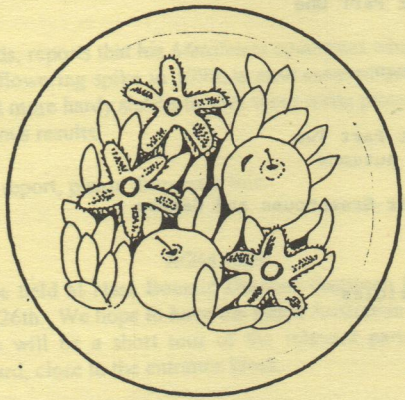
PENTACHONDRA

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY



ISSUE 22 MAY 1999

AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 22
May 1999

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EDITORIAL

The winter of 1998/99 has again been mild with abundant rain and strong winds. I actually managed to mow my lawn on New Year's Eve! Snowdrops started blooming in the first week of January. On 6th January London enjoyed its hottest January day for more than 150 years as the temperature climbed to 15.7C. During the winter my garden had several coverings of snow and experienced several frosty nights, but no lengthy cold spell. I successfully overwintered outside, in containers, specimens of *Melaleuca nesophila* and *Sollya heterophylla*.

The hard frosts in mid-April have caused more damage to plants after all the soft growth put on in the milder conditons. *Grevillea robusta* in the greenhouse suffered blackened foliage as did my South American *Acnistus australis* which had just acquired its first coat of leaves this year. And my poor wisteria, which was just about to bloom....all the flowering racemes have shrivelled up.

Thomas Naylor, of Leeds, reports that his *Melaleuca squarrosa* which is now over 2.5m high and produced just one flowering spike in 1998, is now covered in buds. Thomas plants his tender subjects amongst more hardy shrubs to give them some protection, although it may not produce the most decorous results.

If you have anything to report, please drop me a line.

Sue Hyams

AGM 1999

The APS AGM will be held at Ness Botanic Gardens (between Liverpool and Chester) at 2pm on Saturday June 26th. We hope to have the noted Australian writers Rodger and Gwen Elliot with us. There will be a short tour of the relevant parts of the gardens. Please assemble in the courtyard, close to the entrance kiosk.

Will members who belong to the Northern Horticultural Society, or the RHS or who have a Season Ticket for Ness Gardens, please ensure that they have their tickets with them.

Direction details for Ness Gardens can be obtained from Jeff Irons or Sue Hyams.

RHS SHOW - TATTON PARK SHOW
July 22-25, Knutsford, Cheshire

This show, the first "Hampton Court" of the north, will be the biggest horticultural event in the north since the Liverpool International Garden Festival in 1982. Your treasurer, Tony Entwistle, has managed to obtain a stand in the Specialist and Garden Societies marquee.

The stand is 4 x 2.5m and it is expected that the Society will mount a show of plant material occupying at least 50% of this space.

HOW MEMBERS CAN HELP

1. Those who live within around an hour's journey or less from Tatton and would be willing to man our stand for some of the time (Thurs & Fri 11am-6pm, Sat 10am-6pm, Sunday 10am-5pm). The weekend will be the busiest and we should try to man our stand fully then.

2. Those members who live further away but still in the vague north-west and north midlands may decide to visit the show for the day and if so you might be willing to give up a few hours during your visit and man our stand (it is one way of getting in free!).

Can you please let Jeff Irons know what hours you can offer. Those of us who live near Tatton will do all that we can but we cannot be there for the whole time, and we will have a lot of work to do in setting up on the day or two before.

THE PLANT DISPLAY

We are working on this; it is not a big area and we cannot have too many very large plants, nor do we have a lorry to transport them! If you think you will have something suitable in flower at the time please let us know. There may well be a case for cut flowers and foliage rather than pots eg. a vase of Hebes or Callistemons might be better than pot-grown plants. There will be practical problems:- plants would have to be delivered to Tatton the day before the show, or left with myself or Jeff in advance. We are hoping to get some Australian cut-flowers from Israel.

Tatton Park is only 10 minutes from exit 19 of the M6, and the M56 and M62 intersections are quite close.

We have to date only a handful of volunteers so if you think you can help please let Jeff know.

Staging this show will obviously entail some expense to the Society, but we can claim some expenses back from the RHS.

SOUTHPORT FLOWER SHOW

The theme for the 1999 show is Australasia with Australasian flora and fauna featuring throughout the exhibits. The dates for your diary are August 19th - 21st.

TREASURER'S NOTE

The enclosed balance sheet for 1998 is very satisfactory despite the expense in producing the Index. It is not expected to have to increase subscriptions for some years.

This year (1999) it proved necessary to send out 112 reminders to Members who had not paid their subscriptions by February. This cost the Society over £30 in postage, envelopes etc., and you must agree this is a quite unnecessary and unjustifiable expense for a small society.

Next year I intend to celebrate the Millennium by not sending out any reminders. There will be one in the December newsletter (and you are welcome to pay then!), but those who do not pay by Standing Order (I have the form for this) and forget will only have the 'reminder' of not receiving the May Pentachondra.

CHANGE OF POSTCODE

Please note that Jeff Irons' postcode is now CH60 1XG. For full address, see inside back page.

THANK YOU

Many thanks to all contributors especially those I didn't acknowledge individually. The Spring Newsletter always coincides with the busiest time of the year at the garden centre which I help manage, and the start of eleven hour days, and I must admit that by the time I get in on the evening and have a meal, paperwork is the last thing on my mind. I do appreciate all your articles; without them there would be no Pentachondra, and we would not be able to learn from each others successes and failures. Just one plea: if anyone can write about New Zealand plants that would be most welcome. Most contributions are on Aussie plants and as we are the Australasian Plant Society, we need a balanced newsletter.

THE AUSSIE INFO-PACK

This pack has been compiled from many sources, including the Internet. It has involved a lot of work and will have some gaps and faults which members may well be able to correct or add to.

The pack comprises the following:

1. List of selected UK Nurseries offering Australasian plants.
2. Directory of NSPCC Australasian collections in the UK and France, plus ORCA Australian collections.
3. ACRA list of registered cultivars of Australian plants.
4. List of unregistered cultivars in general cultivation.
5. Directory of Australian native seed suppliers comprising:

(a) CSIRO/ANBG list
(b) many other suppliers
(c) plus NZ and S African native seed suppliers.

6. List of Australian and NZ retail native plant nurseries.
7. Directory of Australian Botanic Gardens and Arboreta, and note of where to see native plants in and around Perth, Melbourne and Sydney.
8. Article on the geology of the Australian sand-plains (SGAP).
9. Booklist of WA and Victoria SGAP.
10. Selected booklist of ANBG Canberra.
11. List of SGAP state societies and national Study Groups for genera and specialities.
12. List of native plants suitable for alkaline soils (SGAP).
13. List of endangered and threatened Australian species.
14. Extract from original paper from Kings Park WA on smoke germination.
16. List of recent name changes (SGAP).
17. ANBG notes on Acacias, Banksias and Telopeas.

This package (which covers some 80 sides of A4) will be sent in a folder. Cost £3.50 inclusive (payment to APS) Send orders to Tony Entwistle. Orders will only be prepared to order, so please allow 3-4 weeks delivery.

SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS (SGAP)

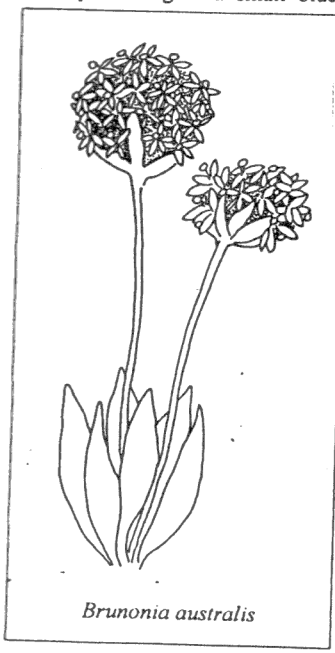
As expected, the SGAP has decided to change its name to the Australian Plant Society (APS). This will cause some confusion with us (they did not consult us!) so it will be best to

continue to refer to the SGAP, which in fact most branches are continuing, for the moment, to do as a subtitle eg APS Victoria (SGAP).

BLUE FLOWERED PLANTS IN THE 1999 SEED LIST

By Jeff Irons

"Blue" flowered plants are always in demand, though it is surprising how many of them actually have quite a bit of violet in their blooms. One of the few true blues is found in the perennial herb *Brunonia australis*. The common name of Blue Pincushions could not be more apt. Imagine a small blue 'cushion' of tiny flowers, with the yellow stamens protruding like pinheads. That is what Brunonia's flowers heads are like. In Australia a search is on for selections with short stalks, for the plant's stalks are usually too long for it to be taken up by the pot plant trade.



Brunonia australis

When last in Australia I took seed from garden plants, and sowed it when I returned home. The summer was cool, and the plants progressed slowly. So slowly in fact that even though they were in my greenhouse they did not produce flower buds until December. Planted out in 1997 they bloomed that summer, survived the warm '97-'98 winter outside, and bloomed again in August 1998. However such treatment isn't to be recommended. The best course is to lift plants after flowering and over-winter them under glass. Remember that they are deciduous.

Wahlenbergia is similar to *Campanula*, but releases its seed in a different way. The most striking 'blue' is that of the rhizomatous Australian Royal Bluebell, *W. gloriosa*. Sue Hyams finds that it is perfectly winter hardy in her sandy soil. In warmer Wirral it will overwinter only in the 15cm of soil in the top of a metre high rubble-filled wall. Plainly, excellent drainage is essential. The striking flowers appear over a long period in summer, and the plant spreads slowly - too slowly for my liking.

The most garden worthy New Zealand Wahlenbergia is *W. akaroa*. Dennis Rowlinson found that it performed well in the cool wet summer of 1998. Since the natural habit is on the limestone cliffs of Akaroa Heads (near Christchurch) it could be expected to stand up to dry summers too. The large flowers are a pale blue-violet, the outside being paler than the inside. The self fertile radicate (clump forming) species will hybridize with other radicate species, and possibly with rhizomatous ones too. If collecting seed (and we DO need seed for our bank) you must keep it isolated from other Wahlenbergia.

W. pygmaea ssp. *drucei* is a recently described ssp. too new for it to have been included in the AGS Encyclopaedia. Unlike the spp. *pygmaea* and *tararua* it grows on grit. The pale blue-violet flowers have a creamy white central band in each lobe. Given the chance it will hybridize. Again we do want more seed for our bank, but only from plants grown in isolation.

Ed:- *Orthrosanthus* are also blue flowered.

NOTES ON THIS YEAR'S SEED LIST

PART ONE

Asterotrichion discolor. This narrow evergreen shrub from Tasmania was the subject of an enthusiastic letter in the superseded JRHS. The very floriferous plant illustrated has since died, and the species has probably been lost to British cultivation. The species, which will need shelter and moist conditions, usually has male and female flowers on different plants.

Telopea truncata f. *lutea*. Taken from the first yellow flowered Tasmanian waratah plant to be discovered, this seed will give about 25% yellow flowered plants. Because of that, much of the seed has been given to the Welsh National Botanic Garden, which will grow the seedlings to flowering size. Some has been retained for APS members with both space in their gardens and patience. Vegetatively propagated plants from the parent are sold under the name "Essie".

Isophysis tasmanica. A challenge for the experienced alpine grower! Sow seed on sieved dried sphagnum. With luck germination will occur in the autumn. Then it is up to your skill.

ANOPTERUS

By Gary Dunlop

Anopterus is a small genus of two similar Australian shrubs or small trees in the Escalloniaceae family. Only one, *Anopterus glandulosus*, which is indigenous to Tasmania, and known colloquially as the Tasmanian Laurel, is reasonably hardy in mild gardens and is in cultivation in the British Isles.

The other species *A. macleayanus* is confined to the sub-tropical hill forests of the eastern coast of Queensland and the north of New South Wales. It is known colloquially as the Queensland or MacLeay Laurel. It is not in widespread cultivation, even in its native land (1) though it is recommended for a moist shaded site or indoors. (2) It does not seem to warrant a mention in any general British horticultural dictionary or encyclopaedia. In the wild *A. macleayanus* grows in shade and apparently requires shade from the strong sunlight experienced in Australia. The new growth is bright red like a Pieris, fading through bronze to dark green. The leaves, in the only illustration which I have seen (3) seem to be undulate at the edge though they are described, like *A. glandulosus* as bluntly serrate, so it may be somewhat variable in the wild, though only white flowered forms seem to be known. It can

vary in height from 3-10 metres and from 1-5 metres wide, though normally with a single stems, which with age it apparently tends to lose the lower foliage (4).

These two species are geographically remote from one another, and this disparate location, as well as the family, suggest that the genus had its origin in the Jurassic period, 180 million years ago, before Gondwana split apart. At this time, Tasmania and the eastern coast of Australia were on an east-west alignment along the southern edge of Gondwana, rather than the current north-south one (5). The investigation by paleo-botanists of the fossilised plant remains in Antarctica may yet establish whether this genus once inhabited these, now frozen, wastes, as it too, formed the southern edge of this giant tectonic plant, before it was rent asunder.

Bean (6) records that *A. glandulosus* was first introduced to Kew in 1840 where it subsequently flowered under glass in winter, but did not prove hardy outside in London. It was figured in Curtis's Botanical Magazine Tab.4377. (7) The first outdoor flowering he records was at Cann House in Devon in May 1920. A quarter of a century later W. Arnold-Forster in his peerless and eminently readable book 'Shrubs for Milder Counties' (8) describes it in the final chapter entitled 'Some uncommon, untried or tender shrubs'. His brief descriptive account of it is worth quoting in full:

'A. glandulosus. A large bush with long evergreen, toothed leaves and most beautiful flowers in spring - terminal spikes of cup-shaped flowers, white sometimes flushed with pink. This plant from Tasmanian woodlands is reputed to be fastidious, but has done well in a number of gardens in Southern England, and should certainly be tried in mild places, especially near the sea. It wants shade, shelter and an acid soil. Cuttings of very young shoots strike easily, but are apt to spend their strength in flowering. There is a pink variety (not seen here).'

This eloquent brief description summarises the plant in a fraction of the length taken by Bean but gives a better impression of the plant than the longer more precise botanical description; yet it still covers the cultivation requirements, the variety of forms and idiosyncrasies of propagated plants.

Bean (9) summarising the results of his investigation into the cultivation of various tender plants in the British Isles, obtained only 5 replies regarding *A. glandulosus*. It failed with Mr P D Williams at Lanarth, but still survived after four years outside at Exbury. It was considered tender at Bodnant, but survived for 15 years in Lord Headfort's garden in Co. Meath in Ireland, which did not enjoy an exceptionally mild climate. Its eventual loss was ascribed to wind rock. Hugh Armytage-Moore at Rowallane regarded it as reasonably hardy. Bean concluded *'Besides a soft moist atmosphere it would appear to require at least moderate shade and a soil rich in humus and of an acid or neutral nature'*.

Bean suggests an ultimate height of 40 feet, whereas Harold Comber (10) notes *'20 feet high in moister places, but have to take its beauties on trust, as it is feeling the effects of previous bad seasons and is not flowering.'* This missed opportunity was presumably recorded in 1929, and he must have seen it in flower the following year, as in his field notes (11), for 1929/30 he collected seed twice, under the numbers 1418 and 1788; only the latter collection is described: *Anopterus glandulosus. Labill. A very beautiful, broad leafed, evergreen shrub, 6-20 feet tall, from moist forests 500-2000ft. Flowers in terminal racemes, white or*

pink tinted. Not far from being hardy as it is found at 2000ft. where the snow lies in winter. Grow in any good moist peaty soil.' Harold Comber, though perhaps better known for his earlier plant introductions from South America, had a keen eye for a good garden plant and a knowledge of the cultivation requirements. His father James had been the first head gardener at Nymans so plantmanship and gardening were in his blood. After a secondary education at a private school he went, at the age of seventeen, to work for Henry Elwes at Colesbourne Park for four years, before a couple of years at Bletchingly Castle followed by a course of study at RBG Edinburgh, which was sponsored by Sir Edmund Loder and Henry Elwes. (12)

In the wild in Tasmania, *A. glandulosus* is an under-storey shrub, in wet temperate rain forests (from sea level up to 3000 ft according to the Flora of Tasmania) and apparently quite variable in form and size as well as the form of the leaves and inflorescence and flower colour; the pink flowered form mentioned by Arnold-Forster, has recently been introduced into British cultivation. This shrub is sometimes illustrated in general plant encyclopaedias but no two illustrations of the flower are similar. The variation in altitude, at which this shrub is found, is likely to mean that there is some variation in hardiness of the species in the wild and presumably in cultivation; this might account for the variation in success of the cultivation of this plant, which Bean discovered.

Both the pure white and pink flushed flowering forms grow well in Northern Ireland. The form which I grow has pink tinged flowers in tight racemes. In 15 years from a cutting the taller of the two plants has reached about 2 metres, the other about 1.5 metres. The parent plant, from which I struck several cuttings, grew in Plas Merdyn, the woodland garden of late Drs. Bill and Gretta Lennon, Holywood, Co. Down. At the time it was over 4.5 metres high, and well shaped like a portly cypress, broadening to over 1.5 metres at its widest. By now it must be about 6 metres tall. The original cuttings were struck fairly easily in a closed propagator in shaded heat, more recent attempts in a similar propagator were less successful. The cuttings were subsequently placed in mist and rooted quickly. Most, as reported by Arnold-Forster, tended to flower rather than grow for the first year or two.

The pure white flowered form grows at Guincho, the garden of the late Mrs Vera Mackie, where it has reached about 7 metres tall, and 3-4 metres across at the top but it is an ungainly shape, denuded at the base, though this may in part be due to pruning owing to its proximity to a path. The individual flowers are slightly larger than the pink tinged form which I grow and are elegantly spaced out in the panicle, which resembled large sprays of lily of the valley. This form has somewhat larger and coarser leaves, but with less prominent bronze shading to the underside of the leaf, than the pink tinged form. This might suggest that the flavonoid or pigment giving colour to the pink tinged form is missing in the pure white form. The chemistry of pigmentation is complex but a useful brief introductory summary was published in 1998 by Dr Alun Rees. (13)

The plants in both Plas Merdyn and Guincho survived the severe winter of 1980-1 when a week of severe frosts had temperatures plummetting at night and not rising above freezing during the day. It is likely both gardens recorded temperatures as low as -16°C, as the garden at Mount Stewart did that winter. So given the right conditions, both these forms could be considered fairly hardy.

I brought two smallish plants with me when I moved gardens just over ten years ago. Curiously, the taller of the two plants which I grow, was planted in drier conditions with less

shade. The naturally high humidity in Northern Ireland even in rare hot dry summers may well account for the survival of this problematical 'tender' shrub. Neither plant is of such an elegant shape as the parent plant, but both have had a chequered history and been moved several times. In the wet autumn of 1998 I threw caution to the wind and moved the taller of the two plants to a shadier and probably moister location. The root ball was relatively compact, more akin to a camellia than rhododendron, but with enough fibrous root to retain a reasonable amount of soil. The plant, which is about 1.8 metres tall, survived the move quite successfully, though the severe storms after Christmas that year laid it flat, though without completely unearthing the root ball. Additional soil and repeated firming in have kept the plant almost upright despite a sequence of subsequent storms. It is too early to say whether Lord Headfort's prognosis will be vindicated, though the wet weather has so far kept the plant reasonably healthy.

April or May is the normal flowering time for both forms of the shrub in Ulster, though the mild autumn of 1995 produced a premature crop of buds on one of my plants, which had it continued until the new year might have seen the first flower open on New Year's Day. Severe frosts of -13°C on Boxing Day Night and the following night destroyed all the buds, though left the foliage unscathed. Remarkably, the plant made a completely fresh set of flower buds and bloomed remarkably well, given the circumstances, but a little later than usual. I may be particularly well placed to grow *Anopterus* as I garden on a relatively uncommon geological base for Northern Ireland. The low windy hill top on which I garden was formed by a dolerite sill, thus providing an acidic soil on a similar geological base to much of Tasmania, with a reasonably moist climate. The eastern part of the province where I am located only records about 914mm (36 inches) per year, but such rain that there is, is usually well distributed throughout the year. However, in the ten years since I started my current garden, we have experienced at least 4 very dry summers, which did result in many losses as the depth of soil over the bedrock is quite shallow in most parts of the garden.

Anopterus glandulosus is reputedly very difficult to grow from seed. I only know of one person, Dick Fulcher, who managed to germinate seed when he was at Bicton Agricultural College in Devon. One plant survived with him outside for a number of years at Bicton, reaching about 1.2 metres before it succumbed; though the cause was undetermined. Given the climate in the natural habitat, I think Jeff Irons is probably correct in suggesting that the seed must be kept moist, though whether the plants are self sterile is not known. I understand from Jeff that the species self-seeds quite prolifically in the wild.

Anopterus macleayanus would certainly seem to be a worthwhile plant for shaded indoor cultivation, though given the levels of sunlight in some parts of the British Isles, shade may not be so necessary. One can but hope it is introduced into cultivation in Britain before too long, though if seed germination is as problematical as would seem to be the case with *A. glandulosus* plants may well have to be introduced rather than seed. Given the right conditions, *A. glandulosus* should be able to be cultivated more widely in the British Isles, though it may only be suitable for the western fringes as the hotter drier climate of the south and east of the country is likely to prove inhospitable for this charming and elegant shrub.

ED: *A. glandulosus* seed from the 1999 harvest is in the current APS seedlist. It has been stored at 4°C while in our care.

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8. Arnold-Forster W 1948 Shrubs for the Milder Counties, Country Life, London, pp315-6.
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10. Comber H F 1931 Plant-collecting in Tasmania Pts 1 & 2 New Flora & Silva Vol 3. pp91-100 & 165-176.
11. Comber H F 1930 Filed Notes of Tasmanian Plants.
12. Nicholson S 1992 Nymans: The Story of a Sussex Garden, Alan Sutton, Stroud.
13. Rees A 1998 The Colour of Flowers, The New Plantsman, Vol 5, Part 2 pp101-8.

Acknowledgement
I would like to thank Jeftf Irons for providing some of the background information and references for this articles.

"IT'S A PIG!"

By Greg Plenty

I've been keen on the sub-tropical look in my garden for some years. I started with *Cordyline australis* but soon found that they are much hardier than is suggested in most gardening books, even those sponsored by the R.H.S. Round this way (West Yorkshire), if you're lucky, they can get quite big. There are some large specimens, perhaps 3.5 to 4.5m tall that survived the very cold weather of now three winters ago (I write in March 1999) when the temperature dropped to about -20°C. What they seem to dislike, as with so many tenderish rosette-forming plants, is very cold weather combined with the dampness of melting snow. The hardiest forms seem to be the slowest growing, according to Angus White, the owner of Architectural Plants in Sussex. (1)

But what of *Cordyline indivisa*? I first saw this magnificent species on a Gardeners' World programme from Northern Ireland (I think!) many years ago. These plants were perhaps 2 metres tall, branched, with very wide leaves with a central yellow stripe.

Finally I tracked plants down to the nursery mentioned above. Twice I managed to kill them, but for no apparent reason. One had suddenly given up the ghost despite being kept frost-free over winter.

Opinions differ as to its hardiness, but there's no doubt that it comes from the moist mountain ranges of New Zealand, emerging as young plants, as the trunk grows, into the sunlight.

It seems that they are not easy to grow! Angus White describes it in his excellent catalogue as "challenging to grow...It's a pig." They don't seem to like being grown in pots for too long. However, a friend of mine, Clifford Ball, who lives in Wetherby, had one growing very well in a pot for years. On moving house he planted it in full sun two years ago and it's not looked back, coming through some very cold weather without protection.

In 1996 I acquired some seed from Chiltern Seeds. There weren't many in the packet but they germinated quite well and produced some healthy-looking seedlings. How was I to keep them alive? I had a look on the Internet by typing in "Cordyline indivisa" in one of the search engines (2). General views from around the world were that they should be grown like ferns in shady and damp conditions. I've gone for this view and it seems to be working.

I've got three *C. indivisa* planted out at the moment. One is under a *Pseudopanax crassifolia* in semi-shade; another is under a quite large *Dicksonia antarctica*, while the other is next to an *Astelia chathamica* in full shade. There's no difference in their growth, which is rather slow compared to *C. australis*. I water them in warm dry weather - quite rare conditions in these parts in the last twelve months. Dryness at the roots seems to be the limiting factor to their survival rather than low temperatures. At least that's my theory! Any more ideas?

(1) Architectural Plants, Nuthurst, Horsham, West Sussex. RH13 6LH. Quite a number of interesting Australasians stocked.
(2) If you're on the Internet, I recommend typing WWW.Metacrawler.Com in the top address box to start your search as it searches all the search engines on the internet.

Greg can be contacted at e-mail: gregplenty@svbarn.freeserve.co.uk

AUSTRALIANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

By Tony Entwistle

No, I have not got a villa in the Med, not even a week's timeshare, but I have over a lifetime visited most areas of the Mediterranean, mostly in winter/spring, and I have kept an eye open for Australian plants.

The 'Med' is itself a complex and climatically very differing area, so I am referring in this article only to the 'tourist' Med, ie the littoral and adjacent areas under about 300m.

I have to say that the result of my observations is not encouraging. There are *Eucalyptus*, of course, mostly *E. globulus*, but very few of the ornamental flowering species. There are Acacias, all of the *retinoides/longifolia* type; some *Callistemon citrinus*; the odd tree of *Grevillea robusta*, and that's about it. I have never seen a Banksia for example.

Why is this? There are many reasons - firstly, climate and soil. Though temperate Australia is often said to have a 'Mediterranean' climate, this is not true, as Jeff says in his book. Even in south-western WA, perhaps the nearest, the climate is not as variable as in the Med, and I have encountered deep snow, albeit short lived, even at sea level in places as far apart as

Mallorca, Nice, Rhodes and Cyprus.; whereas even a few hours of snow on the tops of the Stirling Ranges in WA gets local newspaper headlines.

Secondly, there is the soil. A large proportion of the Med is on limestone, sometimes very alkaline, just the reverse of Australia. This would certainly not suit a lot of Australian plants, although there is still a good range of lime-tolerant species available.

Thirdly, availability. Whereas in this country there seems to be a Garden Centre round every bend of the road, they are far and few afield in the Med, and the position seems to worsen the further east one travels. There are nurseries, of course, largely geared to the popular standard plants, and large specimens for instant effect for hotels and villas. A lot of the 'concrete jungle' of the littoral is not truly owner-occupied for most of the year, so the gardens have to be easily maintained and are not 'plantsmen's' gardens.

And finally I doubt whether the Mediterranean races are basically as 'plant-mad' as the British. I have the impression - and who can blame them - that they are more interested in producing their delicious fruit and vegetables.

The cynic might say that if you took a deep breath and said quickly 'Oleander-Hibiscus-Bougainvillea' you have described 90% of the ornamental horticulture of the Med. Perhaps in another 20 years times will have changed.

LIBERTIA GRANDIFLORA

By Sue Hyams

In late March I bought a plant of *Libertia grandiflora*. This New Zealand irid is a rhizomatous perennial with yellowish-green narrow iris-like leaves upto 75cm long. Clusters of 3-6 white flowers, each upto 3cm in diameter, are produced in long panicles in late spring and early summer.

To grow well, *L. grandiflora* requires a humus-rich moist soil with good drainage and full sun; ie. try it in a gravel garden. In a cold winter it is advisable to protect the base with a mulch. The plant I purchased was easily split into four pieces, the largest of which I potted into a ceramic pot to stand amongst my collection of grasses. The remaining three pieces were planted in the rockery/scree.

GROWING BANKSIA OUTDOORS

By Jeff Irons

In January this year I received a telephone call from someone in northern England. He wanted to grow *Banksia robur* outside, and was very surprized when I advised against it. A Cornish nursery had told him that it is fully winter hardy. There is a vast difference between winters in the extreme south-west of Cornwall and those in the remainder of the country. Even 50 years ago, when winters were cold, the average winter temperature in S.W. Cornwall was over 7°C, the level at which plant growth ceases. Nowadays temperatures there must be

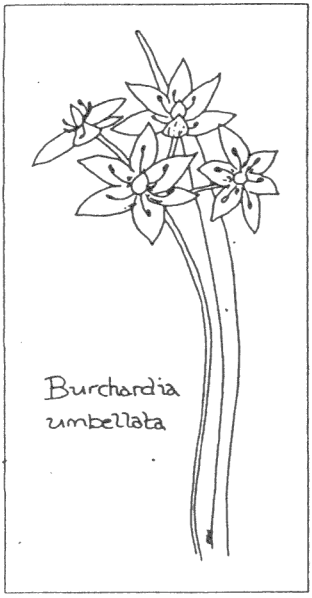
much higher. Plant survival in such areas is no guide to survival elsewhere. Anyway there is a difference between survival and thriving.

When asked I recommend only 3 Banksia for outdoor cultivation - *canei, marginata* and *saxicola*. Even these cannot be guaranteed. All three of them died in the '95-'96 winter in my garden. Warm weather up to Christmas had kept them growing. Then three successive nights with minima of -9°C killed them. Under glass I recommend *B. blechnifolia*. It has attractive foliage, and never gets too big for a small greenhouse.

NOTES ON THIS YEAR'S SEED LIST

PART TWO

Alyogyne huegelii is commonly known as the lilac hibiscus. It is an erect shrub upto 3m high found in S.A. and W.A. The lilac to pink or, occasionally white flowers are 7-12cm across with 5 overlapping petals and a yellow protruding style.



Burchardia umbellata, otherwise known as milkmaids, is a honey-scented member of the Lily family, growing upto 60cm in height. White to pale pink flowers are arranged in terminal clusters. Each flower has 6 petals with 6 brownish-red-tipped stamens surrounding a prominent red ovary. Found in all Australian states except N.T.

Calotis cuneifolia is a perennial Australian daisy with flowering stems upto 60cm. The flowerheads are white to lilac with a yellow centre 10-25mm across with 30-45 rays.

Clematis pubescens is native to W.A.. This clematis has masses of large white 4-petalled flowers.

Gaultheria parvula is a low creeping shrub, from South Island, forming mats upto 30cm across. Large white or pink flowers cover the foliage, eventually forming large round fleshy fruits.

Geum parviflorum is found on both North and South Islands. Clumps or rosettes of bright green leaves and branched hairy flower stems upto 30cm long. White flowers with 5 roundish petals upto 1.5cm in diameter.

Hardenbergia comptoniana is also known as the Australian native wisteria. It is a vigorous climber with mauve to blue, pink or white, pea-shaped flowers arranged in long racemes.

Lambertia formosa is a bushy shrub, from the Proteaceae family, native to sandy heaths and dry forests of NSW. It has rigid, linear wedge-shaped leaves. The flowers are red and tubular arranged in clusters of 7 surrounded by red bracts.

Patersonia fragilis is a member of the Iridaceae family. Widespread in NSW and Tas. Purple flowers 20-35mm across with 3 broad, spreading lobes and 3 yellow-tipped stamens, arranged in small terminal clusters.

SOUTHERN SPRINGS AND NORTHERN AUTUMNS

Tim Longville

Recently I was asked to write a series of magazine articles on half hardy plants, one article to each season. The winter article dashed off, I was already looking complacently towards the finishing line of the autumn piece and imagining myself spending the next three cheques. When, finally, I actually began to write the article for the spring, however, I came down to earth with a bump. Where was the abundance of spring-flowered half hardies I'd blithely expected and assumed? Whoops. Collapse of stout party. Much head-scratching, brain-picking and frantic consultation did finally produce just about enough plants for my purposes - but it also raised an interesting problem. It's that problem which I'm now about to pass on to you, together with the suggested explanantions of myself and my 'consultants' and hope that you'll be encouraged or provoked to argue with them and propose your own.

What I soon discovered was that, though there are many plants grown in the UK as plants on the borderlines of hardiness which in their native lands do indeed flower in the spring, in the UK they (by and large) don't. They flower in the autumn. The problem is: Why?

Everything which follows is hypothesis: my and my collaborators' 'best guess' of the moment. *Real* answers would demand far more botanical research than has so far taken place or is at all likely to take place in the foreseeable future, since such research tends, understandably enough, to concentrate on plants with actual or possible economic importance rather than on plants which merely happen to look attractive in gardens. I've also restricted my argument to plants from the southern hemisphere when cultivated in the north, though in a modified form many of the same arguments would (well, should) apply to plants from the southern end of the northern temperate zone when cultivated in the northern end of that zone.

In the first place, 'by and large' is not the same as 'always'. So, before we can answer the fundamental question, we have first to answer a subsidiary question. It is this: though it's true that most spring-flowering southern hemisphere plants flower here in the autumn, why do others maintain their original southern hemisphere pattern and flower in the spring just as happily here as there?

The suggestion (and I emphasise that it's only a suggestion) is this: it may have to do with the fact that there are in effect two kinds of plants in the southern hemisphere. A shorthand description of the difference would be to say that some (the older plants, those whose ancestors developed first) are Gondwanan in origin while others (the younger plants, whose ancestors developed more recently) are post-Gondwanan.

Gondwana is the name currently given to a vast proto-continent, which included Africa, Australia and South America. Over enormous periods of time, it slowly began to break up, under the influence of plate-tectonics. As a result of this gradual break-up, such parts of the original Gondwana as Australia finally settled into positions which were both further north (that is, further from the South Pole) and lying at different angles from their 'starting positions'. How, then, do such changes affect plants developed in the two sorts of conditions - post-Gondwana and during-Gondwana - when, to benefit northern gardeners today, they're transported to the northern hemisphere? Simple. Those plants which developed closer to the Pole were native to a world of lower light levels. Their descendants therefore adapt more easily to the light levels found in the spring in the northern hemisphere and are able to maintain their original flowering times. This pattern of flowering behaviour can be seen in plants such as *Telopea*. Plants whose ancestors didn't originate until the post-Gondwanan period, however, have inherited the need for much higher light levels to trigger flowering - levels far higher than those available in a northern hemisphere spring. Examples here are legion and include much of the flora of Australia and South Africa. Examples commonly grown in European gardens, though, include many of the *Ozothamnus* : a particular instance would be *O. obcordatus*.

How much effect a Gondwanan or post-Gondwanan ancestry may have is, obviously, unprovable. The actual effect of light intensity, however, isn't. It's empirically provable that the relatively low light levels of a northern spring are indeed one of the factors retarding the flowering here of southern hemisphere spring-flowerers.

There are other differences between northern and southern hemispheres which also make a contribution. For example, not only are the light levels here different in the spring from those Down Under, so is the soil temperature. *We* have real winters, as a result of which the soil gets cold - and stays cold for a long time. Much of the southern hemisphere doesn't have real winters and its soils never really get cold. To many southern hemisphere plants, the late spring soils of the northern hemisphere must seem bitterly cold and not at all encouraging even to growth let alone flowering. (Yes, of course, there are sometimes frosts at night in the southern hemisphere and the absolute minimum temperatures reached are sometimes surprisingly low. Such frosts, though, are almost always short-lived and come after both long hot summers and relatively warm winter days. As a result, their effects on the soil and on the plants in it are greatly reduced.)

I can hear the objection already. 'All right, given that lack of light and lack of soil heat mean that many southern hemisphere plants won't flower in the spring, why don't they flower in early or high summer? - by which time surely the soil has been warmed and the light level is if not high at least as high as it ever gets in the northern hemisphere?'

It's true that the soil is then warm and that the light level is then relatively high but the objection ignores what is probably a third vital element in the equation. It is not only the level of the light which counts but also its duration. In a northern summer the day length is simply too long to imitate closely enough the day length of a southern spring.

There may be one further piece of climatic conditioning to consider. It is possible that plants which in their natural habitats are accustomed to dry winters and (relatively) wet summers won't flower in a northern hemisphere spring because, not only is the soil then cold, it's also

wet. They need the (relative) dryness of an English summer to remind them of their dry southern winter - and to trigger the flowering which they are used to have follow it.

To conclude, it's only in the late summer and autumn that these four factors are finally in an appropriate equilibrium and able to initiate flowering: the soil is still warm enough and is not dry enough, the light is still intense enough, while the day length has finally become sufficiently short. Which in turn is why gardeners in the northern hemisphere who are interested in growing half hardy plants experience such difficulties in finding plants to flower in their gardens in the spring.

At least, that's the theory. For the moment. Until you disprove it. Or invent a better one. Or find so many half hardy plants which *do* flower in the spring that there's simply no need for a theory at all.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Paul Spracklin and, particularly, to Jeff Irons, both for provocation and for information.

MYOSOTIDIUM HORTENSIA

By Sue Hyams

This Chatham Island endemic is a spectacular herbaceous plant. It has large, fleshy, shiny green heart-kidney shaped leaves deeply grooved by the main veins. The flowerheads are large, upto 15cm in diameter and made up of numerous forget-me-not-like flowers, each upto 2cm across and ranging in colour from dark to pale blue.

Myosotidium hortensia grows naturally in coastal habitats, experiencing a cool temperate maritime climate. The nearest UK equivalents are the Isles of Scilly, coastal south-west Ireland, the west and southwest coasts of Britain from Devon and Cornwall to the far north west of Scotland. In all these places the plants would stand a good chance of winter survival. If you don't live in any of these favoured spots, don't dispair. The Chatham Island Forget-Me-Not is quite happy growing in a pot or the border of a cold greenhouse. Choose a large pot, at least 25cm in diameter as the plant likes a good root run and dislikes root disturbance. The compost needs to be free draining and rich, with ample moisture throughout the growing season. They appear to thrive when heavily fed with seaweed-based fertiliser. During the summer high humidity and a cool temperature is essential. Pot-grown plants are best moved into semi-shade.

My two plants were obtained from seed sown in January 1996. In early April of the same year two seedlings were potted on into 9cm pots. By the end of that summer they had put on so much growth that they were potted on into 20cm pots. They were overwintered in the greenhouse. The watering was kept to a minimum. In early May 1997 the first flower appeared. In July 1998 I replaced Osmocote Slow Release Fertiliser with Rooster Poultry Pelleted Manure and my plants have gone from strength to strength. I mix a handful of manure with a bucketful of compost and repot in the usual way. By the end of March this year, several flowerheads were forming and I look forward to a wonderful display.

WINTER FLOWERING GREVILLEAS FOR GREENHOUSE AND GARDEN

By Jeff Irons

The Victorian town of Ararat is quite high up, and some years ago *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* was planted in its McDonald Park. *G. alpina* grew there naturally, and the two species hybridized. Two of those hybrids were selected by the retail trade, and they are sold as 'Austraflora McDonald Park' and 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'. The latter is said to be more compact, have larger leaves and larger flower conflorescences. I've grown it since 1993, though only the last two winters have seen it outside. Under cold glass 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' displayed its large red and creamy yellow flowers all through the winter. Outside it has been disappointing. Even though the winters were warm, flowering did not begin until April, a time when there is plenty of colour in the garden. Next winter my 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' will be back in the greenhouse. Its compact size makes it an ideal indoor plant.

Some years ago an Australian friend sent me 4 seeds which had been harvested from her garden plant of the Mount Tamboritha form of *Grevillea lanigera*. The origin of this plant is uncertain. It does not come from Mnt. Tamboritha, and is thought to be actually a coastal form. As my 4 seedlings grew, it became obvious that they were not like their parent. I wondered whether they had reverted to type, or whether they had hybridised. All bloomed in their third year, and all keyed out as *G. lanigera*. One was outstanding. Though taller than the others it is still a low growing, spreading plant which makes weedproof ground cover. The red and white flowers appear in August and continue till May, with a peak in March and April. They do get frosted, but since there is a succession of them flowering resumes as soon as frost disappears. This form was given to Paul Allanson, who is, at present, its only supplier.

In spite of its name *G. alpina* is not an alpine form. In really mild places such as Portmeirion it will stretch out to reach 2m or more across and be covered with profuse red and white flowers in March and April. I lost that form in the cold winters of the 1970s. Nowadays I grow the Southern Hills form. My plant, from Mnt. Evelyn, is cold tolerant in Wirral, but it flowers much better under cold glass. So I believe that except for those who live almost on the coast *G. alpina* is best as an indoor plant.

My recommendations are: 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' for a greenhouse and *G. lanigera* for the garden.

SURVEY OF PLANT PROPAGATION

By Dennis Rowlinson

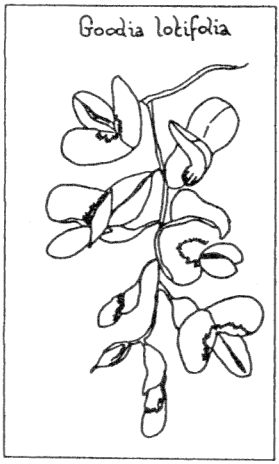
Many of you will have received a letter from Dennis requesting information of your methods of plant propagation. Dennis would like to thank all those members who took the time to reply. If you haven't heard from Dennis yet, you soon will. When all the information has been received Dennis will be able to write an article or two on all the varied ways members use to get their seeds to germinate and their cuttings to root.

GOODIA LOTIFOLIA 'GOLDEN TIP'

By Jennifer McGrady

I have been given seed of this, bought in the Botanic gardens in Canberra, and described as being suitable for Canberra gardens. The description on the packet reads:

'A lovely, multistemmed shrub with blue-grey, clover-like foliage on smooth brown stems and clusters of bright yellow pea-shaped flowers in Spring. Grows to a height of 1-4m and will adapt to most garden situations and climates. Is a vigorous suckering plant and is useful as a fast-growing screen plant. Prune after flowering to promote bushy growth and abundant flowers.'



The sowing instructions recommend a boiling water soak as for Acacias, and the germination is 'from 19C'.

There is one listing for *Goodia lotifolia* in the Plant Finder - the Hannays of Bath - so presumably this is the correct and current name. It isn't mentioned in the RHS Index, nor in the 'Pentachondra' index. If it grows in Canberra it must tolerate low temperatures, and maybe even a touch of frost, so it should only need protection here through the worst of our winter.

So I am wondering - is it too big, or impossible to grow, or is it just plain awful? I shall sow the seed anyway, but I would like to know more about it before it takes over my conservatory!

A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION LEPTOSPERMUM RUPESTRE

By Dennis Rowlinson

Leptospermum rupestre (*L. humifusum*) is growing in my back scree bed, across various layers of rock and gravel - about 2cm high looking the picture of health and galloping downwards at a great rate.

I have accepted it as a very good foliage plant so far, as it has lovely dark green foliage and it has come through all the bad weather without a mark - however it has never had a flower in the six years or so it has been there.

Questions - does anyone growing it get flowers; do I have a non-flowering clone and, if so, is there a flowering clone available and where.

Ed: my plant produces lots of white star-shaped white flowers in early summer!

EUCALYPTUS VERNICOSA
THE SMALLEST GUM TREE?

By Greg Plenty

I was asked by Jeff Irons to write this article to go along with the other by Brian Halliwell that is elsewhere in this issue. I'm fascinated by Eucalyptus trees because not only are they evergreen but they often have interesting bark and odd shaped leaves. Another bonus is that they cast little shadow compared to our typical European deciduous species.

However, there is one big problem for many people, depending on your point of view. Many grow like a rocket and soon become out of scale with the rest of the plants in the average small garden. Unless they are chopped back regularly their top growth seems to get out of equilibrium with the roots. No doubt several readers have experienced the 6m *Eucalyptus gunnii* on its side after a gale.

Do not despair! If you like Eucalyptus and have a small garden, all is not lost. In April 1994, or perhaps 1993, I received a few seeds of *E. vernicosa* via the APS seed allocation. I knew nothing of this species but the codes that Jeff Irons provides next to the names on the list led me to have a try. When the seed arrived, he had noted 'Tas' on the packet so at least I knew their rough provenance. I kept them watered through the summer, but nothing popped up until the following spring, having been kept in a cold greenhouse. Three seedlings appeared, so the germination rate was not good.

They grew away slowly. I separated them a few months later and planted them out when about 75mm high during summer 1995 on a raised south-facing bed. By now I realised that they were not fast growers and were considered very wind resistant and frost-hardy, ideal for my exposed Mediterranean bed.

But just how slowly would they grow? I'd planted them as a group of three about 1.2m apart but they soon began to develop a different habit so looked odd together. I had ended up with plants of apparently the same species but with very different growth rates.

Action had to be taken. One plant, the smallest, seemed very unusual. By Spring 1997 when some APS members visited me, it had shot away to about 10cm and looked like an 'alpine hummock'. By last Spring it was plainly becoming overwhelmed by other plants so I dug it up and moved it, something not generally recommended for *Eucalyptus* sp. By now it had streaked to 30cm high. It proved to have a very small root system. The 'trunk' bent horizontally just below ground level with roots emerging from here, before the whole root system descended vertically as normal. Since then I've moved it again because of the encroachment of other plants on its patch but its survived perfectly well and at the time of writing (February 1999) is about 45cm high.

Flushed by my success at transplanting eucalypts, could I move the medium sized plant (1.2m high) because now this was getting overwhelmed by the largest one? I tried it and it seems to have worked. I gave it a small stake because its in an extremely exposed spot (90 miles per hour gales this winter). It lost a few leaves perhaps but is otherwise healthy.

The largest plant is now 2m tall and looks just like a larger version, in all its parts, of the other two.

Something troubles me, however. The largest has been in bud for some time now and will no doubt flower this year. The other two show no signs of this phenomenon. They are growing in almost identical conditions. Are the two variables growth rate and reproductive maturity, exhibited by these plants, a natural genetic variation within one species or could it be that one or all of my plants are hybrids?

VARNISHED GUM

By Brian Halliwell

It is surprising that this Tasmanian species, probably the smallest in a very large genus, has been neglected in British gardens. The few species which are hardy in the British Isles have grey or blue-grey leaves so perhaps it is because the ordinary green leaves fail to appeal or more likely because it is little known and difficult to obtain.

As it occurs on exposed slopes of Tasmania's highest mountains, it remains small because of exposure to the elements. In nature it is less than 1m and can be under 30cm. If seedlings are planted in lowland gardens, they make much larger plants and can reach 3m or even more. Like all eucalypts it responds to hard pruning in April and so can be kept to any size. I had it growing in one of my gardens where space was limited and every 8 years I cut it back to ground level.

I was told by seed collectors in Tasmania that this species exists in two forms. Most are dwarf because of exposure but there are genetical dwarfs which remain small, less than 60cm high even in lowland gardens. In my collecting I was never fortunate to find any genetical dwarfs, if in fact they exist.

Growing in high exposed conditions with uncertain mountain weather even in summer, pollination must be hit and miss. It only needs one ovule to be fertilised in any eucalypt flower for a capsule to develop. In any seed sample there is always a mixture of infertile and viable seed. In *Eucalyptus vernicosa* the percentage of good seed is always small. In my experience good seed has a short viability and germinates poorly when more than a year old. Life can be prolonged by keeping a seed packet in a refrigerator.

Sow seed as soon as available and expose the container to winter cold which results in better and more even germination in the spring. Pot seedlings as soon as big enough to handle, one to a small pot. Juvenile leaves which develop will be opposite, stalkless, elliptical about 4cm and shining green.

Plant out in May whilst the seedling is small and before it has become root bound. It needs a moist acid soil which does not dry out. Unlike most other species, this one is not tolerant of drought at any stage.

Classed as a mallee, varnished gum produces many stems from the base. Throughout its life it remains shrub-like and rarely develops a pronounced trunk. Old stems become yellowish and old bark peels off in strips. There is no great difference between juvenile and adult

growth. In adult growth, leaves grow close together so it is not easy to discern that they are alternate, thicker in texture, on short stems but they are still the same shape and colour but smaller and usually with red margins. Eventually if unpruned bushes will flower. Flowers which are axillary are often produced singly but more usually in threes. These are in the form of bunches of upright stamens white or cream. The capsules which follow are bell-shaped with flat tops.

Here is an uncommon eucalypt fully hardy, small enough for an average-sized garden with bright shining green leaves that is worth searching for as plant or seeds.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Guide to the Wildflowers of South-Western Australia
Nevill & McQuoid, Simon Nevill Publications, Fremantle
Price A$22.50

This is basically a book of photographs, the plants grouped by ecological habitat. They are uniformly excellent, over 900 of them. There are also useful guides as to where to see plants in WA. Good value for money.

DOWN UNDER IN INNER LONDON

By Tim Longville

I've recently been reading about an improvised and evolving garden in London which sounds as though it might well be of interest to passing APS members. It's known as The Paradise Project, it's in Vauxhall and is as it were the 'filling in the sandwich' between the Houses of Parliament on one side and Battersea Power Station on the other. That's as precise as I'm able to be about its location, because apparently its creators aren't too keen on the sort of exact geographical publicity which might lead to sudden massive influxes of viewers.

The Paradise Project began in the 70s as a mildly post-hippy attempt to brighten up a still war-damaged, run-down and in many cases virtually derelict area of Victorian terrace-housing. As with most such terraces, the houses here opened straight onto the street, with no gardens or greenery at all to enliven the overall atmosphere of bleak desolation. Originally, just to do *some*thing to cheer the place up, plants were simply plonked in improvised containers by house doorsteps. Then, chunks of pavement were 'appropriated' and turned into garden-beds. One square, in particular, has been quite intensely planted on a grand scale, with separate large-scale beds at each of its corners and an ex-bomb-crater in the centre turned into a substantial children's garden. This has very nearly all been done simply by self-help by the local inhabitants. For much of the time, 'the authorities' have helped, if at all, only by turning a blind eye to technical infringements of the law. Now, though, they're joining in - and helping to finance a tree-planting programme throughout the surrounding streets.

Why should any of this be of particular interest to APS members? Because of the plants which have largely been used - and because of the people who've largely been responsible *for* their use. Many of the plants have been exotics, many of those exotics have been Australasian - and the reason for that is simply that, over the two decades since the project's beginning, many of those involved in it have been young Aussies and Kiwis 'passing through' the area, either as students, young professionals - or as participants in the 'Grand Tour by the thumb' who've stopped off to take a lengthy bath-and-beer break with sympathetic compatriots. So examples of plants such as cordylines, phormiums, *Pittosporum tenuifolium, Acacia dealbata* and *Astelia nervosa* var. *chathamica* 'Silver Spear' tend to predominate in a 'planting palette' which anyway has a strong leaning to the lushly sub-tropical, with bamboos, *Cytisus battandieri, Passiflora caerulea, Clematis armandii*, trachycarpus and even the odd Abyssinian banana.

(If you cast your eye upwards, by the way, at one point you'll see a piece of topiarised box in the shape of a bird on its nest of sticks and straw, stationed in the middle of an extravagant roof-garden. It's a sign that success - *and* gentrification - has indeed arrived in this once-derelict area. Until recently, this was the garden of the massively media-friendly young garden designer, Dan Pearson. A long way from 70s hippies, old tyres used as planters, and plants which sometimes fell from the back of a passing lorry...)

I've never seen the place and I steer clear of London whenever I can so I'm not *likely* to see it in the near future but if any member is passing that way and has a little time to spare, perhaps they might search it out and send back a more detailed report. To stimulate your interest, I should add that extensive new planting ought to be taking place in the near future since the project has just been awarded £40,000 of Lottery Fund money.

Acknowledgement: The information I've paraphrased originally appeared in a lively and informative *Snippets* column by Diana Ross in the winter 1998 issue of *Hortus*.

PATIO POT IDEA

Plant up a terracotta pot with *Phormium tenax* 'Bronze Baby', a dwarf hybrid New Zealand flax, with bronze leaves, and add an understorey of *Acaena microphylla* 'Copper Carpet'. This is one of the New Zealand burrs with pinnate bronze leaves upto 3cm long comprising of 9-15 rounded leaflets. It is a compact creeping plant producing small, spherical flowerheads which are later followed by bright red burrs, 2.5-3cm across, making a lovely contrast to the tall spiky flax leaves.

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