



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No 367 - April, 2021

MARCH MEETING

Plant Use at a Zoo

Craig Shalders was our speaker at the March Meeting. Craig is a very experienced horticulturist and is now the Horticulture and Grounds Manager at Werribee Zoo.

Craig began, as many do, at Burnleigh. He moved into ornamental horticulture and landscape construction. He ran his own landscaping business, both in Australia and overseas. After ten years he began in production horticulture in Tasmania, working with tulips and lilliums. He moved back to Holland for more work in the tulip production industry.

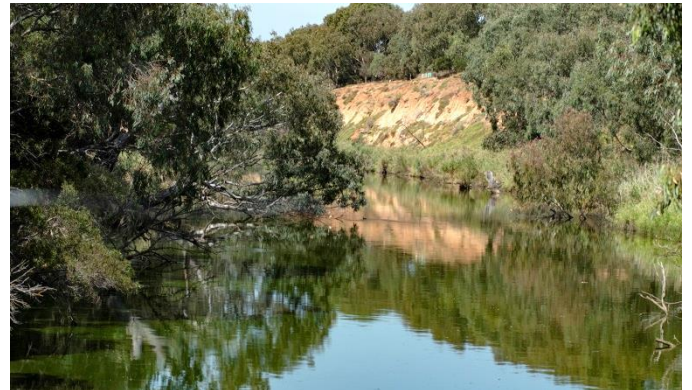
He then worked in agricultural research, agronomy of cut flowers and then moved into mass olive production. He then joined Boomaroo Nursery, the biggest nursery for production of veggies, ornamental and Australian plants. Boomaroo sells to Bunnings, Big W, Masters and many other large retailers.

Five years ago he joined the established and experienced Horticulture team at Werribee Zoo as Horticulture and Grounds Manager. His talk focussed on the way native plants are used to interpret both Australian and African themes at the Zoo.



Werribee Zoo is a 225 hectare site which was cleared farmland when Zoos Victoria acquired it. A few remnant trees remained along the Werribee River. Mostly native

plants were introduced to begin a restoration of the site. The Werribee River, which runs through the property was planted with indigenous species with seeds sourced from as close as possible to the zoo.



The Werribee River between 'Woodlands' and the 'Savannah', in the heart of Werribee Zoo

Eucalyptus baureiana ssp. thalassina is one of the remnant trees which has some indigenous cultural significance. The team are using this tree as a source of seed to expand the indigenous plant species on the site. The road borders and public carpark were planted with whatever natives were available, given lack of funding at the time.



A mix of natives and exotics on the African Trail

The browse plantation is an area with about 25,000 trees which are grown to feed animals at both Werribee and Melbourne zoos. Eucalypts are grown primarily for

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the koalas, which are totally reliant on zoo staff for their food. Species choice was based on the diet of local koalas, and those are likely to be brought into the zoos vet team for treatment. Again, seed was sourced from as close to Werribee Zoo as was practicable. Several species of acacia are grown for many of the animals and their selection was based more on how many animals would eat it, rather than if it was endemic to the area.



Gorillas love *Acacia saligna*

Australia Trail is an area of the zoo designed to showcase grasslands of the western basalt plains. The area is burned regularly as it would be in nature as part of the management program. Feature beds display a number of important grassland species. The team is looking to plant 10,000 grassland plants in the next 12 months.



Brachychiton gives an African 'feel'.

Many of the plants used around the site are not native, such as proteas used to reinforce the African theme of the zoo. But, many natives, such as Brachychitons are being used in a very clever way to add to the story.

Werribee Zoo has been given a grant of 84 million dollars to expand the zoo and the horticultural team are currently planning the planting palette of our huge expansion. Very exciting times at Werribee Zoo.

Craig's talk was followed by an in depth Q and A session. A video of the Craig's presentation and question and answer can be found here ...

<http://apsgeelong.org/webinars.html>



The Australian Trail wetlands

2021 PLANT SALE

April 17th

As things stand, our 2021 Plant Sale will go ahead on Saturday April 17th. Plans are underway and advertising has begun. As usual, we will be looking for lots of support on the day to help make things run smoothly. We will update you with any changes and you should have received an email asking for your help.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SALE

SAT 17TH APRIL 2021, 8:30^{AM} – 4:00^{PM}

A large variety of native plants provided by specialist native nurseries for sale.

- Open garden
- Book sales
- BBQ & refreshments
- Kids activities

Adults \$2 each, Children free!

Wirawilla, 40 Lovely Banks Rd, Lovely Banks

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FUCHSIA GUM

Ade Foster

Driving home from Werribee three or four times a week can be tedious, but I noticed recently a tree showing some interesting colour. Next time I brought my camera along and stopped to take some photos.

The tree is a Fuchsia Gum, *Eucalyptus dolichorhyncha*, and there are several planted along the highway near the Avalon Airport.

Fuchsia gum was first formally described in 1973 by Ian Brooker who gave it the name *Eucalyptus forrestiana*

subsp. dolichorhyncha. The type specimen was collected by John W. Green near Grass Patch, Western Australia, in 1957. In 1993, Brooker and Hopper raised the subspecies to species status as *E. dolichorhyncha*.



***Eucalyptus dolichorhyncha* near Avalon**

The tree has a very limited distribution on the Esperance plains in the southern part of Western Australia. It grows on clay soils or in sand overlying a clay base, and seems to prefer level ground.

E. dolichorhyncha will grow to about six metres, and though it may have several trunks, it does not have a lignotuber. So, it can be killed by fire or by excessive pruning. The canopy starts off quite narrow but becomes rounder and more attractive with age.

The real beauty of this tree is not the flowers but the buds. They are large and singular, each growing on a long stalk. They become bright red and shiny as they mature. It is these buds which give the plant its common name of 'Fuschsia Gum' from their resemblance to the flowers of the Fuchsia.

The specific epithet *dolichorhyncha* refers to the bud caps which are very long and thin, from the Greek *dolichos* (long) and *rhynchos* (snout or beak). The flowers are yellow but, I think, quite insignificant when compared to the buds.

A great garden plant but is susceptible to wind damage, so best planted in copses, or a very sheltered site.

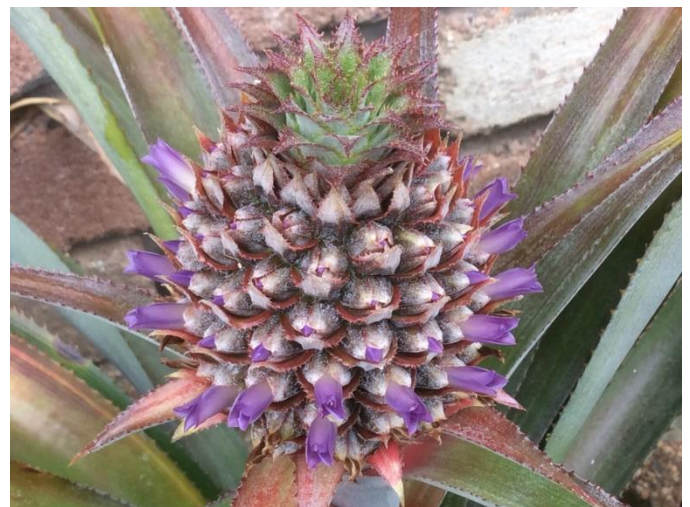


The buds of *Eucalyptus dolichorhyncha*

GROWING PINEAPPLES AT BARWON HEADS

By Tony Cavanagh

I know that pineapples are not native, having come from South America and being seen by Christopher Columbus in what is now the West Indies in 1493, but when I perhaps fluked the rare feat of flowering a pineapple here in southern Victoria, Ade asked me would I mind writing an article and showing some pictures of the plant, together with providing some information about how I did it. So here goes.



Pineapple flowers

It all began in September 2016 when I bought a pineapple which included the leaved top and I decided to try my luck at growing it. I simply cut the top off, let it dry out for a day or so then planted it in a large pot of well drained mix.



The potted leaved top

Because I don't have a heated glasshouse, I pushed my luck even further by attempting to grow it outdoors although the growing position was over bricks with a backing brick wall and facing north.



The setup

I must have done something right because this year I will harvest 9 pineapples (with very few more for the next couple of years). The pots were in racks and carefully watered, with cover being provided over winter and shelter from winds. I think that it is most important to supply as much sun as possible, to ensure that the potting mix is well drained and to keep an eye on the pots' water situation even though as Bromeliads they do not need a lot of water, and to cut off the dead

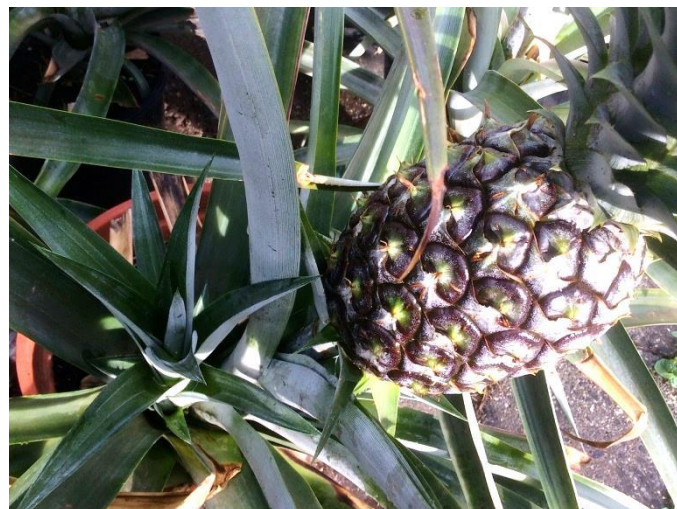
leaves and keep the plants tidy.



After two years, fruit.

The major problem down here is that they take about two years to reach fruiting stage from planting and the developing fruits take a further six to nine months to reach maturity. But the wait is worth it – how many of you can say you have eaten your own home-grown pineapple (at least here in Victoria)!

Not a great deal more to say. I have provided some photos so you can see that Liz and I have nothing fancy but that we have grown these plants to fruiting stage and had some to eat. A question you may ask is where do I find my "stock"? I must admit I have wondered this for commercial growers (we would certainly never make a living for our crop!). My only sources are living, from what we know as the top (you can rarely buy "pineapple with top" in Victoria but they are available in some specialist green grocery shops), and suckers or "pups" from a growing plant. What I call the sucker grows out from the base of the plant at the top of the pot and is shown in the picture.



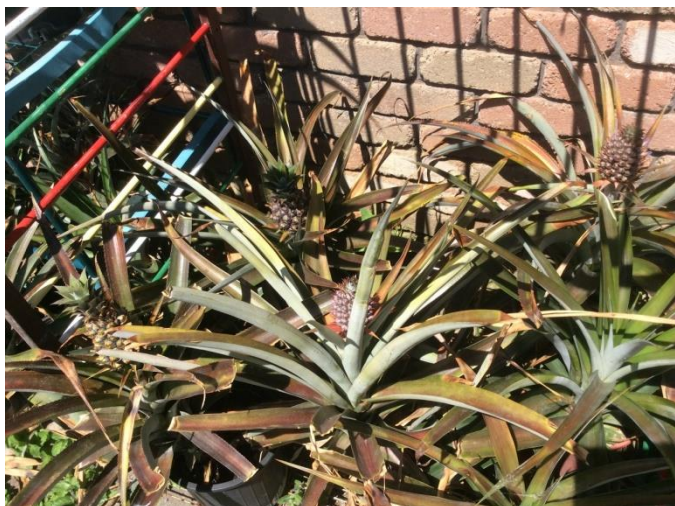
Fruiting plant showing sucker

The “pup” (my name) grows out of the plant’s stem part way up and is fairly rare. It may be my imagination but I have generally found that non-top grown plants are usually of poorer quality and I am unsure if they actually grow a fruit. Best thing if you want to try is to grow from a top although I can be corrected.



Very little is involved – just cut the leaved top off with about 2-3 cms of the pineapple included, leave it dry for a couple of days then cut some of the excess off and plant it in an 8 to 10 inch pot (20 to 25 cms for the rest of you). A good quality native

mix is ideal but must be well fertilized and should be added to yearly or more frequently. If your plant is going to fruit, it will show its development after about two years deep down inside the top of the stem. It will be clearly seen above the top at about one or two months and is extremely pretty then in soft pinks and whites. If you are further lucky, after a couple more months your fruit will flower as you see in the first picture. I find it very rare and have only had it on a couple of occasions and the individual flowers don’t last long. I must admit I don’t know the flowering function (perhaps it is to fertilise the fruit so that it establishes and grows to maturity) but pineapples don’t set seed as far as I know.



Four fruits for later

And then after nearly three years, again if you are lucky, you will have a fully fruited and ripened pineapple in your garden and can sit down to enjoy the fruits of your labour (and the following drink as well).



And then you just wait and hope for the best. Hope you enjoy the pictures.

HARRIETT CAVANAGH’S PINEAPPLE FRUIT DRINK

When I was growing up in North Queensland, my mother used to make us this drink and serve it over ice in the hot, humid weather. It was really tasty and what I like about it now is that it allows you to use all of this wonderful fruit, you can grow the top, eat the flesh and make the skins, the core and any scraps into a delightful drink. So here’s how.

Cover skins and scraps from a large pineapple with cold water (about one litre). Bring to boil and boil about five minutes. Add three quarters of a cup of sugar (or to taste) and one teaspoon of citric acid. Simmer for one hour. Cool and strain with a fine strainer. Add a little lemon essence or juice and rind of a large lemon. Serve chilled. Enjoy!

COOKING WITH NATIVE INGREDIENTS.

By Debbie Biro

Recently, I had an email from former member and still interested planto, Deb Biro. Deb thought we might be interested in a weekend she and husband, Rob, enjoyed recently. Deb writes ...

I thought I would share this with you and you can pass onto members. Some may have discovered it and taken part already.

At the weekend Robert and I went to Peppermint Ridge Farm out at Tynong North. We had enrolled in a native plant cooking class. We have had an interest in this for a few years and just wanted to see how to use the plants in everyday cooking instead of feeling like I needed to create a special dish.

Julie is very knowledgeable about the plants, their nutrition ratings and much more. She has a science/ecology background and was a teacher for many years. She is very passionate about sharing her knowledge so these foods can become more mainstream.

It was an eclectic group of people, young and old, from the country and the city and all with different reasons to come along.

We had a small tour of the garden while collecting the food and then came back into the old schoolhouse ready to cook. We all volunteered to cook parts of the meal. Morning tea was Lemon Myrtle ANZAC cookies and four teas to taste - Sugar Gum, Lemon Myrtle, River Mint and Anise Myrtle. Each of the teas had a couple of Mountain Pepper leaves as they change the way your body absorbs the nutrients.

Then we worked toward making lunch. The lunch menu consisted of Warrigal Greens and cheese filo pastries, a salad with a Lemon Myrtle dressing, Warrigal Greens pesto and chutney. We finished off with Lemon Myrtle muffins with Finger Lime icing and zest and Anise Myrtle ice cream.

In the pastries we added River Mint, native thyme, native oregano, Mountain Pepper and Anise Myrtle.

We had a lot of fun together and when we shared the food it was like a classroom, you had to explain to the group what was in it and how it was made.

She also holds a tastes and tour day where you walk from her father's old farm down the road looking at the native plants and then up through her kitchen garden before reaching the schoolhouse for a 4 course meal cooked by Julie.

I would recommend it even if you had no desire to cook with your garden plants. It was great just to taste them in everyday dishes. I have already cooked the Lemon Myrtle ANZACs for the children on Monday.

Maybe as a group you could choose either of these days as a special outing.

To learn more the Geelong Library has a copy of her book called 'Australian Native Plant Harvest' by Julie Weatherhead



For a bit more information visit the website ... it is very interesting ...

<https://peppermintridgefarm.com.au/>

SEE YA LATER, ALLIGATOR

Penny and I are heading north for a few months, after the plant sale. Catch you all on the other side. 😊