



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 303 – December 2014

Christmas Break-up

The December meeting, as usual, is a BBQ gathering, this time at Roger and Sheila's house, 17 Aldershot St, on December 6th at 5.00 pm. The club will provide sausages, hamburgers, vegie-burgers and bread.

You are asked to bring a salad or desert to share, and your own eating utensils, plates, glasses and chairs. Roger says he has enough chairs, but please bring one just in case. Most importantly, you should bring your own drinks. In a departure from previous years, ***the club will not be providing any drinks*** except tea and coffee.

There was an attendance sheet at the last meeting to enable us to cater the event. **IMPORTANT:** If you intend to come to the BBQ, but weren't at the last meeting, please email Frank at

ftscheelings@gmail.com

by Wednesday 3rd December, to confirm your attendance. If you attend the BBQ without having filled in the form or without having notified Frank, please bring your own food You ***will not*** have been catered for. Hope to see everyone there.

NOVEMBER MEETING A Talk by Frank Scheelings

BORNEO

It seems that Frank and Tina took a trip to Borneo last year, although there was much heckling from riff raff in the audience as to quite when the trip occurred. Frank was adamant that they went in May, and Tina insisted it was in November. However there was consensus that they actually went to Borneo, and Frank was at the meeting to tell us all about it, and show us more of his fantastic photos.

Borneo is the third largest island in the world, and the geographical centre of south east Asia. It is an island of three nations – Indonesia in the south, Malaysia and Brunei in the north. Frank and Tina

visited the province of Sabah, which is the northern most tip of the island, in the Malaysian territory. The first stop was Sandakan, to which they flew from Kuala Lumpur on the first day.



Sabah, on the northern-most tip of Borneo

The Sepilok Orangutan Park has a daily exhibition where the orangutans are fed. Most of the animals are rescued orphans found in the forest, where their mothers have died as a result of land clearing for palm oil plantations. They are taught to behave in the way wild orang-utans would – food gathering, nest building and the like – and then rehabilitated when they are ready. Sadly, some never learn the ways of the wild and they remain in the sanctuary.



A young orang-utan at Sepilok

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Next day was a boat trip to Turtle Island, a trip of about two hours through tons of floating plastic and other rubbish. The island is quite small, about a 20 minute walk right around. The water is very warm and there are great opportunities for snorkelling on the reefs. Turtles, mostly green and leatherbacks, nest here all year round. The turtles arrive each night to lay their eggs in a hole in the sand. The eggs are gathered up and reburied in fenced area to protect them from predators. Some are buried in full sun, and some in shade, as the sex of the turtle is determined by the temperature at which they are incubated. When the eggs hatch, the young turtles are gathered up and released into the ocean.



Thousands of turtle eggs in their protective cages

Next day they took another 2.5 hour boat trip up the Kinabatangan River to the Sakau Rainforest Lodge. There was plenty of wildlife to be seen along the river, with crocodiles, orangutans and hundreds of birds. Excursions on smaller boats were conducted each morning and evening to search for birds and animals along the river banks. They were lucky enough to see crocodiles, pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, macaques, langur monkeys, tree-snakes, numerous butterflies and many more hundreds of birds.



Elephants from the day touring boats

From there they continued on to the Gomantong Caves, which are famous as the place where swifts nests are harvested for the Chinese delicacy, Bird's Nest Soup. These are harvested by lunatics who, with

no regard for life or limb, climb rickety bamboo scaffolds to collect the extremely valuable nests. The caves are extensive and some of the caverns are huge; home to thousands of swifts and millions of bats. The floor is covered in guano and the air is rich with the scent of ammonia. Hordes of cockroaches and hunting centipedes swarm over the floor.



Next stop was the Danum Valley Conservation area, where once again they were greeted with luxurious accommodation and a plethora of wildlife. There is an incredible tree-top walk here, many metres above the ground through the rain-forest canopy, allowing Frank many more fabulous photographic opportunities. The trip ended with a flight to Kota Kinabalu, the largest city in Sabah, where Frank and Tina rounded out a holiday to remember.



PLANT TABLE

with Denise Cromer

The table was well endowed with a great range of plants this month, but particularly *Callistamons*, *Melaleucas* and *Beaufortias* with their lovely bottle-brush flowers.

One lovely *Callistamon*, *C.seiberi*, had pale peachy pink flowers. This may have been *C. 'Sugar Candy'*, a largish shrub which makes a dense and interesting hedge. *Callistamon teretifolius* is known as the Needle Bottlebrush, or Flinders Ranges Bottlebrush and has very showy bright red flowers.

Melaleuca radula, the Graceful Honey-Myrtle, is a very showy, largish shrub from the south west of Western Australia. Our specimen had bright mauve flowers. *Melaleuca elliptica* the Granite Honey-myrtle, is a plant of the granite outcrops in southern W.A. It forms a medium to large, erect shrub 2-3 m high and 1.5-2 m broad, with intricate branching. The foliage is grey-green, with elliptical leaves. If grown in a frosty area, the leaves develop a purplish tint. The flowers are large, showy and bright red, but it apparently has pink and white forms. *M. filifolia*, the Wiry Honey-myrtle, grows on the sandplains around Geraldton, W.A. A largish shrub, to 2.5 metres, is has lovely deep mauve flowers in late winter and spring.



***Melaleuca radula* – Graceful Honey-myrtle**

Beaufortia schaueri is a low, spreading shrub with very bright purple/pink flowers in late winter and spring.

There were a couple of beautiful verticordias displaying the lovely feathery flower petals which give the plant its common name of ‘feather-flower’. *V. plumosa* is a lovely garden plant with deep mauve/pink flowers which have a deeper pink accent. *V. monodelpha*, is a dense rounded shrub which may be 2m across in its native W.A. When in flower it is densely covered in startling deep candy-pink flowers.

Denise brought along a nice blue *Scaveola* which has the flowers presented on upright stems. She has been experimenting and has discovered that this plant is great as a cut flower. *Scaveola albida* is a prostrate shrub of southern Australia with bright, white flowers. It also comes in blue and purple.

Chamelauciums featured again this month, proving just how long their flowering period is. There were 5 different purple ones, (all from the same parents it would seem), probably *C. uncinatum*, which were varying shades of electric purple. Franks, monster-flowered Seton’s Form always attracts some comments ... strangely, often ribald. The mystery of the Chamelaucium from my garden which was reported last month has been solved. It is, in fact, a

Chamelaucium/Verticordia hybrid called Paddy’s Pride. Thanks Bruce, for the ID.

Others plants of interest included *Platysace linearifolia*, *Eremophila youngii* and *Banksia caleyi*, known as the Red Lantern Banksia. This bushy plant, with sharp holly-like leaves produces red flowers which hang down unlike others of the genus whose flowers are presented sitting upright.



***Banksia caleyi* – Red Lantern banksia**

PLANT OF THE MONTH - *Grevillea insignis* subsp. *elliottii*
Wax Grevillea - bright flower form

The raffle this month was won by Gaeton Limsowtin, who waltzes in after some months of absence and snaffles the grand prize. I’m becoming quite paranoid about this raffle!! Gaeton chose a lovely grevillea as plant of the month, which was brought along by Matt Leach. Matt writes ...

Ed.

This plant’s name is Latin for remarkable, or extraordinary. I have two *Grevillea insignis* subsp. *elliottii*, taken from cuttings of a parent plant that my father purchased from Wirruna Nursery in Wallington, over 20 years ago. *G. insignis* is from the Western Australia wheat belt region, mainly Varley, where the rainfall is 350-500mm per annum. Conservation status is listed as uncommon and severely at risk over much of its range.



It grows to 2-4m x 2-5m in very well-drained, dry sites, in densely laterised loam in Eucalypt woodlands. It prefers a warm, full sun position, and tolerates summer humidity. It withstands extended dry, harsh conditions, and frosts to at least -6°C, without signs of stress.

Dad's plant never grew well, and over time, declined and ended up dying last year. A few years before it died, Dad took several cuttings, only two survived. Three years ago I planted those plants in my garden, one in full sun, the other in part shade, in raised granitic sand beds. The plant in full sun is smaller, 1 x 1m, than the one in part shade, 1.5 x 1.5m. Both are dense, and flower pretty much all year round. In March-April, when there isn't too many flowers out on either of the bushes, I prune them by 25%.



G. insignis are good screening plants, and are great for nectar-feeding birds.

UP-COMING EVENTS

Australian Open Garden Scheme

24 & 25 January 2015 - Sunnymeade, 48 Harvey St, Anglesea. Gravel tracks lead through a field of native grasses on an open lawn and shrubs sheltering beneath local stringybarks. Emu bushes clipped into ball shapes feature, with beds of touch natives, vegetables and a Moonah forest. This is a seaside garden full of interest and ideas.

24 & 25 January 2015 - Ghazeepore, 680 Ghazeepore Rd, Freshwater Creek. This is a romantic farm garden situated on a meandering creek, against the beautiful backdrop of ancient red gums. Winding paths lead to repeat plantings of hardy species that are proven performers.

FUTURE MEETINGS/SPEAKERS

February 17th February is always our first gathering for the year and, again, it takes the form of a BBQ get-together. This year it will be at the BBQ area on Warralily Blvd, just off the Barwon Heads Rd, Warralily. This will be on the regular meeting night, Tuesday 17th February at 6.00 pm. The club does not cater this at all, so **BYO everything**.

March 17th Our speaker will be the inimitable Roger Wileman, who will talk to us about his recent trip to Western Australia for the wildflower season. I've seen some of Roger's photos ... don't miss this!

April 21st Our April meeting will be addressed by some of the members and will take the form of a 'Botany 101' lesson ... explaining a bit of basic botanical terminology, plant structures and identification tips.

CALOTHAMNUS SPECIES by Roger Wileman

I'm grateful to Roger for this article and his photographs, inspired by Tony Cavanagh's musings last month. Ed.

I agree entirely with Tony, that these lovely plants are not as popular as they once were. I think one of the reasons for this fall in popularity is that a lot of the species that were available were a bit too large for most suburban gardens. Some of the species that are now available are smaller, make a great foliage addition to the garden, and a good show of colour when out in flower.

Before my recent trip to Western Australia, as usual, I made out a shopping list of plants I wanted to find. A few on the list were Calothamnus species. Although a majority of species are found in the south west of W.A., a few of the species that I was looking for were further north - around the Enneabba, Mullewa, and Three Springs areas - all north of Perth.



Calothamnus longissimus

I found *Calothamnus longissimus* north of Three Springs. It is a small, sprawling shrub about 500 mm high with very long, thin leaves which seemed out of place on a *Calothamnus*. The flowers are a very dark red colour and although very showy are partially hidden in the foliage. The seed pods are imbedded in the corky trunk of the plant.

30km west of Enneabba, I located *C. torulosus*, a low-growing species to 1 m high with a very unusually shaped, single flower. They are very dark red, and not there were only a few flowers on the plants that I found. The foliage is a bluish colour and I think these would make a very attractive garden plant.



Calothamnus torulosus

At Lake Indoon, near Enneabba, I found *C. blepharospermus*. A very showy shrub with wide, long leaves and bright red flowers, this plant grows 1 to 2 m high and may be a bit too large for some gardens. It is a very attractive shrub and one that was available from nurseries for many years. Frank and Tina have one growing in their garden at the surgery .



***C. blepharospermus* seed capsules**

C. tuberosus is called Peak Charles claw flower, named for the area east of Lake King. I also found it growing on the granite outcrop "Hills" near Westonia, at Sandford Rocks, McDermot Rocks and Yannymooning Hill. This species grows on these

granite hills in small depressions where water is trapped and a miniature garden has evolved over many years. It also grows in small cracks in the rock face with plants reaching 2.5 to 3 m growing out of the smallest crack. This is not the most attractive *Calothamnus*, but it has a very interesting and unusual tuberous root system. These serve as a reserve in hard times, almost like a succulent, and the plants I found looked as though they had seen some really hard times! One unusual thing I noticed was that the plants were not growing at the base of the hills where I would imagine there would be more nourishment.



***C. tuberosus* in typical habitat**

My favorite *Calothamnus*, *C. pinifolius*, grows in the south west of W.A, between Albany and Esperance. I also relocated it growing at Point Anne in the western part of the Fitzgerald River National Park. It is an erect plant which may grow to 1.5 m, but is usually smaller. It has dense, pointed foliage and is almost pine like in appearance. This plant appeals to me because it grows close to the coast, is fairly small, and unlike most of the other species, the flowers are near the top and around the entire branch.



Calothamnus pinifolius

I will have grown some of these species, and they'll be available for purchase next year.

AUSTRALIAN WILD RICE

From Radio Nationals 'Bush Telegraph' 6/11/14

Poking around in the lagoons and wetlands of Australia's Cape York peninsula seems a world away from the science lab. But for researchers from the University of Queensland, even crocodiles won't deter them from this eureka moment.

The prolific wild species that flourishes in these murky waters is a variety of rice. And scientists say it holds the key to securing one of the world's most important food commodities. As the world's most vital food crop, rice accounts for 80 per cent of the total calories consumed by 2.7 billion Asians, or half the world's population. And with widespread interbreeding and domestication of the crop, Asian wild rice populations no longer exist.



UQ researchers studying wild rice at Lakeland Qld.

But Australia's wild rice has neither been domesticated nor interbred with domestic rice. This means that these strains of wild rice contain an invaluable source of diversity that, should the grain face challenges from disease or demand, will prove crucial to the future of the grain. Whether the DNA contains disease-fighting genes, or the ability to create a new commercial crop, researchers regard it as an important key to global food security.

Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation director Professor Robert Henry says it's a discovery with global implications.

'You can't underestimate the importance of rice to food security. This is key to sustaining that,' he says. 'We could reasonably expect that this could be a very important contribution to food security in the next 50 years.' Mr Henry said.

PRESIDENT'S THANKS

Matt Baars

This is just a short note that I am writing in appreciation of members of our club, who put in that

bit extra to help make the club and its various activities more interesting and enjoyable.

I think we have a very good committee and as with every one of them some of the jobs involve more work than others eg. Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor. These jobs can involve a lot of personal time without much recognition.

We have a great newsletter and I think Ade should be congratulated. I'd also like to thank all those who do contribute their articles. If more members could do so it would make the newsletter even better and Ade's job a little easier.

I would also like to make my appreciation known to those members who help set up and clean up at the meetings, organise and sell tickets for the raffle, not forgetting those who supply the prizes. Also those who organise the excursions, represent us at APS Vic. meetings and particularly all the activities involved in the plant sale, especially the organising of growing, potting up and looking after the plants.

I find it interesting that the most of these people have very busy lives.

It is very important that I thank the ladies who provide and set up supper each month. Tina and Penny create fantastic food and it is always difficult to get the second half of the meeting started after supper.

On that note I must add that our Committee meetings are really well catered for by our members and their partners.

I hope to see you all at the Break Up, if not have a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Another year is drawing to a close. Our son will visit from Finland in time for Christmas, and our older daughter will return to live in Melbourne after five years in Boston. For the first time in ten years, we will have our family together, in the same place, at the same time, on Christmas day. This will be one to remember for Penny and me. So, we wish all members, and *your* families, an equally joyous Christmas. Whatever you conceive it to be, and however you choose to celebrate it, please stay safe and healthy. We look forward to seeing you all in 2015.



*Merry
Christmas*