



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 271 – February 2012

FEBRUARY BBQ

Saturday 18th

Arthur and Linda have kindly made their home available for our Welcome to 2012 BBQ, on Saturday 18th February. The address, for new members, is 'Wirrawilla', 40 Lovely Banks Road, Lovely Banks. Please arrive about 5.30 pm.

PLEASE NOTE THE CORRECTION TO DECEMBER INFORMATION. THIS BBQ IS BYO EVERYTHING. PLEASE BRING A SALAD OR DESSERT TO SHARE, BUT EVERYTHING ELSE IS BYO.

Contact Linda on 52761343 to confirm what you are bringing, so we don't end up with 63 desserts and no salads.

Being February the weather may be very hot, so bring your bathers. But, be warned ... Arthur has a video camera, and he's prepared to use it! If the weather is inclement, there is a Plan B and Plan C so we are covered for all contingencies. See you there ☺

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Tony Cavanagh

Tony continues his fascinating series

It seems ages since I wrote the first article of this title for the May Newsletter but a lot has happened since then and I have been sidetracked into specific articles on plant naming, *Grevillea kenneyiana*, Sturt's Desert pea and William Baeuerlen. These did have some connection with the theme but now I can get back to considering some more of the people after whom many of our Australian plants are named. Don't be surprised that most of them are European because until the mid to late 19th century, there were very few botanists in Australia and most plants were named in Europe. Even those who worked here, such as Ferdinand Mueller, owed a lot to Europe and still honoured overseas botanists and collectors in their

naming (although in fairness to Mueller, he was keen to encourage local people to collect and send him plant specimens and rewarded the diligent ones by naming plants after them).

Bauera This is a small genus of three eastern Australian plants, seemingly not as popular as they once were. They are spreading shrubs, preferring dappled shade and moist rather than a dry situation, and are spectacular in flower, usually pink to purple, occasionally white. Two of the best known are *B. rubioides* (found from Queensland to South Australia) and *B. sessiliflora*, endemic to the Grampians. They are named after the Austrian botanical artists Ferdinand and Francis Bauer. Ferdinand is considered one of the finest botanical (probably more correctly biological) artists ever and I have included one of his paintings here as I have been unable to locate a picture of him.



President: Harry Webb - harry.webb@bigpond.com

Treasurer: Frank Scheelings - Ph 52297494

Secretary: Bruce McGinness - brucesm@unimelb.edu.au

Editor: Ade Foster - adefoster@internode.on.net

Australian Plants Society – Geelong P.O. Box 2012 Geelong. 3220

He is also commemorated by species in *Banksia*, *Eucalyptus*, *Grevillea* and others. Bauer was born on 20 Jan 1760 and died 17 March 1826. He came to Australia on the ship *Investigator* in 1801 as botanical and zoological artist, with Matthew Flinders and the botanist Robert Brown and both collected and prepared drawings. When he returned to England in 1805, he had some 1541 illustrations with him and many more part-finished sketches. Bauer painstakingly prepared watercolour plates of many of his plants and published some of them in parts but the venture was not a success even though they are considered some of the finest ever made.

Beaufortia This is a small WA genus of some 18-20 species, closely related to the melaleucas and callistemons. They are not common in eastern Australian gardens although a couple such as *B. purpurea* and *B. orbifolia* seem to be reliable in well drained soils and near full sun situations, forming neat shrubs to around 2 m. The most spectacular is the orange-red flowering *B. sparsa* which is fairly fussy needing soils that do not dry out (in WA it supposedly grows in swamps) but beautiful in flower. The attached picture was taken in the Dunedin Botanic Gardens in southern New Zealand, surely the most southerly location in which it has ever been grown!



Beaufortia sparsa – Swamp Bottlebrush

The genus was named by Robert Brown after Mary Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort, born December 1630, died 7 January 1715, one of the few women to be commemorated in a plant name. She was an outstanding grower of exotic plants from all around the world, probably over 2000 plants, while her herbarium collection of dried specimens (now in the British Library) ran to some 12 volumes. She was friends with and respected by some of the leading English botanists and gardeners of the time although of course, she never grew any Australian plants.

Billardiera I have always known *Billardiera* as climbers but on checking in Rodger Elliot's

encyclopaedia, found that some are small shrubs. There are some 25 species, many from WA, and some are very striking in flower. I have only grown *B. ringens* and *B. bicolor*, both climbers, and they prefer good drainage and dappled to full sun but are otherwise fairly reliable.



Billardiera bicolor- Painted Billardiera

They commemorate Jacques-Julien Houton de Labillardiere (also given as La Billardiere), born 23 October 1755, died 8 January 1834. He was botanist and naturalist on a major French expedition to Australia and the south Pacific in search of the missing explorer La Perouse, between 1791 and 1795. Labillardiere collected extensively in Tasmania and Western Australia, both plants and other "natural history" objects, and published the results of his Australian collections in two volumes in 1804 and 1806. Because of his and other French explorers' collections, many Australian plants were grown in France, sometimes before they were grown in England, especially in the garden of Josephine Bonaparte at Malmaison outside of Paris.



Mary Somerset and Labillardiere

SELF-CLEANING EUCALYPTS.

Deborah Smith

Thanks to John Bell for alerting me to this article by Deborah Smith, published in the Melbourne Age on 2/11/11.

When Gerard Poinern saw the beautiful silver foliage of a eucalyptus known as the 'Rose of the West', it reminded him of beer. Dr. Poinern, a nanotechnology expert, knew that beer foam was usually white because of its tiny reflective bubbles. He wondered whether the waxy surface of the Western Australian plant might also have microscopic features that could have industrial uses.

His team at Murdoch University in Perth found that the leaves of this native tree were covered in tiny bumps, with even smaller pillars of wax on top, which made them water repellent. Instead of water spreading out and sliding across the surface, it forms beads that roll across it. These droplets have a greater affinity for any dirt on the surface of the leaf, than for the leaf itself. Dr. Poinern and his team showed that a fine spray of water could gather up carbon black toner particles, which had been coated onto the leaves of the Mottlecah – *Eucalyptus macrocarpa*.



Eucalyptus macrocarpa - Mottlecah

"The rolling drops were able to completely clean the surface of the leaf" he said. An advantage of the local plant was that the wax could be easily and cheaply extracted. When put onto a glass plate, the wax re-assembled itself so it had the original surface structure. "The was still had those remarkable qualities" Dr. Poinern said.

The research is published in the journal '*Nanotechnology, Science and Applications*'. DR. Poinern said possible applications could include coatings for boat hulls, or for medical instruments to aid in sterilization. Dr. Poinern says that most other self-cleaning plants are aquatic. The Mottlecah, with its large red flowers, grows in dry conditions, and may have evolved the water repellent properties to

channel water droplets down to its roots, assisting survival in the arid landscape.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN GARDEN SCHEME

Jan 7-8: The Moorings, 14a Bass St, Flinders. A young garden designed by Fiona Brockhoff features predominantly native plants with subtle colouring, textile, shape and scent the key elements. 0.3ha. (NEW)

Feb 11-12 Henry Garden, 3 Eugenia Court, Boronia. A broad diversity of Australian natives feature in a lush green waterwise haven displaying strong structure and good use of space. Sculptures. 0.1 ha. (NEW) Rob and Val are members of APS Foothills Group and their garden has many interesting and innovative ideas.

APS GEELONG SPEAKERS.

- **March – Liz Benetto.** Liz will talk to us about the plants used by the Wathaurong people
- **April – Graham Wood.** Graham will discuss my favourite native plants, the Grevilleas.
- **May – Deirdre Murphy** will talk about the aquatic life in the Barwon River.
- **June – Tim Solly.** Tim is the nurseryman at Barwon Water and will talk to us about the work Barwon Water is doing with native plants in the area.
- **July – AGM** and Photo Competition.

WHAT'S IN THE BUSH?

HIGH COUNTRY ORCHID

We were lucky enough to be invited to spend a few days with Frank and Tina in Bright in early January. The high country flora is spectacular at this time of year. Frank and I made a couple of trips, to Mt. Buffalo and Falls Creek, and I was amazed again at the diversity and colour that can be found.

The almost treeless plains above Falls Creek were ablaze with yellow and white daisies, pink trigger-plants, lemon yellow kunzea and a myriad tiny ground-hugging plants which are endlessly fascinating. The few copses of Snow Gums which were spared the fires were in full bloom and covered in green and yellow beetles, all busily mating.

At Mt Buffalo, we were particularly looking for orchids, and Frank led me unerringly to four species that he had found in previous years.

The most interesting is the elbow orchid, *Thynninorchis huntianus*. A tiny plant, perhaps 60mm tall, with a weird, hinged floral arrangement, the

elbow orchid is a wasp mimic. It uses pheromones to attract male wasps in the family Thynninae (hence the generic name), which attempt to mate with the flowers. This triggers the plant hinge to release and the wasp's struggles bring it into contact with the orchid's pollinia. These become stuck to the wasps head and, frustrated, he flies off to be seduced by another orchid. The process is repeated and pollination has occurred.

The wasps are very small, about mosquito sized, and easy to miss in the field. At home, I was checking my images on the computer and was amazed to discover that one had been sitting on the plant while I was photographing it (see below). I would dearly love to have caught the wasp 'on the job', so to speak.



***Thynninorchis* flower, with attendant wasp. The 'pseudo-wasp' flower is less than 1cm in length.**

The wasp receives nothing from this arrangement, and, apparently, finds the plants pheromones preferable to those made by the female wasp. I must say, I think both his judgement and his eye-sight is a little lacking.

AUSSIE PLANTS ABROAD. *Eucalyptus pauciflora*
 In another life, I coached kids' gymnastics. At one time, we imported a Swedish coach, Olle Sålder, to work with our burgeoning boys' program. Olle returned to Sweden at the end of his contract and now lives in Humlarp in the south-west of the country, near Helsingborg.

A few years ago he contacted me about the possibility of growing some *Eucalyptus* species in Sweden. There are a few that grow above the snow-line, particularly in Tasmania. He thought they might do well in Sweden and give him a reminder of his time in Australia. I put him in touch with a Tasmanian company who sells seeds on-line, and they duly sent him some packets of seed.

The weather in Humlarp is very different to Australia, with winter average temperatures around zero, and summer averages at about 15 degrees. To my surprise, the Snow-gums, *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, did well and he had quite a few healthy young seedlings in his glass-house by the northern summer of 2010. He decided to try a couple in the garden, but the 2011 winter was very cold, and they did not survive. However, he still has a few inside and plans on transplanting them when they are a little bigger.



Olle's Snow-gums in Humlarp, Sweden

APRIL PLANT SALE

Under a Cloud?

Myrtle Rust, a virulent fungal disease has been discovered in Mornington. In response, APS Victoria has banned the sale of *Myrtaceae* at its sanctioned events, until at least January 2013. Obviously this has a huge impact on our plant sale. The committee is currently considering its options and seeking input and advice from our growers. We'll keep you informed. Meanwhile see attached letter.