

Golden

Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society
Latrobe Valley Group
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Golden Grevillea - *Grevillea chrysophaea*

October will be a trial 'Zoom' meeting.

Even though there is a glimmer of hope that the lockdown will end soon, October is too soon to plan for a normal 'face to face' meeting. Instead, Mike will send out an invite via email to a Zoom meeting. This will be a trial to see if we can achieve an online meeting for our AGM in November. As well as this, there is an invite to an informal walk in The Res in Traralgon on Friday October 2 starting at lunch time. Distancing and group size rules apply, assess your own risk profile before deciding to attend.

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Hope all are well. I have been in lock down, in Melbourne, for the past 9 weeks. No access to my mail or anything at home. And it looks like a bit more to go. Wattle Day was on 1st of September, what a versatile useful Australian native with over 1000 species of acacia: there must be a plant for every situation. I saw some good news from The Age September 4th 2020, an article by Megan Backhouse.

An experimental project being run by the City of Melbourne and the University of Melbourne is now underway. It is planning to replace woodchips that once blanketed a sloping, River Redgum strewn site in Parkville, with native grassland. A million seeds of 27 indigenous grasses and wildflowers have been sown into six different types of garden bed to ascertain the best way to establish large-scale understory plantings that have the beauty and biodiversity of meadows, the soil-covering benefits of plants in the wild, and the low-maintenance demands of woodchips.

University of Melbourne researcher Katherine Horsfall is envisaging billowing spreads of wallaby grasses, lilies and daisies. There will be billy buttons and pussy tails, kangaroo grass and lemon beauty-heads. "We are aiming for the look of a grassy woodland."

While the Parkville planting is entirely composed of local plants that would once have grown in this area naturally, things have changed since these wild flowers and grasses were free to arrange themselves. The soils have become richer than these plants like, topographies have altered and existing trees compete for moisture. The site, along Gatehouse Street in Royal Park is, in the words of Horsfall "definitely challenging". Adding to the degree of difficulty was the fact that many of the seeds Horsfall wanted to sow were not widely available commercially.

For about eight months, Horsfall ran a seed production operation at the University of Melbourne's Burnley Campus growing wildflowers expressly to harvest sufficient quantities of seed. While it's possible to create a meadow by planting seedlings, sowing seed is not only less expensive but results in a much higher diversity of species. Horsfall says there are between 50 and 130 plants per square metre in high diversity natural systems but she assumed a low germination rate and produced enough seed to sow at an achieved density of 200 to 300 plants per square metre. "With direct seeding there is so much chance involved, you can put all the right things in place but it is up to nature to do its thing" She says.

Before sowing she divided the site into 54, 24-square-metre plots. One third of the plots were covered with 80mm of free-draining, nutrient poor sand, one-third were covered with 10mm of the same sand and the remaining one-third were left as the existing soil.

After the seeds were sown (at the end of April) half the plots in each category were then covered in jute matting, an organic geotextile that aids in weed and erosion control. Irrigation will be the same across the entire site with each plot to receive the equivalent of about three millimetres of water a day for the first 12 months. "We could have more irrigation for more germination but we wanted to start these guys tough," Horsfall says. ►

Horsfall checks on the germinated seeds, which have now formed seedlings just large enough to be identifiable, most weeks.

Every second month, she weeds the site by hand, recording both the time spent on each plot and the dried weight of the weeds removed from each plot. The aim is to monitor progress of the different beds over the course of a year to ascertain which treatment does best. "It would be really nice if we could get more of a recipe for getting that low-nutrient substrate right." Horsfall says it would help pave the way for the creation of more large-scale indigenous meadows on other modified urban sites, something Horsfall says is especially important given that naturally occurring grasslands and grassy eucalypt understory communities of south-eastern Australia have become fragmented and critically endangered.

Maintenance will consist of an annual slashing in April or May and an October cutting for the patches of the warm-season kangaroo grass. To reduce fertility and create gaps for the flowering plants, the cut material will be removed from the site.

Cathy Oke, chair of the City of Melbourne's environment portfolio, hails the Parkville planting as the city's first indigenous wildflower meadow. She says it will provide valuable lessons about the "best and most cost-effective way" to plant indigenous flowers beneath existing trees and thereby increase biodiversity, including of insects and native birds, in the city. We will keep you posted about how it pans out.

Let's hope this project is very successful and other councils adopt this plan for gardens around the country.

Happy gardening, regards Rhonda

2020 Calendar photo spot - October

By Mike Beamish

This *Blandfordia grandiflora* (Christmas Bells) came from Woolenook Native Nursery in Maffra, purchased during our visit there in 2014. It first flowered in February 2015 while still in its nursery pot, which had me worried that it would turn up its toes before I could get it into a bigger tub. My fears were unfounded and it was subsequently potted up into its current 40cm waterwell tub with another *Blandfordia* and a few Chocolate Lilies that



I don't seem to be able to keep alive directly in the ground. Time went by with no apparent growth on either of the Christmas Bell plants, but they didn't die either. Then in January 2019 more buds appeared on the same plant as 4 years previously, but still no movement on its companion. This second flowering produced 6 flowers on the single stalk, in contrast to only 2 flowers in 2015. Why it flowers in February in this part of the world is anybody's guess. Colder, wetter (or wet for longer rather than higher totals) or light duration probably all play a part.

With Covid holding us all in some sort of lockdown, it has been a difficult time to plan our annual general meeting. Even with our AGM extension, time is running out and Mike has been researching our options. A 'Zoom' meeting looks like our best option if we are still unable to have a normal meeting in November. If you are anything like me, the prospect of wrestling with a computer to try and manage an on-line meeting will probably send a cold shiver down your spine. With that said, Mike set up a Zoom meeting between him, myself and another friend of Mike's. After a couple of early minor issues, we settled in a trouble-free meeting for nearly an hour, even experimenting with some of the more outrageous options. With it looking like a 'do-able' option, we have decided to have an October Zoom meeting to try and iron out any bugs before launching into our AGM in November. If you have fears/issues about jumping into this new technology, Mike or myself may be able to guide you through it over the phone if you want to have a practice run before then.

As an October activity, Mike has proposed a 'flash' walk in the Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve on Hickox Street in Traralgon on Friday October 2, starting at lunch time (as per Mike's email). We will be sticking to current group size rules but everyone should assess their own risk profile and decide accordingly.

On the home front, life has continued much as it has for the last several months with pretty much just the plants in bloom changing. My Boronias are full-on at the moment, filling that corner of the garden with scent on still mornings and masses of colour every day. There is an interesting variation in my *Boronia heterophylla* 'Pink' this year. Most of it is in its usual pale pink but there is a branch on which the flowers are a bright lipstick pink. I believe this to be what is known as a 'sport' or *lusus*; a genetic variation in that section of the plant. Interestingly, the colour seems similar to *Boronia heterophylla* 'Lipstick', a plant I have never had any success keeping alive in my garden. The photos below show the two colours on the one plant. I have taken cuttings of the 'sport' bright pink to see if I can establish it as a plant on its own. I have also taken cuttings of all my other Boronias as the area they are

planted in is more exposed to the sun now that most of the gum tree sheltering it has succumbed to old age. I may have to find another area to use as a Boronia garden.

And another big 'THANKYOU' to all the article contributors for this month's edition of the newsletter. Feedback I am getting says it is very much appreciated by members in lockdown.



Species: *Hibiscus geranioides*.

Family: Malvaceae.

Derivation:

Hibiscus: From Greek, *hibiscos*, the marshmallow, *Althaea officinalis*.

geranioides: Referring to the genus *Geranium*, with the suffix *-oides*, meaning 'like', thus like a *Geranium*, perhaps referring to the leaves.

Name: None.



Distribution: Widely distributed across northern Australia, in a variety of situations and habitats.

Description: An annual or biennial herb with erect stems to 60cm tall and 50cm wide, sparsely branched and covered with rigid stellate hairs and bristles. Leaves are dark green, up to 4cm long and 3cm across, deeply divided into 3-5 lobes with stiff hairs on both surfaces and toothed or lobed margins. Flowers occur in spring and summer, are up to 3cm across, are pink and solitary in the upper leaf axils, and have a deeply divided, hairy, 1cm long calyx, followed by 1cm long globose capsule containing a few hairless seeds. ►





Opinion: My original specimen came as a gift for giving a presentation to the APS SE Melbourne Group a couple of years ago and is still alive, though not looking as healthy as it did in its first year. This is probably why it is considered an annual, or biennial at best. I planted mine in a waterwell tub (about 45cm), which sits on the pathway along the western side of the house, where it gets a good amount

of sunlight. I used a tub because I didn't expect a sub-tropical plant to enjoy being in the ground in Boolarra, but it seems to cope with the cooler climate ok and even tolerates the mild frosts it is exposed to within the protection of the garden – it's usually a couple of degrees warmer than outside the fence on a frosty morning. It is about the dimensions given in the description above and flowered very well in its first year and I was able to collect quite a few capsules and extract some seed. Flowering in its second year was much sparser, whether due to age or the cooler, wetter summer, I do not know. It remains to be seen if the plant survives the winter and makes it into a third flowering season. I sowed some of the collected seeds at the end of summer 2019 and more during the summer of 2020 and had a mixed result. A few germinated in 2019, but only one survived potting up and it is now about 20cm tall, looking lush and healthy. A few more germinated this year and it remains to be seen if they survive the winter and/or potting up. I'm pleased though that some seeds did germinate, to prove there is some viability and that they will cope in a cooler climate than their natural habitat.

Sources:

Sharr – WA Plant Names and their Meanings.

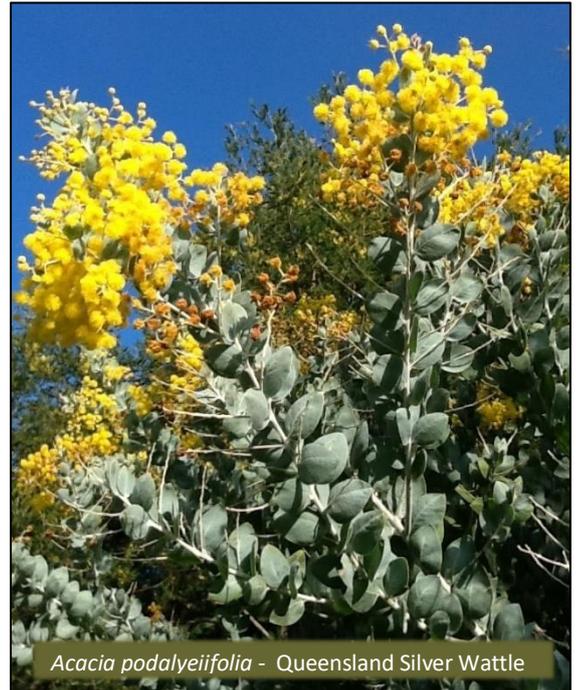
Elliot & Jones – Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, Volume 5.



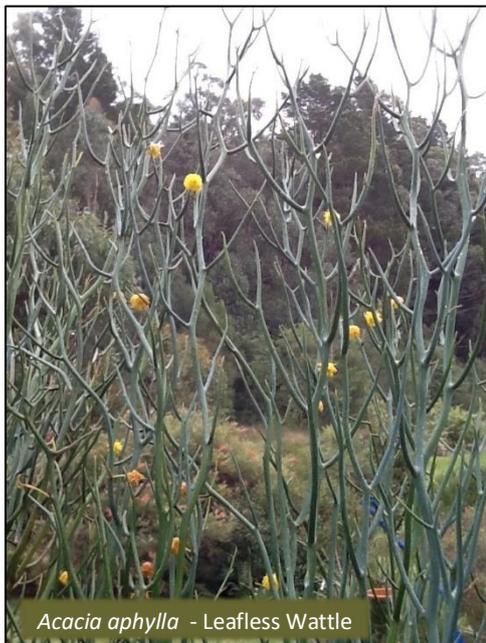
Wattle we name them?

By Daryl Radnell

I have recently developed a new appreciation for binomial botanical names for plants. While out doing my daily walk (with mask) I was struck by the number of wattles (Acacias) either in bloom, or about to be in bloom, along the roadside. I took cuttings from most of them with the intention of identifying and naming them. On trawling through reference books and the internet I discovered that there are some 1350 species of Acacia found throughout the world and close to 1000 of these are to be found in Australia. Taxonomic research has indicated that this genus as we know it, cannot be maintained as a single entity and Acacia should be



Acacia podalyeifolia - Queensland Silver Wattle



Acacia aphylla - Leafless Wattle

divided into at least five genera. As if identification isn't hard enough. The

vast majority of Acacia occur in Australia. Of these, about 955 belong to the sub genus Phyllodineae, and make up our familiar wattles. Unfortunately, the Type species for Acacia internationally accepted is *A. scorpiodes* syn. *nilotica* which is one of the thorn trees, a group of 161 species distributed across Africa, Asia, the Americas and northern Australia (7 species). That meant almost all of the Australian species would have the generic name *Racosperma*, which is the next oldest available name. Thankfully common sense prevailed and the name for the majority of our wattles ruled. When we were in South Africa a couple of

years ago one of our guides enjoyed telling us that Australian Wattles could no longer be called Acacia, the idea of which we thought was a furphy.

One of the roadside Acacias is a local and grows freely at our place so I thought I didn't need to take a piece for identification purposes. I know it by its common name of "Prickly Moses", which apparently is a corruption of "Prickly Mimosa", but on investigation I found that there are at least six wattles with that common name; *Acacia brownie*, *A. farnesiana*, *A. hubbardiana*, *A. pulchella*, *A. ulixifolia*, and *A. verticillata*, the latter two being locally indigenous. ►



Acacia verticillata - Prickly Moses



Acacia boormanii - Snowy River Wattle

And when I looked up black wattle/blackwood I found 16 different plants with that common name, hence my new found understanding for the need to use botanical names, although, this understanding does not stretch to pronunciation or the ability to remember them.

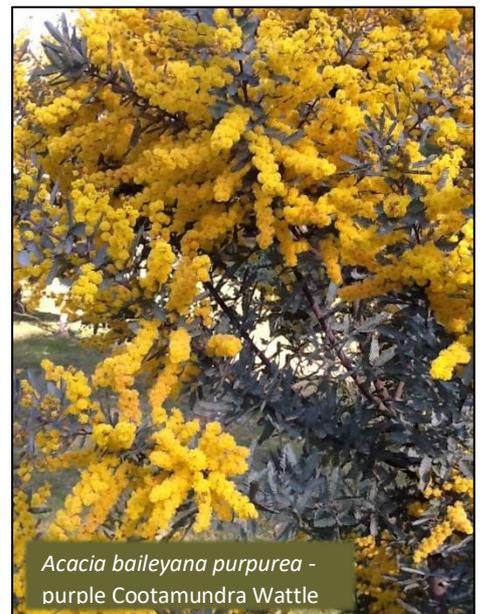
Australia's floral emblem is the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*). The generic name *Acacia* is derived from Greek 'akis', a point, referring to the prickly leaves of some species. The specific name 'pycnantha' is

from the Greek 'pyknos', meaning dense and 'anthos' meaning a flower refers to the dense clusters of flowers. The vernacular name Wattle, commonly used for Australian species of *Acacia*, derives from Anglo Saxon times. Wattles were long flexible twigs used in wattle and daub style of building; a technique that was used by early settlers in Port Jackson (hello Col, ancestors of yours?) [not guilty. Ed.] using an abundant local tree, *Callicoma serratifolia*, commonly and confusingly known as blackwattle, although it is from the family Cunoniaceae. Species of *Acacia* were later used as wattles in Australian construction.

The acacias in our garden are keeping up with the roadside blooms, in fact I suspect that a few of our wattles may be the parent of a some of the free growing ferals. Certainly, there are quite a few garden escapees along the road.

One wattle in particular that we are extremely pleased about is our *Acacia leprosa*, Scarlet Blaze We have four, plants, all self-sown seedlings from our original that died a

year or so ago, and three of these are in bloom. We weren't sure if the blossom would be red or revert to the original *leprosa* colour but as you can see, they are red, much to our delight.



Acacia baileyana purpurea - purple Cootamundra Wattle



Acacia leprosa - Scarlet Blaze

New life in 'The Res'.

By Jill Fidler

The Traralgon Railway Reservoir Conservation Reserve, affectionately known as 'The Res', has been my haven this winter; no doubt many Latrobe Valley people have felt the same. The Res has outdone itself lately with spectacular flowerings of Acacias, Correas and the occasional *Indigofera australis* to name a few. The highlight for me, however, has been following the development of a Black Swan (*Cygnus Atratus*) family. The pair started off with 6 cygnets which sadly became 3 quite early. They have created much interest and have been photographed countless times. Having extra time on my hands, I have whiled away the mild Winter days in this 'Traralgon Treasure' as I'm sure many of you have. If you haven't seen this family yet, there is still time as the cygnets are still pale grey and fluffy.



And new life in the bush.

By Mary Jackson

Spring delights in many ways but on a recent walk with a friend we witnessed a seldom seen sight. As we approached a steep bank, we noticed a female Lyrebird scratching and foraging as if oblivious to our presence. She worked constantly and circled within meters of us as we stood quietly, watching and enjoying her trusting behaviour. Surprisingly, as we continued to observe we noticed a circular opening within a mess of twigs, foliage and debris at eye level up the bank. Perched inside this well camouflaged opening was an alert, well fed Lyrebird chick waiting patiently for food, intently listening and responding softly to the melodic, short sharp calls from mother Lyrebird.

It was just awesome to be totally in this moment with nature; enjoying a truly spectacular, moving and memorable experience. Note in the photo below mother in top left and nest in lower right.



Natives amongst the pines.

By Marilyn Ingram

COVID lockdowns and border closures affect life in strange ways. For me it has involved working in pine plantations with my partner Pete, collecting pine pollen and actually operating a funny new device called an iPad to record data from pine trials.

Recently, for his work, we travelled to the Casterton area. Amongst miles of pine plantation, I discovered a beautiful patch of remnant bush. In the free draining soil were natives in a mass of bloom. Out came the camera and I spent a delightful half hour scrambling around finding new patches of flowers every few metres.

Clumps of *Xanthorrhoea*, white *epacris impressa*, straggling banksias, red *Astragaloma*, purple *Hardenbergia* and varieties of pea flowers and a low acacia were all blooming. And there were many other species budding, just awaiting their time in the sun.



The plant that really amazed me was an *Isopogon*; gamely hanging on in in the midst of the tall pines, together with a Sundew companion plant.

Last week we were at Longford. Again, wattles ablaze, and again it astonished me to find healthy groups of large greenhood orchids in between rows of *Pinus radiata*.

Our native plants are real survivors!!



Ramblings from Moe South.

By Judy Stirrett

Spring is here and there is so much out in flower; even a few native orchids are starting to make an appearance. The *Chiloglottis valida* (Common Bird Orchid) is in flower again and I found a small patch of what I think are Greenhoods (*Pterostylis* sp.). I have not seen these growing here before, so they are a nice surprise.

I also think I have found a *Caladenia* species (*C. alba*, or *C. carnea*?).



In the crop circle *Pomederis lanigera* is a mass of creamy yellow flowers.

Grevillea barklyana was planted amongst a group of Burgan to give it a sheltered environment 2 years ago and it has grown very fast. It started forming buds in July, and is in full flower now. Last year flowering started about July and continued till about March this year. So, it seems to have a long flowering period.



A few years ago, we had a magnificent 8-year-old *Acacia leprosa* 'Scarlet Blaze' growing. Then it just died. Two years ago,

I noticed 3 seedlings pop up near the original plant. Flower buds formed this year, so I had my fingers crossed they would be red. 2 seedlings have now flowered and they are the red of Scarlet Blaze. The 3rd has buds that are still developing, so maybe this one will be the yellow form. Apparently, the red form is normally propagated by cuttings, but the parent had a lot of seeds that did fall to the ground, so I'm thinking these plants are from seeds and are not suckers.



Coming events of interest

Note: Please check the Vic APS website for cancellations before attending.

24 & 25 October 13th FJC Rogers Seminar on Mint Bushes & Allied Genera. Hosted by APS Yarra Yarra in Eltham. Saturday venue Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Road, Eltham. Please check website as this situation could change due to Victorian Covid 19 rules.

12 – 17 September 2021, ANPSA Biennial Conference 2021 – Kiama, New South Wales. The theme 'Australian Flora – Past Present Future'. The Conference will be hosted by the Australian Plants Society (NSW). Preliminary details of the Conference, pre- and post-Conference tours and the beautiful town of Kiama can be found on the APS (NSW) website.

9 October 2021 APS Echuca Moama Native Flower Showcase, Echuca Masonic Lodge Hall, 426 High Street, Echuca. 9.00 am to 4.00 pm. A huge flower display, plant sales, floral art, Native Bonsai, basket weaving and other displays and demonstrations.

Rainfall for 2019 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Wayne	Tanjil South	21	20	51	42	97	72	127	205	152	80	134	155	1156
John	Traralgon South	16	23	21	37	145	54	111	247	112	34	180	29	1007
Diane	Drouin	8.5	37	57	47	125	63	101	200	114	70	159	32	1010
Mike	Boolarra	9	23	51	43	132	67	106	207	118	52	155	42	1002
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	8	38	49	32	120	59	103	176	93	42	151	37	906
Brian	Drouin	6	29	63	51	125	57	101	197	116	65	177	28	1015
Carolyn	Yarragon	10	22	26	42	138	79	103	226	119	60	172	30	1028
Judy	Moe South	12	22	52	43	152	81	127	118	147	56	167	51	1028

Rainfall for 2020 (in mm)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Wayne	Tanjil South	136	108	66	163	134	72	91	107					877
John	Traralgon South	76	55	15	134	105	54							438
Diane	Drouin	121	147	40	170	123	51	64	154					868
Mike	Boolarra	93	126	40	159	121	73	78	115					803
Mary	Jeeralang Junction	86	134	39	152	93	73	97	98					772
Brian	Drouin	124	136	46	163	125	47	53	158					852
Carolyn	Yarragon	105	171	35	138	125	48	55	138					814
Judy	Moe South	99	95	33	159	137	53	55	128					759

Stunning Hakeas

By Jill Fidler

I visited my friend Clarice Montgomery - a 'Gardener Extraordinaire' earlier this year. I met Clarice who moved to Seymour around the same time as Len and I about 15 years ago. We became foundation members of the APS Strathbogie group. She refuses to let her recent 90th birthday stop her spending most waking hours in her garden or looking for orchids in the local flora



reserve and will be doing so when she is 100, I'm sure. She has transformed a suburban block into a truly cosmopolitan space with a happy blending of natives and exotics and a large productive vegetable garden. Not content with that, she continued outside her fences into the railway car park and surrounding footpaths...which brings me to the subject of the photos attached of a spectacular *Hakea bucculenta*, commonly known as 'Red Pokers'. An endemic Western Australian plant growing 3-5m. The flowers which start green and turn a rosy pink are held back in the foliage but are easily seen. This makes them perfect for small birds as they can feel safe when feeding. The plant was labelled *H. bucculenta* but it has been suggested it could be a *Hakea francisiana* (Emu Tree) another of the group of grass leaved Hakeas. Does anyone have any thoughts on this? Feedback welcome!



<https://apsvic.org.au/ap-s-latrobe-valley/>

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Golden Grevillea
Grevillea chrysophaea

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Title page photo: *Grevillea chrysophaea* at Holey Plains State Park by Mike Beamish