Exploring Eden Media, rrp \$39.95)



"They're perfect for travelling or for giving you a good energy boost."

– Ashleigh Butler

Makes: 12 to 15 slices.

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 3 min

Ingredients

1 ½ cups of oats
1 ¼ cups of dried fruit, nuts and seeds of your choice
¼ of a cup of maple syrup
¼ of a cup of coconut oil, melted
½ a teaspoon of cinnamon
½ a teaspoon of vanilla extract
200g of dark chocolate
Small handful of nuts
(I use pistachios) for garnish
Rose petals for garnish (optional)

Method

Line a tray, approximately 20 x 25cm, with baking paper. It's ok if it is a little bigger or a little smaller, you just don't want the muesli layer to be too thick, as it may crumble. Combine all of the ingredients, except the chocolate, pistachios and rose petals, and press it firmly and evenly into the lined tray. Leave it to set in the fridge.

Meanwhile, melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl that will fit over the top of a pot of boiling water without the bowl

touching the water. Stir continuously until the chocolate has melted.

Pour the chocolate over the slice and garnish it with the rose petals and nuts of choice. Place it back in the fridge or freezer until the chocolate layer has set.

Once set, cut it into slices with a hot, sharp knife. The knife should be hot to touch. Heat the knife by running it under hot water or filling a glass with hot water and dunking it in every so often as you cut, to help slice through the cold chocolate and keep the slice from crumbling.

Store the slice in an airtight container in the fridge.



SHOP



At
**Exploring
Eden
Media**



TOP 4!

Italian restaurants

By Kasey Simpson

Franco Pizza Bar, Thirroul –

This hatted restaurant offers a tasty Italian-inspired menu, designed to be shared.

LUPA Pizzeria and Bakery, Wollongong – Serving authentic woodfired pizzas, fresh homemade pasta, a range of antipasti and gorgeous Italian desserts.

Kneading Ruby, Wollongong – A modern take on a pizzeria, using fresh, locally sourced produce.

Il Nido Trattoria Pizzeria, Balgownie – Experience the Giuliani family's famous traditional Italian hospitality and enjoy home-style cooking from their Northern Italian heritage.

Think we've missed one? Share your favourite spots – join the conversation on [Facebook](#)



Try finger limes

By Susan Luscombe

Although not native to the Illawarra, this subtropical citrus is worth a special mention as it has made its way into the hearts of Australian foodies. Sarah Anderson from Pope's Produce is a huge fan and her market garden at Woonona recently produced an abundance of fruit. Sarah shares her favourite uses:

Drop finger limes into champagne, gin and tonic or soda water with ginger cordial;

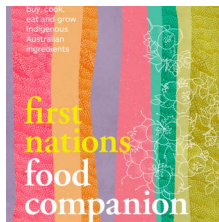
Add them to bircher muesli;

Include in a chicken wrap;

Garnish any meal by squeezing a full finger lime over it.

Cooking with native ingredients

By food writer Susan Luscombe



"A compendium of native foods available to us fresh or dried, plus hundreds of accessible recipes"

SHOP



The
cookbook at
Collins
Booksellers
Thirroul

For too long in mainstream cooking and eating we have ignored the food that is native to Australia – the fundamental local food. Although we are starting to see native ingredients incorporated into conventional menus, recipes and products like gin, there is still a long way to go to bring these ingredients into our lives and kitchens.

The recently released cookbook *First Nations Food Companion* is a compendium of native foods available to us fresh or dried, plus hundreds of accessible recipes. It devotes a section to native plants for food to grow at home and a list of native ingredient stockists. The authors express concern for loss of knowledge of Aboriginal language names and uses of the many thousands of plants that made up First Nations diets.

So how can we incorporate native ingredients into our diet? If you're eating out, support places that use native ingredients and try the dishes. Grow your own bush tucker plants. The Wollongong Botanic Garden monthly native plant sale is a great place to start with its broad range and knowledgeable staff.

These five native Illawarra plants are great for your pantry, freezer or garden.

Boobialla: A bushy shrub close in flavour to juniper that has been incorporated into commercially available gin. Grow your own and pick when the berry turns pink or buy fresh or frozen, though it is best used dried as a spice.

Lilly pilly: This attractive small tree is a prolific producer of small tart fruit. You may have come across lilly pilly jam made from the abundant scarlet berries, but it has uses beyond jam, including in salads and a substitute for blueberries and raspberries.

Warrigal greens: A spreading groundcover high in vitamins, this can be used like spinach or bok choy. It's very easy to grow and will take over your garden if given free rein. The younger leaves are less bitter and able to be used raw. The larger leaves should be blanched or steamed.

Native thyme: A fragrant shrub also known as mintbush, the leaves can be used as a tea as well as a herb for meat and vegetable dishes.

Coastal saltbush: The leaves from this hardy coastal shrub can be used in any dish to give a herbal salty flavour, including salads, stir fries and in the stuffing for your chicken. Dried it can be used as a salt substitute.



DRIVEN

By Marcus Craft

The Kia EV6 GT-Line offers a stylish way into the world of electric vehicles, but is it worth its circa-\$80,000 price-tag?

We tested the rear-wheel drive version of the Kia EV6 GT-Line during a week of mixed driving to see how it'd perform as a family vehicle.

After a couple of days of infrequent driving we charged at one of the free NRMA DC chargers in Wollongong's Stewart Street East car park and managed to get from 50 percent to 83 percent in 30 minutes on a maximum 75kW charger.

Read the full review

Top 3 Parks near Tennis Courts

By Michelle Barry, the team leader for child health promotion for Healthy Cities Illawarra

Tennis is a great way to maintain health and fitness and can play a role in increasing muscle tone, strength and flexibility, increasing reaction time and metabolic function. Often clubs will have trial and social days that you can get involved in. Check out these courts.

1. Beaton Park, Foley Street, Wollongong

City of Wollongong Tennis Club has 14 courts to choose, including hard and grass courts. You can book online through their website or join one of their many social tennis events coming up.

2. McDonald Park Tennis Courts, Albion Park Rail

Next to the McDonald Park Playground are tennis courts that can be hired at prices starting from \$7.50 or you can join the men's social competitions that happen every Monday. Private and group lessons are also available if you want to

improve your game. They welcome newcomers so check out their website for more information.

3. Callala Bay Tennis Courts, Boorawine Terrace/Wearne Street, Callala Bay

Next to a playground is a tennis court to hire from Shoalhaven City Council. It's fully fenced and available to hire by the hour. It's low pressure and can be a great way for families to be active together, do something different.

Find more parks at [Play Illawarra](#)



Real Estate Wrap

By Ian Pepper of Ray White Helensburgh



Inspection numbers and sales over the past week indicate buyers are somewhat dismissive to the surprise rate rise earlier this month and there were also no signs the Federal budget caused any concerns either.

Meanwhile, economists remain divided on whether the budget will be inflation flaming or cooling, so only time will tell if the government's plan to increase spending in a "non-inflationary" way will work.

Sales over the past week to demonstrate the market's strength:

- 12 Maxwell Crescent, Stanwell Park \$3,200,000
- 32 Chippendale Place, Helensburgh \$1,350,000
- 31 Old Farm Rd, Helensburgh \$1,170,000
- 45 Station Rd, Otford \$1,100,000
- 1/51 Redman Ave, Thirroul \$1,310,000.

Should parents be involved in their child's school?

By parenting editor Kasey Simpson



"I caught myself organising a playdate with a kid my son barely talks about. And I thought, 'Am I his social diary keeper too?'"

– Kasey Simpson

HAVE A SAY



Join the conversation on **Facebook & Instagram**

I'm new to the whole school thing. My son started kindergarten this year. Before he started, I was keen to join the P&C, intrigued by the in-school reading opportunities and slightly disappointed that they didn't have a school canteen. But now – I'll admit it – getting too involved in my child's school feels strange. Will it have a positive or negative impact on my child?

You might think that I am just trying to find reasons to take that additional task off my to-do list. However, two out of three of my kids are shy and my son in kindergarten is extremely shy. So, I want to explore the potential pitfalls of going overboard with school involvement – and give the parents out there feeling the same way a little relief with a different opinion.

I believe that school is a place where kids have the chance to spread their wings and create a space to find themselves, without the guidance and influence of parents. Not that being a P&C member or canteen attendant is a rescue mission but does our presence provide a safety net? Should we take a step back and let our children navigate the sometimes rocky and uncomfortable path of school?

I say embrace the role of supporter, not

superhero, and trust that they'll learn and grow from their own experiences—even if it means the occasional homework mishap or forgotten lunchbox.

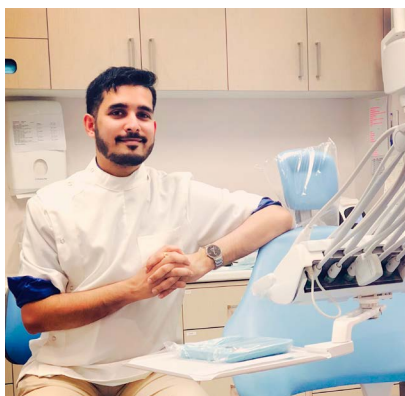
Recently I caught myself organising a playdate with a kid my son barely talks about. And I thought, "Am I his social diary keeper too? WTF am I doing?" Kids need space to develop their own friendships and navigate social dynamics independently. By micro-managing their social lives, are we inadvertently becoming the puppeteers of their social interactions too?

Is this where the snowflake generation started?

I know we are all well-intentioned but shouldn't we give our kids the space to forge their own connections, develop their own creativity and problem-solving skills, learn valuable lessons and become who they are without us?

I'm not judging anyone who is involved in their child's school. All I'm trying to say is, if you're not – that's okay too. Surely there are pros and cons to any subject.

At least we can all agree that we want our kids to become resilient, self-reliant individuals, equipped with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in the world beyond the school gates.



Tips from the tooth fairy's friend

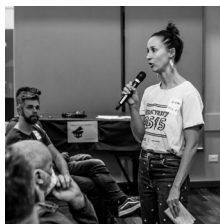
Dr Mohit Tolani, a dentist at Dapto Dentists, shares the 5 don'ts of dental visits

1. Don't tell your child to be brave (they already are)
2. Don't bribe your child
3. Don't tell your child that it won't hurt (or it will)
4. Don't use the dentist as a deterrent or punishment
5. If you are very anxious yourself, ask another family member to take your child to the dental visit.

[Read more](#)

Full house for Solar Rollout in Thirroul

By Kristen McDonald of the volunteer group Electrify 2515



"We had a packed house with many on the waiting list"

– Kristen McDonald,
Electrify 2515

Thank you to all the community members who joined our Community Solar Rollout launch on Saturday, May 13 at Thirroul Community Centre.

We had a packed house with many on the waiting list and plenty of great conversations were had. The launch involved an address from Dr Saul Griffith on the big picture, with the fantastic news that electrification is being funded for the first time in a Federal Budget. Excitingly, Hon. Jenny McAllister, Assistant Climate Change and Energy Minister, stated that the 2515 community helped put electrification on the national agenda and prove that Australians are behind this concept. Well done to everyone for creating positive change!

We also heard from committee member Francis Vierboom with an update on our application for funding from ARENA.

Francis shared the broad goals of the application, which includes:

- electrifying homes and businesses;
- creating smart energy users; and
- building community assets.

The funding is unconfirmed and the application process is ongoing, we hope to submit our final proposal in June/July. If successful, about 500 households within 2515 could apply for subsidies to help reduce the upfront costs a little for implementing efficient, electric appliances (such as reverse-cycle air

conditioners or electric heat-pump hot-water systems). Solar would not be further subsidised, which is why we're encouraging community members to get started on their solar journey today.

Local architect and Electrify 2515 committee member Davin Turner shared the details of the Community Solar Rollout and how we researched and vetted local solar providers, partnering with two trusted providers. These solar partners are generously offering a 10% discount to all participants of the program and are on hand to give you personalised advice – so if you've thought about getting solar, now is a good time to start.

Finally, we heard from Peter Aubourg, a community member who installed solar on his home 18 months ago and shared his learnings and savings with the audience as a real-life case study.

There were also opportunities for people living in strata residences to talk with Allume, who provide solar solutions for apartment complexes, and for people to look at software monitoring programs with Solar Analytics (who are also offering a 20% discount on subscriptions for Electrify 2515 participants) to gain better awareness of their energy production and consumption patterns.

Community members also met the Hi Neighbour team to learn about their clean energy skills project.

For more information, visit the Electrify 2515 [website](#)



WATCH



A recording
of the solar
rollout
launch

Photos: @billielikes



New 10 and under division to foster competitive surf skills

By Emily Laurence on behalf of the Scarborough Boardriders



"It's providing a pathway for those kids that are competitive"

– surfing coach
Dave Hyslop

On Sunday, 7 May, in cold weather but clean two foot surf conditions Scarborough Boardriders launched a new competition age category aimed at giving its young girl and boy members a chance to develop their competitive surfing skills.

Club Contest Director Ian Pepper says the new mixed 10 and under division, using Surfing Australia judging criteria via the Liveheats system, gives the club's Micros a transitional period before they move to the 12 and under division.

"If the surfer gets the wave without the parent they get scored a little bit higher, if the parents push them in, they obviously get scored a little bit lower," he said.

"It's all about them getting in the water having fun, putting a rash shirt on and having a look online and seeing how they went afterwards."

Micros Coordinators say the 10 and under division is a great addition to the club.

"It is invaluable to be able to see how judging works and allow the kid to assess their level of competitiveness and ability," said coordinator and high-performance surfing coach Dave Hyslop.

"It's providing a pathway for those kids that are competitive and would like to pursue competitive surfing."

The new division is a progressive step, in light of Australian government research into surfing showing a national drop-off in club participation at round about the age of 9 to 11 years old, in particular girls (see Surfing State of Play Report 2019).

The May 7 pointscore also welcomed several new members to the junior women's division.

FOLLOW



Scarborough
Boardriders
on
[Instagram](#)

Community Celebration Day

not for
profit



member
owned

FOOD CO-OP THIRROUL

Celebration Concert

Saturday 20th May - from 2:00pm

at Wombarra Bowlo

Free entry

(but donations to support Flame Tree are welcome)
to see ...

Lara of Janis

Cloudbird

THE MAD PRIDE

**The
Numbered**

Fiona Johnson

SINGONGO

Raffle

Drum Workshop

ALL ACTS AND THE VENUE ARE DONATED
COME AND SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY
THIS EVENT IS HELD ON DHARAWAL COUNTRY