



# Correa Mail

Newsletter No 394 - October, 2023

## SEPTEMBER MEETING - Plants of the Little Desert

Our speakers were Graham and Maree Goods and their topic was Little Desert – The Weird and Wonderful. They urged everyone to visit the desert, but warned that three days at least are needed and a competent 4WD is a necessity.



Graham and Maree have explored the desert for many years and have an intimate knowledge of the flora and fauna and where it can be found. As such they are often asked by scientists to assist with finding particular plants, moths, birds and the like.



Moth hunting with Melbourne Museum Scientists

There are many plants that provide food for animals, birds and humans alike. The dodders *Cassytha melantha* and *C. pubescens* produce tiny fruit, and though they are good to eat, too many of them will give you diarrhoea. The Bitter Quandong, *Santalum murrayanum*, lives up to its name, and is very attractive when in fruit. The Broom Ballart, *Exocarpus sparteus*, also provides masses of fruit, they are tiny and you would need a lot to satisfy your hunger.



Broom Ballart, *Exocarpus sparteus*

Reptiles are common in the area and We were treated to some wonderful photos of the many that Graham and Maree have encountered. Perhaps the most beautiful, and, in keeping with the topic, the weirdest is the Common Scalyfoot - *Pygopus lepidopodus*, a beautifully marked, legless skink.



Common Scalyfoot - *Pygopus lepidopodus*

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Graham has a particular interest in the birds of the desert and his photos were wonderful. With many habitat types within the three blocks comprising the Little Desert, the variety of birdlife is quite staggering. One photo in particular caught my attention, the very aptly named Shy Heathwren, and difficult bird to see and photograph.



**Shy Heathwren - *Hylacola cauta***

Mammals, too, are plentiful in the desert. Feral goats are a problem in the western block, but kangaroos and wallabies are found throughout. Graham was lucky enough to find a Western Pygmy Possum hiding in some firewood and was able to return it from whence it came.



**Western Pygmy Possum - *Cercartetus concinnus***

Graham and Maree have published a book – The Birds and Plants of Little desert, A Photographic Guide, with co-author Ian Morgan. While the book was being prepared they assisted the National Herbarium to find a number of rare plants once found in the area. *Levenhookia pusilla* - Midget Stylewort is a tiny herb that grows no more than 2 cm high. *Darwinia micropetala* - Small Darwinia, was found at just one site where once there were several. *Boronia pilosa* subsp. *parvidaemonis* - Desert Boronia was thought to be very

rare, but it flowers profusely after fires and then dies away until the next blaze. *Cyanothamnus coeruleus* Blue Boronia is another rare plant which they were able to locate and catalogue for the herbarium.



**Desert Boronia flowering after a fire**

The Golden Sour-bush, *Choretrum chysanthum*, is an uncommon plant that Graham and Maree had never seen in flower. It flowers at Christmas and they are usually busy with family at that time. They received a phone call from the herbarium asking about an Acacia that was reportedly found in the Little Desert, *Acacia* sp. 'Gerang Gerung'. Photos were sent through and Maree recognised it and was able to take a student to the precise location. Although the plant had been grown in the Wail arboretum and was used in roadside plantings, no-one knew where its natural range was, until now. And so, it was named *Acacia cineramis*, and was published in *Muelleria* the following February.



***Acacia cineramis* in situ. Little Desert.**

Graham and Maree's presentation was a visual delight and their easy manner and sense of humour made for a great evening. If you don't have a copy of their book, I urge you to get hold of one. It makes a wonderful addition to any library.



*I was not feeling 100% so left the meeting early. Thank you to those kind folk who have written a piece about the plants they brought along for the plant table.*

**Matt Baars** ... I brought in three *Darwinias* which were grafted by Doug Mackenzie. I planted them about fifteen years ago and they have done very well in the clay soil. I have watered them regularly this year and have been rewarded with great displays of flowers. 'Coolamon Pink' is a seedling from Doug's garden and is better form of *D. leiostyla*. My plant is 1.5 x 1.5m. *D. macrostegia* is also 1.5 x 1.5m and is particularly good this year.



The third plant is a hybrid, with possibly *D. meeboldi* as a parent. It is 1m x 1m and has always flowered well. Also on the table was the Double Bendigo Wax Flower - *Philotheca verrucosa*. This plant has been growing in a pot for over 20 years. It has only been potted up once in that time. My plant is prostrate and 70 cm wide and flowers well every year.

**Bruce McGinniss** ... I brought a sample of *Melealeuca megacephala* into the September meeting. It was a plant commonly grown in the early days of Australian plant gardening but has been pushed aside by the more ostentatious plants available now. I think it is still a plant worth growing and has proved to be a hardy shrub in my nature strip and seems to grow with minimal care. To keep a compact shape, it should be pruned after flowering otherwise it would become spindly and unattractive.



In Ivan Holliday's book of *melaleucas*, he states the distribution as Geraldton to Murchison River area in Western Australia mainly in sandy soils with a height of 1-3 metres. With pruning after flowering, I think it is best kept at one metre or less.

**Matt Leach** .... My plant is *Asterolasia asteriscophora* commonly known as lemon star bush which is a slender bush without regular pruning to 1 to 2 metres tall.





It is endemic to southern Australia along the Great Dividing Range from the Tumut district of New South Wales to Macedon and Emerald in Victoria. The leaves are egg-shaped and variable in size ... 5-20mm long and 4-10mm wide. They are green with whitish hairs on the underside. The flowers are arranged singly or in small groups, yellow in colour, and 5-12mm in size.

My two plants are grown in raised beds in semi shade with drip irrigation which is needed in dry times as these plants are usually the first to show signs of water stress. The flowers are good insect attractors and are good also as a cut flower.

**Chris Walker-Cook** ... My plants is *Eremophila hygrophana* graft chimaera. It is a fast-growing shrub having reached 2m x 1m, after just 18 months. Reportedly, it was first grafted by a keen gardener in Drysdale, on *Myoporum insulare* rootstock. The leaves sometimes revert to the green *Myoporum* form but are easily cut out. Lilac flowers are produced in short axils along stem. It regularly attracts the Fungus-eating Ladybird - *Illeis galbula*.



**Carmel Addlem** ... *Melaleuca diosmifolia*, Green honey myrtle, is a compact shrub from the south west corner of Western Australia. It has beautiful green bottlebrush flowers and the stamens tipped yellow. It can grow up to 3 metres. My plants are about 1 metre and this is the first year that it has flowered. They were given to me by

Bruce as tiny little seedlings so I'm very pleased to see that they are doing well in my clayey soils.



**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. 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) is 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.

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. Definitely recommended if you have the room.

#### SEPTEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup> EXCURSION – Inverleigh Gardens

A very few APS Geelong members joined with members of the Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens for a lovely sunny afternoon visiting two gardens in Inverleigh. Matt and Nicole Leach were our guides through the Leach garden and neighbours, Stuart and Robyn Kerdel, very generously showed us their rather eclectic garden.

Separated from Leach's by an empty block (a handy car-park on the day,) it is a wonderland of native and exotic plants, ponds and vegie gardens, and Stuart's unusual metal sculptures made with 'found' objects.



Paths meandered through the garden and there were some wonderful plants in flower ... a credit to Robyn's tenacity.



A very pleasant hour was spent discussing the various plants, wrestling with identifications and marvelling at the great variety on display.



By now the guests had dispersed somewhat. Some had moved to Leach's garden and some remained to wander Kerdel's for a while longer.



Matt was much in demand, helping with identification and growing tips of the many plants on the block. Those who know Matt know of his interest in Banksias, and there was a great deal of interest in the collection.



But Banksias aren't the only thing of interest in the Leach garden. Many Eucalypts, Hakeas and others kept our interest and there was much discussion and photo taking until Matt's mum called us in for afternoon tea.



There was a general feeling that we could have spent many more hours wandering the gardens, chatting with Matt, discussing plant identification and suitability for the soil in our part of the world. We wholeheartedly thank Matt and Nicole, Matt's mum and Dad, Victor and Moira and neighbours Stuart and Robyn for the generosity in sharing their gardens and their knowledge with us. Thanks also to the Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens for allowing us to tag along on their excursion.



**Waiting for the chance to strip the garden.**

#### **OCTOBER 8th – OPEN DAY GEELONG BOTANIC GARDENS**

We've been invited to take part in the Geelong Botanic Gardens Open Day on October 8<sup>th</sup>. GBG is expecting a crowd of 500+ visitors and is planning on showcasing their beautiful garden space, complete with live music, entertainment for families and community-based garden groups.

We will have a flower table similar to the one at our plant sale, and be chatting to folks about using native plants in the garden. And, we'll be on the lookout for new members. If you have an hour or so to spare, please

come and help out. If you could deliver your flowers to the gardens by 9:15 am so we have time to set up before the event opens at 10.00 am., that would be amazing. Please come along and support APS Geelong and the GBG. It should be a fun day.

#### **2023 MEETINGS and OUTINGS**

<b>Sept 23</b>	APS Victoria AGM
<b>Oct 8</b>	Open Day Geelong Botanic Gardens
<b>Oct 17</b>	Jason Caruso – Eucs for the garden
<b>Nov meeting</b>	Miriam Ford – Prostanthera etc.
<b>Dec 10</b>	Xmas break-up BBQ
<b>January 2024</b>	High Country campout

#### **WE HAVE A NEW TREASURER !!**

Penny Foster has offered to take on the role of Treasurer for APS Geelong. We accepted gladly and she was co-opted onto the committee at our recent committee meeting. Penny has over 35 years' experience as book-keeper and office manager for a large vet practice in Geelong and will be sure to keep our finances well in hand. Thanks, Penny, for taking on the task. Thanks also to Bruce and Sheila who took on the role temporarily, when no-one else was willing.

#### **AN UNUSUAL LOCAL PLANT – by Chris Walker-Cook**

Recently, I went to the Bellarine Landcare Nursery in Drysdale to buy a few more plants. One plant which grabbed my attention was labelled *Plectranthus parviflorus* (Little Spur Flower).

I am not familiar with this genus, and I certainly have not known it to be indigenous to the Geelong area. I was very curious to find out more. It comes from the *Lamiaceae* Family and produces blue flowers in late Spring and over Summer.

Wanting to find out more, I looked it up in VicFlora. I found that *Plectranthus parviflorus* is now *Coleus australis*.

For those of us who like to know the botanical details, the key in VicFlora makes the following distinction:

*Plectranthus* sp.: "Calyx with pedicel attached centrally to the base of the calyx tube, corolla lobes more or less equal in length". *Coleus* sp.: "Calyx with pedicel attached eccentrically to the base of the calyx



tube, opposite the posterior lip; corolla with upper lip distinctively shorter than lower”.



*Coleus australis* is a non-aromatic shrub which grows to a height of up to 70cm in East Gippsland and also in NSW, Qld and Polynesia. A small disjunct population can be found on the basalt cliffs around Buckley Falls.

To make matters even more curious, Vicflora has tentatively identified another *Coleus* species, growing a little upstream from the Falls as *Coleus graveolens*. *C. graveolens* grows up to 70 cm. in East Gippsland, and also in NSW, Qld. But the ones near Buckley Falls differ in being semi-succulent and aromatic. According to the VicFlora entry, it may be a completely different species. So, it looks like the plant I have could belong to one of 3 possible *Coleus* species.

One thing for sure: at least I now know the plant is indigenous to Geelong.

#### THE BENEFITS OF EXTRA WATER by Matt Baars

We all know that native plants don't need as much water to grow as most exotic plants. This is not true of natives that come from high rainfall areas. Plants that come from drier areas take advantage of rainfall to

flower and produce fruit. Most plants are seasonal flowerers and others flower while there is adequate moisture available. This is case with some of my grevilleas. I saw this happen in my garden this year.

I have over the years installed watering systems in my garden front and back, there are 6 separate systems (garden beds) in the back and 2 at the front. They are controlled by 2 simple timer computers and distributors, all connected to one tap at the front and one at the back. The reason there are multiple systems is because the standard plumbing to the house delivers only so many litres of water per minute. This means I can only put a certain number drippers or sprayers per system to match the tap output. All this hardware is readily available at local hardware outlets.

The reason I set this up was so that garden would be watered while we were on holidays. This year I decided due to it being drier and milder than normal, to leave the system on for most of the year. The computers allow for different watering times and watering duration, so I set the watering to be every 3 days for a duration of 20 to 30 minutes for each system. The results have been great. Most of the plants have thrived. The garden is greener, bushier and the flowers abundant for a longer duration, some haven't stopped flowering. Native plants will survive with less water but they certainly take advantage of any extra moisture.

But, there are unwanted results. The weeds have taken advantage as well and there will be a lot of weeding and pruning to be done.

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER FORUM

At the suggestion of Chris Walker-Cook, we are introducing a new segment to our newsletter .. a Q and A forum. The idea is for members to pose a question about a plant they have or have seen in the wild, or maybe propagating tips or identification of a mis-labelled plant. Anything at all, really.

The question will appear here and we invite you to provide an answer if you know it, or maybe research and come up with a solution. The possibilities are endless.

Chris found this plant, on Boundary Track at Anglesea, which he believes to be *Hibbertia sericea*, and poses a few questions ...

Is this a white form of *Hibbertia sericea*? Has anyone come across a white form previously? What are the possible explanations for the aberrant colour? How common would it be?



So now, it's up to you. What do you think? And please, send in your questions and answers.

**PROPOSED MT HOTHAM TRIP    by Bruce McGinniss**  
**Friday 19th January - Monday 22nd January 2024**



Your committee is planning a trip to Mt Hotham to coincide with the peak of flowering in the alps. Members will be subsidised for 50% of the accommodation costs at a ski lodge that hasn't been decided yet so the exact cost cannot be given in this newsletter. The final cost per person will depend on the number of members attending as we intend to book-out the entire lodge.



Preliminary investigations with 16 members attending would cost approximately \$200 for the three nights' accommodation per person after the 50% subsidy. Could members please contact the secretary as soon as possible if they are interested so that I can make some informed decisions for booking a lodge. Also give notice if you are comfortable sharing a room with other members, I will presume members traveling with partners will be sharing a room.



The lodges come with communal style kitchen and, for example, the Arrabri Lodge I am investigating has 6 rooms, each with ensuite bathroom, which can accommodate between 4 and 8 guests. So please get in early and help me plan. I can promise you beautiful scenery and lots of wildflowers. I stayed at Mt Hotham in January 2022 and there are plenty of easy walks to showcase the flora and scenery. We will not be organising bus transport, and I would recommend members arrange carpooling amongst themselves.

