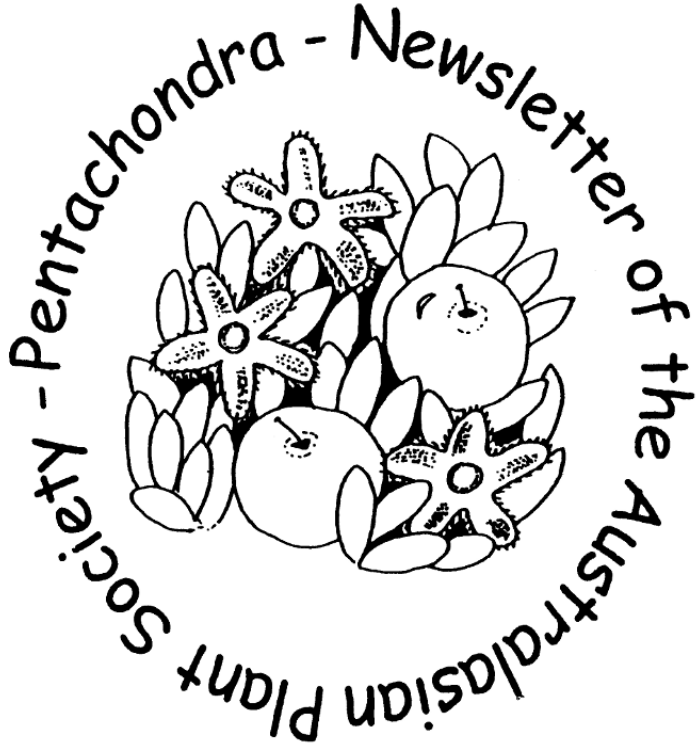


Issue 30 May 2003

AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 30

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Editorial

Here in North Yorkshire, winter has been wet and cold. Snow showers in early January were followed by a week of freezing weather with night temperatures dropping to -6°C. The second half of the month was milder. A walk round the garden revealed the two specimens of *Solanum laciniatum*, planted in two half barrels in the front garden last year, to be badly wilted. Now in the middle of April, they are leafless. I am waiting to see if they will resprout from the base.

Also in late January, *Clematis petriei*, in the greenhouse, was covered in buds, as was *Indigofera australis*. The end of January and the beginning of February were cold again; days of snow showers and freezing temperatures.

In the middle of February, I noticed that the two specimens of the Chatham Island Forget-me-not, *Myosotidium hortensia*, that I decided to overwinter outdoors for the first time, had blackened limp foliage after the latest frosty spell. I began to regret leaving them outdoors, but, now in mid April, new foliage has grown (thanks to March's endless sunny, dry days) and flowers are starting to form.

I had to wait until mid March to photograph to yellow pompons on *Acacia dealbata* which started developing last summer.

Now I look forward to the rest of spring and summer, to see how other plants perform, as well as seeing the two robins, who have made a nest in my greenhouse, raise their fledglings.

Happy gardening..... Sue Hyams

AGM 2003

This year's meeting will be held on Saturday June 14th, 1-4pm, in Room 17 at Pershore College, Worcestershire. There will be an opportunity to view the college grounds including ornamental glasshouses, with an alternative plan of a slide show should the weather be wet.

We look forward to seeing you there. For travel enquiries, please contact Jeff Irons.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those members who have sent in articles and snippets of news.

Articles are now required for the December issue. I no longer have a reserve of articles, so please find time to jot down a few paragraphs on garden visits, success with seeds or plants etc.

Deadline for the December 2003 issue is October 16th. Articles can be sent on disk. Acceptable formats are Microsoft Word, RFT and TXT. If sending handwritten articles, please print plant names. Please send to Sue Hyams (address on inside of back cover).



Tatton Park 2003

The APS has booked a stand at this year's Tatton Park Show. Will members willing to assist in staging, staffing and dismantling please contact Tony Entwistle.

So many seedlings!

Most of you will have already applied for your seed allocation, and I suspect most of you will have asked for the maximum 20 packets. Although some packets contain only five seeds, others contain more. This sets me wondering - what do you all do with the umpteen seedlings you find yourselves with?

I know its good to have reserves to fall back on in case a plant dies, but it must be difficult finding space for every germinated seed. Greenhouses do not have expandable sides!

Are there too many seeds in the packets, and are you just sowing a few to limit the number of seedlings? Please let us know.

Could we start a mart & exchange to distribute the excess plants?

If you have excess seedlings that you are happy to distribute to other APS members, write and tell us. Sending plants to other members costs you nothing - the recipient will be happy to refund the postage.

*****

John Canney, an APS member from Luton, has just started a small specialist seed company. His list contains seeds from around the globe, from as far as Australia, India and China.

All seeds are sold for £1.00 per packet.

To contact John, or indeed to order seeds, write to : 86 Meyrick Avenue, Luton, Beds, LU1 5JR. Telephone : 01582 423509.

News on the APS website

(Please read this even if you don't use the Internet, as it might persuade you to give it a try, or you might be able to assist!)

The Society has had a web site for a couple of years now, originally set up by David Gallacher and Jeff Layman, to whom we give our thanks. With more useful information now available on the Internet, along with improved means of finding it, increasing numbers of people are making use of the medium. There has been a feeling for some time that we should expand our use of this facility to enhance the services of the society to members. Keith Larkin has volunteered to take on this evolution of our site to provide additional facilities, and below gives some ideas of what might be achieved. But your suggestions are welcome.

There are three main aims of the enhanced web site:

Make as many people aware of the existence of the society as possible

This is to both promote the growing of Australian plants and to gain new members.

Getting ourselves known is an ongoing task, which can be met by several means. Using the net appropriately can provide one means to achieve this. One plant society I know of says that the Internet is their main source of new members, although this has taken a while to achieve, and uses a good infrastructure to achieve it.

Whilst ensuring that the main search engines bring up our site for appropriate searches might seem at first sight the best way to achieve this, the experience of those who have used these facilities for some time is that the main way to get ourselves known is by having a link to ourselves from other appropriate plant societies (and in turn providing links back from ourselves to their site to help promote them). This will also enhance our position in search results with some search engines, such as Google. Suggestions as to which sites to try to agree a link with would be appreciated.

Provide information regarding growing these plants in the UK

People aren't necessarily going to join our society immediately, but if we can capture their initial imagination, and fuel it with information, then we stand a better chance. So we need good information and pictures of Australasian plants in cultivation in this country. Could you help provide this information?

But we need to get a balance of giving enough to hook them, but not too much so they don't have to join! Hence ....

Provide additional facilities to members of the society

We need to enhance what members are already getting from the newsletter, but possibly only available to members. The information pack that Tony Entwistle has produced could be there,

along with links to other societies, photographs to complement articles in the newsletter, the cumulative index, and possibly back issues of the newsletter. There are quite a number of possibilities.

How you can help

The new facilities will be steadily enhanced over the next year, but nothing is finally decided. We welcome your views, along with suggested sites you know of, either with appealing facilities (which might give us a pointer of what to do - no point re-inventing the wheel a different shape!) and/or to agree mutual links.

In addition to the pictures of and information on attractive plants in cultivation in the UK, it would be useful to have a list of people with photos of plants in habitat who we could canvas for illustrations to complement articles.

We don't want to end up with a two-tier society, where those with Internet facilities benefit to the loss of those without. Investigations are being made to enhance the newsletter, perhaps with colour photos, but we can't get away from the fact that the Internet does give new facilities in a very effective manner. For those of you without Internet access, perhaps you could use the facilities of a friend or member of your family. Which might encourage you to have a go yourself - after all my 89 year old father uses it, and our own Jeff Irons has recently mastered it!

Please contact Keith at ???@anzplantsoc.org.uk <mailto:???@anzplantsoc.org.uk>, or through the web site www.anzplantsoc.org.uk <http://www.anzplantsoc.org.uk> .

Many thanks to Keith for writing this article as well as for his valued time, expertise, and enthusiasm as he takes on the role of Webmaster.



*****

Hovea montana

Jeff Irons

Each year I sow some of the species in the APS seed list, at the time members will sow them, and use the same quantity. Last year I tried *Hovea montana*. Four seeds were soaked overnight, then sown on moist tissue paper in a covered Petri dish. Two of the seeds were nicked on one side. After 6 weeks the two nicked seeds put out a radicle, and a fortnight later so did the other two. As soon as germination was seen each seed was transferred to a pot. Nothing further happened. Eventually they all died. Since then I have learnt that some legumes do not make initial growth if the soil does not contain suitable bacteria. My seeds had been put into a soil-less compost. Perhaps the *Hovea* needs to have its compost inoculated with soil taken from the vicinity of an existing legume. If more seed comes to hand, I shall try doing that. My supposition has been corroborated by Brian Halliwell. He says that it was found at Kew that many legumes grew poorly, if at all, in sterilised soil, but that they grew much better in unsterilised compost.

Easy Plants

Prostanthera

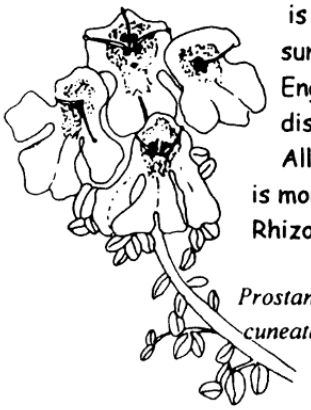


Prostanthera rotundifolia

A few years ago, during an AGS garden visit, everyone in the party was drawn to the source of a minty smell. It was a low growing shrub, with small shining leaves just visible between masses of large flowers. The flowers were white, heavily spotted with purple, and each had a prominent lower lip. The shrub was the evergreen *Prostanthera cuneata*. Possibly introduced in the early 1970's, the species languished in obscurity until it was noticed by a visiting Dutch nurseryman. Recognising its possibilities he took back four cuttings, and four years later exported 1000 plants. By 1994 he was exporting 4000 plants a year.

This long-lived, summer blooming, compact evergreen shrub now has an RHS Award of Garden Merit. In June, the peak flowering time, there are so many flowers that the leaves are almost hidden. After that, there is a scattering of flowers right up to early December. The plant can be kept small by giving it a clip over with shears after the main flowering. Rubbing some leaves between your fingers, then smelling them, will demonstrate how the shrub got its common name of Alpine Mint-bush.

Like many other plants the Alpine Mint-bush has different forms, and some have been selected by gardeners and nurserymen. The one seen most often is "Alpine Gold". It is a selection by the late Bill Cane (of Banksia canei), introduced to Britain by me in 1981. More upright than the normal commercial form, its leaves have a yellow edge. The colouration varies with the seasons, and is at its most intense in summer. In cloudy northwest England the yellow edge disappears in winter. Paul Allanson found that "Alpine Gold" is more susceptible to Phytophthora/ Rhizoctonia than the straight species.



Prostanthera cuneata



Prostanthera nivea

Since it is not particularly distinctive I was not too bothered when (after about 8 years) my specimen died. It was not replaced. A variegated form from New South Wales was even less of a pleasure. There is no point in growing something just because it is different, so this form did not make the journey from my garden to a nurseryman.

Last year Marilyn Gray, the speaker at our AGM, gave me a 'blue' flowered form, from Victoria's Lake Mountain. Rooted cuttings of it have been distributed to several APS members, for trials in their gardens. Marilyn stipulated that it should not be given or sold to commercial bodies. My own cuttings will be grown in isolation until I can introduce some genetic diversity by collecting seed for our Seed List.

If you are in the Snowdonia area, do call in at Aberconwy Nursery. It sells *Prostanthera* 'Badja Peak'. Rachel Lever says that this "shrugs off winter, and sells on sight". Flowering a little later than *P. cuneata* this aromatic leaved upright shrub appears to be a natural hybrid. Introduced by Dealbata Nursery (Dalgety, New South Wales), and described as occurring naturally, it was brought to England by me in 1992. It has nearly the same virtues as *P. cuneata*.

Not everyone likes *P. walteri*. Although the long flowers are large, their colouring is rather sombre, the superficial appearance being grey. Add to that the fact that it is not reliably hardy, and you have a species that can be passed over without regret.

P. sieberi is by far the most aromatic of the indoor prostantheras. Even the gentle air motion inside a greenhouse is sufficient to release the powerful smell. The purple flowers appear in April or May. If your greenhouse has space for only one *Prostanthera*, it should be this one. Brian Halliwell reports that at Kew it was hardy on a south facing wall.

Several other prostantheras can be bought from nurseries, and the following are worthy of special mention. Firstly there is *P. lasianthos*, which seems to have two clones in commerce. One of them has large leaves, perhaps 8 to 10cm long. The other has leaves which though smaller are still larger than those of other prostantheras. I have not found either form to be winter hardy. A small leaved selection that I brought back from Tasmania has also turned out to be tender, and in my garden the var. *subcoriacea* will not survive the winter outdoors. All forms of this species have large flowers in summer. The individual blooms are white, marked with shades of purple. In southern and western

Britain *Prostanthera rotundifolia* will survive most winters outside if it is trained against a wall. Elsewhere it needs to be under cover, and was never found to be hardy at Kew. The flowers are in loose racemes. The usual clone seen is in the middle of the colour range, which is pink to purple. The grey leaved *P.* "Poorinda Pixie" (*incana x rotundifolia)* is gorgeous when in flower, but has an unfortunate tendency to die shortly afterwards. It is often confused with "Poorinda Ballerina" (a seedling from "Snow Queen"; *phylicifolia x lasianthos*). The latter has white flowers tinged with purple, and the tips of its leaves turn down. It has a stronger constitution than "Poorinda Pixie". Having been grown here for nearly 100 years, *Prostanthera nivea* is well known as a plant for the cool greenhouse. Its snowy white flowers can be seen in spring and early summer. Not as vigorous as the species mentioned earlier, it can easily be kept compact.

Cultivation

All prostantheras should be cut back hard after flowering. If this is not done, they will quickly become far too large for most greenhouses. Cuttings root easily, and fresh seed (from species) germinates well. Neither high light nor high summer temperatures are a problem. They are not suitable for chalky soil, and prefer soil that is not too dry. Pests are not much of a problem. *P. sieberi* can, however, be attacked by white fly. All in all, they are rewarding plants. If you have space for just two, one outdoors and the other indoors, choose *P. cuneata* outside and *P. sieberi* for your greenhouse.

Footnote

There is confusion between *P. sieberi* and *P. incisa.* The former is often sold as the latter. Many purchases will be made when the plants are in bloom. It is easy then to tell the two species apart. The lower calyx lobe of *P. incisa* is longer than the upper lobe. It is folded, so that it appears to be about half as wide as the upper lobe. *Prostanthera sieberi* has very aromatic leaves. Their smell is so strong that some people find it overbearing. The much less intense smell of *P. incisa* is nearly always found to be pleasant. Most of the so-called *P. incisa* sold in Britain is actually *P. sieberi.* To add to the confusion there is another name in the horticultural trade! It is *P. scheelii,* and this plant is really *P. sieberi.*

Jeff Irons

Sheffield Winter Garden

In January, I made a trip to Sheffield, to visit, amongst other attractions, the Winter Garden.

The Winter Garden is part of a £120 million scheme to regenerate Sheffield's city centre. Following the demolition of an ugly-looking Town Hall extension, work began on the Garden in May 2002; opening to the public last December.

The Winter Garden is one of the largest temperate glasshouses to be built in the last hundred years. It's the biggest glasshouse in any European city centre:

* 70 metres long
* 22 metres wide
* Almost 21 metres high

The building is absolutely beautiful and one of largest Glue Laminate buildings in the UK. Strips of larch have been glued together to form the structural arches which support 2,100 square metres of glass.

The building has background frost protection to a minimum of 4 degrees Celsius.

The colour leaflet produced by Sheffield City Council tells us to 'experience the exotic collection, mainly from the southern hemisphere - big palms from Central America, Madagascar and China, grass trees from Australia and Norfolk Island pines.' Different areas of the Winter Garden house plants requiring different growing conditions; eg. there is an area of tree ferns, *Dicksonia antarctica, D. squarrosa* and *D. fibrosa* plus *Cyathea* sp. at the North end, and at the southern end, a selection of drought resistant plants including agaves from Central America. Planted the length of the building are 10 six metre tall Chusan Palms, *Trachycarpus fortunei*. There are also several 3m tall Norfolk Island pines, *Araucaria heterophylla*. Clumps of *Phormium tenax* are planted at the southern end, whilst in the centre, is a stand of bamboo *Phyllostachys nigra* and *P. viridis*. Other plantings include *Strelitzia regina* and *Protea cynaroides* from South Africa. A taste of paperbarks is represented by *Melaleuca nesophila, M. hypericifolia* and *M. armillaris*. Other australians include *Correa* sp, *Prostanthera rotundifolia, Callistemon* sp., *Acacia* sp., *Eucalyptus* sp. and grass trees. To add seasonal colour, when I visited, there were planting of poinsettias and hippeastrums.

Sue Hyams

Some of the smaller gems

I can't remember when I first became interested in those miniature plants many of us call 'alpines'. I *can* remember seeing the spring gentians and birds' eye primroses in Teesdale over 20 years ago and marvelling their desire to live somewhere so bleak. I can also remember the various wild pansies and violas on visits to wooded areas of Yorkshire. Twenty-odd years later I also remember stands of rock roses (*Helianthemum* sp) in Wensleydale's limestone countryside. And whenever I visit RHS Harlow Carr, I make a beeline for the alpine houses.

Over the years I have grown/attempted to grow many of these miniature plants and the following article describes some of the australasian 'alpine/more miniature' plants that I have had experience of growing, some more successfully than others.

Being aware of the differing requirements of different species, my plants can be found in several environments : scree beds where I have tried to create good drainage, a rockery constructed from the spoil heap formed when making the pond, plunge beds (15cm deep aluminium trays, 40" long x 24" wide, filled with sharp sand), stone alpine troughs which remain permanently outside, and lightweight stone-effect alpine troughs which can be brought under cover to prevent winter wet damaging more finicky plants.



Wahlenbergia gloriosa

I have two scree beds, one larger than the other. When we moved into our present house 10 years ago, the garden could be described as 'an almost completely bare canvas'. The previous owners were great annual flowers and vegetable growers and left me with a large area of lawn in the back garden along with a raised bed housing a clump of daffodils, and a smaller bed with just a few weeds.

The raised bed was transformed into the larger scree area by improving the existing sandy soil with added grit and adding a few well-placed pieces of sandstone, in keeping with the local rock. The smaller bed was made into another raised bed by the use of surplus stone blocks, discovered by the oil tank after moving in. The area, 1.5m x 0.9m, was edged with these blocks, which didn't need cementing together as the sheer weight of them rendered it unlikely that they would be accidentally moved. The '20cm high stone-block surround', was filled in with a mixture of sandy garden soil and horticultural grit. On top of this was added 75cm of pea gravel, as well as a few chunks of rock.

One of the first alpines to be planted in the smaller scree was *Wahlenbergia gloriosa*, commonly known

as the Royal Bluebell. On 26th May 1982 it was announced that the bluebell was to be the floral emblem of the Australian Capital Territory. *Wahlenbergia gloriosa* is a small perennial herb with oblong leaves about 2.5cm long, with conspicuously waved leaf margins. The violet-blue flowers, upto 2 or 3cm in diameter and usually erect, on 15cm long slender stem, provide colour from July to September. Planted in 1993, as a small specimen bought in a 75mm pot, it had, by summer 1994, spread to cover an area 30x30cm. It spreads by creeping rhizomes which can easily be potted up or transplanted. Several of these divisions were transferred to a half-barrel in the front garden, the plants protected to some extent by the overhang of the house eaves. Other divisions were potted into terracotta pots and placed in the plunge bed which stands next to an east-facing wall and therefore receives protection from rainfall from the west By 1998, the scree plant was a shadow of its former self, having decreased annually in size, and producing only a handful of blooms. The succession of wet winters appears to have provided the bluebell with adverse growing conditions. In summer 2002, the half-barrel plant was transferred to a pot when I decided to replant the barrel with *Solanum laciniatum*. Provided that some protection from the worst of the winter weather can be provided, it appears possible to grow this lovely bluebell outside.



Celmisia ramulosa

Another alpine that I've had mixed fortunes with is *Celmisia ramulosa*. This is one of the New Zealand Mountain Daisies. Stiff branches are covered with overlapping grey-green leaves approximately 1cm long. Young leaves and stems are covered in tiny hairs giving a downy appearance. Bought in 1993, it, too, was planted in the small scree. No protection was given in the winter 93/94. In April 1994 25 flowers were produced, but this was to be the last brilliant display of white daisies, 2-2.5cm in diameter. As the next years passed, flowering was less and less spectacular. By September 1999, dead patches appeared amongst the foliage. More and more of these dead patches appeared during the next 18 months. By Spring 2001, this mountain daisy was dead. I suspect that if I had given the plant winter protection, it would still be alive. In April 2002, I bought another specimen and this time I have planted it in a trough which can be placed under cover if needed.



Celmisia spectabilis

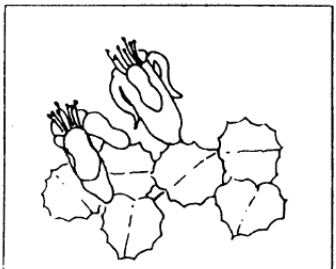
Another Mountain Daisy that started off well but deteriorated just like *Celmisia ramulosa* was *C. spectabilis*. One plant was purchased in 1995 from Egglestone Abbey Gardens, where hundreds of the species grow happily in the open ground. *Celmisia spectabilis* produces tufts of very thick leathery leaves upto 20cm long and 2.5cm wide, which are shining yellowish green and glabrous above. The undersides are covered in soft white tomentum. This daisy was planted in the larger scree

where it flowered well in 1996 and 1997. Daisies upto 5cm in diameter sat atop stout stems 25cm tall. The ray-florets are white; the disc-florets yellow. But after the wet Spring in 1998, the plant began to look very unhappy. Foliage started to rot at the base. Despite this, it still managed to produce 9 or 10 flowers that spring and the next, but by September 1999, it was looking very poorly. There was more basal rotting which eventually affected the whole plant, so that by Spring 2000 this mountain daisy was also dead. I feel another trip to Egglestone Abbey is due.

One alpine that I've had no trouble with is *Parahebe decora* 'Kea'. Named after the mischievous alpine parrot of New Zealand's South Island mountains. Unlike the habitat of most parrots which live in the sunny tropics, the kea's home is a vast wasteland of scrub, tussock and bare shingle screes between forest and snowline. It is a real extrovert particularly in the presence of human beings, and will follow hikers for miles on end. They can be extremely destructive reducing a mountain camper's tent to shambles while he is out walking. In some parts of the South Island there are road signs warning travellers of the kea's presence. Unlike the bird, the plant is completely controllable and good natured. It is a prostrate and spreading plant, with rounded shiny leaves, with two crenations, about 4mm in length x 3mm in width. The speedwell-like flowers, produced on slender racemes, are white/mauve with mauve veining marks. Planted in the larger scree, it flowers every summer.

Another resident of the larger scree is *Leptospermum humifusum* (syn *L. rupestre)*, planted in 1993. This prostrate alpine produces white apple blossom flowers, upto 1cm across, every June. The leaves are elliptic, glossy and deep green, upto 2cm long. Apart from the cold winter of 95/96 when there was some discolouration of the foliage, there have been no problems. In fact, in 2002, I had to remove about half of the stems as it was growing so well it was masking other alpines.

In 1995 I bought two small plants of the New Zealand fuchsia *Fuchsia procumbens*. I now have three specimens after taking cuttings. This dainty fuchsia with exquisite blooms is ideal for pot culture. I grow my plants in wall baskets, two of which are overwintering outside under the protection of an old plum tree, whose canopy of branches is entwined with a summer flowering clematis. I have recently noticed that these two plants are sitting in wet, cold compost, so I wait to see if they have survived this winter outdoors. The remaining plant spends winter in the greenhouse, just in case I lose the others.



Fuchsia procumbens

This fuchsia is characterised by tiny soft green leaves, 9mm x 9mm, produced on wiry stems which root freely as they scramble across the compost. The very colourful flower, about 15mm in length, faces upwards rather than down as in most fuchsias. The flowers consist of a yellow tube with reflexed green and purple sepals. The filament is red and the pollen blue-purple. Dozens of blooms develop to be followed by fruits, starting green and turning red by autumn.

Leptinella pyrethrifolia is a New Zealand alpine. Although not particularly striking, it is strongly growing, thriving in the plunge bed. This spreading robust plant forms a carpet of fleshy pinnately-lobed green leaves which tend to be clustered at the tips of the stems. Young

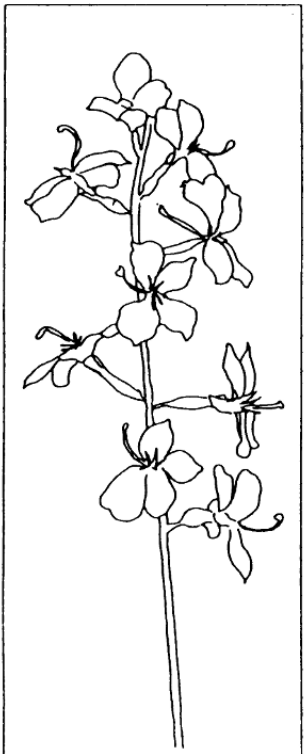
stems are purplish, greening as they age. The creamy white flowerheads are upto 16mm in diameter.

Growing happily in the greenhouse border are several self-seeded specimens of *Pelargonium australe*, a perennial herbaceous plant. The original plant, still thriving, was obtained from seed sown in February 1996, producing the first flowers in July that year. The flowers are pink to white with purple or rose veins, about 16mm across, arranged in terminal clusters of 4-12 blooms on reddish-brown stems upto 45cm in length.



Leptinella pyrethrifolia

In January 1996 I obtained seed of two forget-me-nots from the Alpine Garden Society seedlist. Listed as *Myosotis australis* 'Brown' and *Myosotis australis*, both lots of seed were sown soon after receipt with germination occurring within weeks, and flowering the same summer. *Myosotis australis* 'Brown' has spoon-shaped foliage which is olive green above and reddish on the under surface. Both surfaces are hair. The white flowers are just 5mm in diameter with 5 white petals, a yellow eye and 5 reddish brown stamens. By the end of the first summer the plants were past their best and setting seed which germinated readily. Each year the same process occurs with seedlings popping up everywhere: between paving stones, amongst gravel, as well as around the parent plants. The other forget-me-not, *Myosotis australis*, also behaves like an annual, but unfortunately is not so prolific. The leaves are narrow-elliptical and more bottle green in colour. The flower colour is yellow.



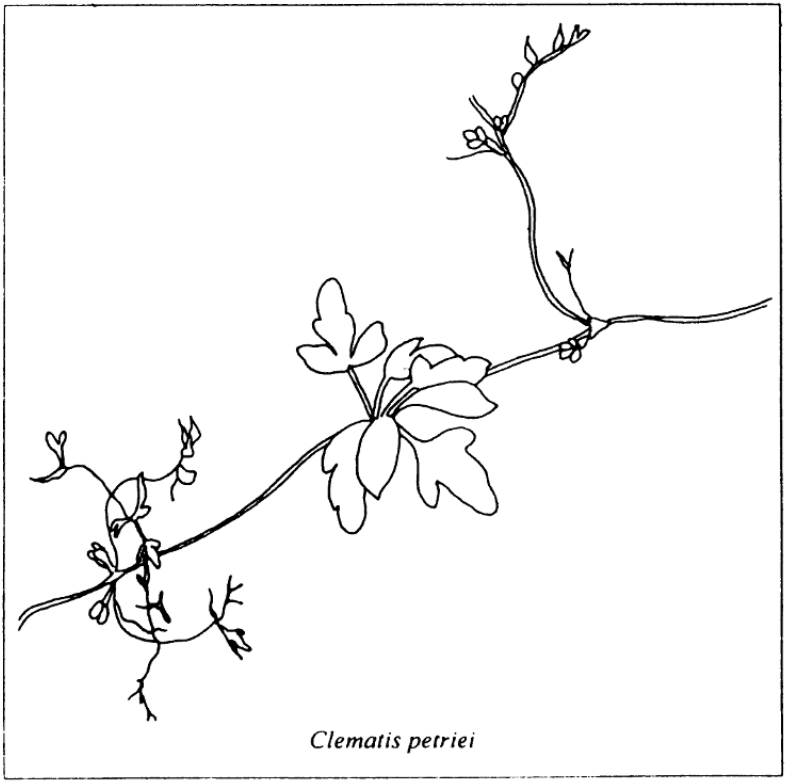
Stylidium graminifolium

I expect a lot of real alpine enthusiasts will be very much against the lightweight alpine troughs/sink gardens which have been available for the last few years. For them, only the real stone thing will do. Although not the 'real thing', they do have a major advantage. They can be lifted and transferred easily to the glasshouse to protect plants from the worst of the winter weather. I have bought several of these troughs, and planted individual ones with a selection of plants all requiring similar conditions, (ie. not liking winter wet or frost tender). Towards the end of the year, the whole trough is transferred to the glasshouse, placed near the door so that they still receive ventilation during the day when the door is open.

Growing in one of these lightweight troughs, made from a polymer resin material, is a specimen of the Australian Trigger Plant, *Stylidium graminifolium*. This is a tufted perennial capable of growing upto 30cm high. It has basal rosettes of stiff, erect, linear, glossy leaves. Flowers are produced in terminal narrow upright racemes, in shades or pink to magenta. My plant was given to me last year by APS member Dennis

Rowlinson. He did actually give me two plants, but a blackbird took a fancy to one of them and kept uprooting it until it eventually die! I have yet to experience the flowers but look forward to them. This species gets its name Trigger Plant from the fact that a trigger action in the stamens aids insect pollination. This plant ideally prefers glasshouse cultivation as it is frost tender, requiring a minimum temperature of 7°C.

Another plant growing in one of these troughs is *Clematis petriei*, bought as a young plant at the AGS Cleveland Show in 2002. This tiny New Zealand alpine clematis, with its evergreen glossy foliage has settled in well and is currently (February 03) covered in developing flower buds. Growing in the same container are plants of *Arthropodium candidum* and *A. candidum* 'Maculatum'. These are tuberous-rooted perennials, from New Zealand, growing upto 20cm high. *A. candidum* has mid-green linear leaves, whereas 'Maculatum has bronze foliage. All the foliage dies down in the winter, and needs removing to prevent mould. Freely, produced flowers are small and white, 8mm across, arranged in panicles. Hundreds of shiny ovoid black seeds follow the flowers. I also have *Arthropodium candidum* 'Purpureum' growing in a terracotta pot. The foliage is spotted and purplish.



Clematis petriei

Also growing in one of these troughs, which is permanently left outside, is *Ourisia* 'Snowflake'. Bought in 2000 and initially planted in a ceramic bowl, it was divided into two plants in 2002. The other plant was transferred to the larger scree where it is flourishing. These are matforming, evergreen perennials with spoon-shaped, glossy, dark green leaves upto 1cm long. An abundance of tubular white flowers, 1-2cm across are freely produced each spring and summer.

Just a few of my 'smaller' plants.

Sue Hyams

"Where have all the pesticides gone?"

I am not an organic gardener. But I don't pour vast amounts of chemicals around, either.

There are times, however, when I get fed up with the damage caused by pests, and resort to chemical means to deal with them. Sometimes, the pests win, and I give up trying to grow certain plants. For example, I no longer grow most Papillionaceae (Leguminosae?, Fabaceae?) in the greenhouse due to red spider mite. Chemicals available to the amateur don't touch it. Biological control with a predator? A waste of money; these are really only effective on a large scale, with the sort of climate control which is only available to commercial growers (most predators work at higher ambient temperatures, at lower temperatures the pests will prevail). Even then, it is a trade off - if you're growing tens of thousands of one or two types of plants, a few dozen suffering disfiguring damage really don't matter. If the predators haven't found their way to those plants and the pests are having a field day, the commercial grower will just write them off. But the amateur can't afford to lose the one or two plants of a particular type that he or she took so long to find!

I haven't suffered from the worst pest (as I am led to believe) - vine weevil. But the pest which annoys me most is the Sawfly larva (whether Gooseberry or other is not important). It never kills the plant, but somehow always seems to find the one bud which is going to become a flower for the first time, or the first time in umpteen years. By the time you've noticed that the leaves surrounding the bud seem to be stuck together, it's too late - the larva has eaten away the growing tip. Now, no contact insecticide (I am using the term "contact" insecticide for something which is sprayed onto the pest, or the pest ingests from outside the plant) will prevent the damage once that Sawfly egg has been laid and the leaves stuck together around it. No spray will have any effect, unless it is absorbed from the leaves into the plant, or you water the plant and it is taken up through the roots, and the larva takes it in as it eats the leaves. In other words, the only effective insecticide is a systemic one. And that is why I have written this. It is no longer possible to buy my favourite quick-acting systemic insecticide; it has been removed from the market under an EC Directive.

This all started a few months ago when I noticed that my bottle of Doff systemic insecticide,

which I had had for several years, was nearly empty. It contained dimethoate, to my mind the most effective, quick-acting, systemic insecticide. So I went to one of the several local garden centres to buy a new bottle. To cut a long story short, I couldn't find one anywhere. Not in the garden centres or other shops which sell pesticides. But the shelves seemed to be full of bottles and sprays; surely I could find a suitable substitute. Well, on closer examination, it seemed that there were a large number of brands all containing more or less the same thing. There are the "organic" sprays, which are usually a type of fatty acid or soap. For the chemical sprays, there are a few contact insecticides, but these are nearly all pyrethrins in one form or another. There are one or two long-acting organophosphorus (i.e anticholinesterase) contact insecticides for soil use against root-eating or soil-borne pests.

But there are now only 2 systemic insecticides available. One of these is of the carbamate (pyrimicarb) type, but it is very specific and really only active against greenfly and blackfly. The other is imidacloprid (Provado). Now this has been around only a few years for amateur use, and was originally promoted as the first effective treatment for vine weevil, and also sciarid fly. It is now being sold for dealing with just about all other pests. I have no doubt that it is very effective, or perhaps was; how long before pests become resistant to it if it is the only systemic pesticide available? Perhaps this is already happening; I noticed that there is an aerosol available (Provado Ultimate Bug Killer) which is a mixture of imidacloprid and methiocarb (a contact carbamate insecticide, previously used against slugs and snails).

Methiocarb was originally sold under the name Bio Slug Guard as a molluscicide. Other than metaldehyde, it was the only chemical on the market to deal with slugs. In fact, it was by far the better of the two. It not only killed slugs, but snails as well. In my experience, snails do a lot more damage than slugs in the greenhouse and off the ground outside. I have found dry slime trails on the wall and eaten leaves of *Clianthus puniceus* 3 metres off the ground! Metaldehyde is not active against snails, and, in fact, is a poor slug killer. Its mode of action is dehydration, but in wet weather the slug can survive this and will often recover (and I think it fair to say that the British climate can usually manage a few wet days a year). A slug will not survive ingestion of methiocarb.

So why is methiocarb now on the market as an insecticide, but not as a molluscicide? Why has dimethoate disappeared? It is all due to a lack of demonstration of safety with these

materials in whatever capacity they are being used for. In a nutshell, EC law says that pesticides can only be used when they have been demonstrated to be safe. The fact that they have been on the market and used for 10, 20, or even more years counts for nothing. Data must exist to show that they are safe. And note that it must exist for a specific use*. Thus it has been demonstrated that methiocarb is safe for use as an insecticide, so it can be used in the aerosol mentioned above. However, it has apparently not been demonstrated to be safe when used as a mollusicide. I asked Bio about this; they said that it would be too expensive to run it through all the necessary tests. There would, however, appear to be some confusion about this.

For those of you with internet access, you can have look at the UK Pesticides Safety Directorate pages (http://www.pesticides.gov.uk), which is an informative site with lots of links. One of these is to a page called the anticholinesterase status list (http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/anticholinesterase/ache_status_list.htm). On this page, you can find the status of dimethoate. It is being supported, but is still under consideration. You can also find methiocarb. This is also supported, but once again is apparently still under consideration. I am not sure of the date of the information on the web page. It states "This list provides the current status of those active substances contained in products included in the review for which PSD has responsibility (e.g. products for agricultural, horticultural, forestry and home garden use). However, "current" would appear to be June or July 2002 from references to Minutes. Interestingly, that ties into some information available from the EC, in the form of an Acrobat file (ec_review_actives_July02.pdf - available in a link from http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/ec_process/ECreviews/EC%20review%20programme.htm). This file contains "Active Substances Covered by the EC Review Programme", and says that it is "The latest list as known on the 23 May 2002 replacing the earlier lists." The file has a long tabular list of chemicals, withdrawn, still under consideration, or approved in the UK (for specified uses). Dimethoate has been approved by the EC as an insecticide and also as an acaricide, but there is a reference to a footnote which states: "UK approvals suspended. Please see http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/anticholinesterase/ache_status_list.htm". Methiocarb is also in the table approved as an insecticide, molluscicide, and repellent. There is no footnote, so I assume that the information I received from Bio is out-of-date. In that case, I can legally use my old tub of Slug Guard!

* This includes "amateur" usage. You may have read articles in the popular press about the use of coffee (in effect, caffeine solution) as an effective treatment for slugs. Well, it may be very effective, but it is also illegal as it has not been proven safe as a garden pesticide. So if you pour a cup of cold coffee over your delphiniums or hostas in the hope of seeing off a few slugs, you've committed an offence. But if you just throw it out as a waste product with no specific intention in mind, that's fine!

Jeff Layman

Easy Plants

Brachyglottis (Senecio) 'Sunshine'

One of the most widely grown New Zealand shrubs in British gardens is often called Yellow New Zealand Daisy Bush. This evergreen shrub reaches about 6' in height but has a sprawling habit and can become 12 feet or more in diameter within a few years. Upright stems produce alternate, ovate, leaves about 1" across and 2" in length which are slightly infolding. The upper surface is green and smooth whilst the lower is felted, ranging in colour from white to buff. Bushes produce the most impressive flowering in June and there are subsequent sporadic yellow daisy like flowers with perhaps a second minor flush in September.

The shrub seems indifferent of soil, either acid or alkaline, as long as it is well drained. Although it will grow in partial shade, it is better in full sun in a soil which is not too rich. It needs regular pruning to keep within bounds. This can take the form of dead heading after flowering and reduction of outward facing shoots. Though harder pruning, which is better, will in no way reduce subsequent flowering. If annual pruning is neglected, or the gardener is so timid that an overlarge bush is produced, which swamps its neighbours; cut back very hard, even to ground level, immediately after the first flush in late June. An alternative is April pruning. Although flowers will be sacrificed, there will be attractive foliage to fill the gap. Following pruning apply a general fertiliser, such as Growmore, at 2 ounces per square yard of root run. Increase is easy by cuttings. Best taken in August, using new non-flowering growth, about 4 inches in length. The cuttings can be inserted in a shady place in the open ground with reasonable success - unless winters are extreme, but are better in pots or trays in a frame or glasshouse.

The taxonomy of this plant has undergone changes over recent decades. When it arrived in this country in the early years of the 20th century, it was referrred to as *S. greyi*. Investigation was to discover that *S. greyi* was rare and characters of plants in British gardens very different. *S. laxifolius* was suggested, a name which was applied for a number of years but this species which is less reliably hardy also had characteristics which differ from British plants. Subsequently it was discovered to be a hybrid between the two species. An original cross was recorded as occurring in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens in New Zealand before 1913. Dunedin Hybrids has been applied to all plants which have arisen from crosses between *S. greyi, S. laxifolius* and *S. compactus*. The form grown in British gardens has been given the name 'Sunshine'. Just to add to the confusion, this group of species is sometimes classified in the genus *Brachyglottis*, as in the Plant Finder and so 'Sunshine' can appear under either name.

Brian Halliwell

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Dwarf forms of Leptospermum scoparium

In the December 2002 issue of the Newsletter Jeff Irons mentioned *Leptospermum scoparium* as one of the species he grows in his garden. This species is a moderate to large evergreen shrub which produces 5 petalled white flowers copiously in early summer. It is native to Australia and New Zealand, where it is an early coloniser of burnt or cleared ground. The kiwi form of this species has produced the coloured flower forms which have become covetted flowering shrubs for many gardeners. Pink forms are also found in Tasmania, but have not been used horticulturally. Most books written in the first half of the 20th century recommend these coloured flower forms for unheated glasshouses. Adventurous gardeners will have discovered that these seem reasonably hardy over most of the British Isles following mild winters of the last decade. The hardiest of the coloured flower forms of *L. scoparium* are the dwarfs.

In the late 1940's a form appeared in New Zealand which was referred to as: *L. scoparium* 'Nanum', which was compact, about 3' in height even when mature.

Duncan & Davies, New Zealand nurserymen of New Plymouth in the North Island bred from this form and introduced a group of 12 cvs, each named after a New Zealand bird. All bushes were small and compact with flowers in shades of pink and red. Young growth on all of these was reddish. Seed was set freely and subsequent generations of seedlings remained small. Some or all of these were introduced into British gardens, where they proved to be more or less hardy.

In 1952 Messrs. Ingwersen had received an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society for a plant they had submitted as *L. scoparium* 'Nanum'.

In 1952 A.T. Bulley of Ness obtained an Award of Merit for a plant of *L. scoparium* 'Nichollsii Nanum' which had been raised by his gardener, Josiah Hope. (A self sown seedling from *L. scoparium* 'Nichollsii Nanum'). This had flowers of the same rich crimson as cv. 'Nichollsii', but the bush was small and compact and was to prove hardy. In addition it has reddish new growth. Seed is set readily and subsequent seedlings remain dwarf, but the colour varies. Unfortunately many of these seedlings have been given the same name as the parent. Whenever a cultivated variety produces viable seed, the seedlings should not be given the same name as the parent. Just like human children, they are different from their parents. Giving them the same name leads to confusion, and it can be difficult to separate the true original cultivar. A number of plants that appear on Alpine Garden Society Show benches under the name *L. scoparium* 'Nichollsii Nanum' must be some of these seedlings, for they do not have the rich colour of 'Nichollsii'. Jeff mentions that his plant was propagated by cuttings taken from the original plant at Ness so his, at least, is correctly named.

Brian Halliwell

Ring-tail possum

Sharing your Garden

In 'Australian Plants', Vol 17, No. 135, there is a quote from Rodger and Gwen Elliott explaining why they choose to create a wildflower garden...."to provide and maintain habitat for the wildlife of the region.....we share our garden with over 50 species of native birds, an echidna, ring-tail and brush-tail possums, numerous lizards and skinks, several snakes, butterflies, insects and other creatures."

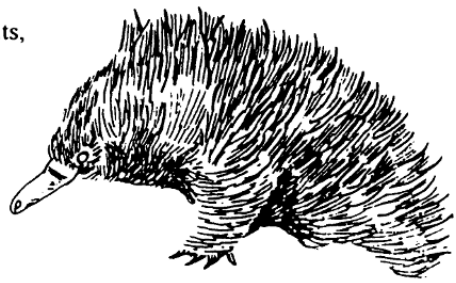
Here in North Yorkshire I also grow a lot of wildflowers, in this instance British natives, for similar reasons. The wildlife may be different....we share our garden with over 20 species of native birds, hedgehogs, grey squirrels, newts and frogs, butterflies, insects and other creatures, including the 'gentleman of black velvet', the mole!

Like the rest of our members I also grow several Australasian wildflowers. Unfortunately they don't attract the possums and parrots I'd love to see. Instead of possums climbing up the trees and sipping nectar from the blossom, substitute squirrels leaping from eucalypt branch to eucalypt branch, and from eucalypt to eucalypt, often with a peanut clenched in their teeth while they seek out a suitable hiding spot for it.

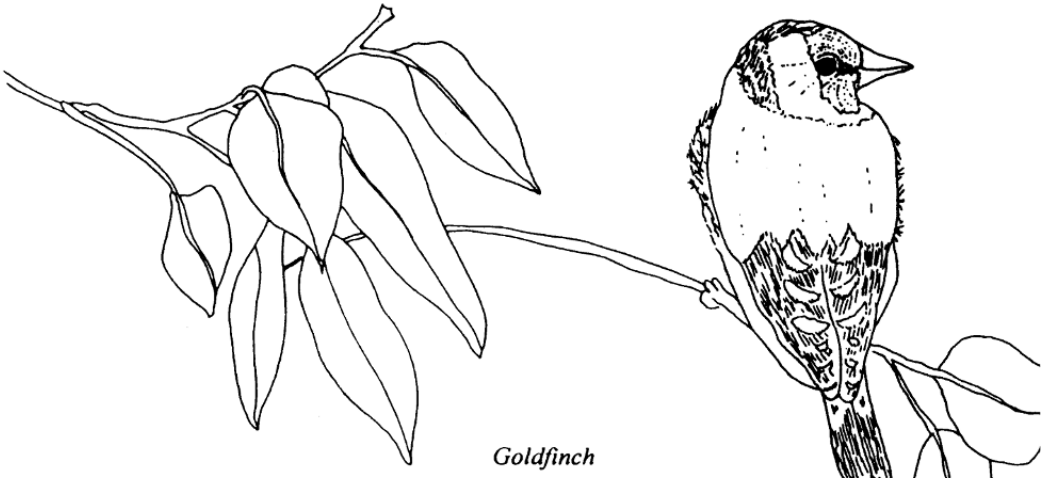
The summer blooming of these eucalypts attracts the bees which buzz endlessly around the nectar-filled flowers. They also graze on the honeymyrtle and bottlebrush flowering spikes, working their way from one end to the other. *Bursaria spinosa* is also a favourite 'fast food restaurant' in the summer, while the dazzling white daisies of *Olearia* x *scilloniensis* provide the 'starter' in May.

Beneath the branches of the prostrate *Leptospermum rupestre*, happily growing in the large scree, frogs shelter from the summer sun. The various mound-forming grasses, such as *Carex* 'Frosted Curls' and *Carex comans* 'Bronze Form' are also good hiding spots.

Substitute goldfinches, greenfinches, siskins, blue tits, great tits and coal tits for colourful parrots. The squabbling that occurs between goldfinches and siskins can at times sound very much like screeching parrots and cockatoos!



Echidna



Goldfinch

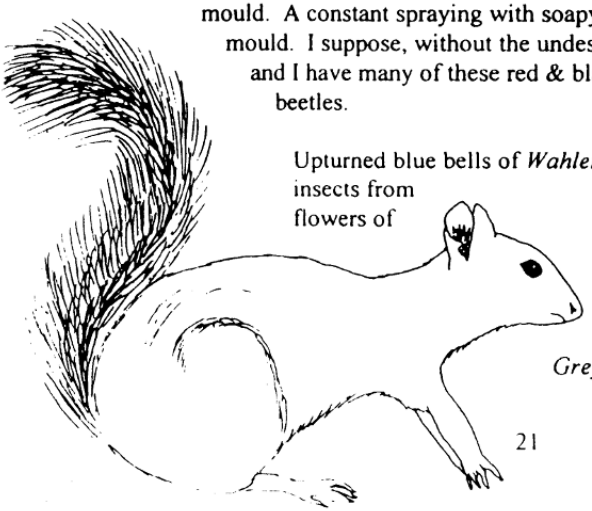
Climbing up the trunk of *Eucalyptus debeuzevillei* is a koala ornament, which looks very lifelike, except for the white deposits left on its head by visiting birds using it as a perch! In the greenhouse, at the base of *Indigofera australis*, sits another koala.

Muehlenbeckia complexa, a twining, scrambling climber that can be a thug if left to its own devices, has provided a safe maternity ward for a pair of blackbirds, which last year produced a couple of healthy clutches of youngsters. Wrens roost in the climber throughout the year.

Butterflies, small and large tortoiseshell, red admiral, meadow brown and wall brown, large white and small white, orange tip and peacock flit around the garden visiting various hebes. On spring evenings, the highly scented ruby-coloured flowers of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and *P.* 'Silver Queen' provide sustenance for night-flying moths.

Hoverflies are attracted to the open purple flowers of *Solanum laciniatum*, while the mauve-purple blooms of *Alyogyne huegelii* 'Santa Cruz' attract less desirable insects - aphids of the whitefly-kind! Another plant that whitefly homes in on is *Fuchsia procumbens*. Its tiny upturned yellow, green and red flowers sit atop sticky foliage which quickly develops sooty mould. A constant spraying with soapy water is required to wash away the mould. I suppose, without the undesirables, there wouldn't be any ladybirds, and I have many of these red & black, and yellow & black, very welcome beetles.

Upturned blue bells of *Wahlenbergia gloriosa* welcome visiting insects from summer onwards as do the red spidery flowers of *Grevillea* 'Canberra Gem'. The seeds produced by *Phormium tenax* are a



Grey squirrel

Sue Hyams

NATURE ABHORS.....

In Issue 29 of *Pentachondra* Peter Thompson complained vigorously not only about the state but also about the planting style of the New Zealand garden at Ventnor Botanic Garden on the Isle of Wight.

I'm not in any position to dispute Peter's account of the actual condition of the garden since I've never visited it (though I would put in a word for its Curator, Simon Goodenough, as a knowledgeable and generous plantsman from whom over the years I've received much useful information and several unusual plants).

However, his description of the garden's planting style and of his own appalled reaction to it seemed to me to raise some general issues which APS members might perhaps usefully discuss, at least as a change from our more usual specific accounts of particular plants. (I hope I'm not transmuting Peter's specific comments into something much more general which isn't at all what he believes. And that he'll excuse me if I am - in the interests of generating a little healthy argument, if nothing else!).

To save readers of Issue 30 reaching for their bookshelves for Issue 29, the relevant passage in Peter's article runs as follows:

> 'The borders were stuffed full of plants - and stuffed is a carefully chosen word in this context. The general affect might, charitably, be said to reproduce the appearance of the most intractably impenetrable examples of secondary growth during regeneration of the New Zealand bush. As a garden feature...it was an unmitigated disaster....[T]he lack of definition from one plant to another so effectively concealed their forms that very little idea could be obtained of their garden potential.'

By chance, my 'bedtime book' when *Pentachondra* 29 arrived was the second volume of A.T. Johnson's famous trilogy about the equally famous garden at Rowen in North Wales which he created in the years after World War I. *A Woodland Garden* (Country Life, 1937) contains among its many pages of horticultural wisdom a perfect and splendidly pithy expression of the diametrically opposite point of view about 'garden aesthetics.'

'[The] plants themselves,' says Johnson, '....have a ready answer for those who hold what they term overcrowding to be one of the seven sins of gardening -

people who are ill at ease unless they have an earth space around each individual, which is just what most plants heartily abhor.'

He backs up his general point by giving a practical example (though, in his context, unfortunately an entirely un-Australasian one). It was a corner of his garden in which the difficult *Rhododendron williamsianum* was only and finally persuaded to thrive when it was 'crowded up by others. Thus the pretty *R. serpyllifolium*, two or three feet across, jostles it from one side, an old *glaucum* elbows it from another, *Vaccinium mortinia* invades to the rear, *Cyathodes robustus* and *Leiophyllum buxifolium* are allied in a frontal attack. And,' he concludes resoundingly, 'each one of these...derives mutual aid and comfort from the other.'

Leiophyllum buxifolium - upright dwarf evergreen shrub from Eastern USA. Requires an acid soil. As the name suggests, the foliage resembles that of the common box. Terminal clusters of star-shaped pink-white flowers are produced late spring and early summer.

Though in this passage Johnson concentrates on what he sees as the *practical* advantages of such a dense intermingling of plants, it's clear from many other (but less easily quotable) passages that he was equally convinced of its *aesthetic* rightness, too. As far as he was concerned, the best sort of gardening involved a sort of idealised version of a 'natural' landscape, rather than a string of individual and separated 'features', whether a feature was considered as a single plant or a mile-long vista. (A *very* idealised form of the 'natural', clearly, when it could involve plants from several different continents! Johnson's reply to anyone who made such an objection would, I'm pretty sure, have been that this is precisely where the greatest skill in and pleasure from gardening is to be found: in judging the positioning of very different plants from very different parts of the world so that they blend seamlessly and as it were 'naturally' together.)

The questions I'd like to put to you then are these:

* Question A. Is the approach - Peter Thompson's idea that plants should be placed so that each is individually defined, A.T. Johnson's that they should be knitted together in a sort of living tapestry - in some way aesthetically 'right' and the other aesthetically 'wrong'?

* Question B. Alternatively, is this as much a matter of individual psychology as of aesthetics? Is it just that, to some, structure in the garden is supreme and can only be adequately appreciated when the elements which go to produce it are clearly defined and separate (these are gardens in which the controlling human hand and mind are clearly shown), while to others a feeling

a flowing naturalness is crucial (these are gardens which are of course just as controlled, but differently controlled, and in which the gardener as far as possible hides his presence)?

* And I suppose Question C is : Is there a 'golden mean' by which it's possible to have the best of both styles of planting?

At this point, I should perhaps come clean about my own position on these weighty matters. Those APS members who have bravely visited my own garden know that it is, I can say with no false modesty, a quite outstanding example of.....extremely bad horticultural tapestry. 'Knit one, purl one, pull one out', might well be my gardening motto. The reason is that on both aesthetic and practical grounds I dislike bare earth. Like Johnson, I believe most plants are happier in close association with others and it pleases my eye to intermingle trees and shrubs and bulbs and herbaceous plants of every height from mighty ten-footers to miniature carpeters. The trick - difficult in any garden, particularly difficult in a tiny one (at least, that's my excuse) - is to contrive dense combinations which look both easily natural and aesthetically pleasing. Combinations, too, in which the plants are happy with their situations and in a well-calculated balance, with none too rampant or too weak. Those are the combinations I spectacularly fail to achieve.

(I start to think that it takes a long lifetime to get to a position in which you know enough even to begin to succeed....And that to achieve real success you would need to have begun the process when you were still - to use a phrase which shows my age, not to speak of some residual sexism - in short trousers...)

Even so, I continue to believe even my pathetically inadequate attempts 'better' (in every possible way) than the opposite extreme.

So much for naked prejudice.

Any takers for an argument?

(And has anyone else, come to that, visited Ventnor Botanic Garden and would they confirm or contradict Peter's judgement of it?)

Tim Longville

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Still on the subject of Ventnor.....

A VISIT TO VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN

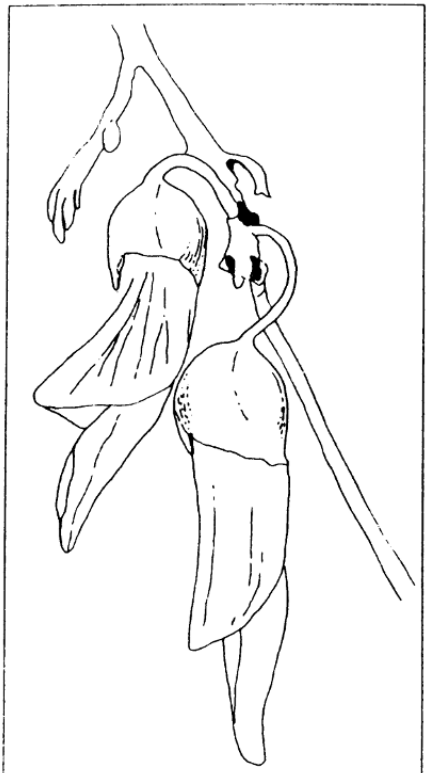
Nearly twenty years ago I was told that Ventnor Botanic Garden had a large collection of New Zealand plants. The AGM at Wisley provided the necessary springboard for our visit.

The weather on arrival at the garden was overcast and windy, not a good start. Just off the entrance was a room labelled 'library', and we naturally gravitated there. There were a number of bookcases, which included a good section on New Zealand plants. Also there was a stand containing a large selection of botanical and horticultural magazines.

We soon got talking to the receptionist who introduced us to the Curator, Simon Goodenough. He said that many people might find the New Zealand garden overgrown, but it did represent the bush, where plants grow through one another. He also had problem with people stealing plant labels, which the garden cannot afford to replace. Simon said there were plans to replant the New Zealand Garden in a year or two, and this would be done in sections. He also mentioned that Ireland, both north and south, was a very good place to see New Zealand plants, as they grow very well there.

The garden is set in a valley that runs roughly east-west. The southern boundary is the coastal, the eastern the local cricket club. You enter the garden via steps roughly in the middle, next to the café. Turning left and passing through the Palm Garden you enter the New Zealand Garden. This is roughly an acre in size, and nearly rectangular, with no island beds. You are presented with an astonishing array of half-remembered New Zealand plants. If you poke around you find that many do have labels, but some leave you scratching you head over their identities. We were lucky that Simon arrived on our second visit, next day, to help identify our unknowns. He also told us that *Cordyline indivisa*, mountain cabbage tree, was in flower in the Palm Garden, next door. This plant is rare in cultivation as there are very high losses of seedlings, after germination.

One of the star performers there was *Olearia cheesemanii.* It is a typical daisy bush, with lance shaped, slightly toothed leaves, but flowers earlier than most others of its clan. There was a magnificent specimen in the American Garden, covered in dense panicles of white flowers, with barely a leaf showing. There were several specimens



Sophora tetraptera (Kowhai) is a spreading evergreen tree or shrub, native to NZ. The pinnate leaves are upto 17cm long, each made up of to 20 pairs of ovate dark green leaflets. Racemes of golden-yellow flowers are produced in late spring.

of the rarely seen *Hymenanthera obovata*, a handsome shrub with green obovate leaves and tiny yellow flowers. We saw at least two large plants of *Sophora tetraptera*, they were in flower, but were going over. I photographed Margaret by a group of *Hebe dieffenbachii*, not in flower but fine specimens none-the-less.

Pittosporums abounded in the garden, many of them variegated. We didn't buy *Pittosporum cornifolium* in the plant centre as I thought the foliage was boring, resembling privet. On returning home I discovered that the flowers are paler and more open than *Pittosporum tenuifolium*, and very beautiful.

We are recent converts to Pseudopanax, having bought *Pseudopanax lessonii* from Graham Hutchins on a recent visit. At Ventnor we saw *Pseudopanax* 'Adiantifolius', *Pseudopanax ferox* and *Pseudopanax laetus*. The last has large, glossy, deeply divided leaves, with flowers like ivy, to which it is related. Our visit to the plant centre netted *Pseudopanax* 'Adiantifolius' and *Pseudopanax* 'Adiantifolius Cyril Watson'.

I cannot end without mentioning *Pseudopanax chathamica*, growing in the American Garden. This was impossible to photograph as it formed a tree over 30 feet high, with all the foliage at the top.

Tony Hayter

Aberdeen Winter Gardens

On March 26th, hubby Andy and myself made a day trip to Aberdeen. GNER were offering £15 return tickets from Darlington, when booked online. Too good an offer to miss! The day was dry and warm, with hardly a breeze. Leaving Darlington at 8am, and arriving in Aberdeen at 1pm, the rail route follows the coast for much of the way. Just north of Edinburgh, seals could be seen basking on the rocks.

Once in Aberdeen, a short walk brought us to Duthie Park to visit the Winter Gardens, a collection of glasshouses and open gardens. The first phase of the current gardens was opened in 1970, after the original glasshouse was demolished for safety reasons. Some of the different sections of the Winter Gardens are a Bromeliad House, where various plants grow happily, many attached to pieces of corkbark, clad to moss-covered scaffolding. Another glasshouse is home to a collection of cacti and succulents, some of them of considerable size.

Of particular interest, was the Floral Hall, a display house containing specimens from Australia and New Zealand. Some of plants seen include kangaroo paws; tall species with lemony flowers, and dwarf ones, less than 30cm tall, with pinky-orange paws. Bottlebrushes are represented by a 3m specimen of *Callistemon citrinus*, plus *C. sieberi* and *C. pallidus*, although none were in bloom. There were shades of pink-purple from various Australian mint bushes - *Prostanthera rotundifolia, P. melissifolia* and *P. sieberi*. Also in flower was *Hardenbergia violacea alba* - racemes of white pea flowers. The leptospermum genus is represented by *L. scoparium* 'Snow Flurry', *L. scoparium* 'Burgundy Queen' which was in bloom (double burgundy flowers), *L. scoparium* 'Blossom', again in bloom (double pink-white flowers), *L. scoparium* 'Boscawenii', L. (Nanum Group) 'Huia', 'Kiwi', and 'Kea', as well as *L. macrocarpum* 'Copper Sheen'.

Some of the other plants of interest were *Acacia dealbata* 'Gaulois', *Eucalyptus parvifolia, Pseudopanax lessonii* 'Purpurea', *Sophora tetraptera, Coprosma repens* 'Painter's Palette', various phormiums, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Tandara Gold', P. *tenuifolium* 'Moonlight', and *Grevillea johnsonii* - the latter in bloom; red spiders. Also of interest was the Fern House where several *Dicksonia antarctica* grow. The Fern House pond is inhabited by McPuddock, the green mechanical frog, with yellow blotches. Every few minutes he rises to the water surface to blow bubbles.

Sue Hyams

LET YOUR KANGAROO PAWS UP, SPORT

I've sung the praises of the internet discussion group Medit-plants in these pages before but its praises bear regular repeating since it so often deals with unusual plants (not all of them in any sense Mediterranean and certainly not all of them Australasian), at least some of which you can deceive yourself into thinking might be feasible in the un-Mediterranean and un-Australasian UK.

A recent case in point - an Australasian one, too - was a fascinating discussion of kangaroo paws.

It began when an unusually cent-conscious American sent in a message asking if it were possible and relatively easy to grow anigozanthos species from seed, thereby avoiding the stiff prices which American nurseries apparently charge for them.

The South African nurseryman Glenn Breayley and I both replied in very similar terms. Yes, it's easy. Caveat, is it worth it, are they worth growing? Glenn even applied the word 'dull' to their flowers. (Though he's since pointed out that as a practical nurseryman his opinions have to be those of his public. If they think something's dull, then he has to think so too. What's 'dull' is what doesn't sell, what's 'nice' is what does. And he threw in a classic story I can't resist repeating, to illustrate the oddity not to say idiocy of some members of that public: a woman who said of one of his spectacular bromeliads - he specialises in tillandsias -, 'Oh, it looks so real it could be plastic'...) My own contribution was to say that here, not only were the flowers on the yellow form of *Anigozanthos flavidus* dull-ish in themselves, they were so sparingly produced

KANGAROO PAWS are classified into two genera, *Anigozanthos* (11 species) and *Macropidia* (1 species).

- *A. bicolor* Little Kangaroo Paw or Two-coloured Kangaroo Paw
- *A. flavidus* Evergreen Tall or Tree Kangaroo Paw
- *A. gabrielae* Dwarf Kangaroo Paw
- *A. humilis* Cats Paw
- *A. kalbarriensis* Kalbarri Cats Paw
- *A. manglesii* Red and Green Kangaroo Paw
- *A. onycis* Branching Cats Paw
- *A. preissii* Albany Cats Paw
- *A. pulcherrimus* Golden Kangaroo Paw
- *A. rufus* Red Kangaroo Paw
- *A. viridis* Green Kangaroo Paw or Swamp Kangaroo Paw
- *Macropidia fulginosa* Black Kangaroo Paw

It appears that all species of *Anigozanthos* can be easily crossed in any combination.

GROWING KANGAROO PAWS

In cultivation Kangaroo Paws are generally killed by giving them too much fertiliser, shade and overhead watering. Plant in a full sun position - in most parts of the UK, pot culture is recommended. Position the pot in a sunny spot. When watering, do not water over the top of the plant.

***

A report in Volume 16, No. 126 of Australian Plants describes how a member from Tasmania grows Hybrid Kangaroo Paws. She planted two kangaroo paws, *Anigozanthos* 'Bush Nugget' and *A.* 'Bush Ranger' in a north easterly bed next to the house. The soil was an introduced reddish loam and the plants were mulched with hardwood chips. There was regular watering during the first year, but after that, watering was once a month, using a mulch to retain moisture. The kangaroo paws happily survived their first winter, where temperatures fell to -5°C.

***

Most Kangaroo Paws are short-lived but produce large quantities of seed which tends to remain dormant in the soil until the area is burned. The autumn after a fire the seed germinates to produce large numbers of seedlings which are again short-lived. The exception is the species *A. flavidus* which can live for at least 30 years in cultivation. It is an exceptionally vigorous, and disease free species and has been used extensively in breeding hybrid kangaroo paws. Both 'Bush Ranger' and 'Bush Nugget' have *A. flavidus* in their parentage.

on a potted specimen that I eventually abandoned it to its fate, and a wet Cumbrian winter in the ground safely saw it off.

However, Californian garden designer David Feix told a very different story, claiming that with him kangaroo paws grew six or eight feet tall, looked lush and tropical when not in flower, and when in flower (which they were or weeks if not months at a time) were vivid and eye-catching.

I wrote asking whether this was just a difference in climate or were we dealing with different plants (it certainly sounded like it). David's answer was that it was a bit of both. The climate difference I don't need to underline (and writing this in the middle of a howling December easterly I don't even want to think about). What David had to say about the different hybrids and cultivars available in California and Australia, though, was news to me. They may not be feasible up here in the damp chill of Cumbria but in warmer and drier parts of the country (Dorset, say, or Devon) they may well be. At the moment, none of them seem to be available in the UK, not even from the nurseries in the south-west specialising in 'exotics', and I don't think, even more surprisingly, that any of them are available in mainland Europe, around the 'real' Mediterranean. Some paraphrases of David's descriptions of some of his own favourites follow, in case anyone further south

is willing to be tempted and has contacts in California or Australia who might be able to magic up plants.

'Harmony' is a vigorous flavidus hybrid bred by Bill Teague in Southern California. It has yellow flowers on red stems (mmmm...) and grows to around 5 feet tall.

'Green' has, unsurprisingly, pale chartreuse green flowers on stems up to 6 feet tall.

Two good reds of the same sort of height are 'Regal Claw' and the Randy Baldwin hybrid, 'Red Cross'.

Then there are selected but unnamed forms in burnt orange, dark red, and pink. All of these, said David, are 'flavidus/rufus/pulcherrima' crosses 'which are the most vigorous with us' and seem to relish what David calls his 'mild climate and moderate rainy winters.' (Remember always that this is California we're talking about!) He finds species such as *A. manglesii* and *A. viridis* 'much more demanding...[and] perhaps requiring warmer and drier winter conditions.' He adds wryly, 'Some [kangaroo paws] can be very temperamental [and] there is much variation in vigor.'



Anigozanthos manglesii

Kangaroo Paws all naturally occur in Western Australia. In fact, the Mangles' kangaroo paw, *Anigozanthos manglesii* was proclaimed the floral emblem of Western Australia in 1960.

The common name, kangaroo paw, is derived from the appearance of the unopened cluster of flowers. In appearance, Mangles' kangaroo paw has broad leaves, 30-60cm long which taper to a point. The flowering stem grows to a metre in height. The stem and bases of the flowers are usually deep red and covered in woolly hairs. The colour changes to a brilliant green for the rest of the flower. There are colour variations including orange, yellow with a red base, as well as an all white form.

As for the conditions in which David grows these plants: full sun and well drained sandy soil with, in his long hot dry summers, a little incidental overhead spray irrigation, plus some run-off from adjacent potted plants. Even that

minimal watering, he thinks, probably encourages the inkspot from which they tend to suffer but since it also prolongs their flowering season he thinks of the one as a legitimate trade-off for the other. (He believes the recommended cure for inkspot in Australia is burning off the foliage. Is he right? In any event, as he says, 'Not so easy to do in an urban garden.')

As for hardiness, most, he says, will 'handle a few degrees of frost, but foliage does burn.' (And remember this is after the toughening effects of all that Californian summer sun.) He adds, 'I don't think they are grown much where they could freeze every winter, most seem slow to recover in cool spring areas after a hard freeze, and are prone to dying out under such stress.'

On the basis of this information, my final assessment of the likelihood or otherwise of successful UK cultivation of these hybrids and cultivars was that they would need to be treated like, say, the more tender cannas or hedychiums, and kept potted up under glass both over winter and during the early part of the growing season, so that they were forced on sufficiently to perform well from high summer onwards. That's what I thought until I read David's comment that, 'I had failed miserably with most as container plants, and only did well when they got put into the ground.' Which was both possibly discouraging (in terms of a canna or ginger lily routine) but also certainly consoling (since it seemed to suggest that the failure of my own potted specimen to perform adequately wasn't - at least not entirely...- due to my own lack of skill).

INK SPOT DISEASE is recognised by small black spots first seen on the older leaves. These increase in size often causing the death of the entire leaf, with secondary infection by other fungal diseases causing death of the plant. Control of this disease, to a degree, has been achieved by using regular preventative sprays of Mancozeb. Species of kangaroo paws differ in their susceptibility to this disease. *A. manglesii* and *A. gabrielae* are usually killed by the disease whereas *A. viridis, A. pulcherrimus* and *A. rufus* are less affected, and *A. flavidus* is highly resistant.

If you have succeeded with kangaroo paws, let us know your secrets.

So, some queries and some eye-candy to end with. The queries first:

Do any APS members succeed with kangaroo paws? By 'succeed' I don't just mean 'get them to survive', I mean 'get them to perform so well that they justify the fuss they demand'! If so, and particularly if not by my suggested

'canna and ginger lily' routine, please tell the rest of us, and me in particular, how.

A discussion of inkspot, anyone? Causes? Cures? I don't remember the kangaroo paws I grew being afflicted by it. I do remember a Poor Knight's Lily being, to the point, indeed, of death. All I ever did was cut off the affected bits, which did, even at the time, seem more 'cosmetic' and less 'surgery' than was probably sensible but as Dr Johnson said when asked why he committed some egregious howler in his dictionary, it was caused by 'Ignorance, madam, sheer ignorance.'

And finally, if you want to tantalise yourself with impossible kangaroo paws (or possibly not impossible: be Californian! Be optimistic!), David Feix recommends a visit to the website of the Monterey Bay Nursery (www.montereybaynsy.com) or that of San Marcos Growers (www.smgrowers.com).

Tim Longville

Acacias

Members will have noticed that many of the acacias in the seed list have had their name changed to *Racosperma*. That is because we have taken the names from the International Plant Names Index. They may revert to *Acacia*. The reasons for the changes are quite complicated but, trying to simplify them, when *Acacia* was named, only 24 species were known. Now there are many more (1000 in Australia alone) and many of these species have features that make it desirable for them to be in a different genus. Inevitably any name change will cause confusion. It is possible to change the 'type specimen' of a genus. That was done for *Chrysanthemum*, so that the horticultural 'mums' did not have to be given a different name. In order to minimise the confusion, a similar proposal is to be put forward for *Acacia*. If successful, it will result in most Australian species staying in *Acacia* and others in Africa and America moving to new genera.

Jeff Irons

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