



Murnong Trail Notes

#3, October 2016

- **Spring has sprung**

October is wildflower month. With the rain we've had, the display of herbaceous wildflowers along the Trail is going to be worth a visit anytime this month, as a succession of species come into bloom.

Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*) (top right), is well-named, as it is one of the earliest wildflowers to come into bloom in Ballarat's forests. There are wide swards of its small white flowers on the College hillsides at present.



Amongst other plants already in bloom are the shrubby **Pink Bells** (*Tetratheca ciliata*), right, and many solitary flowers of **murnong** dotted amongst other vegetation. The deep blue flowers of *Dianella nigra* are also coming out. I grew up knowing *Dianella* as "snake grass" – when it came into in flower, it was time to watch your footfall in the bush.



The first of the heaths is also in bloom – the **beard heath** (*Leucopogon virgatus*) (right) has tiny white flowers, much less significant than those of the state floral emblem, the common heath, which is found around Ballarat but not on our site.



- **Plant names - always changing**

So we put up a sign with a plant name on it, and its botanical name gets changed. Our local murnong was called *Microseris lanceolata*, but we've been advised by naturalist Roger Thomas that due to a revision of the genus, it's now classified as *Microseris walteri*. The good news: *M. walteri* is reputedly the sweetest tasting of the yam daisies. I hope that the Green Group will get to harvest some murnong this term (it's the best season for it), we can cook it, and you can check it out.



The specimen at right, which I found recently at Wilpena Pound, S.A., may be *M. lanceolata*, going by the descriptions available. It's certainly taller than our species.

- **QR codes are coming**

Thanks to Mark McLean for the PD provided on the creation of QR codes for the Trail. These will be attached to the station posts along the Trail, and can then provide instant connection to reference websites. Check out the one at right (nesting box plans):



Thanks too to Zoe Elms (Year 12 Green Grouper) who worked hard to create the template for a leaflet on which the QR codes can be read alongside a map of the Trail.

- **Kangaroo grass – first cereal crop in the world?**

The convention is that humans first milled cereals in the Fertile Crescent. But the author of "Dark Emu", Bruce Pascoe, has amassed evidence of much earlier use of indigenous Australian grasses, like the **kangaroo grass** (right) that grows at Damascus. Both Paul Jans and Bill O'Loughlin have shared with me fascinating articles on the topic, well worth reading. This SBS website provides a summary:



<http://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2016/10/06/were-indigenous-australians-worlds-first-bakers>

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