

Southern African Region Student Exchange

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Summary

The 16th of May 2023 felt like a dream after a very long wait for my trip to attend the IPPS conference in Melbourne as an exchange student. I won the exchange program in March 2020, and I was supposed to leave in May 2020 but due to covid19 I was unable to go. Finally, early this year I was able to go. It was an amazing trip, full of joy and excitement as it was my 1st time leaving the country. I was hoping to gain a lot from this trip, and I sure did. I spent a week in

Perth, a week in Melbourne and a week in Adelaide. I did a lot of nursery visits, botanic gardens and other fun activities in each city and the experience I had was amazing. The most remarkable thing during my visit is that I got to witness 1st hand the purpose of IPPS which is to seek and share information. During my stay in Australia, I met a lot of people that were very open to new ideas and were willing to share information with me.

INTRODUCTION

I arrived in Australia a week before the conference and spent my first week in Perth where I was hosted by Mr David Hancock. He took a lot of places around Western Australia and made sure that I got the best experience.

On the first day we visited Zanthorrea nursery, which is a family-owned garden Centre, located in the hills of Perth, Western Australia. This is one of the nurseries in Western Australia that specializes in Australian natives. I was stunned by how unique and beautiful Australian native plants were. The nursery was very neat, and

everything was well set out, with plants grouped in different groups. They sell well established plants, as well as tube stock, seedlings, herbs, and vegetables.

Mr. Ilec Hooper took us for a tour in the nursery where he shared the history of the nursery and explained most of the things that I didn't know about Australian plants. I couldn't stop taking pictures because of how beautiful the nursery was and everything was new to me besides some of the Eucalyptus species that we also have in South Africa.



Figure 1. A. Nursery layout at Zanthorrea Nursery, B. Herb display, C. Mr. Ilec Hooper and Mr. David Hancock, D. Mr. Ilec Hooper and Sizwe after the tour at Zanthorrea nursery.

On the second day we visited Plantrite Nursery, Muchea Tree Farm, Natural Area Nursery, Bunnings Garden Centre, Kings Park, and Biodiversity Conservation Centre. I found Plantrite nursery to be the most mechanized nursery compared to other nurseries that I visited in Perth. They have less staff members on a big portion of land but because of mechanization they still

manage to perform all the daily tasks required to run a successful nursery. From trays/pots feeding, transplanting, watering up to a finished product, everything is done with the use of machines and that eliminates the factor of having too many employees. It also promotes consistency because with manual labour it can be difficult to replicate one thing all the time without making mistakes.



Figure 2. Plantrite Nursery. **A.** Retail area, **B.** Growing under poly tunnel with shade, **C.** Seed smoking device, **D.** Propagation and transplanting area.

Things I found common about these nurseries was that they all grew mostly Australian natives, are members of the Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria with certificates of accreditation.

It was amazing to witness what one can do on a small piece of land when I got to Muchea Tree Farm. They grow some of South African fynbos plants from cuttings and seeds, they also have a small area where they do seed smoking of Proteaceae species. For a moment I felt like I was home.

A.



B.



C.



D.



Figure 3. Muchea Tree Farm. **A** and **B.** Tray filling, **C.** Transplanting machine, **D.** Sizwe test driving forklift used for moving plants and loading growing media into pot/tray filling.

As hard as it was to adjust to Australian time zones I had to keep up and when we got to Natural area, we met Mr. Andre Nguyen who showed me around the nursery. One thing I loved about the nursery, which

was unique and cool, was their irrigation system which allows the user to program irrigation using any smart device such as cell-phone/computer without having to go the controller physically.



Figure 4. Natural Area Nursery. **A** and **B.** Water filtration system, reservoirs, and irrigation controller at Natural Area Nursery, **C.** Mr. David Hancock & Sizwe after the Nursery tour.

When we got to Bunnings, I realized that their setup was like Builders warehouse in South Africa. The quality of plants on the floor was amazing and the use of labels on plants was on another level. Even plants without flowers looked stunning because of the way they were presented.



Figure 5. Stunning mixed herbs at Bunnings Nursery.

At King’s Park we spent some time at the conservation area looking at plants they propagate, methods used and their propagation structures. We also looked at their tissue culture lab which was amazing. It was well organized and clean with personal protective equipment available in restricted areas.

At a later stage we went to the park where I got to enjoy the view of Perth city. It was stunning, full of tourists and people that went there for relaxation on their beautiful lawn.



Figure 6. King’s Park. **A.** Tissue culture lab at King’s Park, **B.** Propagation of plants such as *Pimelea physodes* through grafting at King’s Park, **C.** PPE for going into seed cold storage rooms at King’s Park., **D.** Sizwe enjoyed the view of Perth city from King’s Park.

On the third day in Perth, we visited Rott-nest Island which is a home of Quokkas from Hillarys Boat Harbour. The journey from the harbour to the island was very nice, met new people and chatted all the way. On arrival we hooped on to the bus for a tour,

the drive was less than an hour which means the island is not that big. Along the way we saw nice views and got an overview of the vegetation found there. After the bus tour we took a walk and along the way I came across many quokkas.

A



B



Figure 7. Rottnest Island. **A.** Rottnest Island Ferry, **B.** Quokkas.

On the following day, which was the 20th of May 2023, Mr. Andre Nguyen, Miss Lara Osborn, and I started our day by visiting Nuts About Natives Nursery. We saw a lot of beautiful Australian native plants including *adenanthos barbiger* which produces a very nice orange flower that they use as their logo, *macrozamia* sp which is loved by Kangaroos and *calytrix fraseri* which has nice pink flowers.



Figure 9. Post nursery tour at Nuts About Native Nursery.

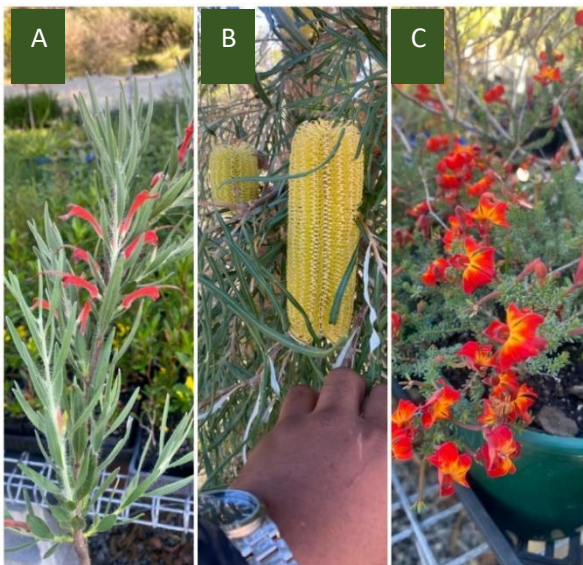


Figure 8. Nuts About Native Nursery. **A.** *Adenanthos barbiger*, **B.** *Banksia* sp.. **C.** *Lechenaultia formosa*.

Then we went to Mandurah, the aim of going there was for me to experience life outside of work in Australia and try new things. I am not a sea food person but, on that day, I tried oysters and I guess that was the first and the last time. We went on a boat cruise around the seaside home and the experience we had was amazing. It was also nice to know that the same Lara Osborn that made time for me and made sure that I had the best time of my life is the same person that was in the sixpack team with Siyasanga Yenzela in 2018 is one of the people who I look up to in South Africa.



Figure 10. Lara, Andre and Sizwe after the boat cruise at Mandurah.

During the conference activities

On the 21st of May 2023 I flew to Melbourne where the conference was going to be held. I met Ms. Pam Berryman, my host, at the airport, then we drove to Larkmans nursery where we did some of the conference preparations. We were part of the group of people that attended the pre-conference tour and during the tour I met new people. That gave me enough time to chat with everyone since we were not that many at that time. We visited a lot of wholesale & retail nurseries, labels & pots manufacturers, gardens, and garden centres.

Places visited during the pre-conference tour: Rivers of Yarrambat, Alowyn Gardens, Larkmans Nurseries, Kuranga Nursery, Norwood Industries, Garden City Plastics, Ball Australia, The Diggers Foundation, Van Loons and Boomaroo.

On the conference day, the venue was packed, and I saw a lot of new faces but because I had already met most of the people before the conference, it was easy for me to get to know new people. The guest speakers that presented during the conference were very knowledgeable and I enjoyed listening to their presentations to the point that I even

had a chat with most of them after the conference. What I really loved about their presentations was that none of them were pushing sales of his/her products, but they were sharing plant knowledge that benefited everyone.



Figure 11. The 2023 Six Pack team.

I was given the opportunity to present as well and talk about my background in Horticulture and the experiences I had in Perth. I was very nervous but that really helped me a lot because at this stage I am no longer afraid of speaking in front of big crowds and the positive feedback I got really boosted my confidence.



Figure 12. Sizwe during his presentation at the conference in Melbourne.

Places visited during the conference and after are Geelong Botanic Gardens, The Gordon Tafe, Vasili’s Garden and Roraima. At the Gordon Tafe we had a grafting workshop which was productive and helpful because everyone got the opportunity to do grafting.

Post-conference activities.

After spending a week in Melbourne, I moved to Adelaide where I was hosted by Mr. Matt Coulter. We visited Mt Lofty Botanic Garden, Urbrrae Campus, TAFE SA, Cleland Wildlife Park, Wittunga Botanic Garden and Adelaide Zoo.

Highlights



Figure 13. Sizwe holding a Koala at Cleland Wildlife Park.



Figure 14. Tour at Garden City Plastics.



Figure 15. Tour at Norwood.



Figure 16. Garden tour at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden.



Figure 18. Gala dinner in Melbourne.



Figure 17. Mr. Matt Coulter showing me the tuber of the Titan arum.



Figure 19. Grafting workshop at The Gordon TAFE.



Figure 20. Stunning designs at Adelaide Zoo.



Figure 22. Networking moments in Melbourne.



Figure 21. Tour at Adelaide Botanic Garden.



Figure 23. Popular Australian pots and trays.



Figure 24. Sizwe in Adelaide.



Figure 26. Tour at the South Australian Seed Conservation Centre.

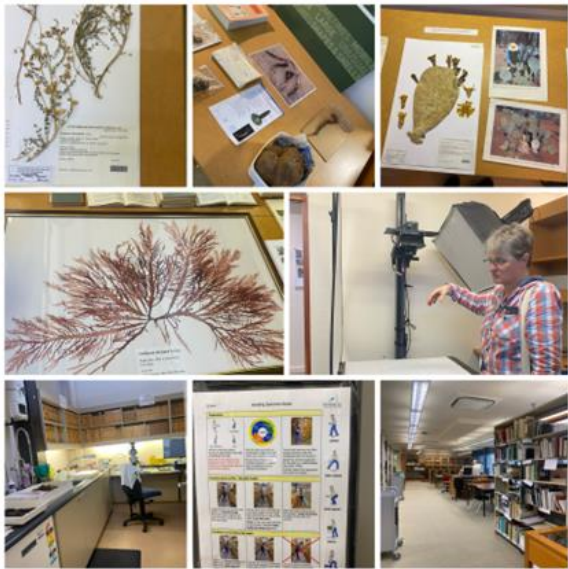


Figure 25. State herbarium & Library tour in Adelaide botanic Garden.



Figure 27. Tour at Vasili's Garden.



Figure 28. Tour at Roraima Nursery.



Figure 29. Pre-conference tour at Searoadferries on our way to Van Loon's Nursery.