



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 298 – July 2014

JUNE MEETING

Cathy Powers

Our speaker in June was Cathy Powers, past President of APS Victoria, who delivered a very interesting talk entitled “Going Potty” – growing native plants in containers.

We were grateful to Cathy for making the journey from her home on the edge of the Brisbane Ranges, given that she was flying to her native USA at 7.00 the following morning. Cathy was a little worried about coming down, when she received a phone call from the police alerting her to a man-hunt in the area. Luckily for us, she was able to make it safely.

Cathy’s presentation was based on one given by Gwen Elliott at the F.J.C Rogers Seminar in 2012. Cathy has added to the original with her own observations and fabulous photographs.

Pots are an important method of gardening in our current society. With many people having smaller gardens, or living in apartments with no garden, container cultivation is a great way to add greenery and colour to the landscape. Pots can be moved around the garden to add colour to an otherwise dreary corner, or can be brought inside to brighten up a room.



Natives in pots – photo David Lightfoot

Plants that may not survive in the ground can often be grown successfully in a container, which is moved

into cover to avoid the hottest, or coldest, weather. *Hibbertia stellaris* is a good example of a plant which is considered a two year proposition in the garden, but will flower profusely and be can be quite long-lived in a container.

Plants in pots are a great addition to work places such as offices and reception areas. Research suggests that plants increase worker satisfaction and productivity, and many an office has a potted *Kentia* palm in the corner, often in quite a small pot.

Vertical gardens and planter boxes are being used increasingly in high rise office buildings and apartments. They are an interesting and effective way of allowing the tenants the enjoyment of a garden, without the need for a ¼ acre of ground.



A Sydney apartment building.

Because are restricted to the container, it is important to provide sufficient water and food. Water is especially important as pots will dry out quickly, and soil may become hydrophobic. If this happens, the water simply runs down the insides of the pot without the centre getting any benefit. Immersing the pot in water until all the air has been displaced, is one way of rectifying this problem. However, plants may need to be re-potted or the potting mix replaced. Drip systems are an ideal way of ensuring that pots remain sufficiently hydrated.

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Use your imagination.

The word 'containers' does not just refer to pots. Raised beds, hanging baskets and planter boxes are also containers. In fact, just about anything can be used as a plant container – terrariums, buckets, bowls, car tyres, sculptures, tea-pots, hats, boots, wheelbarrows – the list is endless, and imagination is the only limiting factor.

Cathy showed us her favourite 'pot', a huge, hollow tree stump which came with their property. Husband, Ron, manouvered it into position with a tractor, and turned it upside down so the roots were uppermost. Cathy, obviously of pioneer stock, shot a fox which was put into the stump to provide fertiliser before it was filled with composted soil, and planted with a magnificent grevillea.

Choice of potting mix is also important. If you use a commercial mix, Cathy recommended that the mix should meet Australian Standards and feature the '5 Ticks'. Black labels are fertiliser free mixes, while red labels have fertilisers added. Beware of phosphorous levels if you are planting Proteacea.

Plants in containers also need to be kept to a size that is suitable for the pot. If they become too large, management, movement and maintenance may become difficult. With that in mind, many native plants take well to Bansai. Eucalypts, Banksias, Casuarinas and Callistamons have all proved successful as Bansais. Hanging baskets lend themselves to planting with natives, particularly prostrate plants, ground covers and clumping species like *Bracyscome*.

Features can be made of large pots by filling them with styrene foam or a similar light-weight material then placing multiple smaller pots to fill the opening. These can be moved around and replaced from time to time to take advantage of flowering times or colourful foliage, or just to alter your display for interest's sake.

One of the largest imaginable container garden is the roof of the desalination plant near Wonthaggi in eastern Victoria. Originally, the entire roof was planted out with *Carprobrotus*, Australian Pigface.

However, like all plants the pigface needed water, and as succulents, they simply soaked it all up and held it in storage. Eventually the weight became too great, and so the rooftops have been replanted with more suitable plants.

Some of the plants which do well in pots, creating a great visual display, often include :-

Ptilotus, Kangaroo paw, *Leschenaultia*, *Goodenia*, *Brachyscome*, *Xerochrysum*, *verticordia*, *Adenanthos*, dwarf *Syzigium*, *Scaveola*, *Rhodanthe*, *Philotheca*, *Crowea*, *Eriostemon*, *Zaeria*, *Stylidium*, and many of the terrestrial orchids.



Scaveolas in a ceramic pot.

ON THE TABLE

with Matt Baars

Most noticeable on the table this month was the number and diversity of the grevilleas. They seem to be a little early this year, and that was reflected with sixteen different grevilleas in the heart of winter. Among them were 'Pink Surprise', 'Peaches'n'Cream', Evelyn's Coronet (*G. buxifolia*), 'Ivory Whip', 'Molly', 'Superb', 'Billy Bonkers' and true species *G. dielsiana*, *alpina*, *bronwenae*, *nivea*, *tenuiloba*, *hookeriana*, *paniculata*, *georgiana*, and *priesii*.

Hakeas were prominent, and one, from a public garden in Perth, drew a bit of comment. It was a mass of deep pink/red and cream flowers and Roger suggested a ssp of *H. multilineata*. Roger brought along a specimen of the Bird Beak Hakea, *H. orthorrhyncha* which has lovely deep red flowers and *H. clavata* with red and white, very heavily scented flowers. *Hakea bucculenta*, from Rolph's garden has bunches of large pale red flowers.



Hakea bucculenta

Correas are to be expected in winter, and quite a few were on display. It seems to have been a good year for the correas, and members reported many more flowers than in previous years.

A specimen of *Eremophila oppositifolia* caused some spirited debate, mainly because the leaves were not, in fact, opposite! This particular one was mauve, but they also come with yellow, orange, purple or pink flowers.

Another plant which was unusual for its deviation from the norm, was a delightful little *Phebalium*, a delicate pink rather than the more usual yellow or white.

Harry Webb can always be relied upon to bring something interesting or different and this time it was the Swan River Pea, *Gastrolobium celsianum*, a shrub to one metre with dark green leaves, soft on the underside, and deep crimson pea flowers.

PLANT of the MONTH - *Templetonia retusa*

Dorothy Parkes won the raffle, and selected another of Harry's interesting plants as the Plant of the Month – Cockey's Tongues, *Templetonia retusa*. Harry writes

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I am quite proud of my *Templetonia retusa* which I have growing alongside my garage at home. It belongs to the *Fabaceae* family and its common name is 'Cockey's tongues'. It is a rounded shrub to 2m high by 3m across, a handy screening plant to hide that ugly fence. Leaves are obovate, to 4cm.

Templetonia retusa is found in southern and western Australia. It is a very attractive plant; since it displays large red pea-flowers that bloom in winter and early spring.

I do have another *Templetonia retusa* in my back yard, this one having yellow/orange flowers.

The plant is very suitable for those who live in the Geelong area, since it grows really well in limestone areas. As a matter of fact I think that it was Margaret Guenzel who introduced me to it about three years ago. Since then I have grown a considerable number from cuttings, with no trouble at all.



Cockey's Tongues – *Templetonia retusa*

They are a little frost tender and require excellent drainage. *Templetonias* respond to light pruning, though regular tip pinching is usually all that is needed to keep them compact.

I should say that there is an Irish influence attached to this plant, since it is named after John Templeton (1766-1825). He is often referred to as the Father of Irish botany. He also was a fervent advocate for Irish freedom from the British Crown.

John Templeton died at the age of 60 and was sadly missed by his family.

ALL RAIN AIN'T RAIN

by Tony Cavanagh

Over the past ten years, I have recorded rainfall at my property in Ocean Grove. As there is no official rainfall measuring gauge in Ocean Grove, I am unsure what the long term average rainfall is but for nearby Queenscliff, it is 604 mm. Since 2007, the highest rainfalls I have recorded are the 765 mm and 774 mm of 2010 and 2011 when the drought was well and truly broken; the lowest 410 mm at the height of the drought in 2008. It has surprised me in recent years how difficult it is to establish new plants in our 37 years old garden. They either grow slowly or die. Even in all but the best sunny locations, very few thrive. Obviously, things like shade from trees and tall shrubs and strong root competition from already established plants contribute to the problem, but lack of soil moisture seems to be another factor, despite seemingly reasonable rainfall. I recently planted out nine shrubs we had grown from cuttings from our garden and had to dig six of the holes with a crowbar, the ground was so hard and dry. Yet we have received

around 200 mm so far in 2014 and this set me wondering what might be going on.



We are all familiar with the so-called rain we receive in Victoria – drizzle for much of the time with half a day’s “rainfall” perhaps yielding a couple of mm. I call this “useless “ rain – it wets plant foliage and puts a bit of water into your tanks but does almost nothing for the garden. My experience for much of the year here in Ocean Grove is that the ground is bone dry 3 or 4 cm down, even after seemingly reasonable rain - the rain just does not penetrate. The highest 24 hour fall in my records was 55 mm in November 2011 but mostly it was less than 10mm. In fact, using 10 mm as the cut-off, I found that in only about one quarter of wet days did I receive 10 mm or more of rain – for 75% of the time, I measured less than 10 mm over 24 hours. The conclusion for planting – natural rainfall is unlikely to be enough for young plants which need all the assistance they can get, especially when in a hostile environment. It led to a change in my planting technique in the garden.

PLANTING OUT – the Cavanagh method

In the good old days of the 1970s, raised garden beds for native plants were all the rage. Australian plants were all lumped together in requiring excellent drainage and only gradually did people realize that many species could handle quite wet situations. Then there was the argument about how much water our natives needed and for how long should you continue to water the plant in the ground. Best advice was “until the end of the first summer” when they were assumed to have become “established”. But there were those who believed that plants shouldn’t be “molly coddled” and should be left to fend for themselves with only minimum watering. The theory was that in this way they would become toughened

and better able to resist drought and dry conditions. It took a long time for many to realize that WA plants were different to those from the east in their garden requirements, that plants don’t read the books and experience and knowing your own garden is the best guide as to how to proceed. What follows is what I currently do but may well need modification if you have deep sand or heavy clay soils, or other conditions.

My soil is a shallow clay-loam over heavy clay, although in some areas, it is sandier and deeper with better drainage. I tend to grow my “difficult” species here. Whether you buy or grow your own plants, you need to read up about them to try to determine what garden conditions they require – drainage, sun or shade, susceptibility to frost and wind, ability to withstand extended periods of dryness or occasional inundation and so forth. You also should choose young and strong growing specimens and avoid large plants in small containers as they are very likely to be pot bound. Knowing your own garden helps a lot at this stage so you can choose the most suitable spots. Especially if you have paid money for the plants, you want them to survive so proper preparation of the planting hole and watering are critical. You need to give them every opportunity to develop a deep and strong root system, and roots only grow when there is some moisture present. This year I also began mixing a teaspoon of water storing crystals and a pinch of Osmocote for natives into the soil at the bottom of the hole to help speed up growth. Once they are established, with a deep root system, plants can then be left to themselves, except for very hot and/or dry conditions when watering may be necessary.



Tony’s ‘well planting’ method.

I dig a hole around 30 by 30 cm and about the same depth. No one ever suggests it, but I put the soil into a bucket, to keep it from mixing with the mulch and to make sure I have enough to refill the hole. I mix the water crystals and Osmocote with the soil, then pour about ½ of a bucket of water into the whole and allow it to drain. Knock the plant out of its pot

and tease the roots, cutting off anything broken or over-lengthy, and stand in hole. Then, backfill from the bucket, bringing soil up to the level of the base of the plant stem. Now comes the heretical part. I then build up a soil wall around the hole so that the plant is effectively in a well. I fill the well with water and allow it to drain. The well makes it easy to continue watering as required in the future and ensures that the water goes down to the roots and doesn't just run off.

I follow up in a couple of days by watering the hole with Wettasoil solution or similar to remove any water repellency in the soil and then rinse the foliage with clean water. You could also use a seaweed solution at this stage as seaweed extract is supposed to strengthen plant cell walls. Water as required until the end of the first summer.

You may well disagree with my technique and I (and Ade) would welcome any comments or suggestions. The above may seem a bit tedious but the aim is to get plants growing strongly and developing a deep root system. Try it out.

OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting, 15th July, is the Annual General Meeting and Annual Photo Competition.

All positions on the Committee will be vacated, and any nominations for the Committee positions will be gladly received. We will call for nominations for President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and six general members.

Please give consideration to volunteering for a Committee position ... it is not an onerous task. Please also give thought to who you would like to see on the Committee, and nominate them, if they are agreeable.

Members should note that membership fees are due as of the AGM. The Committee has retained the current fee structure and rates, so there are no increases for this year. We are easily the best value for money club in the business! A new membership form is attached to this edition.

The AGM can be a dry affair. However, the newer members can be assured that we get the formalities out of the way as quickly as we can, and get on with the fun part of the evening – The Photo Competition. Members are invited to enter photos in three categories ... Australian Plants, Australian Wildlife and Australian Landscapes.

Photos should be your own work, taken in Australia, and not 'faked' with Photoshop. Ed.

Members will vote for their favourite photo in each category, and those with the most votes will win amazing prizes.



Last years' winner by Tony Cavanagh

FUTURE MEETINGS and FIELD TRIPS

Our 19th August speaker will be Brett Diehm. Brett has been working on re-establishing native orchids on the Barwon Coast, and will talk to us about his work. On the following Sunday 24th, Brett will lead us on a field trip in the area. We will meet at the Collendina car-park (Opposite the Milk Bar in Bonnyvale Road) at 11.00 am.

Our speaker in September is Brad Ferrier. Brad is a landscape architect who works extensively with natives.

We are planning a garden visit in October to several predominantly native garden in Indented Head, followed by lunch and another garden visit in Drysdale. We'll keep you updated with more details as they are finalised.

OFF TRACK

Radio National

On Radio National – 621 on the AM dial- there are a great number of programs that provide no end of interesting information for folks like us ... folks with a passion for plants.

I've included a couple of in depth articles in recent editions of 'The Correa Mail' from the daily program 'Bush Telegraph'. The other program that often features Australian plants in their content is 'Off Track', which goes to air on Saturdays at 1.00 pm, then repeated on Sundays at 6.30 am and Thursdays at 2.00 pm. Strange, even inconvenient times, but fear not!

The programs for the last three years are available to listen at your leisure on the ABC website, and I would encourage you to do just that, at ...

www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/offtrack/

Recent stories include ...

- A Landcare Group who tend to sites along the Hawkesbury River around Sydney, which are only accessible from the water. Local oyster farmers, who need a healthy river to survive, ferry the volunteers to and from the sites in their punts.
- Extreme gardening - planter boxes on a 32 storey building in Sydney. (see photograph in Cathy's report, Page 1)
- How are plants affected by what lies beneath the ground in a cemetery?
- Rainforest supersite – the first rainforest research site.

- *Adenanthos sericeus*, *A. sericeus* 'Dwarf Form'
- *A. detmoldii*
- *Isopogon formosus*
- *Eremophila maculate* (purple)
- *E. glabra* 'Amber Carpet' (green leaf)
- *E. glabra* "Kalbarri Carpet" (grey leaf)
- *Myoporum parvifolium* (fine leaf form)
- *Brachyscomb multifida*
- *Leschenaulti bloba* – blue and purple forms
- *Goodenia ovate* 'prostrate'

And a few stragglers. \$5.00 each for members.
Contact Ade – Ph: 52439478

FJC ROGERS SEMINAR

Bendigo

The FJC Rogers Seminar is on **18th and 19th October 2014** at the [All Seasons International Conference Centre, 171-183 Mclvor Road, Bendigo](#)

Brachychitons and Related genera

The *Brachychiton* genus is a member of the *Sterculiaceae* sub-family which includes ...

- *Androclava*
- *Brachychiton*
- *Commersonia*
- *Guichenotia*
- *Keraudrenia*
- *Lasiopetalum*
- *Pterospermum*
- *Sterculia*
- *Thomasia*



These genera contain the plants from which chocolate and cola extract are derived. The name "Sterculiaceae" comes from Sterculius, an ancient Roman god who concerned himself with fertilization.

A number of species of *Brachychiton* are well known in cultivation. The best known is the spectacular Illawarra Flame Tree (*B. acerifolius*) and others widely grown are the Kurrajong (*B. populneus*) and the bottle tree (*B. rupestris*).

This seminar is open to all interested persons

Lots to interest all of us here, so log on and have a listen

WELCOME BACK Vaughan's Native Plants.

We are happy to report that Phillip and Alexis's daughter, Katherine, is continuing the tradition and has opened "**K. Vaughan's Australian Plants**" in Teesdale. Specialising in native plants - rare and unusual varieties, hard to find or grafted specimens – they offer experienced advice, planting plans, home consultation, garden maintenance and landscaping. Find them at 919 Bannockburn-Shelford Rd, open Friday 10.00 am to 5. 30pm, Saturday and Sunday 10.00 am to 4.30 pm.



All

other days by appointment only.

www.vaughansnativeplants.com

PLANTS FOR SALE

We still have a number of the plants we purchased from Mahoney's nursery left over from the plant sale.

- *Correa alba* 'prostrate', *C. 'Pink Mist'*, *C. reflexa nummulariifolia* (pale yellow);
- *Grevillea endlicheriana*, *G. lanigera* "Mt. Tambortitha", *G. arenaria*;
- *Westringia fruticosa*, *W. 'Jervis Gem'*, *W. "Wynghabbie Gem"*