

A brief look at my year ... 2017

2017 has been such a full and busy year, both in the garden and out - but a most rewarding one! My role as President of The Garden Clubs of Australia Inc. (GCA) has taken me across the country, visiting clubs in all states, attending meetings, anniversaries, friendship days and special events. I experienced firsthand the rich diversity that our magnificent country presents and also the challenges that we as gardeners overcome in the pursuit of our passion. I travelled from the north-east corner of Tasmania to the south-east corner of SA, from Norfolk Island to the west coast of WA and many points in between.

In March at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, I had the honour of launching Australia's inaugural National Gardening Week, which was held 8-14 October. Many garden clubs and other organisations, both locally and nationally, took the opportunity to celebrate the simple joys of gardening and to highlight the associated environmental, social and health benefits. I'm proud that my simple idea and an initiative I feel very passionate about, will eventually become a truly national celebration. Don't forget to Dig In & Celebrate 7-13 October 2018!

In early November, the GCA held its 25th biennial National Convention at Ulladulla, hosted by the local garden club. Over 300 members attended and we all spent a wonderful week visiting gardens, attending talks and sharing a passion for gardening. A highlight was a visit to Willinga Park, a world class equestrian centre set in beautiful gardens at nearby Bawley Point. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested by owner Terry Snow, a most humble and extraordinary man!

Killabakh Garden Club celebrated its 30th Birthday this year (and my 14th as president) and the club continues to grow and prosper. A great day of celebration was held in the local Hall and a few months later I organised a regional Friendship Day in the Hall with over 130 attending. A splendid year of activities were enjoyed by the members, including a four-day trip over to the Tamworth region.

Being away so much, the upkeep of my own garden has been a challenge but one I do enjoy enormously. I did manage the completion of a Stumpery Garden, an exciting new addition which I opened for National Gardening Week. I also hosted several charity events in the garden raising over \$4000.

Although away quite a bit, I still managed to participate in a host of local community events such as Killabakh's annual *Day in the Country* fair day - I'm Publicity & Media Officer and a stall holder. I compèred a wide range of events including the Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival's Festival Ball, Taree & District Eisteddfod Grand Concert (I have the honour of being a Vice Patron of the Society) and Manning Support Services AGM. I performed in the February and November Taree Arts Council Concerts and chose to sing songs I'd not performed before! I still write a number of articles for the local papers, primarily my monthly column *Gardening with George* - this year more about my travels than my garden and a few articles were deemed worthy of regional syndication! I was invited to once again judge the Potted Plant & Bonsai Section at the Wingham and Taree Shows. I'm President of Anglican Care Auxiliary, Manning and we held several successful events in 2017, raising aged care awareness & much needed funds.

At the moment, I'm very busy attending numerous Christmas events across the region, 'singing for my supper' and also rehearsing the local Killabakh choir - coordinating our Christmas Celebration to be held on December 17. I will also be giving a few Christmas Concerts and leading the Carols at some local Aged Care facilities - something I truly enjoy!

With such a busy 2017 travelling around Australia, there was no time for a trip O/S (unless you count Norfolk Island & Tasmania) but planning is well underway for a month away in England in May 2018 catching up with my USA garden friends, a week visiting German Palace Gardens and finishing off at Chelsea Flower Show! I'm planning a very quiet January with time to recharge the batteries, as I expect 2018 to be just as busy & full as 2017! The diary is already filling up with invitations to visit clubs - don't hesitate to contact if you have a special event you would like myself or a GCA representative to attend.

Wishing you a Happy & Safe Festive Season and a wonderful 2018!!!

George XXXXXXX