



AUSTRALIAN  
PLANTS SOCIETY  
— Geelong —

# Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 297 – June 2014

## JUNE MEETING

*The speaker at the May meeting was our own Matt Baars, and he spoke to the group about the easiest family to grow – Weeds. I was unable to attend the meeting, and I'm grateful to Matt for doing his own report.*

## WEEDS

by Matt Baars

What is a weed ? A weed is any plant that we do not want in our garden, crop or eco system.

How do they get there? - Through human intervention, when we introduce a plant, clear an area, we change an ecosystem for ever - deliberately eg Paterson's curse, Oxalis, Boneseed and many more, are plants that were introduced as garden plants.



**Patterson's Curse infestation – Flinder's Ranges**

Accidentally, mixed in with food seeds, stock fodder imported from other areas and countries, animal droppings/manure, in purchased pot plants etc. If you import into your garden, any soil, potting mix in bags or pot plants you will almost surely import weeds. The seeds can be blown in from neighbours and paddocks.

## Weeds

Why are they so successful? They are adaptable, hardy, grow anywhere under many different conditions. They set a lot of seed from any stage of growth, they are good at dispersing seed by wind or mechanical means - a lot of weed seed pods spring open when touched, sending seed out up to a metre.

Plants we want to grow nearly always require special conditions, whether it is our food crops, ornamentals, lawns. Weeds will appear amongst these plants uninvited, take advantage of the fertilisers, water and care and take over if allowed.



**Sour Sobs – *Oxalis pes-caprae***

Why are they are a problem? - The problems are different for different people. They can take over eco systems as environmental weeds, they compete with food crops for nutrients and water, thereby reducing yields. Also the weed seeds can contaminate grain crops, they ruin the look of lawns, gardens if left uncontrolled.

How to control them? Manually, as practiced in Third World countries and all our gardens - if they are mixed in with your garden plants. Herbicides can be used

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where it is safe to do so. I use Glyphosate at home, I find it is one of the safer herbicides - I hope. This spray only affects the plant sprayed it is absorbed through the foliage - so be careful when spraying, it does breakdown very quickly in the soil. Chemical companies are developing crop plants that are resistant to glyphosate, so that crops can be sprayed and only the weeds are affected.

If you can control the weeds before they set seed you will save yourself a lot of work in the future. Once you let weeds set and disperse seed, you will be setting up a seed bank in your soil or potting mix. It can take quiet a few years to clear weeds from a soil bank by destroying the weeds as they appear and before they seed.

Natural controls are also being researched and used. This is where the weeds natural pests and diseases from their original home, are after much research and testing against our native plants, are released to try and control weed infestations in affected areas.

Weeds will always be with us, with a bit of elbow grease and careful use of herbicides and other control methods, we can make our gardens as weed free as possible.

And as Frank said, it is good to talk about something we are all good at growing.

Names of the worst weeds in my garden.

- Panic Veldt Grass, *Ehrhartia erecta* South Africa
- Sour Sob, *Oxalis pes caprae* – South Africa
- Creeping Sour Sob, *Oxalis coniculata* & *var atropurpurea* - Cosmopolitan
- Petty Spurge, *Euphorbia peplus* - Eurasia
- Bitter Cress, *Cardamine hirsute* - Eurasia
- Four-leaved Allseed, *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* - Southern Europe
- Dense Flat Sedge, *Cyperus Congesta* - South Africa
- Black Nightshade, *Solanum nigrum* - Eurasia
- Chickweed, *Stellaria media* - Europe
- Sow Thistle, *Sonchus oleaceus* - Cosmopolitan
- Dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale* - Eurasia

#### ON THE TABLE

by Frank Scheelings

The Plant Table discussion this month was a tag team performance by Roger Wileman and John Bell. The plant of the month was *Eremophila alternifolia* brought in by Frank Scheelings and a

report on this plant appears in this month's newsletter.

Roger showed an unusual green hood orchid (*Pterostylis*) from the Portland region which has been identified as a hybrid by (the bloke from the book), but how the experts come to this conclusion as opposed to a new species is curious.



"Ellendale Pool" a cultivar of *Grevillea fililoba*

A number of grevilleas made their way on to the table as these commence their flowering period, among those tonight were *G. "Billy Bonkers"*, *"Ivory Whip"*, *"Pink Surprise"*, *"Moonlight"* all hybrids which share a common parentage and all of which do well here and are regulars on the flower table.

Other grevilleas were the cultivar *G. "Ellendale Pool"*, felt to be *G. fililoba*, and formerly a subspecies of *G. thelmanniana*, and the appropriately named *G. "Orange Marmalade"* a hybrid of *G. glossadenia* and *G. venusta*. Three banksias from Frank's garden made their appearance - *B. prionotes*, *baueri* and *occidentalis* and several forms and hybrids of the correas, particularly some *alba* and *pulchella* crosses which provide some really attractive colours. *Melaleuca laterita*, *Hakea suavolens*, *H. orthorhyncha*, *Crowea saligna* were others discussed. Two of the early acacias were presented - *A. iteophylla* which has a weeping and upright form and *A. beckleri*, described as a neat compact shrub.

#### PLANT OF THE MONTH

*Eremophila alternifolia*

The plant of the month was brought along by Frank Scheelings, who writes:-



*Eremophila alternifolia*

*Eremophila alternifolia* is a very hardy shrub preferring an open position. It can tolerate drought and responds very well to pruning to keep the plant compact and prevent the leggy woody habit that some *Eremophilas* develop. The leaves are bright green, long and flat, and, as the name implies, are “alternate” on the stem. However, as with many *Eremophilas*, the leaves and form of the plant can be quite variable. It is an attractive medium shrub to 2 meters, having masses of pink to carmine flowers. It flowers in my garden for most of the year, and is greatly favoured by honeyeaters. The flowers are tubular and when the corolla is shed the attractively coloured calyx remains on the bush. When the plant is first looked at is often mistaken for *E. oppositifolia*, which it closely resembles. My strike rate to grow this from cuttings has been quite poor.

#### **KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK IN TROUBLE** **Another story from Radio National ...**

One of the best places to see the famous Western Australian Wildflowers, Kalbarri National Park, is showing signs of stress following the long dry spell. Major plant losses over large tracts of the park are causing concerns and highlighting the challenges for maintaining Kalbarri’s biodiversity values.

Kalbarri National Park attracts more than 300,000 visitors, and the Western Australian Government has recently spent \$8 million on facilities to encourage more tourists to the area. With over 1000 plant species listed for the park – 23% at their northern most limit – it is a major attraction for the wildflower

hunters. But, the drought is taking its toll, with the last six months being the driest on record.

Plant deaths are scattered across the park, but *Banksias* seem particularly affected. The Park’s acting Regional Manager, Anthony Desmond, is concerned. “What hasn’t died should perk up, but we don’t know whether what germinates will survive another dry summer. We won’t see a desert, but a change in the species that dominate the landscape.”

Kalbarri National Park, about 500 kms north of Perth, has a wide range of habitats, from the spectacular ocean cliffs to the Murchison Gorge inland. In late winter and spring hundreds of species are in flower. Mr. Desmond says that even if only 40% are in flower, visitors won’t necessarily notice. But the changes are worrying.

The Government is considering adding another 280,000 hectares to the park’s existing 183,000 hectares in an effort to maintain the current diversity, and protect vulnerable plants from weeds and goats.

*I wonder if this is a dire consequence of climate change, or is it the way it has always been ...plant communities adapting to meet the ever-changing requirements of our harsh environment?*

This link allows you to read the story or listen to a pod-cast of the interview with Anthony Desmond.  
[http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bush\\_telegraph/kalbarri-losses/5433068](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bush_telegraph/kalbarri-losses/5433068)

#### **SWAINSONIA ADDICTION DEATHS**    *An interesting story from ABS’s Landline, by Joanna Woodburn.*

A native plant, which has thrived after a major bushfire in western New South Wales last year, has started killing hundreds of livestock due to its addictive nature. The Darling Pea, *Swainsonia galegifolia*, has flourished since the bushfire last January, which burnt 53,000 hectares of the Warrumbungle National Park and farms at Coonabarabran.

So far more than 800 sheep have died on one property alone and landholders fear the death toll will rise.

The Darling Pea had little competition because the fire wiped out other weeds and pasture. Coonabarabran farmer Tony Knight lost more than 200 sheep and hundreds of hectares of pastures in the bushfire. Shortly after the blaze, the Darling Pea took hold. He says preventing the sheep from grazing the addictive weed was almost impossible because the bushfire had destroyed kilometres of fencing.

Darling Pea toxins affect enzymes in brain. Coonabarabran weeds inspector John Unwin says the problem was caused by the unique chain of events which unfolded after the fire.

"The Darling Pea, being a native, is used to fire and most Australian natives are quite used to fire," he said. "There's no competition and on top of a rather large bushfire we've got a drought."



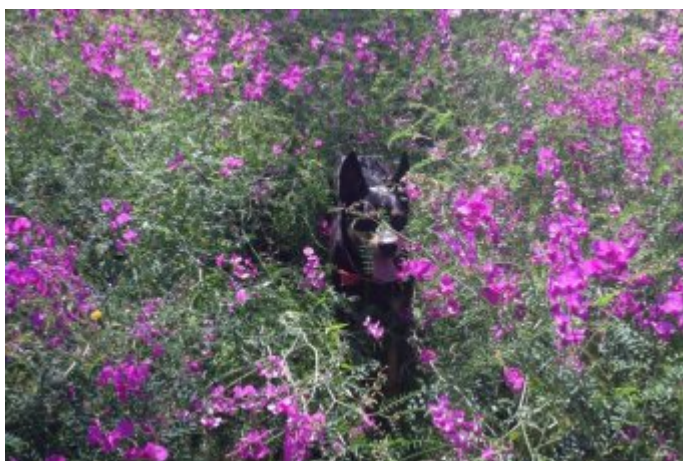
**Swainsonia infestation – Photo Louise Knight**

Autopsies were carried out on some of Mr Knight's sheep and the results returned positive for Swainsona poisoning. Regional veterinarian Greg McCann says the toxins in the pea affect an animal's brain by attacking an enzyme involved in metabolism.

"They lose the ability to judge where their feet are. They become wonky, fall over, appear to be blind, walking into things," he said.

"They can assume funny postures, like head bent down or head bent back, but the one thing that was seen in the cases associated in the Coonabarabran area were twitching."

The New South Wales Local Land Services says five of the 15 varieties of Darling Pea are listed as vulnerable or endangered. A landholder may need approval under the Native Vegetation Act for any control programs and these are determined on a case-by-case basis.



**Photo : Louise Knight**

Rotating livestock is considered the most effective way of controlling the effects of the pea, but many

farmers did not have this option because of the bushfire.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-10/native-weed-darling-pea-killing-livestock-western-nsw/5441638>

### OUR NEXT MEETING

17<sup>th</sup> June

Cathy Powers, a very informative and entertaining speaker, will talk to us about growing native plants in pots. Please contact Harry on 52753748 if you wish to join us for dinner at the Dragon's Bistro before the meeting.

### DICK SOUTHCOMBE WIDER GEELONG FLORA LECTURE Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June



The Geelong Field Naturalists are once again hosting the Wider Geelong Flora Lecture. The guest speaker is Neil Macumber, who will be talking about

Western Australian Wildflowers.

They meet at the 'Friends' room at the Geelong Botanic Gardens on Tuesday March 11th at 7.30 pm. Entrance is at the intersection of Holt Road and Eastern Park Circuit in Eastern Park Melway 452. G4.

### 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"
- *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