



Correa Mail

Newsletter No 356 – April, 2020

PLANT SALE POSTPONED

Sadly, we have taken the decision not to hold our plant sale in April. The risk to our members, growers and the public was considered too great. We also felt that many fewer growers and attending public would make the sale a lot of work for little if any return.

The committee is looking at dates for a sale in late winter or early spring. We'll keep everyone informed. Meanwhile, please stay healthy.

March Meeting

Peter Nuzum

Peter presented a brief but entertaining talk about a regeneration project he has visited in Kenya.

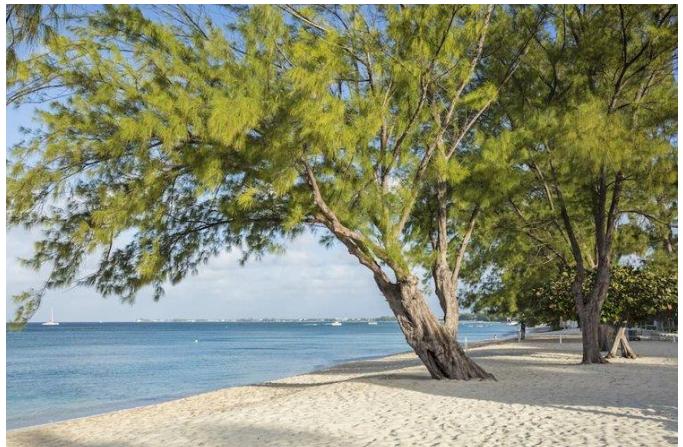
In 1971, Bamburi Cement Ltd. decided to rehabilitate their limestone quarry near Mombasa in the southern part of the country and engaged Swiss agronomist Rene Haller to oversee the job. Haller Park was created.



The Bamburi Quarry – Photo: www.cosy.sbg.ac.at/

Haller had been the manager of Bamburi Cement's garden department for some time, and he set out to find plants that could thrive in the harsh conditions of the abandoned quarries. Of the first 26 plants he experimented with, only three survived: The Damas, *Conocarpus lancifolius*, the Coconut Palm, *Cocos nucifera* and the Whistling Pine, *Casuarina equisetifolia*,

found in Northern Australia, the Pacific islands and widely distributed in south-east Asia.



Casuarina equisetifolia
Photo: © Colin Young | Dreamstime.com.jpg

The casuarina has adapted to grow under severe conditions, tolerating brackish water, which seemed perfect for the environment. However, due to the tree's high tannin content, its needles don't break down readily. Haller observed a red-legged millipede, *Ephibolus pulchripes*, feeding on dry casuarina needles, and sent locals out to find as many as they could. He introduced hundreds of millipedes into the old quarry. Their droppings made it easier for bacteria to break down the Casuarina needles, resulting in a rich layer of humus for other plant species to grow in.



Red-legged millipede, Ephibolus pulchripes

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Birds began to arrive, bringing seeds which soon grew in the newly created humus. Animals arrived or were introduced and by the 1990s a lush rainforest environment was well established.

Today, Haller Park is a popular tourist attraction as well as an important site for education. There is a wildlife sanctuary, a reptile park, a small demonstration fish farm, a palm garden, a crocodile farm and a giraffe viewing platform. There are many more attractions to both educate and entertain the over 160,000 visitors who come to Haller Park each year.



Peter and his mate at Heller Park in 2019

PLANT TABLE

with Arthur Pape

Arthur conducted our plant table discussion this month, and an interesting table it was.

Correas featured strongly and most members agreed that they were flowering a little earlier this year. Among them were *C. pulchella* 'Autumn Blaze' and variety that comes from King Island and a common plant in many gardens. It has narrow, dark green leaves and brilliant salmon coloured flowers.



C. backhouseana is a large shrub to about 2m x 2m, found in coastal southern Australia. It has dark green, ovate leaves. The golden-brown stems and backs of the

leaves have a velvety texture. The flowers are pale yellow. *Correa glabra* – You Yangs form – has small, dark green, shiny leaves with a rough textured surface and yellow/green flowers.

There are always grevilleas on the table and tonight was no exception. Cultivars are very common in grevilleas and we had 'Molly', 'Moonlight', 'Ivory Whip', 'Billy Bonkers', 'Sylvia', 'Peaches'n'Cream' and many others. Among the true species were *G. sericea*, a large open shrub with pale lilac/pink flowers, *G. hookeriana* which has deep maroon, tooth-brush flowers and *G. bipinnatifida* which is one of the parents of many of the 'Queensland hybrids'.



***G. hookeriana* – Black-flowered form**

There were two hybrids of uncertain origin which were interesting. One with sharp foliage and deep red flowers was thought to be a *G. treueriana* x *G. aparagoides*. The other was sold as *G. rigida*, but may be a variant of *G. armigera* or perhaps a hybrid of the two. It had wickedly sharp foliage and deep red, almost black flowers.

There were several Eremophilas. *Eremophila nivea* is a largish shrub with soft, silvery foliage and contrasting mauve flowers. It needs to be pruned to maintain shape and prevent it from becoming 'woody'. *E. microphylla* is a small shrub with fine, very aromatic foliage and small purple/mauve flowers. Someone suggested the smell of the foliage is very similar to that of marijuana. I don't know about such things.

Swainsonia greyana, the Darling Pea, is a shrubby perennial that may reach 1.5 metres. Its large, deep mauve, pea-flowers are very attractive. *Halgaenia preissiana* is a native of Western Australia and is a dwarf shrub that suckers in colder climate gardens in this area. It had deep blue (purple?) star-shaped flowers. *Billardiera ringens* is a climber with light green leaves and tight clusters of orange flowers, usually in spring. Frank has them growing in a raised bed above a retaining wall, and is allowing them to fall down the wall in a most attractive manner. *Pimelia ferruginea* is low, dense, rounded shrub to about 1m x 1.5m. The dark green leaves are obscured by masses of bright pink flowers in late spring and summer.

VERTICORDIAS

by Roger Wileman

Verticordias are commonly known as feather flowers. The name *Verdicordia* is an adaption of the Greek goddess "Venus", goddess of love and beauty. They are an Australian native from the myrtle family.

The vast majority of the 150 species occur in Western Australia, mainly in the South West, but also in Central and Northern parts. Three species occur in the Northern Territory, and one species in South Australia on the Eyre Peninsula.



Verticordia roei

They are completely endemic to Australia and occur nowhere else. They are woody shrubs and the majority of the species are about one metre in height. They have beautiful flowers ranging in colour from white, yellow, pink, mauve and burgundy. They flower prolifically and set large amounts of seed. The plants are killed by fire, but regenerate from the dormant seeds. They will flower in the second or third year and the plants have a life span of about five years in cultivation.

The first collection of W.A plants was collected by William Dampier in 1699, more than likely before Captains Cook's grandfather was born.

The second collection of native plants was during the George Vancouver expedition and was collected by Scotsman, Archibald Menzies at King George Sound, now Albany, in 1791. This collection included specimens of *Verticordia*. These plants were left unnamed for thirty five years, eventually given the name *Verticordia* by Agustus De Candolle, only one year before the founding of the Swan River Colony 1829. Eighty percent of plants found in Australia are endemic. Of these, eighty percent are only found in the south west of Western Australia. One reason for this concentration of unique plant species in the south west is that during the last ice age, two areas in Australia that were not covered by ice were the south west of W.A. and the Grampians in Victoria. Both areas are a wonderland of unique plant species.



Verticordia ovalifolia

The common name Feather refers to the petals which are fringed giving the flower an almost feather-like appearance. This is one of the reasons that botanical artists kept away from painting images of the flowers. It was also difficult to obtain material to paint from.

Verticordias have been cultivated by native plant enthusiasts as early as the 1930's, but almost entirely in W.A. In the 1950-60s more plants were being grown in the eastern states with varying degrees of success. Along came the 1970's and so did a good friend of mine from Ocean Grove. I can only describe him as true pioneer in Australian native plants, he experimented with grafting *Verticordias* onto root stock from the Myrtaceae family from the east coast. After tremendous trial and error, failures and successes, some suitable root stocks were found. He then discovered that all *Verticordia* species are different and would not except the same root stock. To make things even more difficult, the root stock has many forms and varieties and to match suitable combinations has been extremely hard.



Verticordia mitchelliana

But with new species, forms and hybrids being available, finding the right combination is an ongoing proposition. *Verticordias* are grafted to extend their life span and the range of climates to grow them. Grafted

plants are available at Vaughan's Native Plants, at Pomonal. Victoria. They are not cheap, but the effort to produce these plants is quite extensive.



Verticordia miribilis

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS.

I often ask for contributions to the newsletter and I have a few stalwart members who are always willing to help out with interesting content. If you would like to contribute an article for the three months mentioned above, that would be of great assistance. I won't be around to do it, so please give some thought to contributing. No article is too small or too large, and anything even vaguely plant related is grist to our mill.
😊

TEMPORARY NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Penny and I will no longer be travelling in May, June and July, (thanks Covid19 ☺), so there is no need for a temporary editor. However , if anyone feels that they would like to take on the job on a permanent basis, please let me know.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEXT MEETING:

April 21st

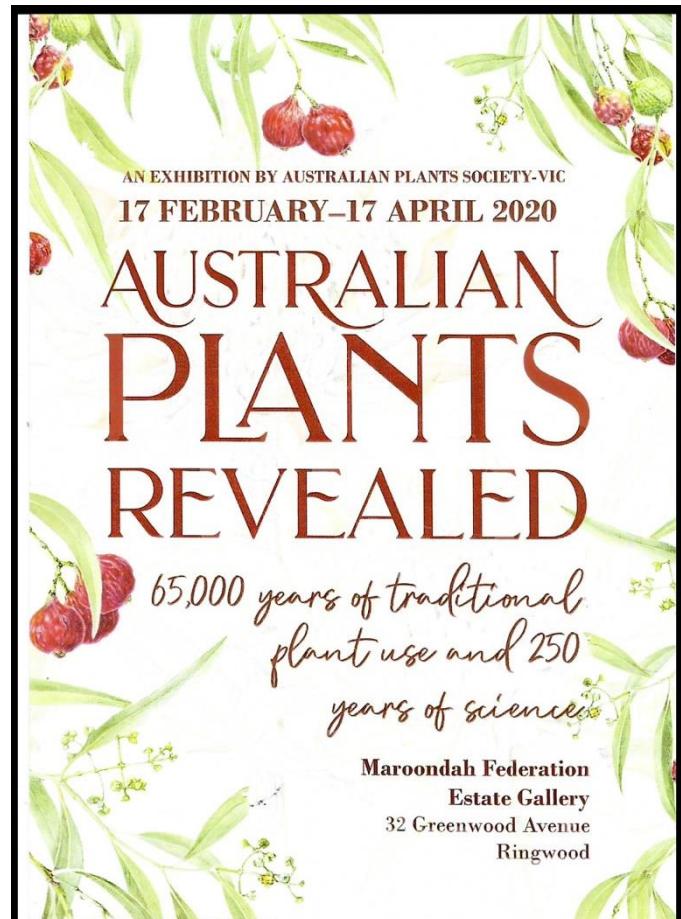
At this time we will continue to conduct our meetings. We will not be doing supper, to avoid the close confines of the kitchen. We will monitor advice for health authorities and keep you informed if the situation changes.

Our next meeting will be a talk by our own Tony Cavanagh and his topic - "The History of Discovery of Australian Plants and Their Cultivation in Europe". Tony has a keen interest in history and Australian plants. He is co-author of the "*The Dryandras*", the definitive work on that genus.

FROM APS VICTORIA'S CALENDAR

Please check whether these are still going ahead, before making the journey.

18th April 2020: APS Yarra Yarra Native Plant & Book Sale. At Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road, Eltham from 10 am to 4 pm.



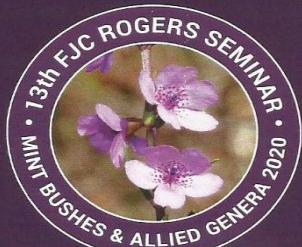
18 FEBRUARY–18 APRIL 2020

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS REVEALED

An Exhibition Highlighting
Banksias and Unique
Australian Flora

Karwarra Australian Native
Botanic Garden and Nursery
1190–1192 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road
Kolorama VIC 3766

Australian
Plants
Society
Victoria Inc.



MINT BUSHES & ALLIED GENERA

LAMIACEAE, Subfamily Prostantheroideae



24 & 25 October 2020
Eltham Melbourne Victoria
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