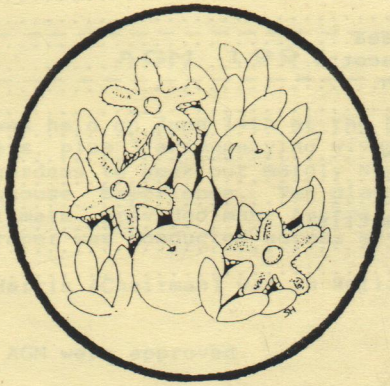
NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY

# PENTACHONDRA



ISSUE 19 DECEMBER 1997

# AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 19

December 1997

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## EDITORIAL

I have been asked by some members if the APS can publish member's telephone numbers to enable them to contact each other, other than by letter. If you are willing for us to do so, please add your 'phone number to your subscription form.

You should have received a Regional List of Members with this issue. If anyone wishes to set up a regional meeting like the now successful Northern Group, the APS is willing to fund postage. I'm sure that Dennis Rowlinson, who initiated the Northern Meet, would be willing to give anyone advice on how to make those first steps.

Many thanks to those members who sent in articles for this issue. I am always short of items about New Zealand plants so if any member can help for the next issue, I'd be very grateful. Please send printed articles, not disks, as my programme isn't compatible with many others.

Sue Hyams

## AGM 1997

This year's AGM was held on June 14th at the Botanic garden, Edinburgh. Six members, plus 3 accompanying wives, attended. After a tour of the rock gardens to seek out mainly New Zealand alpines, we visited the Glasshouse Experience. Ten glasshouses, each with a different theme/climate provided many Australasian plants, many in flower. The AGM proper was conducted across several picnic tables.

1. Apologies : J. Harris (Chairman) was in Holland representing Mallet Court Nursery.

2. Minutes of 1996 AGM were approved.

3a. The APS is now recognised by the RHS.

3b. Jeff Irons mentioned an exhibition called 'Joseph Banks and Friends', held at Eton College's Brewhouse Gallery, until the end of September. The APS was consulted for the exhibition. If any member visited the exhibition perhaps he/she could pen an article for the next issue.

3c. Jeff mentioned the need for more seed donations by APS members. It is known that members give seed to other societies, eg AGS, but never the APS. The APS purchases a lot of seed each year to supplement the small amount donated by members. This is expensive. The availability of a seedlist is very popular with members - upto June 10th there were 649 requests with 92.8% of requests being met. Seed for Australian plants is requested almost twice the number of times as seed for New Zealand plants. To help the APS order the seed required, please find time to answer the questions on your subscription renewal form.

4. Regional Meetings. Only the Northern Meet is so far successful with meetings twice yearly. A regional list of members is enclosed with this issue should members of other parts of the UK wish to form a regional group. If you want help in setting up a regional group, Dennis Rowlinson, who formed the Northern Meet, may be willing to advise.

5. Treasurer's Report. Full details will be included in Issue 20

6a. Appointment of Officers : new Chariman. J. Harris has been re-elected for 97 but there is to be a rethink for 1998. J. Harris has ben unable to attend the AGMs due to other commitments.

6b. Appointment of President (or replacement for Chairman). Two Names were suggested - Brian Halliwell and Ken Beckett of 1998. Other suggestions are welcome.

6c. New Auditor. The present auditor has put up his fees from £25 to £35 which the society considers too expensive for the small amount of work involved. If any member knows anyone willing to perform this task at a cheaper rate or 'for free', please inform Tony Entwistle or Jeff Irons.

7. Joint Membership. A husband and wife joint membership will be implemented in 1998 at £9.00, entitling them to one copy of the newsletter twice a year, and two seed allocations.

8. Adoption of a new constitution. One main difference is that, if a subscription is not paid by 31 March despite a reminder, membership shall be deemed to have lapsed.

9a. Recruiting new members. Several members have resigned (typical of most societies). An advert in the Hardy Plant Society newsletter has brought in a handful of new members.

Internet Publicity. In response to a question in the previous issue of Pentachondra, re. joining the Internet, several members wrote to offer the APS the use of their E-Mail address. One particular member, in Cornwall, is happy to design the pages etc, and hopefully this will bring in new members.

9b. Venue for 98 AGM. Kew was suggested if a guided tour could be organised. Other suggestions are welcome.

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## Visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens

15th June 1997

By Keith Larkin

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On the Sunday after the AGM, some of us visited the Glasgow Botanic Gardens. Our host, the Curator, Paul Matthews, started by giving us a brief history of the Garden over coffee.

We first visited the Kibble Palace, a large ornate glasshouse over a hundred years old and the 'jewel' building of the gardens. This was

originally erected as a place for entertainment, not as a plant house. The entertainment side failed, and it was then used for plant display. It primarily consists of a large circular glasshouse dome, entered via small 'tunnel' shaped structures, all very elegantly constructed in glass set in a metal framework. Looking up inside the dome, the metal sections visibly twist, indicating the urgent need for restoration work on the entire building. It is thought that it is the glass which is holding up the metal work, and when the glass is taken out the metalwork will probably collapse. This twisting also stops the vents at the top of the building from being opened, leading to a very humid atmosphere.

Needless to say, there is currently no money to restore this building, which holds the jewel of the gardens, which is the National Collection of tree ferns. This is planted out in the centre of the dome, with a circular path round the outside. It is hard to convey the impression of it, but the area planted out is substantial, and there are a large number of substantial tree ferns planted out in a 'natural' manner. Whether this is anything like how they look in their natural habitat I do not know, but walking down the paths among them was a fascinating experience. The general public are no longer allowed to walk amongst them due to the compaction of soil around the roots, so if you want to have this experience when you visit I suggest you contact them beforehand.

Whilst I have been fascinated by tree ferns in the past, I have always thought they looked rather forlorn in pots on their own. But these are not only large, but give a feeling of personality. One towers several metres way above the others. There were a number of species in addition to the commonly seen Dicksonia, but I didn't make a note of their names at the time.

The trip continued through the other glasshouses, which consist of a chain of linked houses. Whilst much more modern than the Kibble House, some substantial renovation work has already taken place, and further work is in progress. Sections contain desert plants, plants of economic importance, orchids and Begonias, all well grown and labelled. Behind the scenes, further houses contain the propagation areas, and set behind these there is a filmy fern house, a sort of

rock grotto with these delicate plants grown in artificial rockfaces and old wooden branches. This house is not normally open to the public, requiring close control of the humidity to enable these delicate plants to survive.

Whilst not on the scale of other Botanic Gardens, it is well worth visiting if you are in the area. If you wish to see the tree ferns I suggest you don't leave it too long. With the emphasis on safety these days, it may only be a matter of time before someone suggests the Kibble House will have to close. And even if the large amount of money needed to restore it is found, it will take some time to restore the house. Removing these large plants and then re-establishing them will be a major challenge and will no doubt take some time before they look as good as they do at present.

Our thanks to Paul Matthews and his wife and son, who accompanied us on our visit, for giving us their time on a Sunday morning to show us around and telling us about this fascinating collection.

## Visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens

October 4th 1997

By Sue Hyams

In early October I made my first visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens (I missed the AGM visit, having returned home from Edinburgh on the Saturday). Due to limited time, most of my visit was centred around Kibble Palace, named after John Kibble, an engineer. In 1873 the building was erected in the Gardens, its original intention being for holding concerts and public meetings. But this only lasted for about 10 years when Kibble lost interest and the Botanic Gardens took it over. It now houses plants from various regions of the world including Australia and New Zealand.

My first impression of the building was that it was in need of repair. Broken and unclean windows were all too obvious. Glasgow City Council's policy of free entry is very welcome but surely a small fee would help towards the upkeep of the Palace.

In early October there was not much colour in the Australasian beds, but still plenty of interest. Providing architectural interest were several specimens of Doryanthes palmeri, with their yucca-like leaves upto 2.5m long. There were the last few remaining red flowers on Grevillea 'Red Hooks', and the pale purple and white flowers of Viola hederacea provided groundcover. Trying to push off the roof was Allocasuarina torulosa, a tree with corky, corrugated bark. In the opposite bed Hibbertia cuneiformis was showing the last of its 5-petalled yellow buttercup-like flowers. Nearby Callistemon citrinus 'Splendens' displayed several years-worth of seed capsules. Behind the bottlebrush and in the centre of the Palace, below the domed-roof, were a group of tree ferns, Dicksonia antarctica, of various heights.

There were several New Zealand flax plants. A group of Phormium tenax 'Variegatum' standing to attention like soldiers, with green and creamy yellow striped leaves as long as 2m, contrasted with Phormium cookianum 'Pink Panther', a dwarf plant, not exceeding 75cm, with pink and olive striped leaves. Phormium 'Sundowner' appeared similar to a larger version of 'Pink Panther'.

The thyme honey myrtle, Melaleuca thymifolia, provided colour with its last pink-mauve flowers. The New Zealand shrub Pseudowintera colorata still had a few pale yellow 5- and 6-petalled flowers approximately 2.5cm wide. Nearby Pratia angulata crept along the soil surface. This New Zealand alpine has rounded leaves and white lobelia-like flowers followed by crimson-purple berries. Another plant covered in berries, this time blue-purple in colour, was the Australian Elaeocarpus reticulatus.

Outside the Palace on the rockery were plants of Aciphylla glaucescens, a NZ species, with blue-green foliage upto 40cm long, which would make valuable additions to any fashionable ornamental 'grass' bed. Behind the speargrass were plants of Griselinia littoralis and G. littoralis 'Variegata'. Various hebes filled in large areas of the rockery, one of which was 'Purple Queen' which has bronze colouring to its new growths. Amongst the hebes, Pimelea prostrata, found in New Zealand, sprawled, covering the ground with its blue-green leaves.

# ASPLENIUM BULBIFERUM

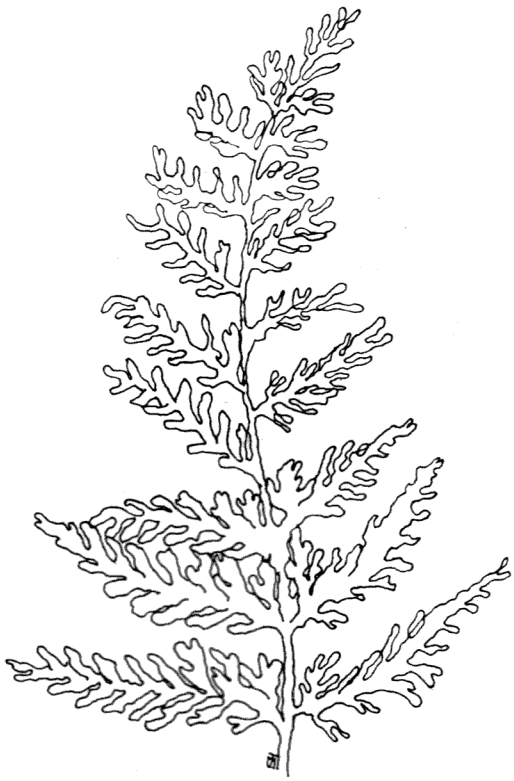
By Sue Hyams

Asplenium bulbiferum, commonly known as the Hen and Chicken Fern, makes an ideal plant for the home, cool greenhouse or conservatory. In its natural habitat, it can grow upto 120cm, but obviously grows much smaller in cultivation.

The characteristic of this fern is the appearance of small bulbils or plantlets produced near the tips of the segmented fronds - these are the 'chickens'. When removed from the mother 'hen' and anchored onto good compost, they quickly produce roots. An alternative method is to peg the young plants down in a pot of compost while still attached to the parent plant and separate after the roots have developed. In nature these bulbils take root in the ground surrounding the mother plant as the fern frond is gradually lowered with the weight of the developing young plants.

My 'hen' plant has, over the years, produced far more youngsters than I can ever cope with. At present I have two dozen rooted bulbils in the greenhouse waiting to be potted on, some slightly older plants growing in a chamber pot in the house, and the original plant on my kitchen unit. And there are yet more bulbils ready for anchoring onto new compost....

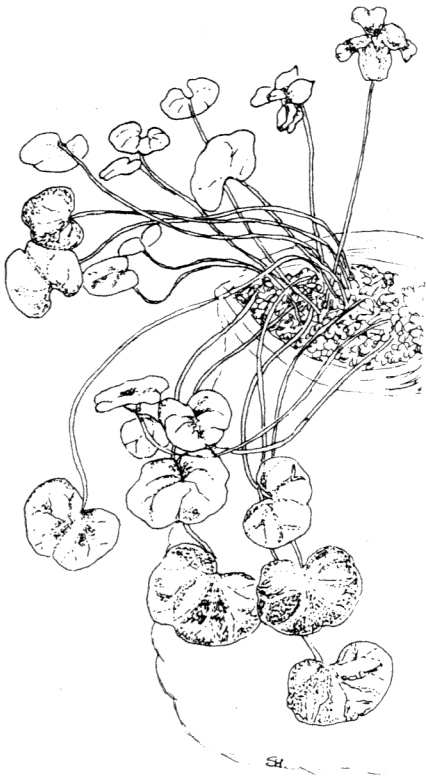
Asplenium bulbiferum is found in New Zealand and Australia, although the Australian plants are reckoned to be distinctly different to those of New Zealand.



Asplenium bulbiferum

## THREE GROUNDCOVER PLANTS SEEN AT GLASGOW BOTANIC GARDENS

Viola hederacea : this groundcover plant spreads by creeping stolons. Above mats of small, round ivy-shaped leaves, 1-3cm long x 1-2cm wide with slightly toothed margins are held white and lilac flowers approximately 2cm across with spreading lobes, the lowest usually broader than the rest. This violet prefers a moist soil with shade especially in summer, and has a long flowering season. In Australia, it is found in Tas, Vic, NSW, Qld and SA.



Viola hederacea

Pratia angulata : this New Zealand creeping species forms small mats of rounded, shallowly-toothed leaves, which vary in size from 4-10mm long x 4-10mm wide. The lobelia-like flowers are white with purple veins. Like the leaves, they are also variable in size (7-20mm long). The flowers are followed by shining purplish-red berries. Plants are often unisexual which explains why some plants never produce berries. It prefers a moist soil and will grow in either sun or shade.

Pimelea prostrata : this New Zealand hebe-like subshrub is easily grown in well-drained soil, forming sprawling evergreen mats upto 50cm across. Dark brown branches are clothed in whitish hairs. Grey-green leaves are close-set along the branches. The inflorescence is composed of 3-10 flowerheads, each made up of 4 white rounded petals with bright yellow anthers. The sexes are on different plants; the male plants are showier because of their larger flowers but if the female produces a good crop of berries, varying in colour from white to orange-scarlet, it can be on equal terms.

## NAME CHANGES

The revision of the New Zealand Wahlenbergia has been published. The only effect it has on species currently sold in Britain is that Wahlenbergia albo-marginata white flowers may be the subspecies flexilis. If anyone wants to see the revision paper, the Secretary has a copy.

In the previous issue of Pentachondra, we printed some incorrect information having been incorrectly informed! Wittsteinea vaccineacea has not been transferred to Alseuosmia and is still Wittsteinea.

# LAMORRAN GARDENS, CORNWALL

By Mark Brent

The following article was sent in November 1996, to Paul Snowden, an APS member, who visited Lamorran Gardens, St Mawes, and introduced himself to head gardener, Mark Brent.

Mark is particularly interested in obtaining material of any of the following genera : Banksia, Calothamnus and Hibbertia. If any member can help, you can contact Mark at Lamorran Gardens, Upper Castle Road, St Mawes, Truro, Cornwall, TR2 5BZ.

'I have compiled a general list to give you an idea of what we grow. All of it copes with the elements as best as it can with fairly minimal protection when it gets very cold, ie. a piece of fleece wrapped around it. At the moment we seem to be moving more towards South African plants, mainly because of their availability so I am planning to plant out a few more Proteas next year. As you can see from the list I have tried Eucalyptus ficifolia in the open - it did get to a reasonable size before it was caught by a late burst of wind chill in February - however it has re-sprouted from the trunk to a height of 2.5m so I'll probably end up with a bush rather than the British Champion tree I was hoping for!

List of Australian Plants

Acacia baileyana
A. dealbata
A. dealbata decurrens
A. juniperina
A. Exeter Hybrid
A. paradoxa (armata)
A. longifolia
A. riceana
A. melanoxylon
A. retinodes
A. verticillata
A. subulata
A. pravissima
A. pataczekii
A. floribunda
Arthrotaxis x laxifolia
A. selaginoides

Banksia marginata
B. integrifolia
Boronia heterophylla
B. mollis
Billardiera longiflora

Callistemon - numerous including viminalis, laevis, citrinus, rigidus
Casuarina equisetifolia
Chorizema ilicifolia
Correa backhouseana
C. decumbens
C. reflexa
Cyathea australis
C. cooperi
C. medullaris

Dicksonia antarctica
Doryanthes excelsa

Eucalyptus - numerous including
E. ficifolia

Grevillea 'Canberra Gem'
G. rosmarinifolia

Hakea saligna?
Hibbertia scandens
H. aspera

Kunzea ericoides

Lagarstrobus franklinii
Leptospermum lanigerum
L. nitidum
L. scoparium
L. compactum

Melaleuca squarrosa
M. viridiflora

Other genera from the Southern Hemisphere include Pseudopanax, Dacrydium, Cordyline indivisa, C. kaspar, C. banksii, Leucodendron sp, L. saligna, L. argenteum, Protea cynaroides, P. compacta (both flowered in past year), Rothmannia, Cassia, Clianthus puniceus, Sesbania punicea, Myosotidium hortensia, Metrosideros (numerous including M. carmineus). Chilean plants such as Fasicularia bicolor, Puya species, Embothrium, Laurelia sempervirens.

Additionally there are a lot of exotics such as palms, yuccas and succulents especially Agave, Aizoaceae, and Aloe.'

## PIPE UPDATE

By Dennis Rowlinson

In Issue 14 of Pentachondra, Dennis reported that he was experimenting with the growing of small Coprosma spp. in drainage pipes. This was to give them room for their roots to grow to a reasonable length and so give a better plant which would be more in keeping with its growth in the wild. At the time he had already decided to plant out three seedlings of Coprosma petriei that had germinated from the 1991 AGS seed distribution.

'The first was planted in a well drained scree, the second was planted in a double wall filled to about 30cm of it's depth with sharp gravel and the last into a clay drainage pipe 30cm long and 10cm diameter. The compost used in the pipe was equal parts peat, gravel and J.I. potting compost.

After the first season the one in the pipe had to be lifted up in it's compost, as it had settled down to a third of the depth. Gravel was added to make up the height. The others were slowly growing on. None had any extra feed.

A month ago (September '97) I realised that the one in the pipe was looking sad and I brought it out of the pipe to check it. The reason for the problem was clear as the roots, obviously liking the regime, the roots had filled the bottom third of the pipe and were trying to get further down. As I had no pipes longer than that one, I had to re-pot into a 2 litre deep pot and spread out the roots as best I could. When measured they were just under a metre long.

All the time since planting, the pipe had been plunged in deep gravel without watering, and it never 'turned a leaf' even during the long Spring droughts Hazel Grove (Cheshire) seems prone to.

The results were that the plant in the scree had grown to 15cm in diameter, the one in the wall had grown to 25cm in diameter whilst the one in the pipe gave a bun of 20cm in its new pot. So it looks as though keeping deep rooting plants in pipes will work for a few years, but it seems, really, as though it would be best to pot on every other year to renew the compost.

The winner in all this was the plant in the wall, as not only was it a larger bun, but the form was tighter and the leaves were smaller. I feel that would be closer to its natural growing pattern. Perhaps I should build more 'double walls' if I'm going to grow deep rooted plants.'

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## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MINT-BUSHES

By Tony Entwistle

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There are 60+ spp. of Prostanthera in Australia, and 15 are found in W.A. Only one is not endemic to W.A. (P. serpillifolia). They are native of the warmer drier inland areas. The flowers are larger, more hooded and typically labiate than most of the eastern spp. (more like those of P. walteri, a Victorian sp), which more often have smaller flowers in dense clusters eg. rotundifolia. None from W.A. are hardy here.

P. magnifica is the only one seen much in cultivation and the only one I have seen in native plant nurseries. It is a handsome shrub upto 3m with very large blue-violet flowers with a red tinge. P. eckersleyana is similar but much smaller. There are several red spp. P. laricioides is the W.A. equivalent of the S.A. and Vic. P. aspalathoides - both have very thin narrow leaves.

The latter is available here, but did not survive long with me!

There is also a yellow form. Other red spp. include P. arenicola, grylloana and carrickiana, the last an endangered species from the Esperance area, but now found to be abundant in a few restricted sites.

From a horticultural viewpoint there would seem to be much potential in hybridising western and eastern species, as has happened with Grevillea. Eastern species have been hybridised (Poorinda cvs) and there is a variegated cv called Mint Ice.

# GARDEN REPORT 1997

By Sue Hyams

The winter of 1996/97 has been mild in comparison with that of 1995/96.

The first signs of winter weather arrived in the second half of November '96. Blizzards (it took me one hour to drive 6 miles home from work one Sunday), and frost, with temperatures dropping to -5°C.

By the end of the month Pittosporum tenuifolium 'Silver Queen' had frosted tips. The new basal shoot on Melaleuca armillaris, planted in the garden in 1995, also suffered tip damage. Protected by a plastic bottle and a bubblewrap shelter, I hope to get it through the winter to put on more growth in '97.

In the greenhouse Grevillea robusta has suffered some cold damage on its uppermost leaves. Every winter the top leaves blacken and fall away but come spring new growth starts. To prepare for the winter I have erected tents of horticultual fleece over canes in the greenhouse over those plants which suffered the most last winter : namely Indigofera australis and Grevillea robusta.

In late autumn 96 during some redesigning of the front garden, Corokia x virgata and several hebes moved, all to a more southfacing site. In addition, three hebes which had so far resided in the greenhouse were also planted out : Hebe 'Hagley Park', Hebe 'Purple Pixie' and Hebe glaucophylla 'Variegata'.

The next period of snow arrived at the end of December and covered the garden for a week. The lowest temperature recorded over the Christmas period was -13°C in the Scottish Highlands. Worst hit by snowfalls were Kent, East Anglia, Essex and the east coast from the Wash to Scotland.

At the beginning of January normal weather patterns were turned upside down, as a result of a clash between the high pressure north of Scotland and the low that dominated Southern England. While much of southern, eastern and central England was in the grip of sub-zero temperatures, the Outer Hebrides basked in 6°C. The Thames was frozen over at Marlow, Buckinghamshire, for the first time since World War II.

In Knayton, the cold spell lasted from Christmas until January 11th. Days were cold and frosty with nightly temperatures dropping to around -4°C.

Scandanavian visitors, fieldfares, have devoured almost all the pyracantha berries. Blue and Great Tits are pecking their way through kilogrammes of peanuts, while the finches are feasting on black sunflower seeds. Unlike last winter I have not seen any siskins this season.

January 13th
In the greenhouse Eucalyptus globulus is pruned back to 1.5m after

hearing that the Meteorological Office is forecasting several nights above freezing point. The branches had been touching the roof, suffering cold damage. Despite the time of year, whitefly is present on several plants. Insecticide has been used on Bursaria spinosa and Sollya heterophylla. Two Dryandra praemorsa seedlings, which germinated in 1996, have been brought into the house as they are badly wilting in the greenhouse - too cold? Under its fleece protection Indigofera australis is developing flower buds. Grevillea 'Canberra Gem' has many spider clusters of buds formed.

I have noticed scale insect and black sooty mould on Acradenia frankliniae and Melaleuca hypericifolia in the greenhouse. The majority of the insects have been manually removed and the older branches have with rubbed with a toothbrush and soapy water.

Before the end of the month, there are more frosty nights. The two Dryandra praemorsa seedlings, taken into house, have died. Not sure why.

January 1997 has been the driest January since 1779. Certainly more sunshine than January 1996 allowing the greenhouse to be ventilated, reducing the incidence of mould.

Early February brings a grey squirrel to the bird table, at the same time as the first snowdrop opens. From the middle to the end of the month, strong winds/gales blow. At the end of the month the pink pea flowers of Indigofera australis are starting to open under the fleece protection. Compared to February '96, the plant now looks a healthy specimen. Red spider flowers are opening on Grevillea 'Canberra Gem'.

At the beginning of March I notice 6 adult frogs and spawn in the pond, a month earlier than last year.

Towards the end of March, Kunzea baxteri, in a tub in the greenhouse, is forming flowering spikes. Hovea elliptica is producing many blue pea flowers. The first deep red pea flowers of Kennedya rubicunda start opening in early April. One flower stem is forming on one of my two Myosotidium hortensia plants. Leptinella pyrethrifolia, sown last year, is blooming.

April 10th. Tadpoles are now visible. Orange Tip and Peacock Butterflies are airborne. Celmisia ramulosa is producing many daisy blooms. Pittosporum tenuifolium is opening its first ruby flowers. In the second half of April, Viola hederacea, in the greenhouse, is producing its first lilac and white flowers. Pots of Pelargonium australe have also begun flowering.

The first days of May are hot. As the swallows arrive back from their southern winter holiday, the temperature reaches 23°C (in some parts of the country the temperature is as high as 27°C). The first blue forget-me-not-like flowers on Myosotidium hortensia open on May 1st. Colder weather is forecast for the following week with temperatures expected to plunge to 9°C, as warm air from Spain changes places with cold air from the Arctic.

May 6th. Snow showers, and the maximum daytime temperature ranges from 3°C in northern Scotland to 11°C on the south coast of England.

For the first time in 14 years, large areas of North Wales woke up to a thick blanket of May snow.

May 8th. Olearia scilloniensis is opening its first daisy flowers in two years, after it spent 1996 recovering from the damage suffered in the winter of '95/'96.

Mild weather in April, followed by frosts in early/mid May have resulted in frost damage to many plants. But fortunately none of my Australasians suffered.

Mid May. Pittosporum tenuifolium continues to flower accompanied by P. 'Silver Queen'. In the scree bed Celmisia spectabilis is in full bloom (9 daisies this year); Celmisia ramulosa has finished flowering. In the greenhouse the first of many crimson flower spikes of Kunzea baxteri are opening. Acradenia frankliniae is also beginning to bloom. Kennedya rubicunda is in the final stage of flowering; Indigofera australis is in full bloom. Bottlebrush flowers are forming on all three Callistemons (2 unnamed plants and one Callistemon speciosus). Buds are also forming on Melaleuca hypericifolia while Grevillea 'Canberra Gem' is showing off its last red spider flowers. A cutting of Sollya heterophylla and several young plants of the same species grown from seed sown last year, have blue-bell flowers. Still blooming are Pelargonium australe, Viola hederacea and Myosotidium hortensia.

Several plants of Ranunculus lappaceus, sown in January 1996, produce their first yellow buttercups.

May 25th. The housemartins are back and the cuckoo is calling but summer still seems far away. Unsettled days are dotted with an occasional warmer dry one.

May 29th. Biological controls for aphids and red spider mites are introduced into the greenhouse. Both pests were a real problem in 1996.

At the beginning of June, north winds continue to blow, but there is plenty of sunshine so inside the greenhouse the temperature reaches the mid-30°C. Flowering buds are forming on cuttings taken in 1995 of Melaleuca nesophila. In the front garden there are two flowers on Eucalyptus coccifera - it spent 1996 putting on much new growth after suffering damage in the winter' 95/'96. Two other eucalypts are flowering for the first time - many white tassel flowers on E. nipho-phila and E. pauciflora.

Myosotis australis sown in 1996 and overwintered in the greenhouse, has several small yellow forget-me-not flowers. Self-sown seedlings of Myosotis australis 'Brown' are producing white flowers in several parts of the garden. Pink buds are forming on Helichrysum adenophorum var. waddelliae. This plant was sown last year and overwintered in the greenhouse; currently in pots on the patio, some seedlings also planted in the scree. Parahebe catarractae alba is in full bloom, as is P. 'Porlock Purple'. There are many flower spikes forming on Bursaria spinosa. This looks to be its best flowering yet. The specimen in the greenhouse has yet to flower - both are the same age but I do have to keep pruning the indoor one to keep it under control.

so I'm probably removing the flowering wood.

June is an unsettled month - cool temperatures and plenty of rain. Young frogs are hopping all over the garden. Mid June and all three Callistemons are starting to bloom (Callistemon speciosus for the first time). Kunzea baxteri is still producing red blooms.

Helichrysum adenophorum var waddelliae now has open straw flowers, upto 3cm in diameter, as well as many buds. The plants are much branched with linear-shaped leaves. The flowering stems arise from the leaf axils. Small developing flowering buds are a rose pink, gradually fading to a pale pink or even white as they start to open. Some flowers are totally white while others are white with the outer papery bracts tinged pink. The flower centres are yellow.

Parahebe diffusa joins the other Parahebes, including P. 'Kea', in bloom. Burrs cover Acaena anserinifolia and A. 'Blue Haze'. Derwentia perfoliata is blooming in the front garden. Pratia pedunculata fills a pot with tiny blue star flowers.

In May, I moved Hovea elliptica, which was growing in the greenhouse border to another part of the same border as I attempted to reorganise my greenhouse. Unfortunately it has since died (I did have difficulty removing all the root). However I have a few seeds from it from previous years so I will try to germinate them. I really love blue flowers and the pea flowers of this hovea are well worth having.

According to a report in The Times newspaper, in early July, June '97 was the wettest June in England and Wales for 137 years. The downpours came after the driest 24 month period (April '95 - March '97) in more than 200 years. Despite the rain, June temperatures averaged 14.1°C, only just below the norm of 14.2°C but the sun shone for only 4.5 hours a day, compared with the expected 6.3 hours.

July. The weather is warming up. After all the rain, the garden looks like a jungle. There is a lot of thinning out and weeding to do. Wahlenbergia gloriosa is producing the first of its blue upturned bells in the small scree bed. In the second week, Bursaria spinosa alongside the housewall, is beginning to bloom, as is Melaleuca hypericifolia in the greenhouse.

Mid July and Gentiana saxosa in the greenhouse opens its first white trumpet flowers. It is growing in a terracotta pot plunged in a sand bed. Also an unnamed upright Leptospermum is producing its first white single 5-petalled flowers. Cuttings of Melaleuca nesophila, taken in '95, are showing their small lilac pompons, although the original plant, which suffered badly during the winter of '95/'96, has yet to show a bud. All plants live permanently in the greenhouse.

In the final week of July, yet another eucalypt is producing white tassel-like flowers. Eucalyptus perriniana, the weakest-growing of my eucalypts, for reasons unknown to me, is putting on its annual show. All the mentioned eucalypts in this article are the same age and grow in close proximity of each other. E. perriniana hasn't a lot of vigour; some of the foliage is discoloured with paler green and brown streaks. It is half the height of the other trees which receive regular pruning to keep them about 2.5m in height. Yet each year it

never fails to produce a few flowers.

July has been unsettled, weatherwise, but not as wet as June. The temperatures have been higher and the June rain has created a colourful jungle. Everything is lush. At the end of the month, Bursaria spinosa is covered in white fragrant spikes, its best display ever. Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty', nearby adds pale purple to the picture. In a tub on the patio Hebe 'Great Orme' is covered in long pink spikes which bees love. The upward growing spikes are 5-10cm long. The flowers open nearest the branch first, the pink colour fading to white/pale pink, giving a two-tone effect. I lost one specimen of this hebe in the winter '95/'96 (after the very dry summer of '95), a plant growing in a southfacing border. The remaining plant is permanently containerised and approximately 60cm in height and so far has spent the whole of its life on the patio, getting no winter protection.

Additional summer colour is provided by several 'bedding' Brachyscomes including 'Strawberry Mousse' with its pink-lilac daisies.

The burrs on Acaena anserinifolia are driving my cats mad! As they wander around the garden, the burrs stick to their fur and they have a real job removing them. Even my husband is complaining that they are sticking to his shoelaces. What started off as a small plant in the scree bed, now covers quite an area and young plants keep cropping up along the driveway.

August brings hot and humid weather, and floods. In the first week torrential downpours in the West Country contrast with temperatures in the high 20s°C in the Midlands and East Anglia. In some places 7.5cm of rain fell in just 24 hours (more than the average for the whole of August). The annual two-day flower show in Taunton was cancelled for the first time since the First World War because of the rain.

As Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty' finishes blooming Hebe 'Purple Tips', a variegated hebe which I overwinter under glass because it is on the borderline of frost hardy, has opened its first violet purple spikes; spikes upto 6cm long. The leaves are variegated; grey green with cream margins and plum edging and prominent plum-coloured mid ribs.

Calocephalus citrinus is producing globular flowerheads about 5mm in diameter. Starting off a beige colour they gradually change to lemon. Commonly known as Lemon Beauty-heads, the plant has silver-grey foliage, the leaves are narrow, 2mm wide x upto 30mm long. From a basal clump of foliage, slender flowering stems, upto 30cm in height, arise, each bearing a single flowerhead.

Mid August. Scutellaria novae-zelandiae is in bloom. The seed for this plant was obtained from the AGS and sown January this year. Approximately 10cm in height, the plant has small, oval green leaves arranged in opposite pairs. White flowers are produced singly from the leaf axils on the upper part of the plant.

For three weeks the hot weather continues. The garden is swarming with welcome hoverflies and coloured Peacock Butterflies, and many unwelcome wasps which are determined to build nests below the soil surface (having reacted badly to two wasp stings, these nest areas

have been fumigated). In typical Bank Holiday fashion, rain arrived on the 24th August and gave the garden a well-earned drink. Prostanthera cuneata, bought last year, is producing its first blooms for me.

There has been no regrowth on the garden specimen of Melaleuca armillaris.

The first half of September brings mixed weather : gales, warm temperatures, showers, cool temperatures. there is an autumnal feel to the air first thing on the morning; moisture on the lawn and cobwebs in the bushes. Most of my Australasian plants have ceased flowering. Just a few pale purple spikes on Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty' contrasting with an abundance of purple spikes on H. 'Autumn Glory'.

In the greenhouse Melaleuca hypericifolia is still producing scarlet flower spikes. On the scree there is still colour from Wahlenbergia gloriosa and Parahebe 'Porlock Purple'. The last of the buds on Helichrysum waddelliae have opened - the older flowers are now looking dirty as they 'go to seed'. I have managed to collect plenty of seed from the plants.

A visit to the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show resulted in me buying, amongst other things, 3 alpines : Raoulia australis, R. hookeri and Helichrysum milfordiae. Having managed to kill two New Zealand alpines within weeks of their purchase, I have decided on a different method of cultivation. The two deceased plants were bought from Inshriach Nursery in excellent condition by my husband at the end of an eight day walking holiday in Scotland. I transplanted them into 12.5cm terracotta pots and stood them amongst my scree plants. In my morning rush to water my containerised plants before hurrying off to work, I have probably drowned them! My new method is to plant them in a very gritty compost in a strawberry pot, with the bottom half filled with gravel.

The second half of September has been warm and dry; temperatures in the low 20°C in some parts of the country.

Early October, and northern winds are blowing. Mid October, and unseasonally warm weather is with us. Temperatures in the low 20°C are experienced over at least half of the country.

Another addition to my ornamental grass collection is New Zealander Carex comans 'Frosted Curls', bought on a recent trip to Scotland. This grass has pale foliage which is almost white in places. Still putting on a bit of colour is Wahlenbergia gloriosa and Parahebe 'Porlock Purple'. In the greenhouse Indigofera australis is forming many flowering racemes. The New Zealand alpines in the strawberry pot appear to be thriving. The biological controls in the greenhouse have worked well. Kennedya rubicunda and Sollya heterophylla both have much cleaner foliage.

The third week of October brings the first sharp frost. Winter is on its way.

## BOOK REVIEW

By Jeff Irons

Reaching for the Sun. How plants work. By John King, C.U.P.

ISBN 0 521 58738 7 paperback £ 9.95
ISBN 0 521 55148 X hardback £30.00

Commonsense ought to tell you that the bulk of a tree is not taken from the soil beneath it. It that were the case, the tree would sink into the ground as it removed nutrients. Yet a surprising number of people believe that the whole of a plant has been taken from the soil in which it grows.

This book tells what actually happens when a plant grows. In simple language it does just what its title declares - explains how plants work, how water rises to the top of a tall tree, why flowers are coloured, what plants eat, and much more. In spite of its extensive coverage there are some surprising omissions. One of them is that the book contains little about sexuality. The fundamental question "What happens when pollen is placed on a stigma" is not asked, and therefore not answered.

The book is a "good read", and one which all curious gardeners should buy or borrow.

## AUSTRALIANS AT CHELSEA 19-23 MAY 1997

By Tony Entwistle

The exhibit by Kings Park, Perth, this year was I think the first official Australian one at Chelsea, and indeed the first since that at the Liverpool International Festival in 1984, which was outdoors and lasted for 5 months.

To be able to show flowers as well as foliage in May is a very real problem which was in part solved by using plants from the north of W.A. Part of the exhibit was meant to represent a sandy dry gold-mining northern area.

It had several Ptilotus spp in flower, with Dampiera and Conostylis, Prostanthera magnifica and a backdrop of massed dried Verticordia with some grey-leaved Acacia.

The rest of the exhibit was in the form of mini-hillocks dominated by Banksia ashbyi and grandis; these were cut branches which had been fixed to dead tree pieces, very cleverly done and giving a very natural appearance. It was interesting to listen to the comments of visitors on the first public day when they saw the Banksias; they were either described as Proteas (understandable, as the Kirstenbosch exhibit was very near) or as 'orange Cactus'!

Foliage was provided by Eucalyptus macrocarpa and Persoonia and some Myrtaceae. Plants noted in bloom included Anigozanthos, Verticordia

grandis, Stylidium galioides, several Darwinia, D. oldfieldii and D. oxylepsis, Brachysema, Adenanthos and perhaps most interesting of all a selection of the new Kings Park Lechenaultia hybrids, which seemed fairly compact plants in colours from yellow to red, with names such as 'Embers' and 'Apricot Delight'; also a patch of L. superba from the Barrens, the intense orange flowers; I would think this had been used in the hybridisation programme. There was also, inevitably, a grass-tree, Xanthorrhoea preisii, borrowed from England.

These are in fact obtainable here - if you have won the Lottery jack-pot - a nursery near me has one some 1.5m high at £300 or 3m at £600!

The two staff from Kings Park seemed very happy with the end result. They had survived all the inevitable bureaucracy and the plants - all except 3 - had survived the methylene fumigation.

I thought it a very laudable and worthwhile effort. It would indeed be nice if Chelsea had an exhibit from some part of Australia each year - after all, South Africa and several Caribbean countries do regularly.

If only even a small part from the Kings Park Show in September could be brought here to the RHS Great Autumn Show - but this is a pipe-dream!

The exhibit from Melbourne was entirely different, and to me disappointing in that I had expected a display of Victorian plants; but in fairness it was never meant to be this, but an art-form advert for Melbourne and the International Show there next April. It took the form of an array of enormous ornate high vases, liberally topped with fresh fruit and cut foliage and flowers, fresh and dried; many were from W.A. and I am sure I spotted a S. African Berzelia.

As well as Eucalypt and Grevillea foliage there were luridly dyed heads of Stirlingia latifolia, and sprays of Banksia grandis and baxteri, Hakea laurina, Boronia purdieana, Crowea, Isopogon and Guichenotia.

I somehow had the feeling that it did not quite succeed.

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## PLASTIC VERSUS TERRACOTTA

By Jeff Irons

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Earlier this year a member reported that his plants were growing much better since he had changed from plastic pots to clay ones. My response was so say that I believed that he could have obtained the same improvement in condition by watering less or by using a less water-retentive compost in his plastic pots. When, and how to water pots is

a continual problem. Cactus growers are well aware of it, and know that overwatering is less likely if plants are grown in small pots. The same is true for other plants, as it is easier for the leaves to get rid of excess water, when there is less of it around! On the other hand small pots restrict root growth, and that retards both top growth and flowering. Laboratory experiments in which plants were grown in sand and subjected to root pressure through weights placed on the sand showed that tip extension growth slowed after only 10 minutes of pressure. Large pots are definitely best for plant growth because fewer roots come into contact with pot sides or bottom. Yet they make it easier to over-water! I find that a good compromise is to grow several plants in one large pot. Each has a greater volume of compost in which to grow, yet there is root competition. The greater volume of compost reduces water content fluctuations, and the greater depth gives a better soil profile. I never impede drainage by 'crocking' my pots.

How do other members grow their pot plants? Sue Hyams would welcome your comments.

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## REPORT FROM PLYMOUTH

By Geoff Boyer

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The majority of seeds I ordered this year haven't come up, but I'm delighted that two seedlings of Banksia serrata have germinated and are doing fine. I've had no luck in the past with Banksia. Two seedlings of Lambertia formosa went yellow and brown and toppled over but another two are doing fine so far. The Acacia pravissima seeds are germinating. The other seeds I didn't think would germinate and have are Baeckia densifolia and one Prostanthera baxteri.

Here in Plymouth we have this budget-type warehouse that sells everything from household goods to horticultural materials, including plants. I was very fortunate a couple of weeks ago to buy three plants at £1.99 each : Prostanthera cuneata, Leptospermum 'Kea' and Leptospermum 'Crimson Glory'. I've also bought Callistemon rigidus and Callistemon citrinus 'Splendens' which is in flower at this moment. Another purchase was Grevillea juniperina sulphurea. All three

are in containers for the moment. My specimen of Pandorea jasminoides has been grown indoors in a south facing window and its beginning to take over. My other plant that's going berserk is a Diplolaena angustifolia growing on my bathroom windowsill. Does anybody know anything about this plant other than what's in the Chiltern Seed catalogue? I can tell you that when you crush the leaves there is a strong smell of coconut.

Down in my garden I have a Callistemon citrinus about to flower and its only approximately 4 years old. I have a bought Callistemon violacea about 3 years old, 1.5m x 1.5m and I haven't had any flowers on it yet. A seed grown 3 year old specimen of Eucalyptus viminalis is trying to take over the garden. I have a bought specimen of Grevillea rosmarinifolia sunk in a hole filled with peat and is growing quite strong.

Another thing I tried was smoking my seeds. Why not try incense sticks, I thought. So I went out looking for eucalyptus-scented sticks and found everything but, so in the end I settled for cherry blossom. All I do is put one in my heated propagator held in place with a small metalworker's clamp. Unfortunately my workshop was smelling very smokey for about a week afterwards. This idea might be worth trying and its not expensive to set up. Whether the smoking of the seeds in the propagator was helpful to the Baeckia densifolia seeds remains to be seen. When I order some more seeds I will try this method again.

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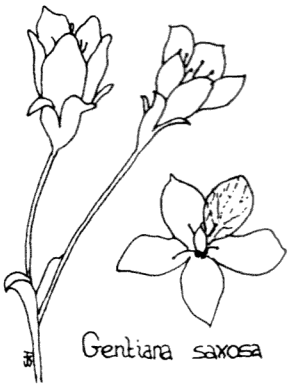
## GENTIANA SAXOSA

By Sue Hyams

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In mid September I paid a visit to the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show. I can still remember the displays of mossy woodland where clumps of Cyclamen hederifolium nestled alongside autumn-flowering gentian cultivars. In my own garden I grow these hardy cyclamen under Zelcova serrata and autumn gentians share a pot with a New Zealand species, Gentiana saxosa. In contrast to the northern hemisphere flowers with their large trumpets, mainly in shades of blue, the New Zealand gen-

tian's flowers are white. In fact in the New Zealand flora, white is the dominant colour followed by yellow. Blue and red are uncommon, although there are instances where these colours can be seen as veining on white/yellow petals. The predominance of white flowers is linked to the way they are pollinated - by moths which can easily see the blooms during their night-time flights.




Gentiana saxosa is one of the country's easier species to grow. It has a prostrate habit spreading upto 20cm and growing upto 6cm in height. Small spathulate green leaves are crowded together in rosettes from which arise flowering stems. Atop these stems the upward-facing goblet-shaped white flowers are produced terminally (with me, mid July this year). The flowers are either solitary or in cymes of upto 5 blooms. The white petals have grey-green veining; the throats of the flowers are green.

This antipodean gentian can easily be grown in either full sun or semi-shade as long as the soil is well drained. Adequate moisture is essential especially if growing in full sun. It may be shortlived but it easily raised from seed; in fact it often self-seeds.

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## BLUE LACE FLOWER

By Pat Anderson

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Jeff Irons, in this May's Pentachondra 18, described this recent addition to the seed list.

When we were in southwestern Australia last autumn (their spring, of course) we bought a packet of Rottnest daisy seeds (WA Wildflower Seed Co., PO Box 804, Canning Bridge, WA 6153). But blue lace flower is much the better common name. We knew before then only that Rottnest Island was famous for being the last significant natural survival area of the quokka (Senotix brachyurus), the half-metre vegetarian rat-like marsupial who gave the island its name.

It is not recorded whether it finds the 'daisy' an agreeable food, but it's certainly an agreeable umbellifera. Trachymene caerulea is a slightly straggly but strong annual* reaching almost a metre in height, with fundamentally trilobate but deeply dissected leaves. The

blue flowers are arranged in dense globular heads 3-5cm across supported by numerous green bracts. The young fruits are reddish-pink before maturity setting off the violet-blue of the petals to great effect.

Although the seedlings planted out in early June (garden soil, pH about 6.5) didn't much care for the torrential rain this year and consequently only just made it into a very blooms in late September, five plants in a 15cm pot in the greenhouse did very well. Placed outside in July, they were an immediate success with all varieties of hoverfly (but not with bees or butterflies).

After fertilisation, the nine sepals close back over the bract reassuming the shape of the bud: at this stage (early October) none of the seed has yet been released, but they look as though there will be enough for the APS later in the autumn.

Almost all the seeds in the packet (16) proved fertile and germinated in two weeks in April in 50:50 standard compost and sand.

*NB Not surprising: Rottnest Island is buffeted by cold winds off the Southern Ocean.

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## FOUR OAKS TRADE SHOW, SEPTEMBER 1997

Some notes on Australasian plant exporters

By Tony Entwistle

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AUSFERN had an extensive collection of Australian ferns and tree-ferns, Dicksonia and Cyathea, all sizes. Also Xanthorrhoeas and Kingias and many palms.

Prices (trade) ranged from £35 for a metre-high Xanthorrhoea preissii with flower spike to £650 for an enormous bifurcated one. I was told that their export licence is likely to cease in a few years, so if you want to splash out on a specimen, now is the time - after that you will have to wait 100 years for a seedling to grow!

AGRESCO (Carmel brand) export conservatory plants from Israel, including many Australians - cultivars of Grevillea eg. Robyn Gordon and Rondeau, which I have never found in this country, and of Chamalaucium, Anigozanthos etc.

NEW ZEALAND LINERS LTD as expected have a full range of Phormiums, Hebes, Leptospermum and Pittosporum cultivars, and many Metrosideros.

Our own CELYN VALE Nurseries lists 44 Eucalypts and 10 Acacias.

I spoke to the compost people SINCLAIR about low-phosphate composts. They are willing to make a tailor-made minimum phosphate compost for you, but you will have to have a full pallet - about 80 large bags!

Incidentally the results of a CSIRO trial of phosphate sensitivity of Australian natives should be available later this year. Eucalyptus and Melaleuca have been excluded as they are known to be fully tolerant.

# DIPLARRENA

By Jeff Irons

Diplarrena (dip-la-REEN-a)

Gk. diploös double
Gk. arren male - referring to the stamens

Most plants will sell on sight when they are in flower. Some almost run out of a nursery, and Diplarrena is among the latter. New information about the genus has been published since Brian Halliwell's article in our Spring 1992 Newsletter. It is now possible to make easy and reliable identifications of the species. Because of that I thought it would be a good idea to update Brian's article.

The two Diplarrena species are known as Butterfly Iris (or Flags) and that common name could not be more apt. It refers to the flowers, which sit atop slender stems just like a perched butterfly. Each flower is short-lived, but since every scape bears several in succession the flowering season is spread over 3 to 4 weeks of May and June. Diplarrena are small enough to fit happily into a rockery, and large enough to go into a mixed border, though for proper appreciation they do need space around them. Most strains are about 30-45cm high when in flower. Some are as small as 15cm, others as much as 1m, with leaves up to 80cm long. I find that the tall strains are not very satisfactory. To my eye their flowers are too small for the size of the plant. Soil conditions can be anything from bone dry in summer to almost waterlogged in winter. Although a sunny position is best plants will flower in most situations other than full shade. I find that the very small strains must have a soil which is always moist. In anything else, they die after flowering.

When introduced to Britain the genus had only one species, D. moraea, and this has resulted in confused labelling of nurserymen's plants. What is now D. latifolia was regarded then as a high level form of D. moraea. Brian Halliwell says that he has never found D. moraea to be winter hardy in Britain, and everything that I've seen labelled as D. moraea has actually been D. latifolia.

Both species have flowers with 3 pure white outer segments. Usually

they are about 3-5cm across, but sometimes blooms can be as much as 8.5cm across. The three, much smaller, inner segments are marked prettily with yellow and purple. They give the key to separation of the two species. In D. moraea the yellow and purple colouring is more prominent towards the middle of the segment, the edges being pale. The colour on D. latifolia is strongest towards the margins. In some plants the entire tip of a segment can be dark purple. Both species have one segment hooded over the stamens.

Latifolia means 'wide leaves' and in general D. latifolia does have leaves which are wider than those of D. moraea. They can be upto 25mm wide. Unfortunately some strains have narrower leaves, and when not in flower the two species can be confused. Most of the plants sold in Britain fall into this catagory. Briefly the two species are:

D. latifolia Leaves more than 10mm wide; inner segments of flower more highly coloured at the margins

D. moraea Leaves less than 10mm wide; inner segments of flowers more highly coloured in the centre

I've grown D. latifolia for over 30 years, in Derbyshire, Huntingdonshire and Wirral. In all that time it has been pest free, and has not needed summer watering - apart from the very small plants. There has been some winter browning of leaf tips, but that defect is much less severe than in many irids. My original plant came from Alan Bloom's private garden (as D. moraea) and I wonder whether it was from Comber's introduction. In past years County Park Nursery has offered several selections, all resulting from Graham Hutchins' 1985 trip to Tasmania. A 'West Coast' form has been sold in Britain, but is not recognised in Tasmania. At the moment the only named selection is 'Amethyst Fairy'. As far as I know it is not available in Britain. When I saw it in Tasmania the plant was small, but in the high level NSW garden of a gardening friend it shot up to 80cm. Plainly the size depends on conditions.

The species name used to be spelt with Robert Brown's 1810 name Diplarrhena. Under the rules of botanical nomenclature La Billardière's 1796 spelling Diplarrena has to take precedence. La Billardière's original spelling of moroea was altered to moraea under these same rules. D. latifolia is endemic to Tasmania, and D. moraea is much more widespread, being found in NSW, Tasmania and Victoria.

## NORTHERN MEETING, APRIL 27 1997

Held at the home of Greg Plenty, in West Yorkshire

Sunday, 27th April, dawned fine and dry, completely different to the damp murk of the Harrogate Flower Show of the day before.

During late morning, as a response to the many letters I'd sent out weeks before, people began appearing from far and wide.

After a buffet lunch, the discussions began. As usual, they tended to follow a rather seamless form, following the interests and experiences of the members present, led by our 'font of all knowledge', Jeff Irons.

He'd brought along various bits and pieces for us to examine and talk about. How does he cram all those different species into his back garden?

We looked at various Grevilleas, some with wonderful flowers. Jeff told us of those he finds hardy on the Wirral, narrow-leaved types such as G. australis, alpina and lanigera. Many of us had not seen these before and wanted to find out where we could buy them.

No-one could work out why Jeff had brought along a 75mm pot of 'moss' and a magnifying glass. All was revealed - I think - when the greenery was studied at high magnification. We were looking at not moss, but extremely tiny seedlings of Richea gunnii. He later expected to transplant them as a clump - not surprisingly! No wonder plants of this and related species and genera can be difficult to obtain.

Dennis Rowlinson told us of his recent trip to Australia. He'd spent a lot of money on plant books whilst there, which we were delighted to look at.

There followed a discussion about Banksias and proteaceous plants in general, with reference to their growing conditions. We were reminded of how they tend to grow in very infertile soils, yet their intolerance to phosphates is not general, but strangely very specific to

particular species.

Talk of poor soils led to a quick trip round my own garden, which is still developing after only three years, but has one or two interesting things.

Here was a chance to catch Jeff out! What was that shrub growing against the south wall of the barn? Reddish-green linear leaves with silvery willow-like young growth gave a clue. Jeff went for Tasmannia lanceolata, but no, it was, unexpectedly to the visitors I suppose, Hakea saligna. This was originally grown from Chiltern Seed some years ago. It's not quite hardy in the open garden but seems to do well against a wall with, as yet, no damage in winter. However, it has yet to flower. Or was Jeff right and did Chiltern get it wrong?...

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## NORTHERN MEETING, OCTOBER 11 1997

Held at the home of Pat Anderson, in Richmond, North Yorkshire

Report compiled by Dennis Rowlinson

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Six members attended the meeting, which started after a wander around the garden looking at the new plantings made by Pat and Margaret Anderson.

Dennis Rowlinson started the proceedings by presenting Jeff Irons' article on Epacridaceae (Jeff was unable to join as he had a previous engagement). This gave an outline of their range of habitats, growth patterns and their botanical differences to the heathers they replace in Australasia. The problems of their unisexual behaviour and the difficulty of germination of the seeds gave impetus to a long debate. This was followed by a series of discussions on various subjects initiated by everyone.

The meeting finished with the usual sale of unusual plants which generated £25 towards Society funds.

Many thanks to Pat and Margaret for the lovely food and looking after us so well.

# TIT FOR TAT

By Pat Anderson

In 'GOING WALKABOUT' in the November 1992 (No.9) issue of the newsletter Sue Hyams mentioned the Australasian invasion of the Cape mountains in South Africa, in partcular by hakea and acacia. Here is some more detail.

In 1845 the government of South Africa became worried by the erosion of dunes and decided to restabilise threatened areas. Many plant species were tested for quick growth in the dry windy conditions. In the 1880s and 1890s the Forestry Department imported and distributed 14 million seeds of Coastal Wattle (Acacia cyclops), 16 million of Coast Tea-tree (Leptospermum laevigatum) and 300 million of Golden Wreath Wattle (Acacia saligna) as well as others.

In Cape Province the problems have now become acute mainly due to the Sydney Golden Wattle (Acacia longifolia), the Silky Hakea (Hakea sericea) and the Sweet Hakea (H. drupacea). The biomass above ground is estimated to have more than doubled over that of the original low fynbos and the colonisers are depriving the city of its limited water supply. Ironically, it had been thought that additional tree and bush cover would have attracted more rain and eased the problems. A serious onslaught has been launched using pests such as fungi, moths and weevils from Australia, and weekend 'Hakea hacks' attack the offending trees and bushes which have incidentally delighted many indigenous species of birds and mammals with the additional food sources.

It all seems interestingly similar to the way I have seen the denizens of New South Wales go about rooting out the exotics like Lantana camara, privet (Ligustrum lucidae) and Camphor laurel (Cinnamomum camphora), and as Sue pointed out, the Bitou Bush (Chrysanthemoides monilifera) imported from South Africa for the purpose of - you've guessed it - arresting soil erosion.

Reference : Low, T., 1997. Australia Nature 25.

## SNIPPET

Following on from the previous article, I came across the next piece of information in The Times newspaper.

In an attempt to stop an Australian melaleuca from wiping out hundreds of species of local insects and plants in the Everglades, squadrons of snout beetles are being imported from Australia where they are known to kill the trees. The tree was originally introduced into America at the turn of the century by well-meaning farmers because it was believed that its spongelike qualities were good for swampland. Unfortunately the climate suited it too well and it has grown out of hand seriously disturbing the ecological balance of the area. It is estimated that the melaleuca has colonised 20% of the 7.5 million-acre swampland.

Sue Hyams

## STURT'S DESERT PEA

By Jeff Irons

One day last summer, when I was working at Ness Gardens, a Friend came in with half a dozen flowering pots of Sturt's Desert Pea. He wanted to know whether the gardens would like them.



I've never tried to grow Swainsona formosa because it is supposed to be very difficult. Australian literature abounds with articles on "How I grow Sturt's Desert Pea." In Britain the recommended method is to graft it onto Colutea arborescens. The operation requires some tricky timing. This chap had simply bought some seed, soaked it overnight before sowing, and grown the seedlings in John Innes No.2 with added peat.

Encouraged by this success I've bought seed, which is in the 1998 seed list. In case you don't know it. Swainsona formosa is a low growing woody pea which has large flowers with a black (rarely red) centre. Usually red, their outer part can be pink or white, and the whole plant is very decorative.

## THE FINAL WORD

Once again many thanks to all contributors. Articles are always needed, especially those on New Zealand plants. If you find time in the next six months to put pen to paper, please don't hesitate.

I hope that I haven't made too many mistakes this issue - it was done in a bit of a hurry, due to shortage of time. Apologies in advance.

Sue Hyams

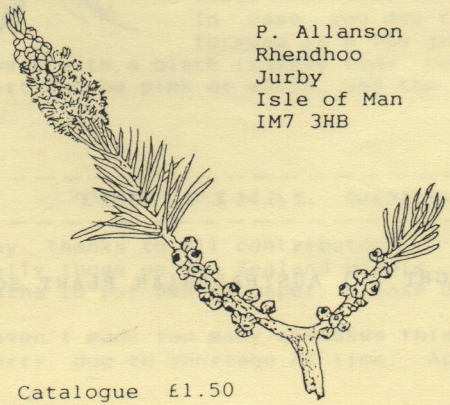
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