Dianella admixta

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY

SOUTH EAST MELBOURNE REGION INC.

A00131128P

PO Box 8835 Armadale 3143

Email: aps.se.melb@gmail.com

Or semelb@apsvic.org.au

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER 2020

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, February to December except November.

The venue is the Hughesdale Community Hall, Cnr Poath and Kangaroo Roads, Hughesdale (MEL 69 C7)

Visitors are always very welcome.

COMMITTEE:

PRESIDENT:	John Thompson thomme@netspace.net.au
SECRETARY:	Helen Appleby
TREASURER:	Norm Seaton normarjs@bigpond.com
PUBLIC OFFICER:	Helen Appleby
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Marj Seaton normarjs@bigpond.com
APS VIC DELEGATE	Marj Seaton
COMMITTEE:	Amanda Louden amandalouden@icloud.com

Please forward any newsletter contributions, comments or photos to Marj at 36 Voumard Street, Oakleigh South 3167 or to the email address above.

********Note: Deadline for the NOVEMBER newsletter is OCTOBER 24th********

Sadly, still no progress towards having a meeting. Our best hope is to be able to have a get together in December but confidence is low at present. We have to be able to fit into COVID restrictions and also have Monash Council allow us to use their hall. We'll keep you posted.

*******In the meantime, please remember that your memberships are now overdue and that this is your last reminder before the cut-off for the December issue of Growing Australian. As the number printed is dependent on the number of members on the APS database at November 1, current members cannot expect to receive a copy if their membership is not current. *******

A small committee is currently working towards our hosting of the Quarterly meeting, jointly with APS Waverley. Our present thought is to hold this on September 11 next year and it is planned to be a one day affair only. Waverley doesn't have grower members so our group will provide most of the plants to be offered for sale during the day. The range we want to promote includes acacias, indigenous plants, tufted plants and any small natives suited to our region. If you are interested in helping to grow plants to sell, please think about starting soon.

Once again, we have some great photos to share in our Photo Gallery. Thank you to Mandy, Betty, Ivan and Margaret, Helen, Ray and Eva for their contributions. John has written another article on a plant not seen on our specimen table – this one about a relative of the leatherwood.

RAINFALL RECORDS for 2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Oakleigh South	**98**	**90.5**	**77**	**167.5**	**70.5**	**44.4**	**33.9**	**84**					**665.8**
Highett	**114**	**76**	**63**	**136.7**	**56**	**44.3**	**33.5**	**64**					**587.5**
Hampton	**119**	**75**	**57**	**132**	**48**	**32**	**23**	**60**					**546**
Cranbourne South	**99**	**64**	**72**	**167**	**89**	**49**	**44**	**93**					**677**
Caulfield Sth	**127**	**70.5**	**62.5**	**148**	**58**	**33**	**19**	**62**					**580**
Elsternwick	**120**	**86**	**67.5**	**141.5**	**74**	**38**	**25.9**	66.5					**619.4**

Not from the Specimen Table – 5

This article is the fifth in a series featuring plants that are not often seen on the specimen table during the normal yearly meetings. Should the situation continue to ease we may be able to hold a December meeting.

This month's plant is *Eucryphia wilkiei* a small to medium sized shrub 1m – 6m in height by 1m – 3m in width. It is only known from the upper slopes of Mt. Bartle Frere in the Bellenden Ker Range also known as the Wooroonooran Range in north-east Queensland. It grows at an altitude of 1200m – 1500m amongst granite boulders in stunted, windswept vegetation. Its very restricted distribution has obtained the conservation status of "vulnerable".

The flowers are large, up to 40mm in diameter, pure white with golden stamens and are produced in pairs at the leaf nodes. They are produced from December to February and are most conspicuous.

Plants prefer a sunny or lightly shaded aspect with good root protection and will grow in most free draining soils. They prefer not to dry out so supplementary watering during summer is recommended. Propagation is from seed or cuttings.

Eucryphia are members of the Cunoniaceae family, a family of 29 genera mostly found in the tropical and wet temperate regions of the Southern Hemisphere. Australian genera include *Bauera*, *Callicoma*, *Ceratopetalum*, *Davidsonia* and *Pseudoweinmannia*. There are 7 species of *Eucryphia*, five endemic to Australia and two in South America (Chile).

The name Eucryphia is derived from the Greek *eu*, well and *kryphia*, cover, from the cap-like calyx in which the sepals cohere and fall off together and the species name *wilkiei* is after Jack (John H.) Wilkie (1902–1997), orchid expert and botanical explorer of the Mount Bellenden Ker region who discovered it in 1970. Bernie Hyland formally scientifically described the species name in 1997.

IN MY GARDEN…….. Marj Seaton

At last Autumn's Cranbourne plant sale I bought a *Pomaderris aurea* and planted it straight away. At that stage it was about 30cm high. At the end of winter, it was just under a metre and in full flower. My books say it could get to 3m though smaller forms occur – mine could be one of those – I hope.


In bud


Fully out

Creamy buds against the dark green leaves make a nice show, but now that the flowers are out it is showing why it was named 'aurea' - the tiny flowers are yellow and the heads glow in the early light. It receives only a little dappled light in both morning and evening but seemed to be quite happy until heavy rain made a mess of the flowers. I will be pruning it soon and will take a few cuttings.

Another plant doing well is Asterolasia hexapetala. Despite the name, most of the flowers have five petals.
The plant is very similar to A. phebalioides but that is a rare plant hailing from Kangaroo Island. Leaves of A. hexapetala are a greyish green and my two bushes grow between one and two metres high. I prune them well after flowering so they are mostly kept to about one metre. The main feature is the profusion of lemon yellow flowers in spring. I also have two bushes with white flowers (more common) but prefer the lemon flowers. All receive morning sun and are protected from afternoon sun. Easy care, but I have not had success trying to propagate them at home. I will try hard to get some to grow for next year's quarterly as it is a terrific plant to have in the garden.

Bossiaea aquifolium (below) is another favourite. Usually it doesn't flower in time to bring it to a monthly meeting but of course this year is different. It is a striking pea bush about 1.5m high and currently flowering prolifically. Quite large yellow and red/brown flowers and holly like leaves, but not prickly, it is in a rather dry spot with a little shade.

Finally, a mint bush bought as *Prostanthera melissifolia* but possibly isn't, is also in flower. The mauve flowers are presented more openly than the more commonly planted P. rotundifolia or P. ovalifolia and makes a very pretty show. I prune it to keep it about 1.5m high but haven't been able to strike any cuttings to date.

THE STORY OF SMOKE

Another article reprinted from "Beating Around the Bush". The author is Professor Kingsley Dixon, John Curtin Distinguished Professor, Curtin University

A startling phenomenon occurs after a bushfire tears through a landscape. From the blackened soil springs an extraordinary natural revival – synchronised germination that carpets the landscape in flowers and colour.
So what is it in bushfires that gives plants this kiss of life? The answer is smoke, and it is increasingly transforming everything from large-scale land regeneration to nurseries and home gardening.

The mystery of seed germination

Burnt plants survive bushfires in various ways. Some are protected by woody rootstocks and bark-coated stems; others resprout from underground buds. But most plants awaken their soil seed bank, which may have lain dormant for decades, or even a century.
However, this smoke-induced seed germination is not easily replicated by humans trying to grow the plants themselves. Traditionally, many native Australian flora species – from fringe-lilies to flannel flowers and trigger plants – could not be grown easily or at all from seed.

The fringe-lily, the seed of which has been found to germinate after smoke treatment. (Flickr) In recent decades this has meant the plants were absent from restoration programs and home gardens, reducing biodiversity.

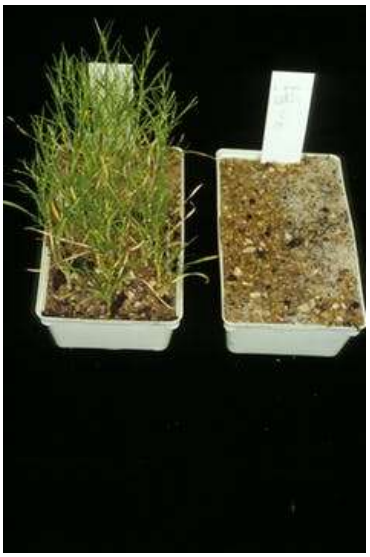
In 1989, South African botanist and double-PhD Dr Johannes de Lange grappled with a similar conundrum. He was trying to save the critically rare *Audonia capitata*, which was down to a handful of plants growing around Cape Town. The seed he collected could not be germinated, even after heat and ash treatments from fire. Extinction looked inevitable.

But during a small experimental fire, a wind change enveloped de Langer in thick smoke. With watering eyes, he realised that smoke might be the mysterious phoenix factor that would coax the seeds to life. By 1990 he had shown puffing smoke onto soil germinated his rare species in astonishing numbers.

The technique is simple. Create a smouldering fire of dry and green leafy material and pass the smoke into an enclosed area where seed has been sown into seed trays or spread as a thin layer. Leave for one hour and water sparingly for ten days to prevent the smoke from washing out of the seed mix. The rest is up to nature.

Taking smoke germination to the world

Soon after the de Lange discovery, I visited the Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden in Cape Town. I was shown a few trays of seedlings out the back – some from seeds treated with smoke, some without. The difference was stark. Smoke-treated seeds produced a riot of green, compared to others that resulted in sparse, straggling seedlings.



A tray of seedlings where seed was treated with smoke, left, compared to a non-treated tray. Photo supplied by author.

But was smoke just an isolated African phenomenon, I wondered? Would 150 years of frustrated efforts to germinate some of Australia's most spectacular and colourful species – from grevillea and fan-flowers to rare native heaths – also be transformed by smoke?

At first, the answer appeared to be no, as every attempt with Australian wildflower seed failed. But after many trials, which I oversaw as Director of Science at the Western Australian Botanic Garden, success came in 1993. Extra time in the smoke house and a serendipitous failure in the automated watering system resulted in the germination of 25 different species with seedlings. Some were thought to have never been germinated by humans before, such as wild-picked yellow bells (*Geleznowia verrucosa*) or the giant feather rush (*Loxocarya gigas*).

This discovery meant for the first time smoke could be used for difficult-to-germinate species for the home gardener and cut flower growers. These days more than 400 species of native seeds, and potentially more than 1,000, respond to smoke treatment. They include kangaroo paw, cotton-tails, spinifex, native bush food tomatoes and fragrant boronias.

Highway plantings, mine site restoration and, importantly, efforts to save threatened plant species now also benefit greatly from the smoke germination technique. For example, smoke houses are now a regular part of many nurseries, which also purchase smoke water to soak seeds for sowing later. Kangaroo paw seeds respond well to smoke treatment.

PLANNED DIARY FOR 2020

The following events are scheduled but, because of COVID –19, are subject to government regulations and may not proceed.

December 1 Alternative date for AGM. Christmas wind-up, "Clear the Decks" plant sale, members' slides.

Plant Sales and Shows 2020

October 24,25 **???** FJC Rogers Seminar "Mint bushes and Allied Genera". Saturday at Eltham Community Hall.

PHOTO GALLERY

From Mandy: *Acacia rhigiophylla* –
a very prickly wattle

Coronidium elatum at Seatons'

Helen's variegated prostanthera and an early flowering rhododendron

Betty sent in this photo of a wattle in Gardenvale.

Most of our members will remember visiting the Grange Reserve during our last Quarterly meeting. Ivan has recently visited and sent in these photos.

He writes:

The heathland is very special. The Grange's web site boasts of 20 orchid species and in previous visits I had photographed nine species and on this visit one was added. This was a Glossodia major (Now called Caladenia major?) but unfortunately it was a little damaged and the photo was not publication quality. The Grange really demonstrates the great variety of plant life that existed in our area, and how efforts to re-vegetate reserves fails to come near to full restoration. There was a good number of plants in flower.

Margaret was fascinated by a pair of Willie Wagtails building a nest using spider webs.

Just after Wattle Day, many wattles were in flower:

Acacia oxycedrus

Acacia paradoxa

Acacia verticillata

Ivan said that there were plenty of other flowers:

Hibbertia fasciculata var prostrata

Leucopogon virgatus

Not the least was the Wedding Bush coming into flower. The pre-nuptial parties were starting up, hens' parties on some bushes and bucks' parties on others:

Ricinocarpos pinifolius

Wax-lip orchid

Ray and Eva have also been busy photographing their garden.
Firstly some Boronia megastigma forms:

Boronia megastigma

Boronia megastigma "Lutea"

Boronia megastigma "Jack Maguire"

Boronia megastigma "Purple Jared"

Dodonaea boroniifolia

Kunzea baxteri

Utricularia dichotoma are growing in our verge out the front in the shallow spoon drain - have just started to come out in flower. The *Drosera auriculata* can also be seen popping up. There's a bit of water there as we had 28 mm the day before this was taken, but it will soon disappear.

Pterostylis nutans