



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 257 – September 2010

OUR NEW LOGO

Our new logo was unveiled at the August meeting. Designed by Skye Jeffrys from design house 'Isle of Skye', the logo depicts *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* 'Lara form' which is now extinct in the wild.

Skye's beautiful design was produced in double quick time, and at a very special 'mate's rate'. If you need any graphic design work, or know anyone who does, contact Skye at isleofskye.com.au ...and, check out her blog .. we even get a special mention.



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Thanks Skye ... we love it!

AUGUST SPEAKER – Brendon Stahl - ACACIAS

Our speaker at the August meeting was the outgoing State President, Brendon Stahl, who told us about Acacias.

There are over 1,000 species of Acacia in Australia, with the majority in Western Australia. They can be a great garden plant, grown for their flowers, foliage, striking seed pods and their ability to grow quickly. They range in size from small shrubs to large trees, with prostrates, low-growers and hybrids that will fit into any garden. Acacias also fix nitrogen, so over time they improve soil fertility. It is said that Eucalypts benefit from being grown with Acacias.

The flowers are either ball or rod-shaped, vary in colour from pale lemon yellow to bright golden

yellow, and can be sparsely distributed or completely cover the plant.



Acacia longifolia subsp. *Sophorae* - Anglesea

In 1995 a single red-flowering aberrant *Acacia leprosa* – Cinnamon Wattle- was found in the Cathedral Ranges near Buxton, in Victoria, and cuttings were taken by the Botanic Gardens. This plant is now sold widely as *Acacia* Scarlet Blaze. The original plant has since died.

Foliage is also very variable, with fern-like true leaves to phyllodes, which are actually flattened stems. There are leafless forms, like *Acacia aphylla*, - Leafless Rock Wattle - and the leaves of *Acacia denticulosa* – the Sandpaper Wattle – certainly live up to their name.

Some Acacias retain a certain interest after the flowering period, with strikingly handsome seed-pods. *A. iteaphylla* – Flinders Ranges Wattle – has lovely pendulous seed-pods, *A. cyclops* – Red-eyed Wattle- has a striking red seed stalk surrounding the black seed, *A. malonoxylon* – Black Wattle – has bright yellow seed stalks and *A. suaveolens* – Sweet Wattle- had large, colourful, hanging seed-pods.

Acacias have the ability to grow quickly, and are often used as wind-breaks or screening plants. They



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also have a reputation as being short-lived, but Brendon thinks this is perhaps relative. Of the original 60 plants that he started his garden with, only about 10 have died, and he believes that this is more to do with climate than life-span.

Brendon's property features over 160 Acacias, and there are flowers in every month of the year. However winter/spring is the most common season, and Brendon has over 80 species in flower this month. *A. filifolia*, a W.A. species, has the longest flowering time, from November to July. His favourite is *A. boormanii* – Snowy River Wattle – a soft, delicate plant which has masses of flowers, and holds its flowers even in heavy rain.

Acacias are pollinated by insects, primarily bees, wasps, beetles and flies, but also spiders and birds. In response to a question from the floor, Brendon stated that although Acacias have a reputation of causing allergies and hay-fever, they are not wind pollinated. Acacias have glands which secrete a sweet liquid and these are visited by birds and ants, which probably become accidental pollinators.

Propagation can be from seed, cuttings or layering. Brendon does most of his propagation by seed, and recommends soaking the seed in boiling water for up to 24 hours. Seed can also be nicked with a sharp blade or nail clippers, or abraded with sand-paper or an emery board. He recommends detailed note-taking on method, medium used, and success rates so that future propagation can benefit from past experiences.

Seed raising medium can be vermiculite, scoria fines, 3-sand 1-peat propagating mix, and proprietary seed-raising mix or potting mix.

Brendon has successfully grown *A. howittii*, , - Sticky Wattle- *A. cognata* Limelight and *A. plicata* from cutting but there are many more that will grow successfully.



Acacia baileyana – Cootamundra Wattle

Suckers can also be used to propagate, with *A. boormanii*, *A. melanoxylon* and *A. genistifolia*, - Spreading Wattle - among those which sucker.

Acacias can suit even a small suburban garden. *A. becklerii* is a naturally small plant, while *A. cognata* has many popular cultivars such as Limelight, Green Mist, and Fettucini which maintain a compact form at 1m x 1m. There are also prostrate Acacias such as *A. baileyana* – Cootamundra Wattle- *A. pravissima* – Golden Carpet- *A. howittii*, *A. cultriformis* – Knife-leaf Wattle – and others. But beware, a prostrate form of a large tree like *A. baileyana* is still a large tree that grows out, rather than up. *Acacia alata*, – Cedar Wattle - *A. baxteri*, *A. glaucoptera*, - Flat Wattle - *A. spinescens*, - Spiny Wattle - *A. varia parviflora* and *A. ulicifolia brownei* are all suitable for containers. Pruning is essential for all Acacias ... indeed almost all plants benefit from regular pruning.

Acacias are also used as food by animals and humans. Parrots, rosellas, cockatoos and native pigeons all eat Acacia seed, and the Aborigines



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collected and roasted seed. Brendon told of a 'Landline' program which showed Western Australian Anglo-Nubian goats being fed on *A. saligna* – Orange Wattle- which is high in protein.

Acacias have also been used since European settlement tanning leather, and dyeing fabric, producing pale yellow, gold, green, fawn, brown and grey dyes..

Eucalypts notwithstanding, I think Acacias are the quintessential Australian tree ... our floral emblem is an Acacia – *Acacia pycnantha*, the Golden Wattle.

VALE PAT BELIN.

Debbie Gaskill

We were sad to learn that Pat Belin died on August 19. Pat suffered a debilitating stroke a couple of years ago and lived in the Peter Street facility until recently.

I knew Pat as a club and committee member for about 20 years, having attended a couple of the original plant sales at her property in Freshwater Creek. Many current members would not have known Pat well as, even prior to her illness she had not felt able to drive to evening meetings, though she continued to attend plant sales for some years.

As a long-time treasurer of our group Pat was fearless in her efforts to promote the club finances, treating every penny as if it were her own. She was a stickler for propriety in matters fiscal and our books were regularly vetted by a shadowy gentleman known only as (in hushed tones) "the auditor". If I remember correctly we paid him for his services in whisky.

Pat was associated with APS Geelong for decades and was recognised for her services to promoting the cause of native plants by the awarding of a Life Membership.

When writing obituaries it is customary to use superlatives. In this case they are totally appropriate. Pat was a truly lovely lady - full of life and fun, always with some story to tell and always with a twinkle in her eye.

Our thoughts are with her family at this time. She will be sorely missed.

ON THE TABLE

Our specimen table this month was outstanding – a riot of colour and diversity - and it was only August! Notable for their variety of form and colour were the Hakeas, Grevilleas and Correas, while the positive identification of the Acacias, Chamelaucium, Darwinias, and Guichenotias prompted some lively and amusing discussion.

We reinstated an old tradition for the plant of the month. At each meeting, the winner of the raffle will choose a specimen which they find particularly appealing, from our table. The owner of that specimen will then contribute a short article about the plant for the next newsletter. Arthur Pape chose Darwinia 'Stripey', a form of *Darwinia macrostegia* which was brought in by Roger Wileman.



Darwinia Macrostegia 'Stripey'

Roger writes ...

"Darwinias are named after Dr Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin. They are endemic to Australia, most of them being found in the South West of Western Australia. 45 species have been described, but only some of these are in cultivation.



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Thanks mainly to the pioneer grafting techniques of Doug McKenzie of Coolamon Drive, Ocean Grove, the *Darwinias* were grafted on to a more reliable root stock from the east coast of Australia making them more vigorous. Doug had many *Darwinias* planted in his garden, and as a result many seedlings would appear. One of these seedlings was “Stripey” which is a beautiful form of *Darwinia Macrostegia*. Another form to have originated in Doug’s garden is Coolamon Pink. Grafted *Darwinias* are very reliable in the garden or a large pot and will flower for many weeks.”

WHAT’S FLOWERING IN THE BUSH?

A walk in the local bushlands on a lovely sunny August morning is a great way to warm up and get the winter cobwebs out. On 7/8/10 Frank Scheelings and I walked Fraser Reserve, a small patch of bushland between Fraser Ave. and Coalmine Rd. in Anglesea. Acacias were the dominant flowering species, with the more open areas a carpet of *A. suaveolens*. Also in flower were *A. myrtifolia*, *A. longifolia* and *A. mucranata*, while low-down the beautiful *Hibbertia fasciculata* is just beginning to put on a show. The tiny *Drosera whittakeri*, with its absurdly large flower was everywhere, and the Pink Heath, *Epacris impressa*, though fading, is still a beautiful display.



Acacia suaveolens at Fraser Reserve, Anglesea

On 22/8/10 we walked the hillside between Gilbert St. and Distillery Creek Rd, near Airey’s Inlet. This hillside was burnt in the Autumn of 2008, and is recovering beautifully. *Hibbertia fasciculata* was a riot of colour on the lower slopes, and the tiny purple pea-flowers of *Hovea heterophylla* dotted the hillside as we climbed.

Pink highlights were provided by *Davesia brevifolia* and *Kennedia prostrata*, which makes a vivid contrast against the still black earth. The beautiful little white Common Beard-heath, *Leucopogon virgatus*, is just beginning to bloom, and the top of the hill, at the Gilbert St end, was a mass of the Blunt Everlasting, *Argentipallium obtusifolium*. And of course ... orchids. We saw 8 species in flower on this hillside. I can’t wait for the Spring!



Hovea heterophylla – Airey’s Inlet

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The ABC Gardening Expo on is 1st -3rd October at the Caulfield Racecourse, Station Street, Caulfield. The APS will have a stall/display and anyone interested in helping out over the weekend would be very welcome. Contact Brendon Stahl for more information at brendonstahl@bigpond.com

The Expo will be open each day from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm ...entry \$17 per person.



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AUSTRALIAN OPEN GARDEN SCHEME

These gardens, open in September, all feature Australian plants. If any members make it to one of the gardens, we'd greatly appreciate a report for the next newsletter.

September 4-5

Davis Garden 4 Rickards Ave, Knoxfield. Richly planted with Australian plants, mounding and channelling used. Exotics in rear garden as well as natives. (20x40m)

Lubra Bend Homestead 135 Simpson Lane, Yarra Glen. An exciting, new, extensive garden using massive rocks and water, designed by Phil Johnstone, surrounded by old cypress hedge. Guildford-Bell house, veg. garden, croquet lawn, etc. (2.5 ac.)

Jerramungup Park 85 Johnsons Lane, Strathmerton. (Paul Kennedy's garden) Significant collections of hakeas, banksias, eucalypts (500 different species) in parkland setting. Ancient red gums. (35 acres) (NEW)

September 11-12

Hanson Garden 104 Webb Street, Warrandyte. Rich collection of Australian plants, rocks and pools reflect Bev's work done with Ellis Stones. Adjacent to national park (1 ac.)

September 18-19

Ford & Adams Gardens 141 Pitt Street, Eltham. Designed by Gordon Ford, integrated waterfalls and rocks, each garden using different approaches. (1.75 ac. And 0.25 ac.)

Note: \$10 joint fee

Alcheringa 46 Victoria Ave, Rosanna. Classic Gordon Ford design; house by Alistair Knox. Waterfall, indigenous plants, huge grass trees, Gynea lilies, etc. (0.25 ac.)

September 25-26

Subushia 16 Dover Street, Oakleigh East. 'Bush block' in the city, with 40 eucalypts, thickly planted, nature-strip too. Dry creek bed, chooks, productive area, permaculture-based. (25x55) (NEW)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Australian Plants Expo 2010

The APS Yarra Yarra group will be holding the Australian Plants Expo 2010 at the Eltham Community and Reception Centre, 801 Main Rd, Eltham, on September 11 and 12, from 10.00am – 4.0pm The expo features a huge native flower show, plants, book and art sales, and lots of activities for children and adults. Speakers Include ...

Sam Cox (Native landscape design)

Phil Hempel (Plant selection)

Georgine Martyn (Bush-food in garden design)

Juliegh Roberts (Bush food)

Adrianna Simmonds (Living with wildlife)

Our Next Meeting

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 21st September and is a members' night. The idea is that anyone who has something to share can spend 5 or 10 minutes telling us about it. Maybe it's a about a special plant or place in their garden, park or local bush. Perhaps it's the birds that come to your garden, or the fabulous flower you saw on your last holiday.

We encourage all members to take part in what should be a fun evening. Don't be shy, and don't be intimidated by us noisy ones! You don't need to be an expert, a scholar, or a fabulous public speaker ... just have an enthusiasm for your subject.

Roger will be our M.C for the evening, and he will be encouraging everyone to come up and share their story with us. We are all equal at the APS Geelong, so please come prepared, and bring as many slides or digital images as you want to illustrate your little talk.

For the purposes of planning, please email me and let me know that you would like a spot on our speakers list. We look forward to hearing from each and every one of you ☺



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Pomonal Native Flower Show

The Grampians group will host the 28th Pomonal Native Flower Show – October 2nd & 3rd from 9.30am to 5.00 pm both days.

Any members interested in attending can meet at the Pomonal Hall at 10.00 am Saturday. After the flower show we will visit two properties in Springwood Hill Rd, just 5 minutes away. One is a large established mixed garden, which survived the 06 bush fires, but is not completely native.

The other property is Roger and Sheilas, which has been 10 years of reward and a bit of hard work as well. Roger and Sheila have kindly offered to provide a BBQ, food and drinks etc.

Bring a chair and sturdy shoes, and a sense of humour! Please let Roger, or Sheila, know at next meeting if you are coming, so they can cater adequately. The Halls Gap Wildflower show is on at the same weekend.

Oh, and it's Roger's 40th annual 21st birthday on Friday 1st October, so be sure to come and help us all celebrate this milestone.

October Meeting

The speaker at the October meeting will be Judith McGinness, who will talk to us on a subject that we are all too familiar with ... Weeds! So, bring your specimen natives as usual, and a couple of weeds for I.D as well. No excuses, we all have them!

Christmas Break-up

Our Christmas break-up will be hosted by Gaeton Limsowtin at his Lara home, on Friday, November 26th. Gaeton has a wood-fired pizza oven in his yard, which will add a different flavour to this years' break-up, in more ways than one. Be sure to mark that date down in your calendars ... more details to follow.

WHAT'S EATING MY GREVILLEAS?

Ade Foster

I have a constant battle with a particular caterpillar that loves my grevilleas. It is especially fond of the 'Moonlight' and *G. candelabroides* beside my front door. One day everything is fine, the next, all the new growth has been stripped. How can one little beast eat so much? But, on closer inspection, it's not just one! I have found over 50 on a single shrub.

The culprits are the larvae of a Tussock Moth – Lymantriidae. They are densely hairy with little tufts along their backs that resemble the bristles of a toothbrush. Some of these hairs are urticating, that is, they break off and may cause an itching rash in some people. The larvae spin a loosely woven silk cocoon through which the offending hairs protrude, as further protection.



One of my Lymantriid caterpillar showing 'tussocks'

The females of this species are wingless and don't leave the cocoon after emerging from the pupae.



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They attract males with a chemical scent, called a pheromone, and the males mate through an opening in the wall of the cocoon. Neither sex has mouth parts or gut as adults, and do not feed.

The females lay their eggs in small batches within the cocoon and cover them with more hairy scales from the tuft on the end of their abdomens.

The young caterpillars drop from the cocoon on silk lines and immediately start feeding, sometimes with disastrous effect on my precious grevilleas.



Typical male Lymantriid moth with wingless female

I'm not a fan of spraying so I pick the larvae off and squash them when I see them, and watch for the cocoons, which I also pick off. They seem to have at least two seasons with caterpillars appearing in the Autumn and again in Spring.

The Gypsy Moth, *Lymantria dispar*, has become a serious pest in North America, since its introduction from Asia in 1869. Its host plants are oaks and aspen and serious defoliation has occurred in the north east. This has seen a change in the nature of the forest as lesser species become dominant. The US Forest

Service spends upwards of \$US 30 million per annum in Gypsy Moth control.

There is on-going work to keep Australia free of this pest. The gypsy moth has flighted females which are attracted to lights. They commonly lay their egg-masses on or near the lights. Viable egg-masses have been found on ships and their cargoes entering New Zealand waters from Asia, so the accidental introduction to Australia is a distinct possibility.

YOUR NEWSLETTER

Thanks to those few who have responded to request an email version of future editions of the 'Correa Mail'. Remember, if it arrives and you can't read it, let me know which version of Microsoft Word you have on your computer, and I will send your copy in that format.

Do you have a story to tell? And interest that you might like to share? A special plant or place that you'd like to tell us about? Send your musings to me and we can publish them in future editions. Deadline is one week after the club meeting.

Do you have any suggestions or ideas for future editions? Please let me know so we can make the 'Correa Mail' the best little newsletter in the business. It's your newsletter, so please be involved. © Contact me at adefoster@internode.on.net or 52439478.