



Correa Mail

Newsletter No 382 - August, 2022

JULY MEETING - Prostantheras with Miriam Ford

Our speaker for this month was Miriam Ford and her topic was The Mintbushes - Prostanthera, stunning plants with lovely perfume. They are unique to Australia with well over 100 species. While the bulk of Mints occur on the east coast, there are quite a few that enjoy WA, SA, NT and the western, drier, part of NSW.

Miriam introduced us to the work of George Althoffer who collected all of the mintbushes and created an arboretum near Dubbo to accommodate them. His work resulted in a book 'Cradle of Incense' where he noted that many of them were highly localised which made them highly vulnerable for survival eg *P. densa* in a little bit of Sydney, and *P. galbraithiae* in a little bit of East Gippsland.

Miriam described some of the more common mints: *P. ovalifolia*, *P. rotundifolia* and *P. incisa*, the latter two being edible. And from the drier, inland areas come *P. striatiflora* (Jockey's cap) and *P. magnifica* from the WA sand-belt and best grown in Victoria as a grafted plant. Now Miriam included some work, with permission, from Dr Trevor Wilson who is a Mintbush botanist.

There are two classes of mintbushes:

1. *Prostanthera* - with a open, bilateral symmetry bell-shaped flowers, many purple-blue to white with spotted throat,
2. *Klanderia* - with elongated tubular flowers that are usually red, sometimes metallic blue.

These two classes have another distinguishing feature - their pollinator. Birds (often Honey-eaters for *Klanderia*, and insects for *Prostanthera*).

Another mintbush feature that Miriam talked about was the essential oils that they produce when the leaves are touched. These oils have been extensively assessed chemically such that mintbushes can be grouped according to their predominant oil.

In terms of propagation, Miriam said that they were very easy from cuttings while from seeds was harder.

Finally her garden will be featured on ABC Gardening Australia on 26th August.

PLANT TABLE

with Frank Scheelings

Plant of the month as chosen by Christa Jones: *Boronia caerulea* (Editor Note: see next section). The flower-table was expertly conducted by Frank Scheelings while Bruce McGinness provided this summary (if that's really possible when Frank's on a roll).



Grevillea brownwenae brought in by Ade with its postbox red flowers is always a favourite. *Grevillea magnifica* was brought in by Frank and Matt Leach and is always an impressive specimen in their gardens with its inflorescences presented on swaying upright branches. Other grevilleas of note were *G. fililoba*, *G. alpina* cross, *G. laevis* which is a spikey brute and *G. glaberata* which has consistently disappointed Ade with its small unspectacular white flowers, only a Grevillea lover like Ade would bother with it.

Prostanthera aspalathoides red and green forms, apart from Ade's unseasonal flowering of *Prostanthera*

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magnifica there were no other prostanthera in flower. Miriam said it was a bit early for the prostanthera to flower. *P. aspalathoides* is a tough little attractive plant that deserves a place in the garden.



Hakea cristata with its interesting foliage with sharp pointed margins and white flowers which do not last very long was given a thumbs down by Frank, but Miriam jumped to its defense stating that she would grow it for its interesting foliage alone. Matt Leach brought in a variety of Hakeas which always confuse me: *Hakea francisiana*, *H. francisiana x multilineata*, *H. coriacea*, *H. buculenta* these are all lovely plants with striking red/pink flowers. A white form of *H. multilineata* which Matt claims grows true from seed was snapped up by Miriam for propagation.

Eremophila oppositifolia with its silver-grey leaves, pink flowers which leave a still attractive pink calyx when they drop is a good-value plant to have in the garden. Matt brought in an *E. alternatifolia* to befuddle Frank, but he came through with flying colours on its identification. *E. santalina* has been a fabulous specimen in Matt Baars' back garden for as long as I can remember, its graceful weeping foliage covered in delicate white flowers is a landscaping treat.

Thryptomene saxicola white form, *T. calycina* and *Scholtzia oligandra* are always good value this time of year. Frank insisted that every garden should have a number of these plants because they are such good value with the quality and the duration of flowering.

Frank's other big recommendation for gardens are the attractive *Chaemalacium* with their long flowering period, they were represented by the ever-popular *C. uncinatum* 'Purple pride'. Some fine banksia and dryandra specimens were brought in. *Banksia spinulosa*

grown from a cutting by Matt Baars has been a consistent performer for 20 years.

Matt Leach brought in a *B. prionotes*, *B. praemorsa*, *B. ericifolia*, *B. pulchella*, *B. meisneri*. A number of these are sitting in my vase at home looking fabulous, a very opportune wedding anniversary bouquet. I didn't have enough room for *Dryandra speciosa* and *D. tenuifolia* but I managed to squeeze in a couple of *Isopogon cuneatus* inflorescences with their lovely pink flowers, Frank reckons they are a bit of a "drop dead" plant.



Guichenotia macrantha is a good value tough attractive plant that will flower in shade and survive without too much watering. *Diploleana angustifolia* also brought in by Frank and was growing well for him without being grafted.

To finish, several wattles were hitting their straps. The ever-reliable *Acacia baileyana* and *A. longifolia*, *A. salicifolia*, *A. florifera*, *A. verniciflua*. *Acacia aphylla* is an interesting shrub with curvy rigid branchlets with no leaves. Matt Leach commented that older plants can get a lot of dead material in the middle as the plant ages.

(Editor Note: Most likely Frank) saw a YouTube by Attila Kapitany with him cutting his *A. aphylla* almost off at ground level to rejuvenate them.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

by Matt Leach

Plant of the month was Matt's *Cyanothamnus coerulescens* syn *Boronia coerulescens*, chosen by Christa (who won the door prize).

Boronia coerulescens (Blue Boronia) has had a name change to *Cyanothamnus coerulescens* in 2013. It is a shrub, growing to 0.2-0.6m high and the same wide. It has branches with warty glands and produces blue, purple or white flowers arranged in leaf axils or in dense leafy spikes on the end of its branches. The flowers have four petals, similar to Boronias and are produced mostly from August to November, although

mine is in flower now. It is found in mallee woodlands, south-west of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and in the far south-west of New South Wales.



There are a couple of sub-species. Unlike many Boronias, the flowers of *Cyanothamnus coerulescens* do not have a fragrance, but when crushed, the leaves and branches have a smell. My shrub is approximately 10 years old, in a full sun position, in an ironstone raised garden bed.

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

These are just a few of the up-coming events that the club is involved with. Please take note of the dates and put them in your diary so you don't miss out.

AUGUST MEETING

AGM 16th August 2022

See you there. It's over before you can say

PHOTO COMPETITION at the AGM

As has become tradition we will hold our Annual Photo Competition at the AGM on 16th August. Bruce has kindly provided the following guidance:

Once again photographs will be lodged electronically and voted on electronically. It's not about the 'best' photo, but the most popular. Be in it. All photos will be viewed at the AGM using the projector with the winners being announced at the AGM. Here's how it works

- We will have the usual three categories .. Australian Plants, Australian Wildlife and Australian Landscapes.
- Each of you can enter two photos in each category, a total of six entries per person. Photos must be your own, taken in Australia, and be anonymous. That is, have nothing in them which identifies the photographer.
- Email your photos to Bruce McGinness at bsmcginness@gmail.com by the 7th August. Please make sure your subject line in the email is: 'Photo Competition Entries'.
- Once they are all in, Bruce will send out a link to where all the photos can be viewed. They will each have a number (no names). Between 8th and 14th August, you can take your time perusing the photos and visit as many times as you wish.
- Choose your favourite photo for each category. You will also receive information about how to register your vote in each category. Voting closes on 14th August. Winners will be announced at the AGM and prizes presented at our Christmas Break-up. Let's make this a successful competition. Get your entries in.



Last years' landscape winner – 'Sunset on the Warrego River at Cunnamulla' by Penny Foster, taken on iPhone

There will be a red carpet, champagne and a 200 piece marching band. (I might have made up that last bit, but it will be a great night.)

2022 MEETINGS

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| Aug 14th | - | Garden visit to Bill and Sue Guymer's garden in Donvale, and others nearby. |
| August 16th | - | AGM and Photo Competition |
| Sept 20th | - | David Pye – 'Dryland Eucalypts'. |
| Oct 9th | - | Visit to Melton Botanic Gardens |

- Oct 18th - TBA
- Nov 15th - Tony Hughes - Grafting
- Dec ?? - Christmas Break-up. Date TBA
- April 1, 2023 - 2023 Plant Sale, tentative date

DAY-TIME MEETINGS for 2022

After much discussion, the committee has decided to trial day-time winter meetings in 2022. Our June, July and August meetings will be at 1:30pm on a weekday afternoon to be determined. We need to negotiate with 'The Ballroom' management on a mutually agreeable day, but our preference is for Tuesday, so as not to change things too much.

Meetings will have the same format as our evening meetings, with a Speaker, followed by afternoon tea and the plant table.

We appreciate that some members may be precluded from these meetings due to work commitments. However, we have members now who can't or won't come to evening meetings in the cold and dark.

I asked for feedback in the last Newsletter email, and 75% of respondents were in favour. So, we'll trial it and see what happens.

WEEKDAY EXCURSIONS

We will be conducting a number of weekday excursions in spring summer this year as a way of getting more social activities for members once the weather improves and the plants start to flower.

The idea is that we'll take a gentle walk in the local bush, and see what's flowering. Anglesea, Brisbane Ranges, Inverleigh Common ... the possibilities are endless and the benefits are many.



We can arrange car-pooling and/or meeting places to make it accessible to everyone. If you have any

suggestions for places we could visit, please let us know.

Sat tunes for more information.

AUSTRALIA'S LONLIEST TREE? from Chris Walker-Cook

Meet the Mongarlowe mallee. With only six individuals in existence, it may be Australia's loneliest tree. It also poses the question – what can we do for a species that has so few individuals left?



In August 1985, Back to the Future was number one in the box office, Tears for Fears and Huey Lewis and the News were battling it out on the radio airwaves and Mary Joe Fernandez became the youngest player to win a match at the US Tennis Open at just 14 years old.

Amid all of this, Ms R Jean, a landholder near Braidwood NSW, was walking on one of her local trails when she spotted an extremely unusual looking eucalypt. Its distinct, curved leaves presented a mystery, looking like they belonged to a plant from an entirely different group. This prompted her to bring a fragment of the curious plant to the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, and a closer look at the specimen revealed that Ms Jean had discovered a unique and entirely new species of mallee eucalypt. This mallee would continue to perplex scientists and researchers up until this very day.

A relic from yesterday

The Mongarlowe mallee, also known as the 'ice age gum', may be Australia's loneliest tree. Since its discovery in 1985, extensive searching has revealed the existence of just six trees from four sites.

These trees aren't just rare, they're also old. Potentially Ancient Egypt, pre-Roman Empire or possibly even older, hence the name ice age gum. Estimates put them at anywhere from 3,000 to 13,000 years old. We can tell these trees are old by looking at a structure at the base of the tree called the lignotuber. This bulbous 'organ' stores food and, in many eucalypt species, it contains a mass of hidden buds that new shoots grow from when the tree is impacted by disturbances such as fire. The size of this lignotuber can give us an idea of the tree's age. If we know approximately how much a lignotuber grows over time, then we can guess at how long the plant has been growing for. The largest Mongarlowe mallee has a lignotuber that's 7.5 metres by 12 metres. It's unlikely the lignotuber grows more than 2mm each year (it could be far less), meaning this tree is at least 3,000 years old!



More questions than answers

While this tree might be lonely, it does get plenty of company from the humans who care about it. For Saving our Species Threatened Species expert Genevieve (Gen) Wright, a closer look at the Mongarlowe mallee only reveals more questions. "This is a unique Eucalypt, and its survival in the wild is dependent on the last known adult plants – of which there are only six," says Gen.

"We think these trees are very old, and could be relics of past climates where they may have been more widespread." What's more, the flowering and seed production of this tree is very strange. "Production of viable seed (seed capable of germinating) is difficult because the distance between all of the known trees is further than any self-respecting pollinator would want to travel," explains Gen.

This means the only pollen available to all Mongarlowe mallee trees is from its own flowers, which won't produce viable seed, or from other eucalypt species that are flowering nearby at the same time. Seed

produced with the pollen from these nearby trees result in hybrids, which is a eucalypt that is a genetic mix of two species and does not produce a true Mongarlowe mallee tree.



The only way to fix this problem is hand pollination, and in 2001/2002 the first viable seed was produced using this method. Back then all the Mongarlowe mallee trees were flowering at the same time, but fast forward to 2020 and these rare eucalypts have fallen out of sync.

"Each plant is now flowering at a slightly different time with just a short period of overlap, making repeating this hand cross-pollination extremely challenging," says Gen. "To complicate things even more, some of the plants are just not flowering at all!"

Why so rare?

We can take some comfort from this tree's situation. The Mongarlowe mallee's habitat has remained largely unaltered since European settlement, and its decline is probably a natural process that has occurred over thousands of years, not at the hands of human activity.

So what does conservation for a species like this look like? To take drastic, interventionist action would disrupt what is a natural process – but don't worry, there's still plenty to keep us busy. The focus is instead on the long-term protection of these special trees and their habitat, as they're probably going to live for at least a few more hundred years.

All trees occur on private land, so maintaining a positive connection with landholders is incredibly important, as they are the true custodians of these special plants. We also keep their location top secret, as a major threat to this botanical curiosity is increased visitation and specimen collection from overly enthusiastic members of the public.

Hand-pollination is planned at the next opportunity, with the hope of producing viable seed as a result, and the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra is ready to grow any seed if this is successful but is also trialling propagation techniques for the species using special grafting methods. This could all lead to an ex-situ population of the plant, so we can further study it, and could it one day become a garden plant like the Wollomi Pine.



"We have so much to learn about this plant... how long does it take to grow and how old are they? Are they the oldest eucalypts in Australia? Will we ever find another one?" says Gen.

One thing is certain – we're lucky there's a team of people dedicated to preserving Australia's mysterious Mongarlowe mallee tree for many years into the future.

Editor Note: Chris provided this article & photos from

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/australias-loneliest-tree-mongarlowe-mallee>

TRAVEL AROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE by Phillip Royce

During June, Di and I did a bit of the Leylands and visited a couple of areas we'd not been to before: Broken Hill and Dubbo. Amongst many things, we did a little walking taking a few snaps of the plants we saw. In some of the places 'Friends of' groups had put in plant labels, while in others, identification was left to one's imagination. See how you go.



IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA I WAS BORN by Phillip Royce

Well Dubbo wasn't the end of it. After a week at home we took off to South Australia to visit the Flinders Ranges and Fleurieu Peninsula. Once again we did a little walking, this time more up and down, but again took some piccys. See what you think:



FROM THE SECRETARY

Please use apsgeelong@gmail.com if you wish to contact the secretary for any reason. Thanks.

And, since communication is 2-way, here's something from our secretary, Peter Nuzum:

New Member: A big welcome to our newest member – Jeff Beavis. Please make Jeff welcome when you meet up with him at our meeting.

Name tags: I am updating the name tags and making new tags for people who currently don't have one. They should be available for our August meeting.

Club activities: We are looking at holding weekday excursions once the weather warms up to local places of interest. If you have any thoughts on where we can go, please let me know and I will pass your suggestions onto Carmel who will be co-ordinating these activities.

Some coming Victorian activities:

First: the Bellarine Botanica is running until 25th August at ARTISANS OF AUSTRALIA, 33 MURRADOC RD, DRYSDALE. Artisans of Australia, the Bellarine Landcare Group and the Bellarine Catchment Network are hosting four weeks of art and craft to celebrate the flora of the Bellarine Peninsula.

Second: Gardening Australia's segment on Miriam's Mints on 26th August.

Third: Hessian tree guards: We can bulk purchase hessian tree guards at a cost of approximately \$2.30 each (includes 3 bamboo stakes. Actual price to be confirmed). If you are interested in these, please let me know. If there is sufficient interest, I will take it to the committee to seek approval for purchase.

APS VICTORIA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

27th & 28th August - APS Yarra Yarra Australian Plants Expo, Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road Eltham. 10.00 am - 4.00 pm both days

1st – 11th September 2022 – The Acacia Project Exhibition, illustrating Rare, Endangered and Unusual Acacia in the Royal Botanic Gardens of Melbourne will be mounted in the Visitors Centre at the RBGV Melbourne. 9 am to 5 pm daily.

17th -18th September 2022, Angair Wildflower Show & Art Weekend. Strictly indigenous this year! A special display of the late John Landy's fascinating collection of local butterflies and insects, guided wildflower walks around the district, indigenous plant sales and stalls by local environmental groups. 10 am to 4 pm. Anglesea Community Precinct in McMillan Street, Anglesea.

1st & 2nd October 2022 - APS Grampians Group Pomonal Native Flower Show, Pomonal Hall. 9.30 am to 5.00 pm Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm on Sunday.

15th & 16th October 2022 – 14 th FJC Rogers Seminar. Topic: Fabulous peas (the typical 'pea-flowered' plants). York on Lilydale in Mt Evelyn. Expressions of interest and queries to fabulouspeas2022@gmail.com

COMMITTEE VACANCY

With Phil Royce's retirement we find ourselves looking for a member or two to join our committee. The task is not onerous or difficult (or even scary). If you think you might like to help us out have a chat with any of the committee members and they'll set your mind at rest ☺