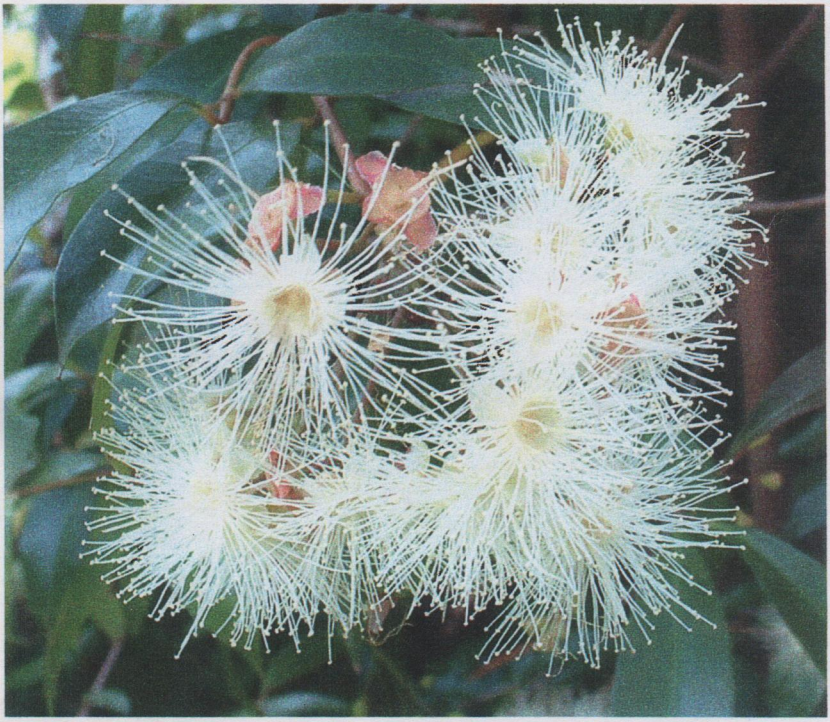
AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

PENTACHONDRA

ISSUE 37 DECEMBER 2006



Syzygium oleosum

AUSTRALASIAN PLANT SOCIETY

Newsletter No.37

December 2006

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Photographs.....thanks to Graham Sumner for supplying the pictures for the front and back cover of *Pentachondra*. Also thanks to Thomas Naylor for the photograph of *Banksia paludosa* in the middle pages. The other photographs have been supplied by the Society's Library of Images, which is compiled from photographs taken by members. Many thanks to all concerned.

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EDITORIAL

A big thank you to all those members who submitted articles, photographs, snippets of news etc. for this issue. I have to admit that until the end of September, I thought it was going to be a real struggle to put together the December issue due to lack of contributions, but chairman Keith, came to the rescue (again!) by emailing members to remind them of the deadline, and as a result several articles arrived at Editorial HQs. Thanks Keith. There are always a core of regular contributors to issues, but it is really welcoming to receive news from 'new' members.

Articles are welcome at any time - if you've got something to report, jot it down and send it in before you forget! Digital images/photos are also welcome.

<u>Articles are now required for the Spring 2007 issue. The deadline is March 1st.</u>

Articles can be sent on floppy disk or CD. Acceptable formats are Microsoft Word, RFT, TXT or just Notepad.

Typewritten reports are welcome as are short handwritten reports but please print place/botanical names.

If writing about success/failure in your own garden, please try to include information about your local climate, soil type, shelter, growing aspect etc.

Please send contributions to
Sue Hyams, Applegarth, Knayton, Thirsk, YO7 4AS.
Email: sue.hyams@ic24.net
Tel: 01845 537407

Subscriptions are due!

All subscriptions are due on January 1st. Please make cheque payable to Australasian Plant Society and send to Tony Entwistle, 113 Station Road, Delamere, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2HZ.

Single member	£10.00
Household	£12.00
Overseas	£10.00

All members are reminded that unless they pay by Standing Order, subscriptions for 2007 are due on January 1st 2007. Members who do not pay by direct debit are reminded that if payment is not received by the end of March, membership will be redeemed to have terminated. No further reminders will be issued.

Library of Images

The Society is compiling a collection of photographs of Australasian Plants. If you have any images (slides, photos, floppy disks or CDs), please send to Jeff Irons. All items will be returned after use.

Weather Report

Australasian Plants in west Wales and the winter of 2005/6.

Media hype and the *actual* forecast.

The balance of probability is for a winter colder than those experienced since 1995/96

Press release, Met Office, October 2005

As a climatologist I feel I have to comment on the allegation that last winter was forecast to be a severe one. It is also some considerable time since I made a contribution to *Pentachondra*, and so I hope this piece will also serve to confirm that (some) Australasian plants still survive in my garden on Cardigan Bay. No excuses, except that since retiring time seems to have been at a premium .. must be all those visits to Australia and New Zealand!

It would be most unfortunate, unfair and incorrect if the winter of 2005/6 goes down in climatological annals as one which did not live up to official predictions. In the event it was a notably dry one in southern and central parts of the UK, and it was slightly colder than the long term average in southern England and south Wales. For central areas, from mid-Wales, the Midlands and Norfolk northwards, temperatures were around the long-term average, and for northern Scotland it was, if anything, slightly on the mild side; about 0.5-1.0 C above the average.

Unfortunately, many sections of the media concocted phrases which exaggerated the threat (and how!) to make exciting and much-overblown headlines. *The Independent* on 22 October 2005 anticipated 'the harshest winter for

decades' and the *Oxford Mail* on 14 November threatened locals with 'coldest winter since records began' (*Weather*, December 2005, vol. 60, no.12, page 334). The exact text (again cited in *Weather*) was:

> 'Our predictions continue to indicate a colder than average winter for much of Europe. If this holds true, parts of the UK - especially southern regions - are expected to have temperatures below normal. There is also an indication for a drier-than-average winter over much of the UK. The last eight winters have been relatively mild and perhaps have given the impression that these are 'normal'. The balance of probability is for a winter colder than those experienced since 1995/96.'

Quite where the official line on the winter being the coldest for 'decades' or 'since records began' emerges is unknown. With the benefit of hindsight we can now see that the official prediction was a good one. The position and strength of the continental anticyclone gave us a higher than usual frequency of easterly winds off the nearby continent, and also explained the winter's lack of precipitation. It was the anticipated dominance of anticyclonic conditions which gave the Met Office the major clue to the chance of both comparative dryness and winter chill. It is interesting to note that similar meteorological conditions in the past have produced our most extreme winters (notably, for example, in 1962/63). If last winter was 'severe' in this globally warmed world then I'm sure our Australasian plants are well and truly grateful! A brief report on last winter can be found on the Met Office's web-site (www.meto.gov.uk), and is summarised in the April 2006

edition of *Weather* (vol. 61, no.4, p.94).

As some correspondents commented in May's *Pentachondra*, our Australasian plants suffered more last winter than for many in the recent past. I have increasingly come to the conclusion, however, that major frosts are not always the cause of damage or death except, of course, to the most frost-susceptible species. Exposure to strong (particularly salty) winds and wet root conditions seem to contribute as much if not more to damage and high mortality here on the west coast. In this 'mild' area and after the winter just gone, with fewer than usual major Atlantic storms, I finally gave up on a 2.5 metre tall *Acacia dealbata* which I used to reckon was the only deciduous variety in existence. However, a much younger plant which I had forgotten about, sheltered between a bush rose, a very deciduous *Hoheria lyallii* and a *Callistemon pallidus*, has survived and at the time of writing (mid-August) is growing away fast. Its young foliage now extends well above the level of last winter's protection. and so, no doubt, will suffer in the coming one (see below).

My two spore-grown *Dicksonia antarctica* also survived unscathed (both are about 15 years old with more than 30 cm of trunk). My remaining large eucalypt (*E. archeri*), which so often disappointed in the past in both growth and form, is this summer a beautiful specimen, although, unusually, it has not flowered. My sole example of *Grevillea* 'Canberra Gem' was badly burned by frost and has just about held on, though producing little in the way of new growth.

Otherwise all my other losses have been confined to the three *Syzygium oleosum* (until I checked

on the internet this year I thought these were *S. australe*), which I had to plant out two winters ago because they were too large to take part in the twice yearly conservatory migration. These were undamaged during the winter of 2004/05 when we had numerous frosts down to -3° Last winter we had at least three nights less than -5° which killed them. It all goes to prove that even climatologists are prone to over-estimate global warming! However, I am now on about my fifth or sixth generation of home-produced seeds, so I have plenty of young replacements which are quick to grow, flower and fruit (see photographs).

Survivals include, first, Australians: *Callistemon citrinus*, *linearis*, *pallidus* and *rigidus*; *Drimys lanceolata*; *Eucalyptus leucoxylon-rosea* (in pots and not meant to be hardy!); *Eucryphia lucida (currently, in mid-August, flowering prodigiously)*; *Prostanthera cuneata*; *Acacia pravissima*. Second, Kiwis: numerous hebes, including *H. speciosus*; *Corokia cotoneaster*, *Leptospermum flavescens* and *scoparium*; *Olearia x haastii*; *Pittosporum crassifolium* (what wonderful scented blossom in May); *Podocarpus alpinus*, and *Sophora microphylla*. All survived unscathed with some pleasant surprises based on past experience, perhaps because of the low rainfall: *Leptospermum scoparium* and *Callistemon citrinus*. It was also a very good year for *Callistemon* flowers. The downside here was the mess as the flowers moult (there's no better description) onto adjacent patios

As for the winter of 2006/07? The official Met Office web-site (www.meto.gov.uk) through the summer has been predicting a milder and wetter one than average. However, 'this does not rule out occasional cold snaps and snow'. Even in a globally-warmed

world we shall still have colder episodes and also the odd more severe winter. It is also important to realise that the 'average' relates to the 30-year 1961-1990 or 1971-2000 mean (currently being phased in as 'standard'). Later years in this sequence have on the whole been milder than earlier years in the period. Note that the prediction does *not* suggest we shall have a record mild or wet one.

A more reliable revision on the coming winter will be released in September, predating this article's appearance in *Pentachondra*. If readers have web access, please check. If not, be careful not to believe everything you read or hear in the media - even the quality bits!

Dr. Graham Sumner,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion.
August 2006

Wollemi Pine

I quickly popped in to Kew Gardens this weekend (14/15 October) and found the sales area re-vamped. They now have an area dedicated to plant sales, and included were a dozen or so Wollemi Pines. 5 litre pots were selling at £300, and 3 litre pots at £97. Cultivation notes stated that the plant can withstand temperatures to -5 C, prune in winter, that it should be sheltered out of full sun and to incorporate 'your mycorrhizal fungi as directed on sachet before placing in planting hole' although I could not see the sachet for sale. It is also recommended as an indoor plant.

Nicky Zanen

*****

On 26 April 2006 a Wollemi Pine was planted at RHS Harlow Carr to see how it fares in a northern climate. Other outdoor plantings include the Eden Project, RBG Kew, Trentham Gardens and Westonbirt Arboretum.

The Wollemi Pine is one of the world's oldest and rarest trees. Thought to be extinct, it was discovered by David Noble, in Australia, in September 1994, and consequently named after him, *Wollemia nobilis*.

Kernock Park Plants, in Cornwall, is the sole licensed grower of the Wollemi Pine in the UK. Tel: 01579 350561 or visit their website www.wollemipine.co.uk

Winter Reports 05/06

Central Cheshire.

A strange winter. More losses than expected. Many seemed OK until mid-March, then withered away with root death. Losses were not always "logical".

1. Completely killed.

Several unidentified Acacias, *Olearia phlogopappa, Melaleuca hypericifolia*, many Hebes (*speciosa* hybrids), *Grevillea* 'Mt. Tamboritha', *Acnistus australis, Echium pininana, Lomatia ferruginea, Buddleja auriculata, Teucrium fruticans.* Even in polytunnel - *Protea cynaroides, Meryta sinclairii.*

2. Slight damage only, reshooting well.

Correas, *Eucalyptus globulus, Nothopanax arboreus, Euphorbia mellifera, Acacia baileyana.*



Tasmannia lanceolata
Mountain pepper
The leaves are dotted with oil glands, providing an aromatic scent when crushed, and a peppery taste.

3. Cut to ground or almost ground level, but reshooting well.

Acacia longifolia, retinodes, Amicia zygomeris, Buddleja colvilei.

4. Untouched.

Prostanthera cuneata, Acacia pataczekii, Podocarpus niveus, Richea scoparia, Tasmannia lanceolata, Grevillea 'Canberra Gem', *Ceratopetalum gummiferum, Leptospermum scoparium, Wachendorfia paniculata, Aspidistra elatior, Vestia foetida.*

Tony Entwistle

North Yorkshire

As Tony has already stated, 'a strange winter'. *Passiflora caerulea* that had been growing alongside *Solanum* 'Glasnevin' for several years, and was threatening to cover the greenhouse roof, suddenly withered in mid March and never recovered. *Acnistus australis* was looking good, still in leaf, right upto mid March when snowy weather defoliated it. Now, in mid September, it is over a metre tall, and has been covered in blue pendulous bells most of the summer. Several greenhouse-wintered plants, including *Prostanthera sieberi* and *P. walteri* found themselves consigned to the compost bin in early spring, as death took a hold after apparently looking as though they had come unscathed through the winter.

The dry warm/hot months of June and July brought more losses. Two

specimens of *Hebe* 'James Stirling', as well as an unidentified Hebe died, as did several conifers. The hebes had been growing well for many years. The unknown hebe left a space nearly a metre wide, which has now been filled with *Drimys winteri*.

Sue Hyams



In Stockport, Cheshire, Dennis Rowlinson sent in the following report in August.

Spring Losses

'Over the winter everything went very well, with most plants in the garden and covered area looking happy and none were damaged.

I was looking forward to a damage-free winter, but a sharp blast of Northeasterly wind in spring damaged our *Clianthus puniceus* badly; the same wind completely defoliated the *Grevillea robusta* and killed a few unknown Melaleucas in my covered area.

The Grevillea and Clianthus were cut back and are now looking better.

Spring Flowering

For the past few years I have been growing on a seedling, which eventually turned out (after a lot of discussion with Jeff Irons and New Zealand Botanic Gardens) to be *Carmichaelia petriei*. It is a rather nice form with a good weeping habit, it flowers very well, and seed will be going into the distribution later in the year. Cuttings take very well, and anyone interested in a rooted cutting should let me know.

Summer Flowering

The *Lomatia arborescens*, which was grown from seed, has been growing in the garden for about ten years. This year it decided to flower and looks very smart with the panicles of cream blossom. Have not seen any seed so far, but will look out for some.

All the New Zealand Clematis have flowered well and the *Billardiera longiflora* and *B. cymosa* have made a good show on the fence - the *B. cymosa* flowers are a nice shade of blue and look pretty good against the dark green foliage. Seed of both of these should be in the distribution. The Callistemon have flowered well but in the heat the flowers faded quickly, though *C. hypericifolium* lasted a bit longer. *Grevillea* 'Canberra Gem' is growing apace and is looking good, *G. lanigera* 'Mount Tamboritha' flowers very early in the year and sometimes we have it on show over Christmas.

Dennis Rowlinson
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Hazel Grove
Stockport
SK7 6NS
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Adrowlinson@ntlworld.com



Clianthus puniceus



Freely available at garden centres, in both red and white forms, *Clianthus puniceus* makes an interesting climbing plant for a sheltered south or southwest facing wall. Have you tried growing the Lobster Claw outside? If so, let the society know how you've fared.

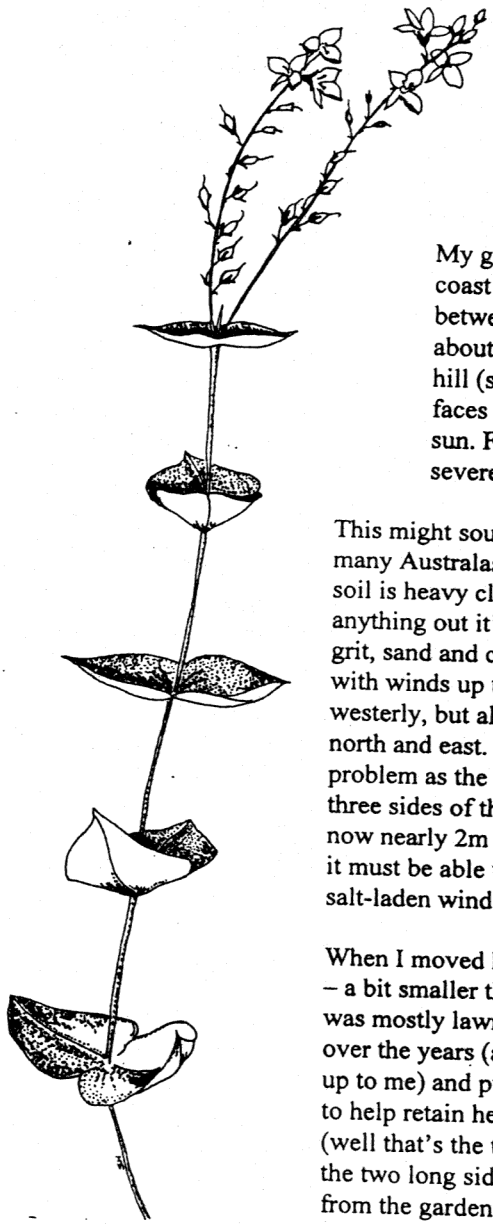
Protecting plants from cold weather

Various steps can be taken to protect vulnerable plants from damage caused by cold winter weather.

- If you are trying to grow something regarded as tender, plant in a sheltered spot - against walls, under shrubs/trees.
- If growing in pots, stand on pot feet to allow good drainage and air circulation. Pots can be wrapped in a double layer of hessian or bubblewrap, or moved inside during the worst of the weather.
- A thick layer of mulch around the base of the plant will help keep the soil frost-free. When soil becomes frozen, the roots are unable to take up water and plants can die from lack of moisture.
- Try to plant tender plants away from areas where they are subject to early morning sunshine, as this causes them to defrost too quickly, rupturing the cell walls.
- Don't feed plants with a high nitrogen feed at the beginning or end of the year - this creates leafy growth susceptible to frost damage.
- Try not to prune plants at the end of the year. The old stems help to take the brunt of the frost. Newly pruned plants produce new sappy growth which is highly likely to be frosted.
- Protect the crowns and trunks of tree ferns by wrapping them in wiremesh and straw.

The next **ASGAP Conference** (Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants) will be hosted by the Australian Plants Society New South Wales and will be held in the Newcastle area from the 1 - 5 October, 2007. There will also be pre and post conference tours.

Report from Hastings September 2006



Derwentia perfoliata

My garden is in Hastings, a south coast town located roughly midway between Brighton and Dover. It is about 500m from sea, on the top of a hill (some 60m above sea level) and faces south east so it gets a lot of sun. Frosts are infrequent and rarely severe, at least in recent years.

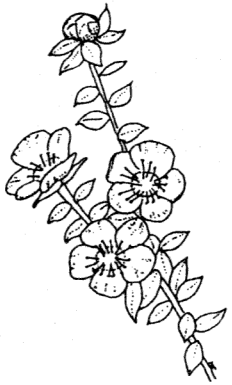
This might sound fairly ideal for growing many Australasian species in the UK but the soil is heavy clay and so whenever I plant anything out it's a matter of adding lots of grit, sand and compost. I also have to cope with winds up to gale force, mostly south westerly, but also colder winds from the north and east. This is becoming less of a problem as the privet hedge that surrounds three sides of the garden becomes taller – it's now nearly 2m – but if it grows in my garden it must be able to tolerate at least some salt-laden wind.

When I moved here ten years ago the garden – a bit smaller than a tennis court in area - was mostly lawn. I've got rid of a lot of it over the years (all of it would go if it was left up to me) and put in brick paths and paving to help retain heat next to most of the beds (well that's the theory). Concrete paths down the two long sides, which separate the hedge from the garden, perform this function as well.



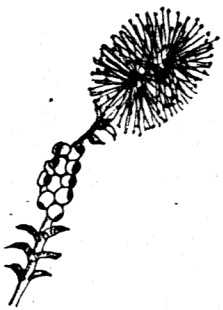
Melaleuca squamea

In retrospect I had an awful lot to play with when I started but I wasn't an experienced gardener and it certainly didn't occur to me that I might specialise in Australasian species, though I did have two I'd grown as houseplants: *Anigozanthos flavidus* and *Hardenbergia comptonia*. The latter is now in my greenhouse, more of the former later. Then in the summer of 1997 I found *Prostanthera cuneata* in a local nursery and was enchanted by its milky flowers and delighted to find it a magnet for bumble bees. This was followed by *Eucalyptus parvifolia* which is now a rather agreeable twin-trunked tree with white flowers in late summer. So far pruning is keeping it under some sort of control but in my ignorance I didn't realise when I bought it that it might want to grow rather larger than I would like. It grows to one side of my small meadow which contains UK native or naturalised species. Perhaps counter-intuitively, it doesn't to me look at all odd in this setting. In 1998 I managed to grow *Callistemon subulatus* and *C. salignus* from seed and in 1999 I bought what was labelled *Callistemon citrinus* but is most likely *rigidus* and is now a large and very floriferous bush.



Leptospermum scoparium

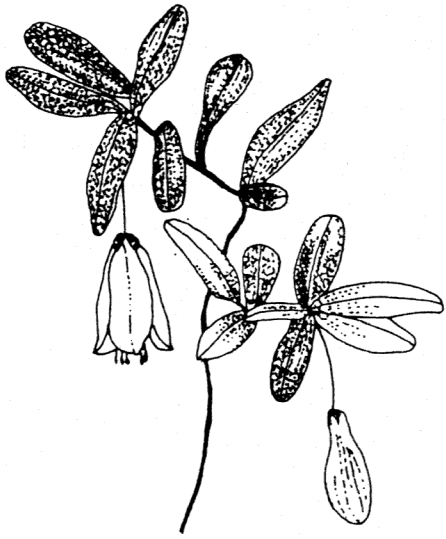
Admittedly none of these is at all difficult, but early success does engender a bit of confidence. I started looking out for Australasian species, both plants and seed, and having a go with whatever I could get hold of. Like Sue Kohler (Pentachondra May 2006) I was quite nervous about planting things out but as the greenhouse got fuller and fuller, especially in winter, I was forced to be more adventurous. Now I try everything outside (mostly in the ground but a few in pots). Species that are reportedly more tender I try to situate in the more sheltered sunny spots but I don't protect anything in winter (a lot of bother, and anyway I don't like the look of wrapped up plants). However I do keep spares of many species in case of loss. Thus far almost everything has survived. Last winter was the most severe we've had in Hastings for 10 years. I lost



Melaleuca squarrosa

an *Acacia baileyana* (sown 2001) which was a poor specimen anyway, *Isotoma axillaris* which was pretty much a long shot for overwintering outside (though I'm trying again), and *Melaleuca nesophila* (sown 2001). This I had already lost once before, in the waterlogged winter of 2002-03, so the remaining plant will stay in its pot and overwinter in the greenhouse. That same winter I also lost a *Pseudopanax ferox*, probably due to waterlogging. Back to the winter just gone, though the leaves of *Bauera rubioides* (planted out 2005) reddened considerably, presumably from cold stress, it still flowered winter and spring. Carelessly though, I nearly lost it to water stress in July, but it seems to have recovered and is now flowering again. I did lose my big *Prostanthera cuneata* this spring but I think its demise was due to old age rather than a cold winter. (Wrigley and Fagg say that even under perfect conditions Prostantheras 'cannot be considered to be long-lived').

I read the articles in Pentachondra about members' gardens with great interest and it seems that I grow many of the usual suspects including *Callistemon* (*pallidus*, *pinifolius*, *rigidus*, *salignus*, *subulatus*), *Melaleuca* (*armillaris*, *ericifolia*, *gibbosa*, *squamea*, *squarrosa*), *Leptospermum* (*grandifolium*, *myrtifolium*, *nitidum*, *rotundifolium*, *scoparium nanum* 'Kiwi'), *Correa* (*alba*, *backhouseana*, *decumbens*), *Acacia* (*baileyana* var. *purpurea*, *melanoxylon*, *pravissima*), *Libertia* (*grandiflora*, *peregrinans*), *Olearia* (*lirata*, x *macrodonta*), *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, *Derwentia perfoliata*, *Cordyline australis*, *Pseudopanax ferox*, *Pittosporum* 'Silver Queen', *Billardiera longiflora*, *Diplarrena moraea*, *Veronica catarractae*, *Carex comans* and *Uncinia rubra*. With the exceptions mentioned above all my plants date from 2000 and have been sown from seed, obtained through APS plant swaps, or purchased. All in all I have 67 different antipodeans growing outside at last count, with quite a few more waiting until they are big enough to plant out and/or I find a suitable space.

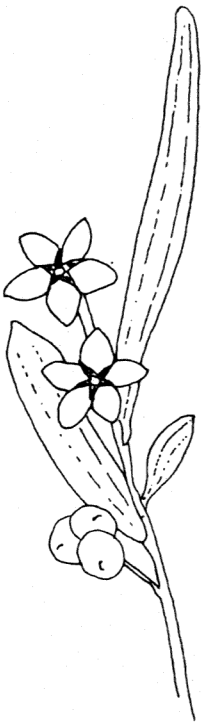


Billardiera longiflora

A *Leptospermum* which has really flourished is *L. grandifolium*, now a large bush about 2m high which is smothered in white flowers in early July. Leaves are grey-green and new growth appealingly pinky-red tinged. Sown in 2000, the seed came from the RHS and was labelled *L. grandiflorum* but thanks to Jeff Irons explaining to me the differences between the two - *L. grandiflorum* blooms in late summer and the sepals quickly drop off the fruits while *L. grandifolium* blooms in early summer and the sepals persist - I am reasonably confident that it's now correctly named. Another *Leptospermum* which does well is still posing an identification problem. Also sown in 2000 it is a slow-growing species with white flowers in late spring/early summer and tiny (2-5 mm) almost bright green leaves. It too came from RHS seed, labelled *L. liversidgei* and for a long time I happily accepted this. Then I saw a picture of *L. liversidgei* which didn't look right for my plant and also Jeff Irons confirmed that the foliage of *L. liversidgei* is lemon scented; that of my plant is not. From *Leptospermum* descriptions in Wrigley and Fagg *L. minutifolium* is the best fit to my plant; can anybody confirm this, or offer other suggestions?

Lophomyrtus x *ralphii* 'Tricolor' (syn. 'Sundae') is a garden origin hybrid between *L. bullata* and *L. obcordata* from New Zealand with attractive pink-tinged cream and pale green variegated leaves. It has reached about 1.5 m after 6 years and is planted in the most sheltered part of the garden. It is supposed to produce white flowers followed by black berries but I am still waiting. *Calothamnus quadrifidus* 'Starlight', (a prostrate cultivar) in the same bed produced a good display of yellow flowers this summer but has yet to survive winter outside.

After 6 years (from seed) *Banksia marginata* is over 3m tall. Its orange 'cones' (it first flowered in October 2004) are less showy than some *Banksias* but it is a graceful tree with leaves that are silver on the underside - its common name is Silver Banksia - and rather beautiful bark. It is planted in a less sheltered part of the garden where it gets a lot of sun and doesn't seem to mind anything the weather throws at it. *Hakea nodosa* (planted out 2004) has just started producing its little yellow flowers again. Again these are not hugely showy but they are fragrant and look good against the orangey stems. This plant is supposed to produce two types of fruits (uniquely for the genus) but thus far only smooth fruits have occurred on my plant, not warty ones. Still with Proteaceae, *Kunzea ambigua* (planted out 2005) is growing well but has yet to flower. *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* (planted out 2004) has also proved hardy and flowers for most of the winter. In future I want to try *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak). Apparently there is one is growing happily in Brynmill Park in Swansea which has reached 12m (Newsletter No 15, The Tree Register). This species has also survived winter in the new Australian border at Hyde Hall in Essex.



Leucopogon parviflorus

I am particularly pleased that *Leucopogon parviflorus*, Coast Beard-heath, has grown well, as it grows round the Cape Otway lighthouse where my brother works, and so has a special association for me. I planted one out in 2004 in the shadier part of my most sheltered bed. It flowered for the first time this year; small flowers crowded together, white tinged with maroon. (Apparently *Leucopogon* is not much grown in cultivation in Australia and has proved difficult to maintain in the ground for long time.)

Acacia melanoxylon (Blackwood) is another species that I associate with family, being frequent where my brother lives. From APS seed sown in 2001 I now have a fine young tree of about 3m though as yet it shows no signs of flowering. It did sulk madly when first planted out (2002) and didn't really take off until this year. Nor has it produced any juvenile foliage since being planted out, in contrast to one from the same batch that I gave to a friend and is planted in a similar situation. *A. baileyana* var. *purpurea* (Cootamundra Wattle), also sown in 2001 and kept in a pot in the greenhouse, has flowered. It is now to big to move easily so this winter I shall leave it outside against the wall of the house and hope the flowers survive.

As an aside, for anyone visiting Victoria, the Otway Ranges are well worth a trip to botanise, and for the spectacular scenery along the coast. A wide range of plants can be seen, from Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*), Myrtle Beech (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*), tree-ferns and other moisture loving plants in the sheltered gullies to long established secondary forests and hardy species of the coastal heathlands. It's also always worth investigating Botanic Gardens in small towns; for example, those in Colac have some fine veteran *Araucaria bidwillii*, the Bunya Pine.

The shiny metallic blue-purple berries which the Blue Flax-lily *Dianella caerulea* can be counted upon to produce never fail to attract attention. I have clumps of this in various places in the garden, though none in full sun. It seems happy even in very dry areas and while it spreads easily it is not a thug; pulling up unwanted bits is not difficult. *D. tasmanica* is quite similar but after consulting descriptions in various books, and seeing this growing at Port Logan

Botanic Garden (south west Scotland) and Hyde Hall I am reasonably confident that my plant is what it was sold to me as. Interestingly it came from Sissinghurst but I hadn't seen it in the garden, which shows it always pays to look at what's for sale.

She-oaks, *Allocasuarinas*, are interesting as curiosities but I'm not sure that many would consider them very garden-worthy. I have three, *A. nana* (seed sown 2000), *A. pusilla* (APS seed sown 2003) and *A. verticillata (*syn. *Casuarina stricta)* which is from seed from Canberra. The first two have flowered and *A. nana* has produced cones. The Grass Tree *Xanthorrhoea australis* (sown 2002, with smoke water) is another oddity which I planted out in 2005. I know they grow slowly but although mine remains alive I can't say it's doing well, possibly because it just doesn't get enough heat. In contrast the orange flowered *Prostanthera aspalathoides* is a smashing plant which didn't even blink at the frost last winter. *P.* 'Poorinda Ballerina' is another very pretty Mint Bush which is a profusion of pink flowers in June.



Prostanthera aspalathoides

I have found good low-growing species harder to come by and/or keep. *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (from New Zealand) is not unattractive but a terrible thug. *Geranium sessiliflorum* subsp. *novae-zelandiae* 'Nigricans' also puts itself about but gets in the way a lot less. *Arthropodium candidum* (also from New Zealand) has proved a snails' favourite, though I now have a little patch that looks as if it will survive. *Viola hederacea* I managed to lose, possibly due to lack of water. However *Geranium potentilloides* (Australia and New Zealand) has been more successful. With small white flowers in spring and summer it's a bit like a white *G. pyrenaicum* but more lax and the flowers are slightly smaller without notched petals. It sprawls not too untidily and responds well to cutting back. This year I have grown *Convolvulus erubescens* (quick germinating) but I have to remind myself that it is a bindweed; does anyone know if it is likely to be invasive?

Anigozanthos flavidus was initially kept in pots and overwintered in the greenhouse. It always flowered well but after several years of dividing I had too many in pots. In 2002 I planted several in a bed by a low wall where they would be exposed to as much sun as possible. They have survived happily and have flowered every year since; last winter's cold merely affected the top growth and this year's spikes were taller than ever. As I have one plant now



Convolvulus erubescens

rooted in the greenhouse spares are also kept outside in pots and the majority of these survive too. Now I am trying (purchased) cultivars of *A. flavidus* with showier flowers ('Royal Cheer', 'Ranger' and 'Haza'), though I have taken the precaution of dividing them first. Incidentally, Kangaroo Paws, along with *Callistemon* and *Grevillea* species, seem to be becoming more widely available, at least here in the south east, where I have seen them in several non-specialist outlets. And visiting Sissinghurst again this summer I saw a number of Kangaroo Paw cultivars in pots, while Great Dixter has a flourishing *Grevillea* and *Corokia*. Are these signs that interest in garden-worthy antipodeans is really starting to take off?

As I collect more plants I find myself having to discard non-antipodeans to make room but the challenge of course is to make a garden that's not just a collection of plants. And not a complete jungle either: faced with the need to prune more and more I follow general principles and the advice in Ross and Irons but more information, especially any special requirements, would be really welcome. But even if the garden is a bit of a mish-mash I find it really satisfying when antipodeans not only grow but flourish, especially if I've grown them from seed. From reading Pentachondra and from my own experience I think many Australasian species are a lot tougher than standard references make out. My plants certainly haven't read the books and long may that continue!

Judy Clark

References

Ross T and Irons J, 1997, *Australian Plants: A Guide to their Cultivation in Europe*

Wrigley JW and Fagg M, 2003, *Australian Native Plants* (fifth edition), Reed New Holland



Dear Nicky (Zanen),

I have been living in the south of Portugal for the past four years and am busy replanting a 7 acre site after a devastating forest fire. In conversation with local fellow members of the Mediterranean Gardening Society I passed around my recently acquired copy of "Australian Plants for Mediterranean Gardens" by Rodger Elliot and received two days later an e-mail mentioning the APS website. I was so astonished at what I found that I promptly applied for membership and now have my copy of Pentachondra for May 2006 and a copy of the fascinating seed list. I was surprised to find that of those trees/bushes I have recently planted many are of Australasian origin.

After which long winded introduction I come to the point of my letter. The local branch of the MGS organizes four meetings each year and aims, as often as possible, to have a principal theme for talk(s) and demonstration. If any APS members happen to visit Portugal and would be willing to give an illustrated talk on "Australasian Plants" - his/her own choice of theme - we should be delighted to welcome them. We are a small group without significant funds so we could not pay a fee; we could however compensate with lavish hospitality!

Sincerely,

Peter Eaton
pandk@sapo.pt

Adapting to hot conditions

Jeff Irons emailed the following interesting snippet.

Magnolias suffered severely in last summer's hot spell but Drimys and Tasmannia did not. That is interesting because all three are primitive plants. In hot weather plants minimize water loss by closing their stomata. Primitive plants are much slower to do this than are modern plants. Evidently the thin leaved magnolias lost proportionately more water than the thick leaved Drimys and Tasmannia and as a consequence showed signs of heat stress.

Name changes

Microstrobos has had its name changed to Pherosphaera. So *M. niphophilus* is now *P. hookeriana* and *M. fitzgeraldii* is now *P. fitzgeraldii*.

If anyone is interested the reference is Taxon 53(2) May 2004 529-30. Since Brummit is one of the authors, the Plant Finder is almost certain to accept this.

Sollya heterophylla is now *Billardiera heterophylla*.

Banksia rosserae

Six years after the discovery in 1994 of the Wollemi Pine, John Cullen, a bushwalker, stumbled across a new banksia species in remote Western Australia. A year later, botanist Neil Marriott and colleague Peter Olde, came across the same plant. They named it *Banksia rosserae* in honour of Melbourne botanical artist Celia Rosser. 27 plants have been discovered, all within a radius of about 20 kilometres. It is believed that the plants are very old. They have massive lignotubers - swollen bases that act as storage organs for water and have the ability to resprout after fire. It is suspected that the banksias germinated in the eighteenth century before Captain James Cook discovered Australia. The first flowering since discovery was witnessed this year by botanists and banksia enthusiasts. The flowers are bright yellow, resembling tennis balls. It is thought that the flowering occurred due to storms generated by Cyclone Glenda, when a year's rain was dropped on the banksias' home in just one day at the end of March.

Celia Rosser, has spent over 25 years on *The Banksias*, described as one of the 20th century's great botanical artworks. Starting in the 1970s, and finishing (so she thought!) in 1990, two new species came to light during a national survey for *The Banksia Atlas* in 1987. This atlas survey was supposed to rule a line under the genus *Banksia*. It had always been doubted that any banksia species would be found in the arid zone. Alex George, West Australian botanist and banksia expert said that it was amazing that after 236 years since European settlement, new species of Australia's most studied plant genus are still being found.

Seedlist 2007

To apply for a seedlist, send a SAE (at least 6" x 9") to:

RJ Christmas
Osborne House
Wrexham Road
Pen-y-ffordd
Chester
Flintshire CH4 OHT

An electronic version can be obtained by contacting - morayacacia@aol.com

The seedlist will be available from 31 March.

Photographs to accompany articles by Tony Entwistle & Jeff Irons



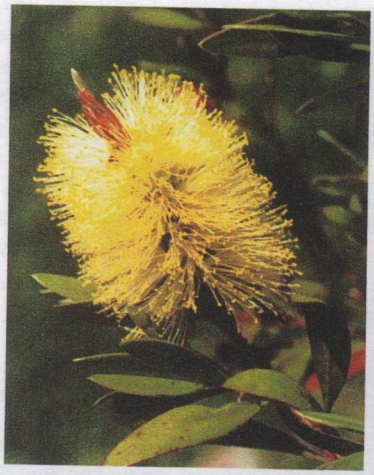
Boronia heterophylla



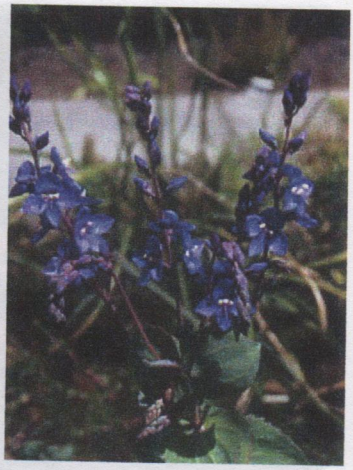
Tasmannia lanceolata

Some photographs to accompany Judy Cl

Callistemon salignus



Derwentia perfoliata





Allocasuarina verticillata

k's article *'Report from Hastings'*

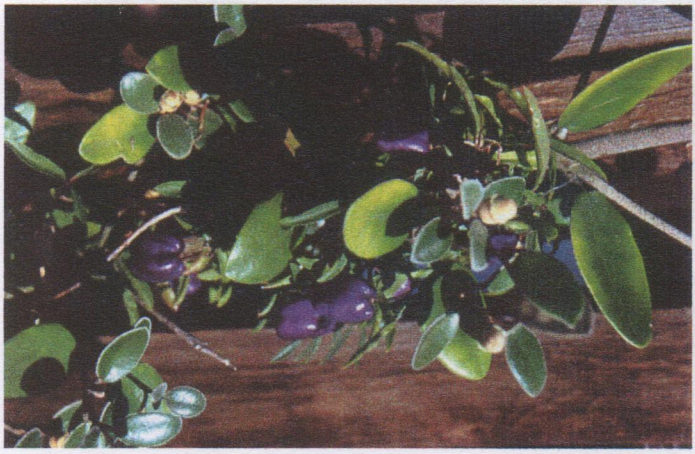
Banksia marginata





Grevillea rosmarinifolia

Photographs to accompany articles by Thomas Naylor and Dennis Rowlinson

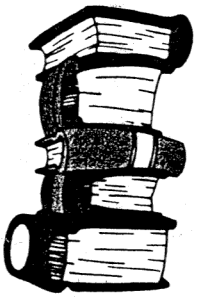


Billardiera longiflora



Banksia paludosa

New Books



Two new botanical books, both produced by Te Papa Press, the publishing unit of the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, P O Box 467, Wellington, New Zealand may be of interest to APS members.

The first is-

An Illustrated Guide to New Zealand Hebes by Bayly & Kellow
0909010129

This book is the most in-depth guide yet to the identification, classification, and biology of hebes - among New Zealand's best known native plants. It provides keys to identify all wild species - 88 of Hebe and five of Leonohebe. This is an indispensable reference for botanists, gardeners, conservation managers, plant photographers, and students.

The second is-

Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand by Audrey Eagle
0909010080

This beautiful two-volume set brings together Audrey Eagle's botanical artworks from her best-selling 1975 and 1983 publications. Over 170 new paintings bring the total number of plants to more than 800 - all in colour and life-size. Every known native New Zealand tree and shrub is here, accompanied by comprehensive notes.

Just published is a new book The Dryandras, written by Tony Cavanagh, the Dryandra Study Group Newsletter Editor, and Study Group Leader Margaret Pieroni. It is the result of collaboration between the Australian Plants Society Victoria and the Western Australian Wildflower Society. 244 pages, 320 colour photographs. Identification and cultivation information. Initially available from APS (Vic) Book Sales, 13 Conos Court, Donvale, Victoria 3111; later from other states book sections.

Palms in Oregon

Stuart Fraser

Where I live in Portland, Oregon, we have a very equitable climate, with winters very wet and frost no lower than 23F (-5C). Warm dry summers are generally in the 70's and 80's F, occasionally in the 90's, or so it has been for the last six years. We like to consider ourselves in Zone 9 - but with occasional dips to Zone 8B. We probably average between 30 and 40 inches of rain a year, falling mostly between October and June.

As you may deduce from these dry but essential statistics, we enjoy a very nice climate for growing a wide range of plants from the Southern Hemisphere, plus some near tropic ones as well. Amongst these many plants, I have seven palms. More, I would like to have, but there is no room.

The pride of place is given to *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, the Bangalow Palm, which my supplier assures me he obtained from its southernmost provenance in Southwestern N.S.W. The next palm is *Arenga micrantha*, a fairly newly discovered species growing from up to 8000 ft in the Himalayas, Nepal and Bhutan. It is a clumping species with pinnate leaves.

Two smaller palms from the mountains of Mexico are planted alongside each other in partial shade, *Chamaedorea microspadix* and *Chamaedorea radicalis* - both clump-forming feather leaf palms to about 8 feet high.

In the front garden we have a *Brahia armata*, a palm from the drier regions of Mexico, where its common name is Blue Hesper Palm. This is a fan palm, and my specimen does have very attractive blue leaves. Further down in the front is *Sabal minor*, the Saw Palmetto from South Eastern U.S.A. where it grows in pine forests. It is really a groundcover plant as it rarely grows aerial stems, with the leaves coming directly out of the ground.

Last but not least, I have two *Trachycarpus fortunei* planted by the street which are about 10 ft high now and look very impressive. *Trachycarpus fortunei* is fairly commonly seen around Portland, often as street trees, but private gardens have their share of them. *Chamaerops humilis* is often seen and quite hardy here. Other rarer sights around the city are *Rhapidophyllum hystrix* from South Eastern U.S.A., which is trunkless with palmate leaves.

One occasionally sees *Trithrinax campestris* from Argentina and Uruguay, a very handsome little palm with palmate leaves, and *Butia capitata*, the Jelly Palm also from this same area. This about sums up the variety of palms generally seen in Portland. There may be more but I have not seen them.

An Unexpected Hedge

by Jeremy Spon

South Africa is not the obvious place to go to see Australian plants, and it certainly wasn't the reason my wife and I went on holiday there recently. (However, if you are at all interested in wild flowers, I can strongly recommend it - the flora is every bit as rich and strange as Australia's.)



Australian plants, though, do occur all over the Cape Province where we travelled, having been deliberately introduced. Unfortunately, the climate is all too favourable, and some have become weeds, seriously threatening the local indigenous flora.

Mature eucalyptus, planted for shelter, are being removed because they take too much water from the ground; casuarinas (established for the same reason) now require a permit to be planted; and acacias are the target of government funded programs for their removal as they seed so aggressively. (The latter do make for a colourful sight, especially in river valleys - species such as *Acacia dealbata, A. melanoxylon* and *A. saligna* turn swathes of the countryside a rich yellow in spring.)

Not all Australian plants are so invasive, however, and we came across an unusual use of one at a wonderful succulent garden we visited. The owner has planted a large maze next to the succulent collection (don't ask why, the answer is too bizarre and tedious!) and the hedges for this maze are formed of, among other things, *Hakea salicifolia.*

I recognized this because I used to have quite a large specimen in a pot - it makes a very elegant small tree, with willowy foliage as the name suggests. Unfortunately, when finally planted out because it was too big for the greenhouse, it died in its first winter outside. Having seen it used as a hedge, I now know that it would have withstood any amount of clipping, and still flowered. In fact it was really the most effective plant of all those used for the hedges of the maze, growing densely and looking very healthy, the plants being studded with the grey knobbly seed-pods.

I wonder if it is used in this way in Australia - perhaps members who have been lucky enough to go there might know?

Garden Visits

by Tony Entwistle

Terra Nostra, Furnas, Sao Miguel, Azores.

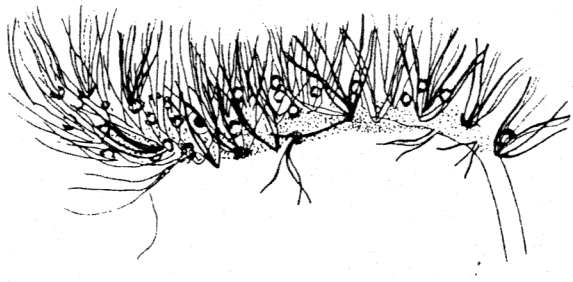
This must be one of the most hidden public gardens, set in an old volcanic crater.

The climate is very wet, humid and warm temperate. The large garden is mostly occupied by palms from all over the world, Camellias of tree proportions, tree-ferns and cycads, with an understorey of Hydrangeas and evergreen Azaleas. Beds are edged with Clivia and Crinum, splendid in flower. There is a huge avenue of Gingko. Recent additions are a Cycad garden and a native garden, and there is an excellent collection of small ferns, both temperate and subtropical. Also new is a bed of Vireya Rhododendrons, said to be the only ones in the EU, which were showing their vivid orange and yellow flowers.

As expected, the climate is too humid for many Australasians, but there were some huge Callistemons, Metrosideros, Araucarias and the largest *Eucalyptus globulus* I have seen, even in Australia.

The garden has a "hot" river running through it, which must be unique. By "hot" I mean very warm to the touch, caused by all the nearby volcanic activity - be careful you do not sit down on a fumarole! (a tourist got boiled to death recently, better just to cook your dinner in one!) This river has been used to form an outdoor swimming pool, very popular with locals, but you will emerge a lurid burnt-orange colour from the volcanic rocks!

The roadsides in the Azores are planted with Azaleas and Hydrangeas which provide both early and late colour. Azaleas grow so well that they have been used as topiary in places and you will find them



Xeronema callistemon

This New Zealand plant has flax-like leaves upto 80cm high. The stems of red bottlebrush-like flowers are produced in late spring to early summer. In cultivation it requires extremely well-draining compost and a sunny situation. Probably best growing as a containerised plant and overwintered under glass.

fashioned as armchairs and seats by the roadside!

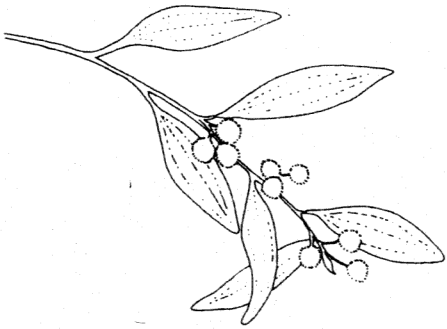
Tresco Abbey

A re-visit at the end of May this year showed the garden at its most colourful. The new visitor centre has its surrounds ablaze with Gazania, Argyranthemum, Pelargonium, Aeonium, *Geranium maderense* and Lampranthus. There have been many more plantings, especially of *Protea cynaroides*, full of blooms, also some new Banksias eg. "Giant Candles".

Plants I especially noted in flower were a tree of *Greyia sutherlandii*, full of red flowers, a clump of *Xeronema callistemon*, and the vivid yellow *Puya chilensis*, the huge spikes full of starlings feeding. The many Callistemons were all finished, but the Cape Ericas were still in flower, as was *Berzelia lanuginosa*. In all, a very good time to visit.

There are bottlebrushes : *Callistemon rigidus* (which grows well in eastern Scotland) and *Callistemon pallidus*. You will also see *Pittosporum patulum, Olearia frostii, Olearia nummulariifolia* and *Ozothamnus rosmarinifolius*.

If you look carefully in the garden, you will also find several unlabelled *Acacia melanoxylon* growing outdoors (in addition to one in the greenhouse). These are bushy, stooled looking specimens rather than the natural tree-like form. They display mostly the mature phyllodes, but there are a few juvenile lower leaves of typical bipinnate acacia appearance. I believe the original top growth of these plants was damaged in the cold January of 1996.



Acacia melanoxylon

Garden recommendation

Ian Michael Smart

The University of Dundee Botanic Garden, Riverside Drive, Dundee has an Australasian Plants section. There is a large collection of eucalypts, covering twenty different eucalyptus species. You can really experience the sight, feel and smell of walking through a grove of eucalypts.

The Dundee Botanic Garden is open to the public throughout the year (apart from the Xmas and New Year period) and is well worth a visit.

Saving seed – some cautionary notes

John Purse

I have obtained many samples of seed of Australian plants from a range of suppliers in recent years, and have collected further samples myself. The suppliers include commercial ones, and also seed banks of several plant societies, including the Australasian Plant Society. I have found that most seedlots are viable, but that growth of the resulting plants is quite often poor. It would be easy to ascribe this poor growth to inappropriate composts or environmental conditions, and initially I simply accepted this as 'one of those things'. However, I realised this was not an adequate explanation when I raised two seedlots of red-flowerd moort (*Eucalyptus cernua,* formerly known as *Eucalyptus nutans)* at the same time; all plants of one seedlot were vigorous from the outset, and remain so 18 months later, while all the plants of the other seedlot are weak and have never looked healthy. I knew that the healthy seedlings had come from a defined wild population, as I had bought them from the Australian Tree Seed Centre.

In the light of this observation, I suspected that inbreeding depression was at work in the non-vigorous seedlot, and I reviewed my experiences with seedlots of other species. It turned out that seedlots that were collected from populations of plants, either in the wild or cultivated, seemed to have germinated and grown well. However, seed that came from isolated plants, or probably did, often had low viability and tended to produce a high proportion of abnormal plants. So I think that I have been seeing effects of inbreeding.

I doubt that I am alone in this. But a little background knowledge may help to avoid the problems.

In any plant species in their natural populations, individual plants will usually differ genetically from each other. This variation is maintained over generations by outcrossing, i.e. cross-pollination between individuals, followed by natural selection. It is estimated that 80% of higher plant species are predominantly outcrossing in their natural populations, and that this percentage becomes increasingly higher still with increased longevity of the species. Thus, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of woody species are outcrossing. This does not mean that such species cannot self-pollinate, although they frequently have a variety of mechanisms that tend to prevent this occurring, and any seeds resulting from

self-pollination tend to have poorer growth and long-term survival. This latter point has been quite well documented in various forest tree species of economic importance.

The obvious practical lesson to draw is that seed should be collected from populations of plants that are able to cross-pollinate, if at all possible. For perennial species in particular, seed from isolated specimens, whether in nature or in gardens, is unlikely to perform satisfactorily, even if the parent plant is outstanding. The problem of course is knowing the precise provenance of the seed, unless you have collected it yourself. Of the commercial seed suppliers, only the Australian Tree Seed Centre provides this information routinely. In my recent experience, other suppliers are happy to advise on the original source of the seed if requested, if they know themselves, but they are often surprised to be asked. I suspect they are rarely asked for this information, and so do not regard it as very significant. If the importance of this information was more widely-recognised and freely-available, I wonder whether we would have more success stories in our efforts to cultivate challenging subjects?

Sources

I have drawn the background information in this article from a chapter by D. Coates and M. Byrne entitled 'Genetic variation in plant populations: assessing cause and pattern', published in a book 'Plant Diversity and Evolution: genotypic and phenotypic variation in higher plants' edited by R J Henry (CABI publishing 2005). This chapter gives a good summary of an extremely complex subject, illustrated by many studies from Australia.

The Australian Tree Seed Centre catalogue is available at:

http://www.ffp.csiro.au/tigr/atscmain/index.htm

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Eucalypts

Nicky Zanen

The genus was named by Charles Louis L'Heritier de Brutelle, 1746 – 1800, from specimens collected at Adventure Bay, Tasmania, during Captain Cook's 3rd expedition, the original type being *E obliqua*, Messmate Stringybark. This was published in 'Sertum Anglicum' printed in Paris 1788 after L'Heritier had studied the Kew collections in England 1786-7.

Continued on page 36

2006 Meetings

Who did you meet in 2006? Did you attend one of the society's three meetings? Read the following reports and you may be tempted to join one of next year's get-togethers.

Southern Meeting

At the beginning of June we held our southern meeting at Jeremy and Hilary Spon's place near Canterbury. Jeremy's excellent instructions helped tremendously, although I have to admit to hypnotically following a truck off the M25 to find myself heading to Canary Wharf!

It was a perfect summer's day. My main concern was that no one would suffer sunstroke. Twelve members attended including a couple who live locally and have never been to Iffen Cottage before.

Jeremy is interested in attracting butterflies, and his garden reflects his use of sound principles to attract all sorts of wildlife including newts and tadpoles. He has a pond but mentioned that he is not impressed with the butyl liner as it gets swamped by couch grass.

Plants I noted included a *Hakea clavata* which flowers three times a year, a callistemon with lime green flowers, *Olearia phlogopappa* sold as *stellulata*, *Eucalyptus urnigera* with a *Euc caesia* type bark which he cut to the ground and has since sprouted 4 branches, and *Prostanthera* 'Poorinda Ballerina'.

For frost protection Jeremy uses a mulch of plastic and stones. On this sunny day though, it was hard to believe this garden would ever be affected by frost. He lives in an area that has a high content of chalk in the water and needs to use rain water on his plants. The average rainfall is 28".

Jeremy likes to use rooting powder for propagating, which is getting harder to get with the new EU restrictions.

The plants don't survive under -10 degrees. Bubblewrap over hothouse limits the temperatures to -4 and -6 instead of -10 and -13. He would prefer to use his cellar, but there is not enough light. He has an extraction fan from the house which transfers warmer air to the greenhouse.

Hilary provided a superb lunch for us. Thank you both Jeremy and Hilary for your hospitality.

We then went to Tim and Gillian Ingram's 'Specialist Plant Nursery' in Faversham.

There was a lot to see here. Tim fancies Umbelliferae, notably because they die down in summer.

He rated the *Prostanthera cuneata* as 'extremely hardy, extremely hardy'. He had a Lomatia with beautiful soft

new foliage and an enormous *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* which can withstand temperatures as low as minus 14. In their situation, a minimum temperature of -10 is normal. Last winter they only reached -6 although their winter was 'ten days later'.

Northern Meeting

14 people attended this meeting at Tony and Ann Entwistle's place in Delamere, Cheshire.

Again we were able to spend our time outdoors in a lovely garden and indulge in a fantastic banquet. Thank you so much Ann and Tony.

Prostanthera cuneata got a mention again as being a plant that is really hardy. A couple of years ago Tony had problems with flooding sewage and the *cuneata* thrived! Other Aussies I noted included *Olearia phlogopappa, Lomandra longifolia, Banksia integrifolia* and *Callistemon subulatus*, which is common in the UK, and *Eucalyptus niphophila*, the Alpine Snow Gum which originates in New South Wales and Victoria.

After lunch we headed off to Dave and Louise Worthington's place. They specialise in trees and shrubs and have a lovely hillside garden which they are hoping to have included in the RHS Open Garden Scheme next year. There are several different views, including the first vista of predominantly conifers. Other show stoppers were Echiums, an impressive collection of poppies and wooden sculptures scattered throughout the garden.

This garden is definitely worth a future visit again, especially when the Japanese garden being constructed has matured.

Annual General Meeting in Birmingham

16 people attended our AGM including Bev and John Hanson from Melbourne, Australia.

Keith Larkin welcomed attendees. Our Treasurer reported last year that we were making a £500 loss so our subscription was increased to £10 per year for British and overseas members. Renewals are in January. Our Treasurer mentioned that he hopes the membership fee will remain the same for several years. It mostly pays towards the coloured printing in Pentachondra.

We currently have 166 members (compared to 196 last year). Last year we gained several new members in March when the RHS ran the Australian Down Under Seminar.

The seed bank income was discussed and a decision made to reduce the charge from £3 to £2. 60 members requested seeds this year. Much seed is donated and the seed bank is subsidised by £200 per year.

President's Report – Keith commented that the newsletter has much improved. Southern area meetings are running well and the Northern meeting happened again this year. There is a core of enthusiasm but we need to encourage more attendance. He recorded thanks to the hosts.

Our office bearers have all agreed to remain in their roles. Judy Clark was nominated as the Southern Rep and Pat Anderson as Northern Rep.

The issue of raising the profile of the Society was discussed, something I (Nicky) am happy to help with.

Venues for next year's meetings were discussed, including Ness Gardens and Reading.

Bev Hanson gave her talk. She worked for 5 years with Ellis Stones who followed the principle of garden design of Edna Walling.

Plants shown by Bev included Orthrosanthus (morning iris, which only flowers in the morning), Dianella, Bracteantha, *Sollya heterophylla* which is now called *Billardiera heterophylla, Grevillea juniperina* and *rosmarinifolia* which she felt will all grow in the UK.

Bev mentioned that her property has a Trust for Nature covenant which means that the bush thereon will be left for future generations. She showed us the progress of two small gardens and one large garden and her own garden. A hint Bev gave us is that rocks need to be handled as they are found in nature, and not buried!

We finished the meetings with a general discussion. Jeff recommended *Eucalyptus verrucata* – a slow growing Tasmanian eucalypt which is a good foliage plant, *E. debeuzevillei* – snow gum, and *E. neglecta* (Omeo gum) although that can grow to 60 ft. It coppices well, has nice leaves and is slow growing. *E. niphophila* – white bark, patched grey or red, *Eucalyptus gunnii* variations and *E. perriniana,* the spinning gum with round leaves, which also coppices well.

Not recommended is the Tasmanian eucalypt *E. globulus* which grows too big.

We were then guided to the Birmingham Gardens. Simon Gulliver is the Plants Records Officer and met Jeff at Tatton Park during his placement year. He studied the adaptations to fire of various Eucalypts. The gardens were founded in 1828 and originally laid out by Loudon. The current layout follows the original design. Now the gardens have playgrounds, facilities for conferences and weddings and concentrate on children's education.

It was pouring when we first arrived which meant that Simon took the opportunity of discussing the plants in the conservatory. He explained how

pitcher plants have translucent leaves that trick the insect into thinking they can escape and showed us a hybridised Dicksonia which needs a pruning every 20 years. This is due in 2 or 3 years and he is not allowed to retire before this task is done!

We were able to see the hothouse and propagating area. These have been moved to a lower level in the gardens, where the frost rates are much higher. This area is being redeveloped shortly.

A very interesting walk with many notable plants. Thank you Simon.

Nicky Zanen

*****

Letter to the Editor

September 30th

Dear Sue

I note the deadline for the next issue of the magazine is tomorrow!! Sorry I have not got any of the formats mentioned, and my handwriting is near illegible so I hope this will do.

I have been intending to do this ever since our Southern Meeting at the garden of Jeremy and Hilary Spon. We have discovered that we are only about 2 miles apart, and we pass by their high hedge frequently on our way to the supermarket! Now we know what delights there are behind that hedge.

What a warm welcome we all received on a very hot day in early June. It was my first meeting with another member of the Society. Their garden is still developing in an exciting way, and the perennial bed looked particularly good with some striking colour schemes. A gravel bed was in the process of construction, and there were interesting walks through shrubs and trees. Jeremy took us all on a tour, and he had prepared a list of all his Australasian plants. Also lurking in one area was a large collection of pots - such a lot to be watered with our hose-pipe ban. Lunch was enjoyed by all and was washed down with some delicious wine one member had provided. After all that Jeremy had arranged a visit to Tim Ingram in nearby Faversham with lots more to see.

Jeremy and Hilary have yet to visit our garden. We have been very busy with various visitors. With so many other commitments the garden sometimes gets a bit neglected; but it always looks good in parts. I am very much an amateur; but have managed to grow a few Southern Hemisphere plants from seed. My greatest success is an *Acacia pravissima* which has survived at least 2 winters outside, and is about 15 ft high. We have a hoheria which also doing well, and covers itself with bloom each year. Not Australasian but very good are my Paulownias, just a bit taller than the *pravissima*. Unlike Jeremy we are at the top of a hill; but we do have lots of large trees around (too many if

anything!) Jeremy must be on chalk whereas we are on a clay cap. I have most of the ordinary things like Phormiums, various Hebes, Pittosporums, Libertia, Callistemons, (not so successful) *Leptospermum scoparium* etc. I found a cassinia in our local nursery and an *Olearia macrodonta*. Just to remind me of New Zealand I sowed some seed of *Cortaderia* Toetoe, and enormous plants have appeared with equally enormous plumes. I have a few Corokia, wirenetting bush; but slow to germinate. Also *Bulbinella hookeri* has been in the pot since Spring and nothing has happened yet. I have had great success this year with *Hibiscus trionum*.

That is about it for now. We must all say a big thank you to our Southern hosts, and hope the Northern Meeting was enjoyable too.

Kathleen Longbottom

*****

It could only happen to Amanda!

Amanda Kershaw and partner were just two of the members attending the Annual Meeting at Birmingham Botanical Gardens in July.

The following quote (emailed to Keith Larkin) conveys how much they enjoyed the meeting. Hopefully, it'll persuade a few more members to attend next year.

'We both had a great time at Birmingham. The only thing that we could have wished for was yet more time to chat to people, with this being the first time we'd met some of them - and I think you've realised how much I like to chat about such interesting things.....but obviously people had schedules to keep to.

'As we were in our own car, (and as usual for us at a new garden) we stayed to (and past) closing time for the public. We were locked in!

'The wedding guests (from an event held at the Gardens) suggested an exit that we couldn't find and eventually the staff found us and showed us a different, rather hidden, way out. We then found that the downpour had wet my car seat through the open sunroof for the journey home. That's life.....

Amanda Kershaw

We Need You!

For just £12, you receive two newsletters, upto 20 packets of seed and a chance to meet other enthusiasts at our annual and regional meetings.

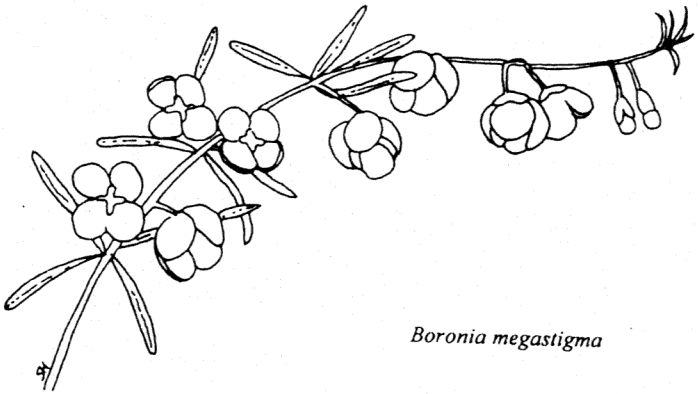
To keep your newsletter interesting, we greatly welcome articles, large or small. Nothing beats the actual experience of growing something new and unusual.

GROWING BORONIAS

- and their relatives

Jeff Irons

There can be few plants that have caused more frustration than *Boronia megastigma*. One nurseryman actually told me that he had decided that it is ungrowable. This was in spite of the fact that others manage to produce it for sale every year.



Boronia megastigma

The key to growing this, and indeed all boronias, is to provide lime free soil (or compost) that is very well aerated (well drained) and to keep the moisture level constant. A heather compost is suitable. Continually letting a *Boronia* get dry, then re-wetting it is one of the surest ways of killing it.

The simplest way to start growing *B. megastigma* is from a bought plant. Transfer your purchase to a larger pot as soon as you get it home. Do not stand the pot on a windowsill, or on a sunny greenhouse bench. Instead, put it somewhere where the temperature does not fluctuate greatly. Aim to get the equivalent of dappled shade. Wherever it is, make sure that the sun does not shine on the pot. That will raise the temperature around the roots, and make the plant more susceptible to infection. A capillary sand bed (or capillary matting) is useful. It ensures that the roots are always moist, yet not wet. Keeping to these simple rules should ensure that your *Boronia megastigma* lives, grows and flowers.

An easy way round the problem of how to keep your plant alive is to grow a species that is less demanding than the Brown Boronia. *B. heterophylla* is one of them. Almost winter hardy, it has large red flowers that fade to white. Like *B. megastigma* it has a delightful fragrance. The smell drifts out of the greenhouse, scenting the air for a considerable

distance. Unfortunately, there is the same problem, that many people cannot detect the smell. It could be that the gardener of the family is the unfortunate one, and the non-gardener the beneficiary of these scented plants! Boronias can be pruned when they are in bloom, treating the prunings as cut flowers. Otherwise prune after flowering, and remove about one third to a half of the growth. Follow with a light dose of slow release fertiliser.

The best method of propagation is from cuttings. Taken after flowering or in the autumn, they root easily, though not always quickly. Layering is probably another practical method. It certainly works with the winter hardy *B. parviflora,* which self layers in August. Other species could be as amenable. Seed needs to be pre-treated by pouring boiling water over it and letting it stand for 24 hrs before sowing in a lime free compost.

Boronias are in the same plant family as Rue, *Skimmia, Citrus*, *Correa* and *Acradenia.* Like them, they do not have a very vigorous root system, so take 12 to 18 months to make sizeable plants If this is recognised, their propagation does not pose any special difficulties.

*****

Eucalypts

Nicky Zanen

Continued from page 29

There are over 660 species of Eucalypts in Australia. The use of common names causes a great deal of confusion within the different states in Australia. For example, *E. dealbata* of New South Wales and Queensland has been known by 15 different vernacular names : Tumbledown Gum, Hill Red Gum, Hill Gum, Tumbledown Box, Mountain Box, Mountain Gum, Ridge Gum, Scrub Gum, Silver Gum, Leatherjack, Leather Jacket, Blue leaf Gum, Smoky Gum, Crossed Gum and Stunted Gum.

Bushmen and timber workers have difficulty in realising the differences between the gums, boxes, stringybarks, ironbarks, peppermints, ashes, bloodwoods and mallees, and even botanists have had to re-arrange classification after closer study by modern methods.

What has always fascinated me is that the most widespread species in Australia is *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (long known as *E. rostrata)*, the Red River Gum. This was named from a cultivated specimen growing in the garden of the Camaldulian order of religious hermits, named from St. Romauld's chief foundation colony at Camaldoli on the heights of the Tuscan Apennines, Italy. Allegedly a seed was dropped there, and because *camaldulensis* was the first name registered formally for the Red River Gum, it is the one this icon of Australia is stuck with.

Reference : Australian Plant Genera, James A Baines.

A Flexible Friend

by Jeremy Spon

The great storm of October 1987 felled many trees in southern gardens, and that of my parents, where I was living at the time, was no exception.

Once the debris was cleared away, many gaps were left, and I persuaded my parents to let me plant some eucalyptus. They were bought from Celyn Vale nurseries, and among the species planted was *E. viminalis*.

It grew well, and straight as a die, and soon developed a beautiful white trunk. However, the storm had left some original (native) trees, and one, a large mature silver birch, was quite close to the eucalyptus. One windy night, without warning, the birch fell over (probably a victim of honey-fungus) and its top caught in that of the eucalyptus. The weight of a mature birch is tremendous, and it dragged the top of the eucalyptus almost to the ground. Amazingly the eucalyptus did not break, but it did look a sorry sight, bent almost double.

It was some time before the local tree surgeons came to clear up the mess, and it was with some difficulty that my father persuaded them not to cut down the eucalyptus as well. It would probably have sprouted from the base, but my father thought that such a resilient plant should be given a chance to recover. When the weight of the birch was removed, the eucalyptus sprang up, but only to form an eccentric curved right-angle, the upper part of the trunk almost parallel to the ground, but some fifteen feet above it.

All this happened some four years ago, and incredibly, the tree has since straightened itself up, and is now virtually vertical again. It is growing away quite vigorously, and seems unaffected by its mishap. I cannot imagine many trees would withstand such stress without snapping, or recover a straight stem when semi-mature, and I am left wondering whether *Eucalyptus viminalis* might not provide excellent building timber!

Snippet - Four Oaks

At the Four Oaks show this September I acquired a plant of *Acacia caven* from Patagonia Plants. I think this should now be correctly *Senegalia caven*. I have never had an American Acacia before; it seems very prickly and with very ferny foliage. I was assured at the stand that it was hardy in the UK but I doubt this - they also assured me that *Lomatia ferruginea*, also displayed, was hardy, but it has never survived outside with me.

Tony Entwistle

A case of mistaken identity!

By Thomas Naylor, Leeds.
Written end of September

It is by no means an everyday ocurrence that a contributor should present himself before the readership of Pentachondra in the guise of a U.S. TV evangelist, but at the present time I can think of no apter comparison for myself. I come before you as one who has transgressed and has been discovered in that transgression. You must realise that every phrase herein put down is punctuated with a sob or a blubber and that if I had white-robed handmaidens by my side they would be sobbing and blubbering uncontrollably. All ye who have followed me have been led into error.

How often the word *oblongifolia* has been on my lips or at the tip of my fingers or my deceitful pen and every time an untruth. It is as bitter as wormwood to me now to realise how often I have flaunted my two banksias and drawn attention to them shamelessly under a specific name which was not theirs by rights.

The true identity of my plants has been revealed and the name ordained for them is *paludosa*. Not *oblongifolia* but *paludosa*! If anything that follows seems at all sanguine or even light-hearted I trust that this preamble will enable everyone to assay the full extent of my contrition.

Both plants have survived for eleven years unprotected in the open ground and were grown from seed purchased under the name *oblongifolia* but I make no excuses. I did develop doubts as to their true identity partly because leaves of *paludosa* are described as whorled and some of those on the stems of my plants could possible have been so described, but more because the flowers in late bud resembled photographs of *paludosa* in the Banksia Book by Alex George. Jeff Irons obligingly sent photographs of my plants in flower to Australia where they were identified by Alex George as *paludosa*.

The larger specimen is over two metres high and both plants show a very strong tendency to grow away from the shade. I think that it is quite likely that their situation 165 metres above sea level on an east-facing slope but planted to the west of the house has aided their survival since they are afforded protection from easterly winds while still having the benefit of air drainage downhill.

Flowering always takes place in winter. This year the first flower will open in early October which is about two weeks earlier than the previous year. One odd circumstance is that two of the rusty coloured buds on the

main stem just above the lignotuber or swollen woody base, are producing flower spikes and I had assumed that they would turn into new shoots. Fresh growth is felt-like in texture and rusty-red for about two weeks in July. The resulting new branchlets often retain a great deal of the red colour and this year appears to be of an especially Babylonian hue.

As for myself I shall be scouring the situations vacant columns of the local paper under hermit once I've used the Yellow Pages to locate a reliable purveyor of sackcloth and hair shirts.

*****

WANTED!
ALL BANKSIA GROWERS

The Banksia botanist, Alex George, is updating his 'Banksia Book' and wishes to include horticultural details of cultivation in countries other than Australia. If you have any banksias, either under cover or outdoors, please let the editor know about them.

DEADLINE for next issue is March 1st. Please send all contributions to Sue Hyams - see contacts page for snailmail address/email.

Pelargoniums and an Erodium

by Jeff Irons

Although New Zealand has only one native pelargonium, which appears not to be cultivated; Australia has six of them. Three have been and still are in my garden. One has proved to be reliably winter hardy. The other two succumb to hard frost, but always leave self sown seedlings that bloom in their second year. The latter two provide summer long colour in a reasonably bright spot and have never needed watering, no matter how severe the drought.

P. australe can be bought from specialist nurseries and has long been in the APS seed list. We used to have just one strain, but in 2006 my plants from a different origin flowered. Seed from both strains is now in the APS list. The earlier strain is quite low growing, say about 6" high, and produces spreading plants with flattish heads with up to 13 white flowers marked with pink to reddish-purple striations. The new strain is more upright, to about 12" and has only about 6 flowers in a head. The leaves are also a brighter shade of green. Both strains flower from June right through to October and cover the ground well. Provided it is not carried out too late they can be cut back after flowering, otherwise

they are best cut back in the spring. When not in flower this species can be distinguished from *P. littorale* by the leaves. Up to 10cm across they have shallowly lobed edges and are covered with hairs on both surfaces. The presence of these hairs can easily be tested by holding a leaf with one hand, then drawing a finger of the other hand across the leaf. It will feel smooth and velvety. My strains are winter hardy to about -7°C.

P. littorale is less frost tolerant than *P.* australe, usually succumbing to frosts below -4°C. It is another low plant, 3 to 6" high with leaves that are dark green on top and often reddish underneath. It has up to six flowers in ahead and like *P. australe* flowers throughout the summer. Its heart shaped leaves are up to 5cm across and when stroked with a finger feel hard. Unlike those of *P. australe* they are only sparsely hairy. Although the name *P. littorale* dates back to 1837, the species was for a time included in *P. australe*.

P. rodneyanum has the largest flowers of any Australian *Pelargonium*. Growing to about 6-9", its magenta flowers, with darker markings at the base of the petals, appear in July and August. Unlike the other two species this one has never set seed for me. Whereas they have tap roots this one has tuberous roots and spreads by making new tubers. This can be used to advantage in pot culture. With feeding, a single tuber will quickly fill a 6" pot and produce a mass of flower. Such plants are very unnatural and have leaves perhaps four times as large as they should be. This species dies down in winter and is quite hardy.

All three species give something different in the way of pelargoniums and always attract favourable comment. They grow easily from seed sown in late spring, flowering in their second year. My strain of *P. rodneyanum* is sold by one alpine nursery.

Erodium cynorum comes from the Swan River area of Western Australia. This origin suggests that it isn't very winter hardy in our climate and that is actually the case. I grow the sub species *glandulosum* which has a wider occurrence and is taller - up to 0.7m. However it too survives by self sown seedlings. It isn't one of the world's best plants, being rather straggly. Nevertheless its small blue flowers with veins that are red at the bottom are quite pretty, so it doesn't get pulled out and some years I remember to collect a little seed for the society's list. If you are 'into' erodiums this one is worth trying. Like the pelargoniums it is an easy and trouble free plant.

Many thanks, once again, to all contributors. Without your help, there wouldn't be a newsletter. All members are welcome to send in snippets of news, etc.

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