



Correa Mail

Newsletter No 395 - November, 2023

OCTOBER MEETING - Jason Caruso

Our speaker for October was Jason Caruso and his topic was '*Eucalypts For Small Gardens – From Backyard to Bonsai*'. There is a long held misconception that Eucalypts are too big for a suburban garden; that their roots are invasive, and they drop branches creating a danger to life, limb and property. Not so! There are many eucalypts that are ideally suited for suburbia, in any situation.



Eucalyptus pimpiniana in a suburban setting.

There are three genera within the c. 920 plants known as 'Eucalypts' ... *Eucalyptus*, *Corymbia* and *Angophora*. The earliest fossil records date back 52 million years, interestingly from Argentina. The two main growth habits of the Eucalypts are what Jason called 're-sprouters' and 'non-re-sprouters'. The non-re-sprouters are plants like the mallets of WA, or the Mountain Ash of south eastern Australia ... hardy plants that are killed by fire, but set copious seed for regeneration. They do not take kindly to pruning and are often fast-growing and short-lived, so, they are probably not the best choice for a smaller garden. The Fuschia Gum – *Eucalyptus forrestiana* is a good example. A very attractive small tree, but difficult to manage.



Eucalyptus forrestiana – Fuschia Gum

The re-sprouters have two strategies. One group regenerates from epicormic buds that are dormant under the bark. These grow new shoots as a response to stress – damage or fire. The other regenerates from a lignotuber- a woody swelling at the top of the roots. This group – the Mallees - makes the ideal plant choice for your garden. When the trunk, or trunks are damaged by fire, broken by the wind, or pruned by the gardener they re-sprout from the lignotuber and can do so again and again, over many years.

In a garden situation, if your mallee becomes too big, or too 'leggy' it can be cut off at ground level, just above the swelling of the lignotuber. It will re-sprout and you can either choose a leader and remove the other trunks or allow it to have a multi-trunked habit.

President: Position Vacant

Secretary: Peter Nuzum: apsgeelong@gmail.com

Treasurer: Penny Foster: damali11@hotmail.com Editor: Ade Foster – adefoster@internode.on.net

Australian Plants Society, Geelong - Website: www.apsgeelong.org



A mallee-type showing the lignotuber

Jason went on to show us a great many small, mallee-type Eucalypts that would make great garden plants. Some were shown in situ, as a wonderful demonstration of the diversity and possibilities of Eucalypts in even the smallest of spaces.



Eucalyptus incerata & tenera in a parking space



Flowers of E. gillii

E. lacrimans has an open, weeping habit and small, white flowers. *E. pulverulenta* has blue, leaf-hugging leaves much sort after for the cut-flower trade and is a very sculptural tree. *E. gillii* has a similar growth habit and features large yellow flowers. *E. reduca ssp porphyria* is multi-stemmed shrub with purplish new growth and bright yellow flowers. *E. extrica* and *E. pleurocarpa* are closely

related and have a low, sprawling habit. *E. priessiana* can be quite large at 3 – 5 metres but its big yellow flowers make it a great plant for the garden.



E.priessiana

Eucalyptus pimpiniana is a small shrub, rarely over 1.5 m. It is slow growing and slow to flower, the buds taking two years to open, but it is an ideal plant for a very small space. *E. armillata* and *E. erythronema* are related small trees with red-pink buds and flowers and attractive ‘minniritchi’ bark. If you want a eucalypt for the flowers you can’t go past *E. pachyphylla*, *E. sessilis* or *E. rodanthe*. Like *E. macrocarpa* *E. rodanthe* has huge, bright red flowers but doesn’t seem to be troubled by the black ‘soot’ that appears on macrocarpa in our humid climes..



E. rodanthe

Others that Jason suggested are *E. kruseana*, *E. minniritchi*, *E. websteriana*, *E. orbifolia*, *E. tetraptera*, *E-synandra*, *E. sepulcris*, *E. desmondensis* and *E. landsdowneana*. Many of these have interesting foliage or very colourful buds and fruits and are ideally suited to the suburban garden. *E. Caesia* ‘Silver Princes’ is a familiar plant to most of us, and is becoming increasingly common as a garden plant. They can be quite large if allowed to be so, but can be suited to

small gardens, as witnessed in this tiny inner-Melbourne setting.

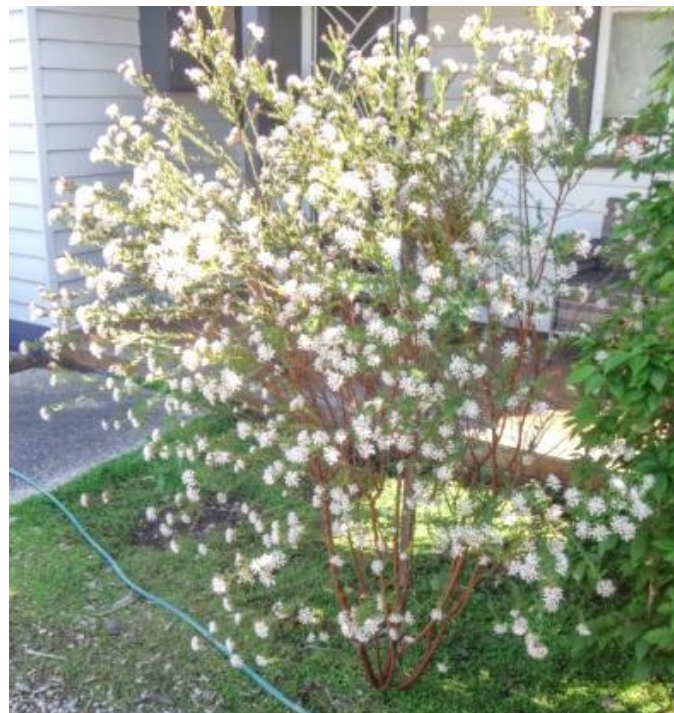


So, plant a eucalypt today, with the right choice, you won't be sorry.

ON THE TABLE - with various members

Having started 'a tradition' last month, we employed the same format for our flower table this time. Each person who'd brought flowers along spoke about their plants and then wrote a small article for inclusion here. I am eternally grateful for these contributions to the newsletter. Even one paragraph makes my job easier and makes the Correa Mail your newsletter, the club's newsletter, and not just mine. 😊

Chris Walker-Cook: *Pimelea sylvestris*, a small shrub from the South West of WA, grows in a variety of soils, sometimes up to 2 metres. It typically grows in Woodlands, hence the "sylvestris" ("pertaining to woods") in the name. Flower buds are pink before turning white when in full flower. My specimen is now almost 5 years' old and is still thriving, despite its facing south and getting very little sunlight in winter.



Ade Foster: I opened with my usual collection of Grevilleas including *Grevillea* 'Sylvia', G. 'Katherine's Fire' and an oversized G. 'Midas Touch', which now stands almost 6m x 5m.



Grevillea 'Midas Touch'

I had several *Chamelaucium* cultivars including 'Sweet Rosy' and 'Little Lorey' both of which have masses of tiny flowers; pink and maroon for the former and white for the latter.



Paddy's Pink is a hybrid of *Chamelaucium uncinatum* and *Verticordia plumosa*, and is a wonderful plant for any garden. It will reach 2m x 2m and from late winter until mid-summer is covered in pink/mauve flowers. These are great as cut flowers and the foliage has a lovely citrus smell. Prune after flowering to keep the plant compact, and you'll not regret having one.

Kunzea ambigua is a plant of the coastal areas of eastern Australia. It grows to about 2m with a lovely weeping habit and myriad white flowers along the branches in spring. Mine is a prostrate form, about three years old, which covers a couple of metres in one garden bed.



Kunzea ambigua 'prostrate'

Joy Sutton: At our April plant sale, I lashed out and purchased one of Phil Vaughan's tissue cultured Black Kangaroo Paws. Not cheap, but what a fascinating plant and I was hooked. "Got to give this a go, Joy" I said to myself.



Phil gave me some advice about keeping mulch well away from the plant. So I put this precious little spiky looking seedling into a raised bed of sandy gravel in full sun and cleared mulch well away from it.

It was pretty exciting seeing flower spikes develop in early spring followed by these amazing black and lime green flowers. *Macropidia fulginosa* is the only species in its genus – a monotypic genus – and it is endemic to WA where it occurs naturally in the gravelly sands that occur between Perth and Geraldton. I will keep my fingers crossed that I can keep it alive for another year or two.

Frank Scheelings: *Phymatocarpus maxwellii* (Syn *Melaleuca maxwellii*) is a compact shrub up to 2.5 meters, found in south-west WA in the Esperance region. Flowers are small, round pompoms 10 mm across with 5 stamens arranged in bundles of 5 as with melaleucas. However, in melaleucas the anthers are placed at the top of the stamens whereas in *Phymatocarpus* the anthers emerge from a slit at the base of the stamens. Evidently this justifies a separate genus!!



Ricinocarpus pinifolius, Wedding Bush, is a bushy plant to 2 meters found in coastal areas from Queensland to northern Tasmania. White starry flowers appear in spring and are excellent cut flowers. They contrast nicely the lime green needle-like foliage.



I prune mine severely to maintain a compact, bushy appearance. There are both male and female flowers with a ratio of 3-6 male to 1 female. The male flowers are distinguished by the abundant yellow stamens.

Olearia phlogopappa is a compact bush to 3 M, with greyish linear to lanceolate leaves, and white starry flowers which may be pink to mauve. Several subspecies are described, with variations in leaf structure. It is found from coastal areas to alpine and sub-alpine areas as well as woodlands, from NSW, Vic and Tasmania. In my garden I prune heavily after spring flowering to maintain compact bushy habitat



Myoporum floribundum, Snow in Summer, has long, thin, lime-green, drooping foliage, which contrasts with the small, prolific, snowy-white flowers appearing along the branches. They occur in such profusion that the bush appears snow-covered. It is found near Jenolan Caves in NSW and the upper Snowy River region of Victoria. The literature suggests it responds poorly to severe pruning, which is not my experience. It can grow to 3 meters and becomes sparse and woody if not pruned. Again, in my experience it is short-lived - just 5 to 7 years - but grows easily from cuttings.



Beaufortia schaueri is another shrub from south-west WA around the Esperance coastal area. It grows to 1.5

meters and is related to melaleucas but again, the difference is in how the anthers are attached to the stamens. Mauve to pink ball-like flowers appear on terminal branches from late winter to spring. As with many in this and related species, the foliage is barely visible due to the proliferation of flowers.



OCTOBER 8th – OPEN DAY GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS

We had a really great day at the Geelong Botanic Gardens on 8th October. The gardens were opened to community groups to showcase their interests and to encourage the public to come to and use the wonderful venue that is Geelong Botanic Gardens.

Our plant table looked a treat, and we had a constant stream of folks who were keen to talk to us about our plants or their native gardens. We distributed lots of our pamphlets, and hopefully, gleaned a few new members from the day. There was also a lot of interest in our next Plant Sale, based on the amount of colour on our table.

Thanks to Kellee for the opportunity to showcase the club and native plants, thanks to those stalwarts who came to man the stall and talk to the public, thanks to Penny for the delicious scones and thanks to those of you who provided the flowers that made the day such a success.

2023 MEETINGS and OUTINGS

Nov meeting	Miriam Ford – Prostanthera etc.
January 2024	High Country campout
Feb meeting	Zoë Brittain – Marine Algae
Mar meeting	Plant Based Trivia
June meeting	Grant Baverstock – Bats
Aug Meeting	AGM & Photo Competition

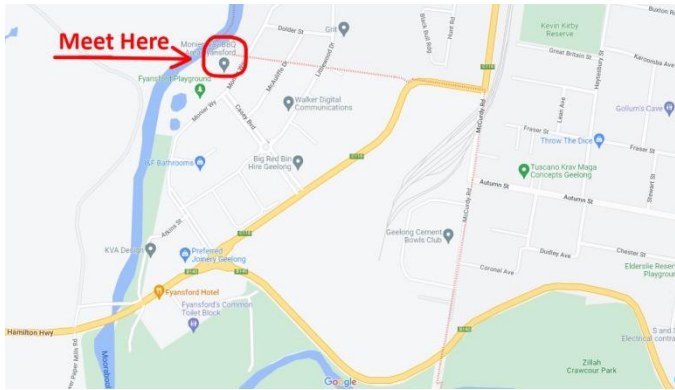
DECEMBER XMAS BREAK-UP

We have decided to hold our 'Christmas end of Year BBQ' on **Sunday, December 10th** at the same place as last year ... opposite 58 Monier Way, Fyansford, at 11.00 am.

This is the extension of Deviation Rd, on the other side of the roundabout at the bottom of the hill. There are BBQ facilities, undercover seating and a great playground for the young at heart. We may not be the only ones there, so be prepared to sit in the open.

BYO everything this year, please. The club will not be providing anything other than the opportunity to gather. So bring your own food, drinks, cutlery, crockery and chair. Hope to see you there.

And again, we may resort to a meal at the Fyansford pub if the weather is unduly wet.



UP THE GARDEN PATH

with Lyhn Barfield

Being a newbie to the Bellarine Peninsula, this year has seen the radar full of new concepts and ideas, not least learning about our local plants and delighting in being involved with all the various local Landcare people. We have a representative for Gardens for Wildlife who will go to a garden owner to educate them on what to implement to attract our wildlife. There are so many groups who on a regular basis go out weeding or planting up whole new pockets of indigenous plants.

Being an avid bird watcher, I have recently become involved with the protection of Hooded Plovers under the auspices of Birdlife Australia. In Victoria since the programme commenced 18 years ago, the numbers have doubled to around 700 but they are still considered vulnerable to critically endangered. It is encouraging to learn there are widespread teams of people all along the coast on the lookout particularly at

this time of the year for these tiny birds and even more so once the chicks have hatched.



Hooded Plover, Pt. Lonsdale – Photo: Gordon Barfield

They nest in a slight depression on dry sand called a scrape and there are many predators, all the usual suspects but humans also are a problem even if unwittingly so.



***Carpobrotus rossii* – Australian Pigface**

Being very small they rest or hide behind objects on the beach like bits of wood, cuttlebone or seaweed. They also use Pigface or *Carpobrotus*. Pigface acts as a sand stabilizer too. They may nest beside it as well. Understanding this, a friend and myself have been nurturing a patch of pigface in our watch area that seemed to pop up magically recently. How it ever grows in dry sand is marvellous and we can only be grateful for the recent big rains to help the situation.



On the nest at a secret location

Nesting for plovers locally can occur anytime from now and they may have up to 4 clutches over the summer depending on how many chicks survive.

Editor's Note: The photo of the nesting Hooded Plover used here was taken with a long lens at about 40m distance to avoid disturbing the bird.

GREVILLEA ROBUSTA – FRIEND OR FOE by Ade Foster

I'm sure many of you are familiar with *Grevillea robusta* – the Silky Oak. It is the largest of our Grevilleas attaining a height of forty metres in suitable conditions. Obviously, being so big, it is not a tree for suburban gardens. I'm prepared to bet that you have *G. robusta* growing in your garden, without being aware of it.

It is fast growing tree with a single trunk, and as such is used as the basis of the 'standard' Grevilleas that are so popular. It occurs naturally in sub-tropical, dry-tropical and riverine habitats in eastern Australia. Because it tolerates many different climates and soil types it is a suitable root-stock for many of the larger, grafted grevilleas. In Belmont, where I live, it is quite common as a street tree and there are a few large specimens in parks around the place.



Grevillea robusta in Israel - Photo: RickP

The specific epithet '*robusta*' refers to the timber. It is hard and has a smooth, silky texture when freshly cut. The grain and colour resembles the true oak, hence the common name. It is used in furniture making and window joinery. So, it is a useful Grevillea to be sure.

But not all is as it may seem. The flowers are large and a rich golden colour. They are very attractive to birds. But the long, yellow styles fall from the flowers as they age, creating an awful mess below. As street trees they grow quickly and there is a constant need to trim them away from power lines and the like. They have been declared an environmental weed in parts of NSW and Victoria, as well as in Hawaii and South Africa.



Grevillea robusta flowers - Photo by Joseph C Boone

G. robusta, like many other grevilleas contains tridecyl resorcinol, which causes an allergic reaction which may lead to contact dermatitis. For me, the contact with several of the grevilleas in my yard (but by no means all of them) gives me a raised, itchy rash on the insides of my forearms. So it's gloves and long sleeves if I'm weeding or pruning around certain of my grevilleas.

Grevillea flowers are rich in nectar, and aboriginal people would dunk the flowers of many grevillea and melaleuca species in water to make a sweet drink. But not the Silky Oak. Its nectar contains hydrogen cyanide, which interferes with the body's use of oxygen. It will probably make you ill and may lead to damage to heart, lungs, blood vessels or brain.

So, beware *Grevillea robusta* – beautiful but potentially dangerous.

QUESTION CORNER

Last month Chris Walker-Cook posed some questions about the white flowering Hibbertia sericea he'd found at Anglesea. What causes it? Is it common? Has anyone else seen one? We have one answer and a few musings from me. Ed.

Tim Hammer, plant taxonomist from the State Herbarium of South Australia, gives this explanation:

"Having pale petals randomly happens to several different Hibbertia species, and it has been observed around the country. It is likely just a genetic anomaly whereby the plant produces less yellow pigment, and it is not taxonomically informative."

On to my musings Aberrant flower colour is not unusual in nature. My research suggests it is more common in blue and purple flowers than in red, orange or yellow ones, but it is seen right across the spectrum.

Flower colour is determined by the plant's genetics, but may be affected by a number of external factors;

the flower's age, the time of year, soil pH, chemical stimulus or poor nutrition can all play a part.

In the case of Chris's *Hibbertia*, it may be a genetic variation on that one plant. Seeds taken from it may, or may not, reproduce the white flower. However, plants grown from cuttings will most likely continue to produce white flowers.

In my wanderings in the bush I have encountered many aberrantly coloured orchids. Are they naturally just very variable, or are there external factors in play? I have no idea. Here are a couple of examples.



Glossodia major - Anglesea

The orchid on the left of this photo is the 'typical' colour. The natural flower colour is determined by the production, in varying amounts, of anthocyanins. If the production is inhibited, flowers tend to be paler, if production increases, flower colour tends to be more intense. Perhaps this explains the orchids on the right in both examples.



Thelymitra antennifera - Grampians

While doing this research, I found an article which talked about genetic manipulation of garden plants to produce different colours. These people have created a *Petunia* which changes colour as the day goes on and changes back during the night! I'm not sure how I feel about that, but here is the link to a video of the scientists discussing their work...

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/103901555?h=0e1241f6ce>

And now, this month's questions.

Firstly, from my research into aberrant flower colour, I wonder how this change of colour affects insect pollinators? Does the colour change make the flowers more attractive? Less attractive? Or does it have no impact? Anyone?

Chris Walker-Cook has offered another series of questions for us

Is there a place for liverworts in the garden? Do they add any value to biodiversity?

More to the point, is there a place for an introduced liverwort in a native garden?

Over many years, I have quietly ignored my growing patch of *Lunularia cruciata*. David Meagher and Bruce Fuhrer describe this species as "extremely common on recently disturbed soil and in waste places, urban gardens and flower-pots".



Lunularia cruciata in Chris's gravel path

It seems to do no harm and is thriving on a patch of gravel pathway near the shed. How have other members treated this liverwort when they have come across it in their own patch?

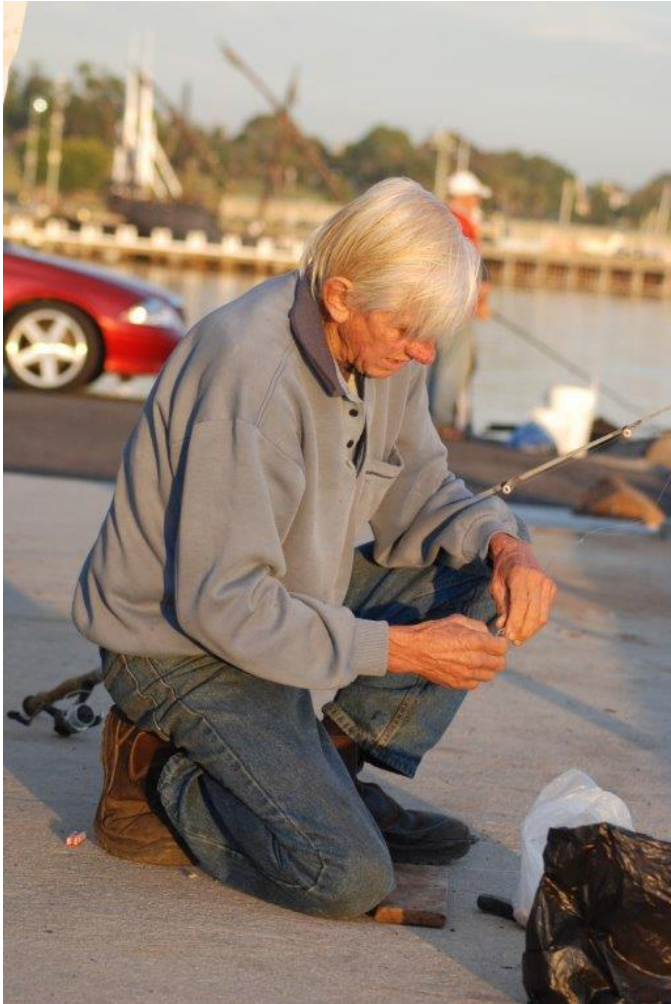
VALE JOHN MAHONEY

27.4.1947 – 26.8.2023

By his great friend, Roger Wileman

John Alexander Mahoney I met John about fifty years ago in the early 1970s, when he had his native plant nursery in Mt Pleasant Road, Belmont. We quickly became good friends and at that time I had no idea that our friendship would still be very strong some fifty years later.

From the very start of our friendship it was clear to me that John was a highly intelligent individual with a marvellous memory ... a real one of a kind. He became a bit of a loner as the years went by, but most of all he was a man who, without exception, did not tolerate fools.



John doing what he loved

John taught me how to grow native plants from cuttings and seed and, although I did develop a very good ability to propagate native plants, my skills were far behind the master. I don't use that term lightly. Anyone who knew John was amazed at his propagating skills. One thing that John told me, that has stayed with me through all the years - If you grow two plants, and one is better than the other, always give somebody the better one. This is still my policy to this day.

John's knowledge of Australian native plants and how to propagate them is perpetuated in the apprentices who John taught. Tony and Jason have gone on to be leaders in different directions in the horticultural trade and it is testament to John's unique skills as a grower and a teacher.

John had a unique sense of humour; he loved fishing, both in the river and down at the Geelong water front. He had a large stamp collection, a rabbit trap collection and a large array of rural of memorabilia. In his early days he raced pigeons, brewed his own beer and preserved pigeon racing, home brewing and preserved fruit. He was an avid reader of books of all types and topics and he could remember what was in them many years later.

I believe when a person passes it is like the closing of a vast book of knowledge, but in John's case I feel that a whole library has been closed for ever.

Rest in peace my dear friend.

I was saddened to learn of John's passing. He was a true legend of native plant propagation and a great supporter of our plant sale over many years. I was also gratified to receive this beautiful obituary from Roger Wileman. Ed.

NEVER GIVE UP

by Ade Foster

Late in December 2021 we had a bee-hive in our front wall. In the March 2022 edition of the *Correa Mail* I wrote an article about the two Grevilleas I was forced to cut down to give the bee man access. I was delighted that both had refused to die and were re-sprouting from what were just stumps.

Fast forward just 10 months from when the plants were 'coppiced' to today, and what a change there has been.



This comparison photo shows Grevillea White Candelabra. On the right you can see the stump where I just chain-sawed through the trunk and the epicormic (?) growth that had appeared in just three months.

On the left is the plant today, with the red line showing the position of the top of the stump. What a great recovery! It is heavily in bud as I write and I expect a great show in the next month.

So, it just goes to show. Where there is a will there's a way, and many plants will recover from great trauma, if they are just given the opportunity.