



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 262 – March 2011

February Meeting

15th February

As is customary, our February meeting was a social gathering, in the form of a BBQ at the Eastern Gardens. It had been a glorious summer day, mid 20s with a light breeze by the time we kicked off at 6.30 pm. Thanks to Bruce McGinness for his work in scouting a suitable indoor/outdoor site with enough room for the 40 or so members who came along.



The trouble-makers' table ☺

A wonderful evening was had by all, until the mosquitos made a sudden appearance and sent us all scuttling for home.

UP-COMING EVENTS

Our Next Meeting

15th March

Our speaker for the March meeting is Frank Scheelings, who will talk to us about the changes in High Country flora since the bushfires of 2006/07.

Frank and his family have been holidaying in the high country for 25 years or so, and he has accumulated a wealth of knowledge of the plants in the area. This knowledge, and his fabulous photography will make for an entertaining and informative evening.

Mingling, Morphing and Meandering

19th March

The APS Victoria Committee of Management Quarterly Meeting will be held at Anakie-Staughton Vale Hall, 55 Staughton Vale Rd, Anakie Junction, Vic. (VicRoads Map 77 G7, Melways Map 609 D4) 9:30am arrival – meeting starts 10:00am - mixing planning for our Society's future with a guided tour of the Brisbane Ranges.

It would be good if some Geelong Group members are intending to, or have already registered to go to the Mingling, Morphing and Meandering.

Being so close to Geelong it would be great to have some input from Geelong Group members in the workshop type forums to contribute to the forward planning of our society.

Indigenous Plants Walk

23rd March

We'll take a guided walk through the Geelong Botanic Gardens on Wednesday 23rd, looking at plants used by the Aboriginal people, particularly the Wathaurong. Led by Liz Bennetto, one of the G.B.G.'s experienced guides, the walk will begin at 10:30 a.m. and will take about an hour. Please meet at the main entrance to the gardens. The cost will be \$3.30 per person, with the club covering members' costs. We'll see many Australian and indigenous plants, which have specialist uses for food, tools and medicine.

Cranbourne Botanic Gardens Bus Trip

26th March

We have hired a 25 seat bus for a trip to the fabulous Cranbourne gardens. Cost for the bus if all 25 seats are taken will be \$20 (there will be a subsidy from the club coffers to reduce this). Entrance to the gardens is \$9.80. There are two cafes at the gardens, or you can bring a picnic lunch. We will stop somewhere for dinner on the way home, so bring some spending money. The bus will leave from the Harvey Norman car-park on the Princes Highway, Corio, at 8.30am sharp!

A seat-allocation sheet for bus-trippers will be at the march meeting, or you can contact Ade to secure your seat early. It will be on a first come, first served

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basis, 25 seats only. adefoster@internode.on.net or call 03 52439478 and leave a message.

April Meeting

19th April

Cathy Powers will speak to us on the 'Biodiversity of the Brisbane Ranges'. Cathy is the recently elected president of APS Victoria. She is a resident of the Brisbane Ranges, a very informative speaker and a great photographer.

April Plant Sale

Our plant sale is on again 9th and 10th April, at Arthur and Linda Pape's property in Lovely Banks. We would love to have everyone at the club involved in some way over the weekend. There will be rosters available at the meeting for such things as gate-keeper, BBQ, canteen etc. Don't be shy, there are plenty of jobs for everyone. There's BBQ tea for all the workers on the Saturday night after the sale closes for the day, at which a very good time is had by all. We hope to see everyone there.

Missing Test-tubes

We need the large test-tubes for our flower display at the plant sale, and they have disappeared. Has someone borrowed them and forgotten to return them? If you know where they are please call Crimestoppers on ... no no no, please let someone from the committee know, so we can make sure they are available for the sale in April. Thanks folks!

Other Groups' Plant sales

26-27 March. Friends of Royal Botanic Gardens Autumn Plant Sale, Cranbourne

1 May. APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale and Propagation Demonstration from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm. Cnr Main Road & Brougham St, Eltham. Demonstrations are from 1.00 – 2.00 pm.

21 May. APS Melton & Bacchus Marsh Annual Plant Sale, Melton

Bendigo Bus Trip

June

We are planning a trip to Bendigo and surrounds in June, including a visit to the fabulous Goldfields Revegetation Native Nursery. More information will follow as details are finalised. Meanwhile, whet your appetite at the nursery's website at :-

<http://www.goldfieldsrevegetation.com.au/>

Another Favourite

Tony Cavanagh

Tony's favourite this time is *Grevillea buxifolia* (possibly subsp *buxifolia*...he's not sure) He writes

This plant has long been in cultivation, being among the first three grevilleas grown in glasshouses in England where it flowered around 1792. Known as a reliable plant in cultivation in Australia, it is not as showy as many of the flamboyant Queensland *Grevillea* hybrids but has such fascinating flower colours, cream, grey and pink-brown, that it is definitely my favourite *Grevillea*. I got my original plant in the 1970s and then it was one of the 'popular' native plants although I think that today you would be hard pressed to find it in a lot of nurseries.



Grevillea buxifolia



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We have continued to grow it from cuttings and it is a reliable shrub to about 1.5m with similar spread, tending to straggle if not pruned, and growing well in both sun and part shade. It can handle all but the driest situations and flowers over many months, the peak being in spring.



It is native of the sandstone areas, often in light forest, from central and south coast New South Wales and the Blue Mountains. There are three subspecies, with subsp. *buxifolia* the most commonly grown.

Sustainable Home and Garden Expo 12–13 March

The Barwon Water Sustainable Home and Garden Expo is on again and we will have an information stall operating over the weekend. It's a great opportunity to promote Australian native plants and the APS Geelong.

The Expo will feature sustainable outdoor living ideas, sustainable garden displays, water and energy conservation ideas, a stage show with Gardening Australia's Jane Edmanson and host of CH31s 'Vasili's Garden'0, Vasili Kanidiadis. There's lots of family entertainment and special appearances by Dennis Walter and Livinia Nixon.

If you can spare even a couple of hours between 9.00am and 5.00pm on either day please contact Ade so he can add you to the roster. We do have quite a

few gaps so let's get involved. Spend a couple of hours wandering the expo and a couple helping on the stall for a worthwhile and entertaining day out. ☺

The Barwon Water Sustainable Home and Garden Expo is on at Steampacket Gardens on the Geelong Waterfront, 12-13 March, 9am – 5pm.



Australian Open Garden Scheme

March 5-6

Plant Fair at Bolobek 370 Mount Macedon Road, Mount Macedon. A beautiful, famous garden with much to admire and be inspired by. It's a setting for a great plant fair, featuring the best nurseries around Victoria and from interstate. Several excellent Australian plant nurseries will be there.

April 9-10

Cummins Garden 4 Mowbray Court, Doncaster East. Permaculture, informal garden featuring Australian and indigenous plants. Water feature in courtyard, veg. garden, chooks, etc. (0.25 ac.)

April 23- 24

Crimsons Rest 74b Falkingham Road, Mount Evelyn. Terraced garden filled with unusual native and exotic

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plants chosen for hardiness, structure and colour. Sculpture etc.(0.33 ac.) (NEW)

April 23- 24

King Parrot Retreat 26-66 Wentworths Road, Strath Creek. Primarily Australian plant collections in large landscape. Olives, conifers and proteas too. Creek, bush tucker. (74 ac.)

What's in the Bush?

Our unusually wet and very humid excuse for a summer has seen the return of a beautiful orchid to the Geelong area. *Spiranthes australis* is a lovely little orchid, easily recognised by the spiral arrangement of the delicate pink and white flowers on the spike. This arrangement gives the orchid its common name – Austral Ladies' tresses.



Spiranthes australis – Austral Ladies' Tresses

Summer Orchids

It is found sporadically down the Australian east coast, Tasmania and New Zealand, and grows in swamps, bogs and marshes, or in seasonally wet grasslands. Geelong's very dry conditions for the past ten years or so have meant fewer and fewer have been seen each summer. But the big rains in January have brought them to life again, in very good numbers.

Frank Scheelings and I have enjoyed several lovely, messy days wading the sedge swamps of the Brisbane Ranges searching for, finding and photographing *Spiranthes*, along with the multitude of dragonflies, spiders, frogs and big, fat, frog-filled tiger snakes that also enjoy that habitat.



Corunastylis morrisii – The Bearded Midge

The unusual summer has also seen the early flowering of midge orchids, *Corunastylis* sp., in the Brisbane Ranges. Usually flowering in mid-April, *C. morrisii* – the Bearded Midge orchid - and *C. ciliata* –



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the Fringed Midge orchid- are already in full flower and in vastly increased numbers ... where last year there were one or two, this year there are hundreds.

They seem to prefer reasonably open forest, and produce a very slender flower spike to 15 cm tall, with up to 20 tiny, dark flowers crowded at the head. They are very easily over-looked, and could well be more common than we think.

The dense hairs on the tiny labellum of *C. morrisii* wave about in the slightest breeze, making photographing them particularly frustrating. Even in very still conditions, close-up shots require the photographer to hold his breath while shooting.

What's in the Bush 2

Rare Callistamon

From DSE Victoria ... A leech-infested swamp buzzing with mosquitoes has proved to be the secret hiding place of a stand of the rare Wimmera Bottlebrush.

An uncomfortable search in deep swampy water eventually paid off for two Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) biodiversity officers who found the rare plants.

DSE's David Pitts and Noushka Reiter conducted two surveys of the swamp in the Southern Grampians after a hot tip off by well-regarded Hamilton field naturalist Rod Bird. David Pitts said the first survey was fruitless but the second yielded excellent results.

"The second trip, wading waist deep in water with the mosquitoes forming clouds, avoiding turtles and gigantic leeches, led us to a stand of approximately 5,000 Wimmera Bottlebrushes on higher ground."

"The bottlebrushes were in a delightfully intact Redgum Swamp, with trees forming a dense overstorey and the trunks and ground covered in mosses.

"The occasional orchid was present in the understorey and the Redgums surrounding the stand were simply majestic."

The Wimmera Bottlebrush (*Callistemon wimmerensis*), recently described and listed in Victoria as endangered, is an enigmatic single

stemmed bottle brush. It has a single trunk up to 8 metres tall, pink flowers and smooth textured leaves.

"These water-loving bottlebrushes were originally known only from a small creek in the Wimmera," Mr Pitts said.

Samples were sent to Neville Walsh at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and confirmed as *Callistemon wimmerensis*.

"This new stand of Wimmera Bottlebrush is an important find for the species," Mr Pitts said.

"DSE, in conjunction with Parks Victoria, volunteers and the Wimmera CMA, aims to secure the future of the species through rabbit and weed control, adequate environmental flows, surveys and habitat protection."



Callistemon wimmerensis



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What's in the Bush 3

New W.A. species

From 'Perth NOW' Two plant species not previously known to science have been discovered during a flora survey in the Great Victoria Desert, as scientists begin to learn more about the relatively unknown region west of the WA border.

The two species, *Grevillea Ilkurlka* ms and *Dicrastylis* sp. Ilkurlka, were collected as part of a wider survey in the Ilkurlka area, 150km west of the border, by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the Spinifex People, in partnership with the WA Museum, Adelaide Zoo and Museum Victoria.

The discovery comes after two western desert taipans, which are among the world's rarest and potentially most venomous land snakes, were recorded in the region last year during the same survey. Just five individuals of this type of snake have ever been found.

DEC conservation officer Jennifer Jackson said despite just 30 collections existing at the WA Herbarium for the Ilkurlka region, the survey established that there were more than 200 species of plants growing in the area.

"This survey demonstrates that desert flora in WA is amazingly diverse, yet we know so little about what is actually out there in the western desert, and no doubt there are many more new species to science that are yet to be discovered," she said.

"It has helped us establish an inventory of the biological assets of the area, which is still one of the most pristine and undisturbed regions in Australia."

Dicrastylis sp. Ilkurlka was collected east of the roadhouse, with the small shrub consisting of purple flowers. Just one population with several hundred plants was found growing on a sandy flat between dunes.



Dicrastylis ilkurlka

Grevillea Ilkurlka ms is a shrub with large golden flowers, and was found growing in several populations on sand dunes within a 5km radius, south of the Ilkurlka Roadhouse.

Grevillea Ilkurlka ms is currently being formally described at the WA Herbarium, and *Dicrastylis* sp. Ilkurlka has been listed as Priority 1 flora, which means it is in urgent need of further survey," Ms Jackson said.

A further two species are currently being studied by botanists at the WA Herbarium, and are also expected to be new species.

Two species that were previously only known to exist outside WA were collected, and several species known in WA were collected in the Great Victoria Desert for the first time.

Interesting Tidbits

These last two articles were found while I was trolling the internet for other things. If you come across anything that you think might be of interest to our group, and worth putting in the Correa Mail, let me know. adefoster@internode.on.net