



# Correa Mail

Newsletter No 386 - November, 2022

## OCTOBER MEETING

## Alpine Flora - iNaturalist

Our speaker for the October meeting was Chris Clarke, former President of APS Victoria and one of the contributing authors of the book 'Plants of Melbourne's Western Plains'. Chris is a keen photographer and naturalist and his talk covered both of these interests.

He began with a pictorial trip through the Victorian Alps in summer. As part of the Keilor Plains APS group he has made many trips to various parts of the Victorian High Country and he shared some of his wonderful photos with us.

The bedrock of the Victorian Alps was formed between 530 and 400 million years ago, on the bottom of an ocean. The Alps have risen in the last 10 million years as a result of continental splitting. Highest peak in Victoria is Mt. Bogong at 1986 metres.



*Aciphylla glacialis* - Mountain Celery

Alpine flora has many adaptations for the harsh climate in which it thrives. There is limited sunlight in winter due to snow, but extremely high UV in summer. High winds and high rainfall also have an impact. Plants tend to be lower-growing and denser than lowland species, and grow and flower incredibly quickly to take advantage of the short growing season.



*Herpolirion novae-zeelandiae* – Sky Lily, flowers early

Perhaps the most numerous and diverse of the alpine plant families is *Asteraceae*, the daisies. Their colours and forms are a constant source of wonder for Chris.



*Brachyscome rigidula* – Leafy Daisy

As you will know, daisies are used to be called Compositae, composite flowers because of their structure. The 'petals' or ray florets, surround the actual flowers, the disc florets. There may be hundreds of individual flowers in the (usually) yellow/orange centre of what we think of as a single daisy flower.

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***Celmesia* sp. – Snow daisies**

*Celmesia* is a diverse genus with about eighty species, most of them endemic to New Zealand. There are at least five species in the Victorian Alps, and it is often very difficult to distinguish one from another in the field.



*Euchiton nitidulus* is a small plant with rudimentary flowers which look nothing like the 'typical' daisy. Daisy bushes, *Olearia*, are also well represented in the Victorian High Country with many unusual species. *Olearia megalophylla* is one such plant, with its glossy, gold-margined leaves and bright, white flowers.



***Olearia megalophylla* – Large-leaf Daisy Bush**

There are a number of Fabaceae – pea plants, in the high country. As is the case with peas everywhere they are diverse in colour and form and notoriously difficult to distinguish.



***Podolobium alpestre* - Alpine Shaggy-pea**

Gentians are very attractive plants and many of the peaks making up the Victorian Alps have their own endemic species. *Gentianella muelleriana* subsp. *willisiana*, the Mt Buller Snow-gentian, is endemic to Mt Buller region.



Because the ground is so wet for a greater part of the year, plants have difficulty extracting nitrogen from the soil. As a result many carnivorous plants, such as sundews and bladderworts have developed.

Many plants have developed a low profile, keeping out of the wind and hugging rocks for protection and warmth. Plants like Cushion bush - *Scleranthus biflorus* have become popular architectural plants in the garden, but do need constant watering in summer.

The Alpine Mint-bush, *Prostanthera cuneata* is a dense, evergreen shrub which grows to about a metre in height, although there is also a prostrate form. They grow readily from cuttings and make a great, aromatic addition to gardens at sea-level.





***Prostanthera cuneata* - Alpine Mint-bush**

There are a surprising number of alpine orchids, many of them smaller than their lowland cousins, but no less spectacular. But only one truly alpine Grevillea, *Grevillea australis* a small or dwarf shrub with massed white flowers. It is the only Grevillea found naturally in Tasmania.



Chris's photos were a delight, and thoroughly enjoyed by the few members who attended. I could continue for many pages with more great images. Thanks to Chris for allowing me to use his photos here.

Chris then went on to introduce us to a program called **iNaturalist**, a world-wide, on-line citizen science project where ordinary folk and scholars can record their sightings of all things natural.

There are thousands of observers worldwide making an increasingly comprehensive database of sightings. Once the observations are made, anyone can see them and apply all sorts of search criteria.

For example, you can search for all sightings of a particular plant and iNaturalist will show you, on a map, where it has been recorded. You can search for all sightings within a certain area, or within a certain time-frame. You can search for all sighting made by a particular person.

If you see a plant but don't know what it is, you can post it and request an ID. Within minutes someone will have given you that information.

Chris took us through a brief but quite comprehensive tour of iNaturalist, and it looks like a wonderful resource. There are guides and video tutorials to get you started, and you don't need to sign up to use it. Have a look at it here, and see for yourself ...

<https://www.inaturalist.org>

**PLANT TABLE**

**with Bruce McGinness**

Our plant table this month was a very diverse one indeed. Once again, Bruce McGinness took control and delivered a really interesting, almost heckle-free, presentation.

Chamelauciums are at their peak flowering around Geelong at the moment and there were around ten different species and cultivars on show. *C. uncinatum* 'Seaton's Form' has perhaps the largest flowers of the group. They are white or pale pink and each is the size of a 20c piece. By contrast, 'Sweet Rosy', a *C. floribundum* cultivar has tiny white and crimson flowers about 5mm across.



***Chamelaucium* 'Sweet Rosy'**

Grevilleas always feature strongly and this month true species were at the fore with *Grevillea flexuosa*, *georgiana*, *insignis*, *bronwenae* and *zygoloba* on show. Among the hybrids and cultivars were 'ANZAC Pride' and 'Red Hooks'. Matt Baars had a naturally occurring hybrid of *G. juncifolia* x *G. spinosa* found in Western Australia, and sold as Grevillea 'Canning Gold'.





**Matt's hybrid 'Canning Gold' - *G. juncifolia x spinosa***

There were two *Lasiopetalum*. *L. schultzenii*, the Drooping Velvet-bush is a shrub to 2 metres occurring in south east Australia from Kangaroo Island to Port Campbell. *L. behri*, the Pink Velvet-bush is a shrub with a somewhat disjointed population. It occurs in the far south of WA, southern SA, north-west Victoria and south-west NSW. The five-petaled flowers of both species hang down in clusters, and, like the *Thomasias* and *Guichenotias*, need to be viewed from below to fully appreciate them.



***Lasiopetalum behri* – Pink Velvet-bush**

There were a number of very interesting plants, from many genera, on the table. *Calytrix tetragona* – Fringe Myrtle, has a wide distribution across most of southern Australia. *Eremophila hygrophana* is a compact shrub from the arid regions of Western Australia. Its purple flowers and green leaves make an attractive garden addition. *Verticordia chrysantha* and *V. staminosa*, both from south-west Western Australia have quite different appearances. *V. chrysantha* is a mounded shrub covered in masses of bright yellow feather-flowers. *V. staminosa* (probably *ssp. staminosa*) has small, brownish-yellow flowers in clusters on the ends of straggly stems. *Aphanopetalum resinum* or the Gum Vine is a very vigorous climber with bright green leaves and masses of pale yellow flowers.

**PLANT OF THE MONTH - *Darwinia oxylepsis***  
By Ade Foster

*Peter Nuzum was the winner of the door prize, and he chose Darwinia oxylepsis as Plant of the Month. And, although he didn't need to, Peter wrote the article .....*

Our plant of the month is *Darwinia oxylepsis*, a beautiful red-flowering plant from Western Australia. Sadly, it is quite rare and is listed as endangered. Its common name is Gillham's Bell and is included with some other Darwinias, known collectively as Mountain Bells.



The species is found in only a few seasonally moist gullies near the lower slopes of the Stirling Range National Park and nearby Porongurup National Park. It belongs to the Myrtle family *Myrtaceae*. It grows as a dense, upright shrub 1.0–1.5 m high and produces large numbers of red bell-shaped, flower-like inflorescences prominently displayed on the ends of the branchlets in spring. These flowers are nectar-rich and are popular with honeyeaters.

*D. oxylepsis* grows in stony, peaty sand in rocky gullies that are wet in winter. There are only four known populations, all of them in the Stirling Range N.P. and Porongurup N.P. They grow in areas known to be significantly affected by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* fungus, to which they are vulnerable. They are also in areas that are prone to bushfire. The species is killed by fire and regenerates from seed stored in the soil but it takes up to four years before new plants produce seed. More frequent fire events may therefore cause loss of populations. The plants also grow in areas frequented by tourists and are at risk from trampling and unauthorised picking of plant parts.

*Darwinia oxylepsis* is listed as "endangered" under the Australian Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. It is also classified as "Threatened Flora (Declared Rare Flora — Extant)" by



the Department of Environment and Conservation (Western Australia) and an interim recovery plan has been prepared. In October 2000, a total of about 4,000 plants were counted in all four areas, but after a bushfire later that month, there were none.



It is difficult to grow from seed but relatively easy to grow from cuttings, although generally short-lived in the garden. It has been grafted onto the hardier eastern Australian *Darwinia citriodora*, and this is the preferred method of propagation

It was named by Edward Rudge in 1816 – *Darwinia* in honour of Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin and *oxylepis* – (Greek) 'oxys' – sharp, and 'lepis' – a scale, referring to the flower bracts. The prominent bell-shaped flowers appear at the ends of branches. However, the 'flower' is really a cluster of small flowers enclosed within large hanging flower bracts (modified leaves) up to 30 mm long. The bracts are mainly deep red, but the uppermost bracts are greenish.



It is best grown in a container if the plant is not grafted and requires well-drained soil. It benefits from some protection from direct summer sun.

**Source: Wikipedia/WA Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority.**

## WEEKDAY WANDERS

with Carmel Addlem

Our Weekday Wander was to visit the garden of Ros McFadyen in Little River. Matt Leach looks after the garden for Ros, who spends much of her time in a wheelchair. She was very excited and proud to show us her beautiful, one acre, mostly native garden. Five hardy members braved the imminent rain and were treated to an absolute delight.



The sound of frogs calling greeted us at the gate, and Ros told us that she's recorded seven different species in her beautifully landscaped pond. The pond also serves to protect the house from run-off in very wet conditions, and it was working beautifully.



Ros was particularly keen to show us her patch of local indigenous plants which included *Craspedia*, *Dianella*, *Carex*, *Pelargonium*, *Arthropodium*, *Brachyscome* and many more. Paths wound around past amazing examples of *Grevillea*, *Acacia*, *Eremophila* and *Eucalyptus*. There are little gems like the standard *Grevillea bipinnatifida* 'Jingle Bells' which was given to



Ros by her Grandfather for her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and a beautiful little Twining Glycine, climbing an old wagon wheel.



The rain made things a little difficult, but a wonderful afternoon was had by all.

#### NOVEMBER MEETING

#### Grafting Eremophilas

Our speaker for the November Meeting will be Tony Hughes. Tony will be known to most of you as a grower, selling plants at our plant sale. He has spoken to us in the past on propagating techniques, and at the November meeting he will give us a demonstration of grafting Eremophilas. If you bring along samples of your favourite Eremophila, Tony will provide the root-stock and you can make your own grafted plant. Sounds like a great night.

#### 2022 MEETINGS and OUTINGS

Nov 10 <sup>th</sup>	Weekday Wander, Brisbane Ranges
Nov 15 <sup>th</sup>	Tony Hughes - Grafting
Dec 4 <sup>th</sup>	Xmas Break-up, Eastern Gardens
Jan 26 – 29?	Victorian High Country
April 1, 2023	2023 Plant Sale

#### MY FAVOURITE PLANTS

by Peter Nuzum

One of the trees I have in my garden is *Hymenosporum flavum* or Native Frangipani with its prolific and beautiful cream/yellow fragrant flowers in spring and summer. It is a tree of the rainforests of Queensland and New South Wales but grows quite well

in most parts of Australia. It will grow to about 10 m tall in the garden though grows taller in the rainforest. Spread is 2-5 metres.

It is the only Australian species of *Hymenosporum* and belongs to the *Pittosporaceae* family. It is closely related to the pittosporum species.



Image by Lazaregagnidze – Wiki Commons

It is very attractive to birds and bees. Propagation is by seed and softwood/semi-hardwood cuttings. It can grow in full sun through to heavy shade though prefers full sun. It will grow in most soil types. My tree (and my neighbour's) are growing very well in heavy clay in the semi-desert of Lara so they will also grow well in low rainfall as well as in high rainfall regions.

*Hymenosporum flavum* is included in various States' lists of low flammability plants indicating that it is suitable for growing within a building protection zone.

It is a very versatile tree suitable for medium-sized gardens in a wide variety of climatic conditions. It has great shape and a profusion of beautiful flowers. I definitely recommend it, if you have the room.

#### IS IT A MOTH?

by Ade Foster

At our meeting last month, Chris Clarke showed us a great photo of a very colourful moth taken in the Victorian Alps. Bruce asked what made it a moth and not a butterfly. This got me thinking. Way back in 1996, after a meeting of our Geelong Field Naturalists Biodiversity Group, I wrote an article for the GFNC monthly magazine, *'The Geelong Naturalist'*. I've made a few edits for clarity and to correct my appalling grammar, but I believe the content holds true today.

Moths and butterflies belong to the order *Lepidoptera*, from the Greek '*lepido*'-scale and '*pteron*'-

wing, referring to the dust-like scales covering the wings of these insects.

Confusion has always existed as to what is a moth and what is a butterfly. This is further aggravated by the existence of a third group, which fits somewhere between the two, the skippers, family Hesperidae, small, butterfly-like, day-flying insects.

Using the distinctions discussed here, and others, it appears that Australia has about 250 species of butterflies, 106 species of skippers and well over 20,000 species of moths, many, as yet, undescribed.



**A butterfly, *Oreixenica lathoniella hercules* – The Common Silver Xenica, showing clubbed antennae**

Moths, butterflies and skippers differ in structure and behaviour, with the antennae being the most readily observable. Moth antennae are thread-like (filiform) or feather-like (plumose) whereas butterfly antennae are always clubbed. The skippers' antennae have hooked ends. The *Castiniid* moths, however, have clubbed antennae like the butterflies.

The fore and hind wings of most moths, and one skipper, are joined by a frenulum - a bristle, or group of bristles, which hold the wings together in flight. This is never present in butterflies, but it is absent in some moths, too.



**Mistletoe Moth, *Comocrus behri*, a colourful day-flying moth with filiform antennae.**

Butterflies and skippers are never true night flyers, whereas most moths are. However there are several species of moth, some with clubbed antennae, and usually very colourful, which are active day-flyers.

The pupa of a butterfly (the chrysalis) is always naked and exposed. They are usually attached with a single strand of silk to the underside of a leaf, twig or blade of grass. Skippers' pupae are often covered with a powdery substance and hidden in rolled grasses. Moths pupate in silken structures ranging from simple to quite elaborate, but may be naked in leaf-litter or underground.

The method of rest is often considered diagnostic - butterflies with wings together above the bodies or, in sunshine, held flat to the sides. Moths generally rest with wings 'tented' above their bodies, but moths of the *Geometridae* mostly rest with wings flat on either side. Skippers use either method and sometimes both at once ... fore-wings together and above, hind-wings flat and either side.



**Hooked antennae of a skipper.**

So, as you can see, it's not cut and dried. Richard South said it most succinctly in his two volume work '*The Moths of the British Isles*' published in 1908. When asked about the difference between them he said, "Moths and Butterflies belong to the *Lepidoptera*. All those *Lepidoptera* which are not moths are butterflies."

Unless they're skippers! Hope that helps, Bruce. ☺

**WEEKDAY WANDER - Thursday November 10<sup>th</sup>**

We'll do a weekday wander along some of the firebreaks in the Brisbane Ranges. These are home to an amazing array of plants, many of them reaching peak flowering now.

Meet at the corner of Geelong/Ballan Rd and Butcher's Rd, 6.8 km north of Anakie at 12.00 noon. Bring wet-weather gear and sunscreen (who knows what the weather will be?) and plenty of Mozzie repellent ☺