Australian Plants Society
Grampians Group Newsletter

Gari-Word

December 2022

NEXT MEETING
Christmas Breakup at Fiona & John Lucas's.
When: Tuesday 13th December from 5pm

Address: 788 Moyston-Dunkeld Rd, Moyston

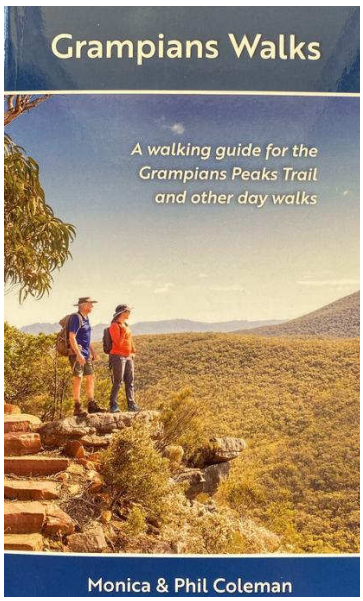
Bring: Food, drink, plates, cutlery & glasses and something to sit on. Coins for the raffle.

Especially considering COVID wave, best to stay away if feeling at all unwell.
Hope to see you there.

I've got my Christmas decorations up!

November Meeting Report

Monica & Phil Coleman are the authors of the excellent book 'Grampians Walks'.
They gave a brief history of their association with the Grampians, from being rock-climbers back in the 70's to running a touring company for 20 years, to settling down outside Halls Gap 15 years ago. During the COVID lockdowns they decided to walk every path Gariwerd had to offer, with their book the result.



They gave an overview of the book's layout, including how to determine walks suitable for one and all, also mentioning that many walks can be joined at different points, avoiding more testing sections if this is desired. They also gave a potted history of the GPT (Grampians Peaks Trail), the 13-day hike from Mt Zero to Dunkeld. They gave insights into how the track was constructed (manually .. old-school splitting of rocks with sledge hammers and then winching them into place), and snapshots of overnight camping facilities.

Quite a few members took the opportunity to secure their own signed copy on the night.

A good presentation by two who knew their subject.

Monica & Phil expressed a desire to join our group and have since become our newest members, taking our individual count to 72. A warm welcome Monica & Phil!
John King

Fiona suggested we include this excerpt from 'Grow Native' by Bill Molyneux. It is a beautifully written account of a walk from Mafeking up onto the Major Mitchell Plateau, describing the plants encountered on the way. The book was published in 1980, so many plant names have since changed.

The Grampians: Where Rare is Common

The Grampians, in the western district of Victoria, hold on their ancient slopes approximately one-third of the indigenous flora of Victoria. A large number of these are available in nurseries. A weekend spent there in late spring gave me the opportunity to revisit some familiar country, and to renew my acquaintance with these plants.

The Major Mitchell Plateau, which is a sub-alpine area, was the objective for a walk on the Saturday. It is an all-day trip, commencing from the site of the old timber hut at Mafeking, on the eastern side of the range. The climb is steady, rising quickly up through rapidly changing plant communities. The light climber, *Marianthus bignoniaceus,* festooned the lower branches of acacias and leptospermums near the first creek crossing. This is an ideal plant for use in covering posts or narrow sections of wall as it does not grow rampant like many other climbers. The dumpy bell flowers are orange and yellow, and attract attention, their bright colours contrasting with the deep shade in which they usually grow.

The first flowers were appearing on *Prostanthera lasianthos,* known in both Victoria and Tasmania as Christmas bush. It is one of the larger species of mint bush, often growing to four metres, with spotty-throated white to mauve flowers obscuring the foliage and carpeting the ground when spent.

As we began the steady climb from the creek, I noticed that the dense growth was gradually replaced with woodland and heathland communities. *Epacris impressa,* which had finished blooming down by the creek, was at its peak at higher elevations. Here too was encountered *Bossiaea rosmarinifolia,* a plant which is endemic to the Grampians. The familiar orange and yellow pea flowers contrast with the sombre foliage of this shrub which grows to one and a half metres. Dense clumps, shin-high, of *Tetratheca ciliata* boasted a profusion of pink pendulous open flowers. It was matched in size by *Helichrysum baxteri* with its fine silver-grey foliage and white and yellow 'poached eggs' daisy flowers which contrasted with many of the surrounding plants.

Taking a short cut over a ridge, we came upon thousands of Bogong moths silently fluttering through vast patches of *Epacris impressa* on which they feed.

On the western slope of this ridge is one of those sub-alpine phenomena known as a meadow. These are open areas of various sizes often with only a scattering of eucalypt species and low tufted grass and herbs. The particular species on this meadow which is named Sheepfold Clearing, was *Eucalyptus nitida,* a small twisted clear-trunked tree growing in this habitat to nearly seven metres. Older trees in sheltered, moister positions were ten metres high.

A turn to the north to move up a steep ridge is made at this point, and suddenly we were among *Eucalyptus pauciflora*. This is the common tree above the snow-line throughout true alpine areas. It is also found as far afield as the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria and near the coast at the Victorian-South Australian border. Even though variable in size and habit, and in its fruit, it is easily recognised by the large pendulous leaves with longitudinal veins.

After a quick climb through a steep sandstone outcrop we paused for a rest and admired the panoramic view to the south, which took in the Serra Range down to Mount Abrupt at the southern extremity above Dunkeld.

Shortly afterwards we came across a plant oddity; odd, that is, in where it was growing. Normally *Banksia integrifolia,* known as the coastal banksia, is widespread on coastal dunes from the Glenelg River, South Australia, right around the southern and eastern coast to Queensland. However, its adapting to the higher colder outcrops here is obviously successful.

One of the rare plants of the Grampians, *Pultenaea subalpina,* was found on a narrow saddle to the Plateau. Usually growing to around one and a half metres, it is the only member of this far-ranging genus with pink flowers. Unfortunately it had not realised the full beauty of its flowering at this time. I had seen it once before and the sight of it in full flower dropping off the edge of the saddle was a memory I had wished to recapture. It is confined to a few such areas, and its isolation may be one of the reasons for not gaining the horticultural popularity it should have.

Once on the Major Mitchell Plateau, an extensive view to the north, east and west is obtained over the dense, low plant covering of this sloping mountain top. Looking in a north-easterly direction, with the Plateau sloping from right to left down to the Wannon River Valley, Mount William stands out as the highest peak in the Grampians.

A number of plants, such as *Boronia latipinna,* grow only in

isolated areas of this region. This rare shrub grows on the edges of small outcrops where some shade and moisture are present. Flower colour is a delicate pink, so common to this genus. The leaves are pinnate with broad segments, the feature used to select its botanical name. Where competition was strong, some shrubs were over two metres tall.

Boronia pilosa grows in similar areas and even though it too has pinnate leaves, these are fine and softly hairy. In more open positions we observed it as a small wiry almost prostrate plant, whereas with protection it was growing to over one metre high, with a light open habit. While this species has proven itself in cultivation, even in ideal conditions of moist open soil, *Boronia latipinna* is a wildflower yet to be widely tamed.

Much of the Plateau is wet for extended periods, and particular plants colonise these zones more prolifically than they do in drier areas. *Melaleuca squamea* seems constantly to have its roots in water occupying margins of creeks or wet basins. On the Plateau it is only a small shrub around thirty to forty centimetres. The spring-flowering blooms are mauve and plentiful, and the foliage is crowded and grey. In cultivation it proves useful grouped with *Melaleuca squarrosa* and *Melaleuca decussata* in constantly wet areas such as are found at the outlet of septic tanks.

Bauera sessiliflora, which in lower creek-side positions is a plant forming dense communities, here on the margins of the wet areas is rather more compact. The six-petalled magenta flowers are spaced with the small foliage along wiry stems. Though tolerant of an open garden position, it is more effectively used in moist, shaded areas adjacent to ferns. Due to its dense habit it can be used, with hard cutting back, as a low hedge, being easily controlled to one metre.

Many plants with reed or rush foliage inhabit wet areas. One of the boldest here was *Patersonia occidentalis*. The common names of native iris or flag are applied to this group, an allusion to the large purple flowers which appear in spring and summer. These are held on rigid stalks above the strap-like foliage which attains forty centimetres. This and other species of its genus are ideally used in a landscape in conjunction with *Orthrosanthus multiflorus* (a Western Australian member of the Iridaceae family), species of *Ranunculus, Pratia pedunculata* and *Cotula filicula,* all small suckering or matting plants for moist positions. A rare plant in lowland creeks but common on limited elevated areas is the endemic *Grevillea confertifolia*. It too is tolerant of extended moisture, but seems to seek out and show to advantage where it has a low slab of sandstone

to display itself upon. The stems with compact needle leaves radiate out, hugging every undulation of the rock, almost as if they are an integral part of the rock itself. At the ends of the branches are arrayed, as if at the extremities of an opened fan, the squat deep pink racemes of flowers. By gently lifting the carpet-like plant, the densely felted undersides of the leaves are clearly seen, as well as the world in miniature which exists under the protection of the plant. Under a rock near to a particular plant I was studying, I found one of the unusual crustaceans (shrimp-like animals) which are occasionally found in such an odd location far from sea or stream.

Another plant often found in high regions is *Celmisia asteliifolia,* which belongs to the daisy (Asteraceae) family. The flowers on stalks above the silvery lanceolate foliage are large and white with a yellow centre. The contrast of the foliage suggests this plant could be an attractive container plant, either on its own or with such a foil as *Scleranthus biflorus*. One that I have in a half-barrel has suckered prolifically.

A popular, hardy small shrub already widely used in gardens is *Kunzea parvifolia*. This belongs to a variable genus of plants where the extremes in appearance of say, *Kunzea parvifolia* and *Kunzea baxteri* from Western Australia, hardly seem to relate them. *Kunzea parvifolia* tends not to be obvious, due to its small foliage, until a blaze of pink pom-poms appears in spring. The dwarf form, which grows less than twenty centimetres high, has proven more popular for landscapes, but drifts of the taller form, to around one and a half metres, provide a softening foil to ferns when associated in the better-drained parts of partially shadier areas.

Another plant which is found nowhere outside the Grampians is *Eucalyptus alpina*. It grows in high elevations in rocky well-drained locations, where its gnarled stringy-barked trunk and large, thick leaves dwarf most other foliage on the Plateau. A profusion of white flowers appear when the unusually warted operculums are pushed aside. It is not well known as a cultivated plant, but is regarded highly by those who do know it as a useful small landscape tree with an attraction for honey-eating birds.

The Grampians, due to their antiquity, have cradled and evolved plants for perhaps a hundred million years. Thus it is no surprise that today's visitors should discover such floral diversity even from one ridge to the next. Many species, some only recently discovered, occupy no more than a few hectares in isolated areas. Involvement in discovering these delights is a fulfilling experience.

Summer Flowering Hakeas by Neil Marriott

In the last newsletter I wrote about our wonderful Australian native Hakeas that flower through our cold and wet winter months. Now, with summer rapidly approaching, I will talk about some of the lovely summer flowering Hakeas that are growing in our gardens. The great thing about these, is that they attract large numbers of our beautiful native insects to our gardens. Many of these are attractive, particularly the numerous butterflies, then there are the beetles, native bees, wasps and many more. Most of these are invaluable for either pollinating our plants or protecting our plants from garden pests.

As a general rule of thumb, our Hakeas need a well-drained sunny to dappled shade site in a neutral to acid pH soil. If you think your garden may be a bit wet in the winter months, simply raising the beds either behind sleepers or rocks, or by digging gutters along the edges and throwing up the soil to the middle of the bed to increase its depth.

Many of our Hakeas have rigid, prickly foliage, so avoid planting too close to the edges of your garden beds. This prickly foliage is ideal however for sheltering our small birds from cats and aggressive birds such as our nasty Noisy Miners or Pied Currawongs. Our little wrens and honeyeaters find the shelter so attractive that you may be lucky to find that they will soon adopt your garden as their home, using the Hakeas as nesting sites. Lets look at some of the beautiful Hakeas that flower right through the heat of summer.

Hakea commutata is a small to medium dense shrub with simple prickly leaves and masses of cream to white flowers from spring right into the heat of summer. It is tolerant of winter wet conditions and dry summers. It comes from the dry wheatbelt region of Western Australia, but is hardy under cultivation.

Hakea elliptica Oval-leaf Hakea
This is a fairly common plant in cultivation, as it has again proven to be most hardy in our gardens. It forms a dense, upright shrub to 3m with soft oval or elliptical green leaves and beautiful coppery soft new growth. Flowering is massed white, sweetly perfumed flowers from November to January. These are delightful for filling the garden with this sweet perfume, attracting lots of butterflies and native bees. Hakea elliptica Oval-leaf Hakea comes from the south coast of Western Australia, so is ideal for the cooler parts of Victoria, but still happy in warm dry climates so long as it is well drained.

Hakea florida Summer Snow The name ‘florida’ comes from latin meaning many-flowered, and this is just so true for this beautiful low shrub. The profuse flowers are strongly sweet scented and cover the plant from September to December. In the garden it is an absolute show-stopper, filling the garden with its beautiful perfume, attracting a host of wildlife to the garden. It is an upright to spreading shrub to around 1.5m, requiring a well-drained sunny to semi-shaded site in the garden.

Hakea francisiana Grass-leaved Hakea or Bottlebrush Hakea
One of our most spectacular Hakeas, widespread in inland Western Australia and across to South Australia. It is a tall, erect shrub 3-6m tall with simple linear flat leaves and massed spectacular pale pink to deep pinky-red bottlebrush type flowers for many months from May to December. Its large size means that it can be used as a tall feature plant or showy screen plant. When if full flower it attracts large numbers of honeyeaters, wattlebirds and lorikeets to the garden, making it invaluable for bringing wildlife into your garden. Coming from drier inland areas, it requires a very well drained sunny site, but as a result it is extremely drought tolerant.

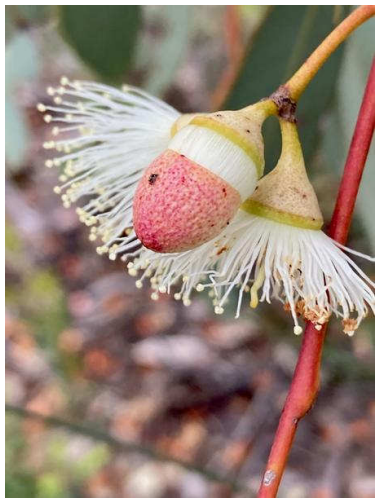
Hakea kippistiana
A large dense shrub to 2m with fine simple leaves and massed white to cream flowers throughout the summer months. These are sweetly scented and attract lots of native bees and butterflies to the garden. Its dense foliage is excellent for sheltering small birds and protecting them from predators. In the West this species grows near winter wet saline swamps, but in cultivation it grows readily in most well-drained sunny sites.

Hakea linearis
An upright shrub to 3m with linear leaves and massed white flowers from December to March.
Coming from the south coast of Western Australia it tolerates cold winter-wet conditions, but is
hardy to warm dry summers. The flowers are strongly perfumed, and can be sweet or sometimes
unpleasantly scented. They are ideal for attracting lots of native insects into the garden, and plants
make excellent screen plants.

Remembering Pauline

It was very sad to hear of the death of Pauline Burke. She and her recently deceased husband Terry have been members since 2007.
Pauline rarely missed a meeting and was always a willing helper at the annual flower shows.
Here is Pauline in her regular post manning the entry desk at the 2013 flower show.

Members' pictures this month are from Maryanne Jess. She has been to WA and Lord Howe island recently. More pictures and info from Maryanne next month.



The newsletter will only continue if it has material to include. If you value the newsletter and enjoy reading it please consider making a contribution.
Contributions in any form, physical or digital are welcome. Items submitted on paper, for example photos, will be scanned and returned. subject matter need not be limited to native plants, but can also include anything you think members may find interesting.
Email: mailto:grampiansnewsletter@apsvic.org.au or by phone: 0438 566 250 or by post to:
Phil Williams P.O. Pomonal 3381
Thanks to everyone for their contributions to this issue.
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/APS-Grampians-Group-960723023989990/

APSVic Grampians Committee Until October 2023

Office Bearers
President: John King
Vice President: Neil Marriott
Secretary: Margot Galletly
Treasurer: Wendy Marriott

Ordinary Members
Ross Simpson
Fiona Lucas
Neil Macumber
Jocelyn King
Lisa Ashdowne