

# Fetherston Gardens Friends

## Annual general meeting 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015

### Volunteers working bee/ TAMS liaison Report - Lesley Pattinson

The past 12 months has seen the continuation of the Friends goals, to restore, regenerate and renew the Fetherston gardens for the local and wider community to enjoy. We have completed 5 years to date.

Our volunteers are the mainstay of our efforts in garden restoration. They venture from many areas around Canberra but mainly from the Weston creek area. We have consistently held our working bees twice monthly and no cancellations have been necessary due to adverse weather conditions. We have between 8- 26 volunteers attend at each working bee and all have been involved in diverse activities and task relating to their abilities and interests. We have a high rate of volunteering in FG and within the ACT Parkcare stats. Many of our volunteers have cared for specific areas in the garden on a continued and committed basis. Thank you Stephen Utick our Camellia expert who is researching, labelling and maintaining these precious plantings of Tony Fetherston's. It was a joy to have Janet, Tony's daughter in the garden last month on a bleak day with a Camellia in her hand. All our volunteers are keen to work where needed and are willing to complete many challenging gardening tasks.

While it is my wish to thank every volunteer individually, for without our people there is no garden, it is difficult to bypass some long term commitments, so a mention of thanks to Rosemary Drabsch and Chris Goodrich must be included here, for maintaining our front entrance carpark plantings, walkways and paths. They are often seen at the gardens out of working bee days, clearing walkways throughout the gardens, collecting rubbish, sweeping and leaf blowing the entrance for the public to be welcomed. Thank you for this regular commitment which often goes unnoticed. Many contribute also yummy cakes and morning tea, that no working bee should be without. We farewelled Ryl Parker from our committee and thank her for her support, particularly with the family fun day photographs and her continued work in the gardens. We also welcomed Louise Hughes to join the team.

Our volunteers have made significant changes in FG these last 12 months. While it is impossible to recap all the garden working bee activities over 12 months, each specific area of the garden has now been attended to. Floriade bulbs from 2014 have been dug, saved and replanted; some have been dug up by marauding cockatoos. Most woody weeds have been removed and any new ivy, blackberry, honeysuckle leaf is viewed with vengeance. We have recently ventured deep into the Secret garden, now the removal of dead trees program is complete. This area had become Tarzan friendly with many exotic weedy vines and more ivy for us to tackle. Excess Bamboo has fed the Pandas at the Zoo instead of landfill and we have an ongoing arrangement with the Zoo for excess bamboo. This area will be the main focus over the coming summer and planting will occur as mulching out this area is extensive.

Our thanks to TAMS management and crews who have assisted FGF, with loads of mulch, and a tree pruning and removal program. Our relationship with TAMS is highly valued and together with our volunteers much has been achieved and evidence of TAMS crew work in the arboretum area with mulching over the autumn has been appreciated. Our TAMS crew have also moved the boundary FGF/Islamic school fence off our path to allow for vehicle access through the garden. This has proved timely as 3 large dead Eucalypts were removed from the Secret garden areas this winter and large contract equipment was needed for this task. We can now safely attend to this area.

Our thanks also to TAMS/PCL, ParkCare and Jasmine Foxlee the coordinator of volunteer programs has continued to provide valuable support with our working bee ideals and connects us to the larger reserve ParkCare and Urban landcare volunteer community. Training, insurance and sign in sheets are covered by her work also.

During May, CIT Arboriculture Students and staff carried out some tree pruning and maintenance in the Woodland gardens for their assessment and studies. It was a pleasure to have students back in the gardens.

Last spring some of the FGF volunteers worked alongside the Islamic school community to begin a school garden group. The Islamic school principle has been very supportive and we started by clearing up the schools entrance area of any weedy plants (yes ivy here too) and replanted donated plants back into this area. As good gardening groups do, we shared and consumed delights of our cultures through food and drinks and developed friendships and new skills. We thank Susan Christianson the Acting School Principle for her support of our request to garden and for the school boundary fence to be moved to allow vehicle access in the gardens and storage of out tools.

The new irrigation system has been in effect and was ready for over summer watering. We have had some issues, as expected with any new system on this scale. Tweaking is still in progress by TAMS. The new DHA water retention ponds are not yet operational and so we have some overflow from our water tank. Thanks always to Wayne Napper, Andrew Forster, Francesco Mazzoli and the TAMS crew; we appreciate their ongoing commitment to the gardens and the Friends.

The Orana School shared their delightful family volunteer hours with us in FG and we were overwhelmed with their hard work, generous nature and commitment over many hours.

The DHA site works have been completed with the removal of the boundary fence. Our new neighbours have moved into homes on Fetherston Ridge. DHA Marketing, Coral Griffin has been a keen and valuable support for the FG Friends. We have welcomed her DHA experience and knowledge, particularly in organising the Family Fun day on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and at the DHA land auction on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, with the support of a Rotary BBQ. Thank you to Dennis Canduff and Mal Ferguson. At this event FGF were presented with a large cheque from DHA to support our ongoing projects in the garden. We were overwhelmed with the generosity of DHA. Thank you. These fundraisers enabled us to work together as a community partnership and also with, and for our wider community. Thanks to Weston Creek Community Council WCCC for their ongoing support of Fetherston Gardens. Thanks to the FGF teams who collected donations and gave of their time in supporting these activities.

We have spent many hours over the last 15 months on our new venture, The Gallipoli Garden, after we received an ANZAC Commemorative Grant from Dept. of Veterans Affairs, DVA. With much red tape and new skills learned, we are pleased to announce the Gallipoli Garden will be ready for Remembrance Day 11<sup>th</sup> November. This is a collaborative effort with TAMS, DHA, FGF, and Foxies landscapes. Our garden will be highlighting the Plants that grew on the Gallipoli peninsula. Work is expected to begin late September by Foxies Landscapes, Terry Fox being Tony Fetherston's apprentice on site .

DHA have very generously offered to fund a plaque and connecting path from Fetherston Ridge through to the Gallipoli garden. This offer has been gratefully received allowing a smooth transition from the Ridge through to the gardens. We are thankful for DHA's generosity and particularly to Stephen Hutchinson and Coral Griffith for sharing our vision of the Gallipoli garden and to explore opportunities to connect us together.

The FGF team was nominated for the ACT Volunteer of the Year award in May. Thankyou Parkcare for their nomination and we certainly enjoyed the nibbles and drinks at the ceremony gleaning ideas for our volunteers. Naturally the nomination and recognition goes to all who have made FG what it is today. This nomination, unexpected, was encouraging for us to keep on. Thank you to the committee for ongoing support and encouragement for the work. We are a team ready to support each other. We have completed 5 years of volunteer restoration in the gardens and our commitment to continue the work is ongoing and strong. We are keen to explore more options to support our volunteers and the gardens future within our community.

Lesley Pattinson