



# Correa Mail

Newsletter No 358 – June, 2020

**GREETINGS one and all!** I hope this newsletter letter finds you all healthy. The slight easing of restrictions has given us back a little of our lives. Hopefully, we can return to normal, or, as close to normal as the ‘new normal’ might be.

I am more than gratified to have received articles from four members for this month’s edition of the Correa Mail. This is a new world record and a very welcome addition to the pages for June. Thank you Roger Wileman, Bruce McGinness, Joy Sutton and Annette Packett ☺

## THE FUTURE – A Message From Our President

Hello to all our members. I was pondering how and when APS Geelong members would like to start getting together again. It of course depends on government restrictions; but more importantly it depends on when members are comfortable with interacting again. I know it is early days, but it is best to have some plan of how we would like to meet in the future. Meetings in a room maybe on hold for some time yet.

Contact the committee and let them know how and when you would be comfortable interacting with fellow members and in what setting with the appropriate protocols. For example, we could have a garden visit to a private or public garden. We may not do anything until Spring, but it pays to have some plan in place to kick around so that the group just doesn’t fade away from lack of interest.

On a final note a way to keep things going is to contribute an article or pictures to the newsletter. I know you all have brilliant gardens so a photograph and a couple of lines of text describing it would be a fantastic way of keeping us connected.

## PROPAGATION CHALLENGES

by Joy Sutton

First thanks to Ade and the committee for keeping the newsletter going during these challenging times. Ade asked us what projects we have been doing in the garden. Well I have turned my hand to the challenge of coaxing seeds to spring into plants.

Banksias were my principle challenge – specifically

several of the WA ones. I had managed to extract seeds from *B. media* and *B. elderiana* cones by making use of my wood heater and burning the cones in a dying fire. But there the success ended! I have tried all sorts of things to get germination happening – soaking, hot water, scouring, smoke water, combinations. Nothing. Well darn it I thought – so I bought some seeds that other folks had extracted although I couldn’t get *B. elderiana*. What a difference!



***Banksia grossa* coming along nicely**

Now I have several seedlings of *B. praemorsa*, *B. grossa*, *B. pulchella*, *B. carlinoides* and *B. violacea*.

I also finally had some success with *Hakea bucculenta*. In the past I had succeeded with germination only to see the baby plants wither once I had pricked them out into tubes using native potting mix. This time I made up a mix that was much freer draining – mixing sand and perlite into the native potting mix. Now I have happy looking *H. bucculenta* seedlings almost ready to be planted out.

Another challenge came with *Callitris*. Nothing happened for about 8 weeks in the seed trays of 3 varieties. Then I did some reading and found a suggestion that they require chill. So into the fridge the seeds went. And now I have a few baby callitris too.

My other propagation challenges have been associated with growing enough plants to fill in the gaps in a plantation I set up last year and to populate a

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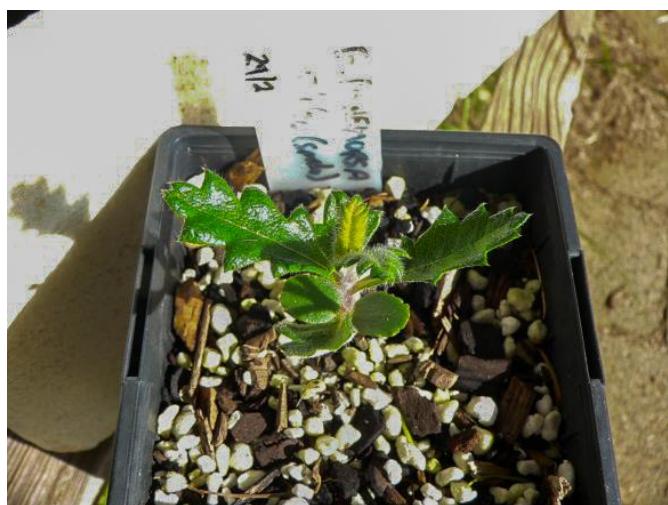
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second plantation I am setting up this year on the farm. The purpose of the plantations is to extend the existing windbreaks, but also to increase biodiversity and provide habitat, food and shelter for birds and insects.

Last year's plantation comprised some 420 trees and shrubs that I had Oz Trees plant for me into previously deep ripped soil in a 300 m plantation space. The mix of plants included 7 eucalypts, 3 hakeas, 2 casuarinas, a callistemon, an acacia and a kunzea. 30 plants didn't make it – some got too wet when planted in August 2019 and the rest succumbed during the summer despite the fact that I was watering a lot of them. The new plantation will be much smaller but will still require about 70 plants.



*Banksia praemorsa*

So I late last year I collected capsules from around the property and the district. These all happily released seeds for me that I popped into seed trays and waited expectantly. Six eucalypt species came up quickly followed by 3 hakeas and 2 melaleucas. Now I have a little forest almost ready to be planted out. So I will be busy in coming weeks!

#### PLANT OF THE MONTH

As we have no meetings, so, no flower table, there is no regular 'Plant of the Month'. I've chosen one from my garden for this month, and I'd love it if one or more of you could perhaps pick a plant from your garden for the coming months.

I have chosen *Verticordia staminea* which is flowering in my garden at the moment. *V. staminea* is a small shrub with very restricted range in the southwest of Western Australia. There are two subspecies – *V. staminea* subsp. *staminea*, and *V. staminea* subsp. *cylindracea*. *Cylindracea* has two variants – var. *cylindracea* and var. *erecta*.



Although I am uncertain, I believe my plant to be *Verticordia staminea* subsp. *staminea*, which is a name almost longer than the plant is tall. It is classified as rare, and information is limited. It is found in a small area north and east of Perth, and is associated with shallow soils in depressions in the granite outcrops.

My plant is a collection of slender almost vertical stems to about 30cm. These are covered with dark green, somewhat fleshy, needle-like leaves, reminiscent of pine needles, which grow directly from the short branchlets.



The flowers appear on the ends of the stems in small bunches of two or three. The buds are spherical and a deep, bright red. The flowers are pendulous, with the feathery petals which give *Verticordias* their common name of 'Feather-flower'. A group of long greenish stamens hang below the fringe of petals.

My plant has struggled, and cannot be called attractive even by its greatest admirer. Perhaps it is in the wrong spot, and certainly it was not helped by the next door neighbour's soccer ball landing plum in the middle of it last year, or the wandering dog which trampled it just last week. The broken branches have been splinted with bamboo skewers from Penny's kitchen drawer and some electrical tape. Time will tell.

## VEGETATION ALONG THE BELLARINE RAIL TRAIL.

By Roger Wileman



The rail trail starts at the South Geelong railway station and continues 35 Km to Queenscliff. The track was originally designed and built for light weight steam trains. These mainly carried troops and supplies to

Queenscliff in case of an attack by the Russians, who were very interested in the enormous amounts of gold being found on the Victorian gold fields. The railway opened in 1879 and closed in 1975. It was still running when we built our house beside the railway in Melaluka Road, Leopold. At that time it would carry shell grit from Lakers Siding. In the 1950s I can remember the train picking up bagged salt at the Cheetham siding at Wilson Road, Newcomb.

The rail trail is bitumen from South Geelong to Drysdale, the gradient is very slight but from Melaluka Road to Bawtree Road it ramps up 40 metres in altitude then an even uphill gradient to Drysdale to 70 metres in altitude, from Drysdale to Lakers Siding it is gravel and slightly down hill, all the way to Portarlington Road, then mostly flat to Queenscliff, where the rail trail finishes at the station.

South Geelong station to Queenscliff station within the rail trail boundary fences is very well vegetated with large sections of indigenous and non-indigenous plants. These have been planted by the friends of the Bellarine

Trail and various other groups over many years, creating a wild life corridor all the way to Queenscliff.

Leaving the South Geelong station the first naturally occurring tree to be seen on the rail trail is *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, (River Red gum) which is east of Whitehorse Road before Clifton Avenue. Between Clifton Avenue and Melaluka Road is the largest population of *E. camaldulensis* along the rail trail.



These trees, in a low lying area, probably germinated after the railway was constructed in 1879.

Between Christies Road and Bawtree Road on the top of the Leopold hill (previously known as Kensington Hill) is an explosion of regrowth *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping sheoak), which has over grown the original line of the railway. From here all the way to Scarborough Station site all the trees have been planted, which is very impressive. Past Scarborough station site the soil becomes very sandy.

On a small ridge on the right, the first *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia) are to be seen. Although not really big, ancient plants they are, in my mind, an original population.



Just before Jetty Road, in another low lying area, are

a few more large *E. camaldulensis*. Past Drysdale, on a sandy ridge before Swan Bay Road, there is a beautiful avenue of *Allocasuarina verticillata*, some really ancient *Bursaria spinosa*, (Blackthorn) and a small population of *Eucalyptus ovata* (Swamp Gum) and *E.viminalis* (Manna Gum). At Swan Bay Road, on the left, is a small population of *Drosera whittakeri* (Scented Sundew). Over Swan Bay Road is a population of some really ancient Banksia marginata, which are found all the way to Banks Road. Before Suma Park, on another ridge, is another population of *Allocasuarina verticillata*.



The last stop is beside Stevens Street, Queenscliff. Here, an original population of *Melaleuca lanceolata* (Moonah) are near the site where they dug for Benito's treasure. There are many small species occurring along the rail trail that I have not mentioned, most of them in very small and localized areas.

#### **MARIANTHUS PARALIUS** by Bruce McGinness

I purchased this plant from Philip Vaughan, and it has turned to be an attractive plant in a pot all year round. The flowers are set-off beautifully against the glossy ovate leaves and are held well clear of the foliage.



Philip Vaughan had it growing in his very open garden beds at his Pomonal nursery gardens and it was

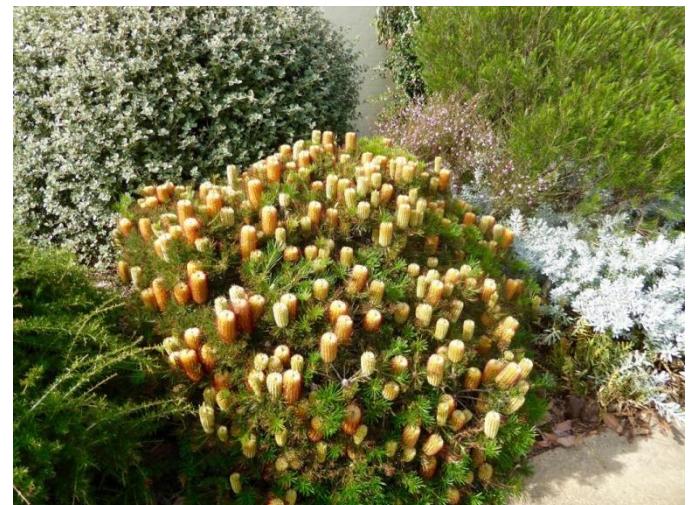
performing well there. I have it growing in semi-shade in the pot mainly to give it some protection from drying out in summer. As you can see from the pictures it is growing and flowering well. Maybe more flowers would be produced in a sunnier position. I am considering trying to grow it in a hanging basket, as its growth habit would suit a hanging basket well. I have not seen this plant being offered for sale or growing in other gardens other than Philip's.



According to the Western Australian Flora Base it is on the Threatened Flora List, declared rare—Extant. I think this means that it is rare, but still in existence. It grows in the Swan Coastal Plains near Perth, in white sand over limestone, on low coastal cliffs. It flowers from September to November. With this in mind it could be a good plant for members with alkaline soil near the coast. Also, with a bit of extra care it will produce flowers out of season.

#### **WHAT'S FLOWERING NOW?**

One of the great contributions this month came from Annette Packett. Annette lives in Torquay, and her *Banksia spinulosa* varieties are having a bumper season.



***Banksia 'Stumpy Gold'***

Annette says 'The plentiful rain we have had has been beneficial to them, and they are blooming better than they have for a very long time'.



**Banksia 'Stumpy Gold'**

'Most of these Banksias are getting to be around twenty years old and they continue to flourish'.



**Banksia 'Coastal Cushion' with 'Birthday Candles'**

'Not much else flowering in my garden at the moment, but these plants are giving much joy to the Yellow Winged Honey Eaters (*New Holland Honeyeaters*) that are plentiful in our garden'.



**Banksia 'Birthday Candles'**

Joy Sutton has also contributed some plants in flower from her garden this month. Joy says "And now here are a few contributions to our virtual plant table from around my garden.

Grevillea sp. – (*Ed. G. 'Superb'?*) This is a mature plant some 20 to 30 years old possibly older – and I have no idea whether it is species or cultivar. It has flowers on it most of the year.



A second grevillea is much younger – at 5 years old it is now starting to bush up and gain some stature after a sad start due first to rabbit attack and then caterpillar attack. This one is Grevillea 'Winpara Gold'.



My *Regelia* is just starting to flower again. I am not sure exactly which species but I think it is *R. megacephala*. Another old plant it has grown to about 1.5 m in height and near 3 m spread. Initially I thought it might be *R. ciliata* but other photos I have seen of regelias led me toward *R. megacephala*. Maybe another member could set me right here.



**Joy's Regelia megacephala ?**

#### **SOMETHING IN THE CRACKS      by Bruce McGinness**

A number of years ago a Ficus seedling started to grow in the cracks of a raised retaining wall in my garden. I presume seed was brought in by visiting birds or bats when feeding on the apple tree. It would be at least eight years old. I decided to keep it and try to bonsai a tree that normally grows up to 20 metres.



**Growing in the cracks**

If nothing else, it has been an interesting experiment in restricting a very vigorous tree to 50cm high. It is starting to develop a thick trunk and is pushing the concrete blocks apart, which doesn't worry me at all in my ramshackle garden. Regular pruning is required to keep it to the size I want but I think it is worth the effort.

I think it is a *Ficus microphylla* because of the smaller leaves. A *Ficus macrocarpa* also sprang up in the garden and was instantly recognizable by its large leaves.



It goes well with the bonsai gingko which I grew from seed collected from the front of the geology building at The University of Melbourne thirty years ago. You may also note my gardening friend Barry the brick in the picture, he has kept me company during the isolation and laughs at all my jokes. I found him lying in the long grass at Latrobe University and he sat on my desk at the University until I was told to leave and take Barry with me.

It is important to have fun in the garden and try out things that may seem ridiculous at the start but turn out to be a very pleasing addition to the garden. That is my philosophy anyhow.