



# Australian Plants Society

## South East NSW Group

Newsletter 166

November 2020

*Corymbia maculata* Spotted Gum and  
*Macrozamia communis* Burrawang

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### Next Meeting

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020, 10.30a.m.**  
**Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens**

Dear Members,

This newsletter brings an end to a long, difficult year, but that doesn't mean that we can't celebrate our blessings.

I am hoping you will be able to join us see out the year with a lunchtime gathering at the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens on Saturday 5th December. We plan to meet on the grassed area below the pavilion at 10:30am, for morning tea and later, lunch. We will be able to go for a wander in between. Please bring chairs to sit on and your own food, but not food to share.

The same COVID 19 restrictions will apply to this gathering as to our meetings. This means we will need to sign in at the Visitor Centre, and leave a contact number, be aware of social distancing and practice our usual hygiene. If the weather is too hot or too wet, we will be able to relocate to Nursery area under cover.

This event will be a social gathering, so there will not be show and tell, or guided tours. But if you are interested, we can go as a group into the Nursery area and have a look at what is growing.

I hope you can make it as it has been difficult to catch up with so many of you over the year. We plan to gather again in February for our Annual General Meeting. At this stage it is an unknown venue, but the date will be the first Saturday in February, (6th). Hopefully we will be able to meet in person. All committee positions will be open, so please have a think if you would like to contribute to the local group more directly. New committee members are always welcome. If you have any skills in planning events that may or may not happen and that need to be restricted and outside, we would love your input.

I look forward to seeing you in December and wish everyone a happy and safe summer festive season.

Di.

## Last Meeting

**With some relaxation of Covid restrictions, our group was able to accommodate 30 members at the recent meeting at Christina and Trevor Kennedy's property, Horse Island near Bodalla.**

Thankfully the weather was kind, and it is pleasing to note that we did attract a full complement of 30 attendees, including visitors Peter and Margaret Olde, members of APS NSW and Menai group. Peter designed and helped develop a Grevillea garden at Horse Island, which was our first stop on the garden tour.

But first, President Di welcomed the group and introduced Christina, although most attending are well acquainted with Christina, who has on a number of occasions welcomed us to her gorgeous property.

After social chat and morning tea, Di called for members who brought along some specimens for **show and tell**, to step up and spruik their offerings.

**Marjorie** was keen to start, and as usual produced a range of unusual plants for our education. *Spyridium coactifolium*, is a small, rare shrub to about 1m, occurring in South Australia's Mt. Lofty region. This plant can be confused with the similar, but widespread *S. parvifolium*, but differs in its floral presentation. The genus is named from the **Greek Spyridion**, (a little basket), for the flower heads are surrounded by whitish, leaf like bracts.

*Clerodendrum tomentosum*, a small rainforest tree, has appeared in the garden since the fires, and is already flowering. The Batemans Bay area is about the southern limit of this plant, and it can be seen along the Kings Highway as an understorey plant, growing often with *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*. Growing 3 – 6m, it is generally an open plant, with velvety leaves and conspicuous flowers which are pollinated by nocturnal moths. Fruit is a dark drupe surrounded by 5 bright red fleshy sepals, and are attractive to birds such as Satin Bowerbirds.

**Margaret Lynch** is a keen grower of smaller Australian plants, and has a range of lilies dotted through her garden which, as she noted "could easily fit into everyone's garden".

*Arthropodium milleflorum* is an easily grown plant which holds its many tiny flowers on long slender stalks, and is a magnet for native bees. The roots of this plant can get quite large, being a widely used food source both by Aboriginal people and early settlers. The plant can self-seed through the garden, and seems quite happy in sun or shade. Why not grow your own food?

Two species of the brilliant yellow flowered **Bulbine Lily**, *B. glauca* and *B. bulbosa* were once widely grown but seem to have gone out of favour. These easily grown plants look spectacular as a drift, and will self-sow in sunny spots. Seed sown in autumn germinates readily, and will flower the following spring.

For those with a shaded garden, the white flowered *Libertia paniculata* is an excellent choice. Plants grow to about 45cm high, and the flowers sit proudly above the foliage, attracting many insect pollinators. Well they must because the flowers produce a reliable crop of seed which can be germinated easily, but rarely do seedlings just 'pop-up'.



**Verna** has a lovely weeping *Myoporum floribundum*, with white flowers sitting along the horizontal branch tops. Leaves are fresh green, but always look like they need a watering, as they hang limply. The plant can get to 3m or so, but is open in habit, allowing many smaller plants to establish below. It will grow in full sun or part shade, but does not like poor drainage. Once widely grown, this hardy Victorian and NSW plant is rarely seen these days, but its attractive habit warrants more attention. *Melaleuca gibbosa*, a coastal plant from South Aust., western Victoria and eastern Tasmania, is a tough rounded shrub to about 2m, with the typical small aromatic foliage of smaller Myrtaceae plants, and prominently displayed terminal flowers which are usually mauve. The selected cultivar *M. gibbosa* 'Pink Passion' as the name suggests has distinctly pink flowers.

*Kunzea ambigua* was brought along by Lesley, and also John, who recommended it be under-pruned to develop as a small weeping tree. Grown as such it can reach 3m or so but not take up valuable garden space. Due to its open branching habit, other plants can be easily established below, and still flower reliably. This common local species is quite hardy, thriving in dry conditions, but often seen along creek banks. White flowers are well displayed along the branches from September to November, and exude the most delightful honey fragrance, to which all manner of insects and butterflies are drawn. The common name of this plant, tick bush, tends to deter people from using it in their gardens, but as was pointed out at the meeting, it is believed to repel ticks. The unusually large flowers of *Goodenia macmillanii* exude an exotic fragrance, not unlike the liniment noticed around footy dressing rooms, and on warm humid afternoons fills the garden with a heady aroma. This rare plant, found in far eastern Victoria and across the border into NSW, grows readily in a well-drained garden, tolerating full sun or semi-shade, reaching about 60cm high and lightly suckering. Also on show was *Swainsona galegifolia*, which was grown from seed collected by Jo Benyon in 2010, and had been sitting in a bag for nearly 10 years. This shrubby pea flowered plant has quite large and showy pinkish-purple blooms, which evidenced by the prolific seed set, proves a most attractive food plant for a range of insects. The next crop of seed has already been collected, for any member who wishes to include it in their garden. A sunny well drained spot is ideal.



Above, *Goodenia macmillanii*, and below, *Swainsona galegifolia*



### Presentation to Christina



Phil, and Christina with her treasures,

No doubt during our visit, there would not be many opportunities for us to be all together at one time, so Di. suggested we make our usual presentation before dispersing through the garden.

**Phil Trickett** produced a couple of grafted treasures, a *Grevillea johnsonii* and a dwarf form of *Isopogon cuneatus*, as well as his go-to stock for grafting **Isopogons**, *Isopogon petiolaris x mnoraifolius* which he calls *Isopogon* 'Coaldale Cracker' in reference to its only known location, Coaldale Road near Grafton. This has proved a very hardy garden plant, growing to about 1.5m, with terminal yellow flowers in spring. So far all difficult Isopogons grafted on to it have grown very successfully.

A promise following the **Goodeniaceae** seminar a couple of years back was honoured as John offered a selection of small species for inclusion in Christina's cottage garden adjacent to the main house. These included *Scaevola porocarya*, *Scaevola striata*, *Goodenia foliosa* (Syn. *Velleia foliosa*) *Goodenia rotundifolia*, *Dampiera hederacea*, and *Dicrastylis globiflora* (Syn. *Mallophora globiflora*)

Norm produced a healthy plant of *Melaleuca lutea*, a shrubby plant with bright yellow bottlebrush flowers, which occurs naturally around the Barren Ranges of W.A. Previously known as *M. citrina*, it was renamed to accommodate a proposed inclusion of **Callistemon** into **Melaleuca**, and as *Callistemon citrinus* has precedence, *M. lutea* came into being. The combining of these 2 genera has been discussed within the botany community for some years, and as is usual when an important genus is about to be subsumed, there has been quite a deal of spirited discussion about the validity of such a move. Norm also included one of his patented welded plant labels.



With presentations completed, members were keen to get into the garden, and with Christina leading, headed first towards the **Grevillea collection**, in what Christina calls the “Olde” garden, where many of the early Grevillea plantings are located. With Peter joining us, we were entertained with anecdotes of the development of this area, and of course answers the many questions about the range of species and cultivars. It was obvious from the interest and discussion, that our lunch was going to be much delayed, for half the allotted time had passed before the stragglers left the Grevillea garden and strolled across the vast lawn towards the house and its varied landscapes.



**Social distancing whilst discussing the Grevillea plantings**

For many years, Christina has demonstrated, indeed pioneered, the adaptability of Australian plants to formal interpretation, and the intense pruning and shaping of a range of species proves the case for wider use of our plants in amenity plantings. Whilst such detailed pruning is not everyone's cup of tea, one can't help but be impressed with just how attractive and healthy the plants are, and how such a display enhances the horticultural acceptance of these plants in the broader community.



Even large gardens such as this can still find space for smaller, cottage garden detail, with drifts and clusters of various daisies, flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) and other non-woody herbs flowering in a massed display beneath tall plants such as *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, Blue-berry Ash, which were about to burst into bloom.



Like most APS members, Christina does like to try unusual plants, and has a range of what we might term “difficult” to grow species, such as Verticordias in an area in which the soil remains relatively dry. Beds have been raised to provide for extra drainage these species need.

By now the group had well dispersed, some having made it back for the chaff bag, whilst others continued to immerse themselves in the varying landscapes.



With an abbreviated lunch break, it was time to tackle the second half of the garden, heading first to investigate the Grevillea pruning which was completed during our visit a couple of years back, by Ray Brown of Grevillea Park Bulli fame.

Although worried at that time, Christina happily reports that all plants responded with great vigour, and have even been subjected to further pruning now she is comfortable with Ray’s apparent harsh approach.

**As the Grevillea plants age, pruning can take a different approach. Lifting the plant by underpruning allows for other plants to establish**

Good rains during the year have certainly enhanced the growth of Christina’s rainforest plants, and we noted that the fruits of her



*Syzygium paniculatum* were the largest seen. As eaten straight off the tree, some decided that they make better jam, others seemed quite happy with the flavour.

They do lack juiciness though. Further on there is another collection of Grevillea, and surrounding the cottage, a range of plants not often cultivated, including specimens of spectacularly flowering *Alloxylon pinnatum*, Dorrigo Waratah. Small trees to about 6m, the

plants have dark green foliage, branches festooned with large flower heads. Protected from frost when young, these warm temperate plants can be grown as far south as Melbourne, and as has occurred here, respond to extra watering, rewarding the grower with brilliant blooms, and honeyeaters with copious nectar.



All too soon, in the late afternoon, it was time to leave, but not before some managed to receive a plant or two from a very gracious host. Christina has had success in propagating some of her unusual plants, and parted with some seedlings of *Dietes robinsoniana*, a rare lily from Lord Howe Islands, the fore mentioned *Alloxylon*, and *Actinotus helianthi*. These will be reciprocated in time with plants that Christina expressed interest in.

Our APS Group is indeed fortunate to count Christina as a member, and are constantly reminded just how patriotic she is of Australia, and in particular Australia’s plants.

Thanks Christina for another great visit to your inspirational garden.

## In My Garden

### Doing my bit for Climate Change, and enhancing the food supply for native bees.

Over the past 2 months I have removed a section of verge lawn 'nature strip', if such a patch could be so described. The grass was sprayed out, then top soil was dug, by hand, and left to dry out for 3 weeks. The grass was separated from the soil, and disposed of, then the soil was dug back in to prepare the patch for planting. After lying fallow for another week, planting of small herbaceous plants commenced. These included 2 forms of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Rhodanthe anthemoides*, *Brachyscome multifida*, and the annual *B. iberidifolia*, *Dampiera hederacea*, 3 forms of *Scaevola aemula*, *Scaevola albida* white flowered form, *Scaevola porocarya*, *Scaevola nitida*, the very hardy *Lobelia sp.* from Point Anne W.A., *Lechenaultia biloba* and *L. formosa* orange flowered form, *Veronica arenaria*, *Goodenia albiflora* and a couple of *Lomandra confertifolia ssp rubiginosa* to soften the Power pole base. Of course the plantings had to meet a couple of criteria, as it is a requirement that people exiting cars must be able to do so safely, although the positioning is such that this is unlikely. However the low growing form of **Chrysocephalum** is so tolerant that no amount of foot traffic seems to affect its growth. Also there is a hydrant within the garden, and this also has only low growing **Chrysocephalum** for the same reason, with a neighbours rescued rock to stand on, and access to this is unrestricted. In total there is just on 80 plants in the approximately 25sq.m. of garden, and after just a few weeks is already looking well settled. Thankfully the planting was more or less completed before the last good rains, so everything settled in well. I had hoped that drying the soil before removing the grass would mean few weeds, but there is obviously a seed bank stirred into action by tilling, so a little more effort will be needed. Anyway the hover flies and other useful insects are enjoying it. And the postie, with whom I discussed the proposal, is comfortable at having to return to the road rather than his usual short cut.

What about Climate Change you might ask? Well this little section doesn't need mowing, so less fuel and noise pollution. Wins all round !



## Little Forest Plateau. Rusden Head Track

Sue and I were invited to join Phil and Catriona on a recent visit to Little Forest Plateau to see how the plants have regenerated after the summer fires. To say that the plants survived is an understatement, with many heath plants regenerating from lignotubers or suckers. Those not so predisposed have seeded generously, and countless next generation plants are on their way. The area is noted for its diversity, with many small herbaceous or grassy plants being amongst the first to recover and flower.

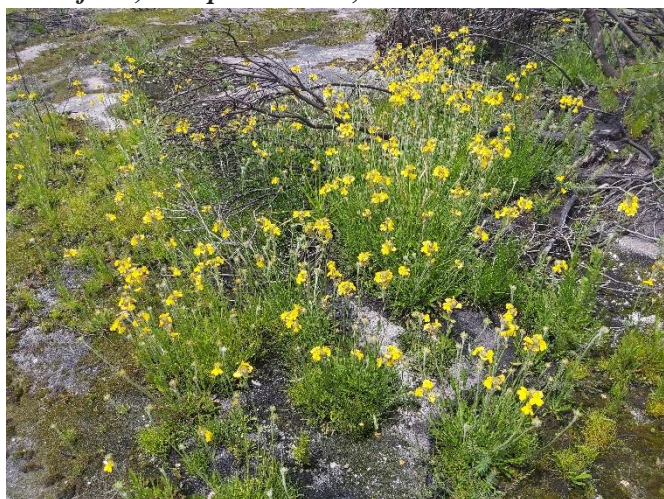


The extent of fires of last summer is evident looking across the Clyde Gorge from Rusden Head



One couldn't help but be impressed at the prolific flowering of the **grasstrees**, *Xanthorrhoea resinosa*, everyone of which carried at least 1 spike. To add to the spectacle, the brilliant yellow flowered rush-like *Xyris operculata* dominated the understory, taking full advantage of the now open canopy.

In just a few short seasons, *Banksia ericifolia* and other tall shrubs will take over, and this display will be limited to a few track margins. Also prominent were low growing herbs *Goodenia glomerata*, *G. paniculata*, *G. bellidifolia*, *Dampiera stricta*, *Scaevola aemula* and *S. ramosissima*.



**Yellow is the dominant colour along the tracks, with *Goodenia glomerata* prominent, Large swathes of Eastern Smoke Bush, *Conospermum taxifolium* taking advantage of reduced overhead competition, have suckered prolifically beneath a forest of stunted Silvertop Ash, *Eucalyptus sieberi***

Detected by scent before finding the plant, *Marsdenia suaveolens* is a woody sub-shrub or light climber with sweetly scented white flowers, was growing among Yellow Marsh Flower, *Villarsia exaltata*, 2 species of **Patersonia** and the lilies *Thysanotus juncifolius*, *Thelionema umbellatum* and *Caesia vittata*. Prominent also Christmas Bells, *Blandfordia nobilis*, just coming into flower, with a spectacular show promised later in the year.

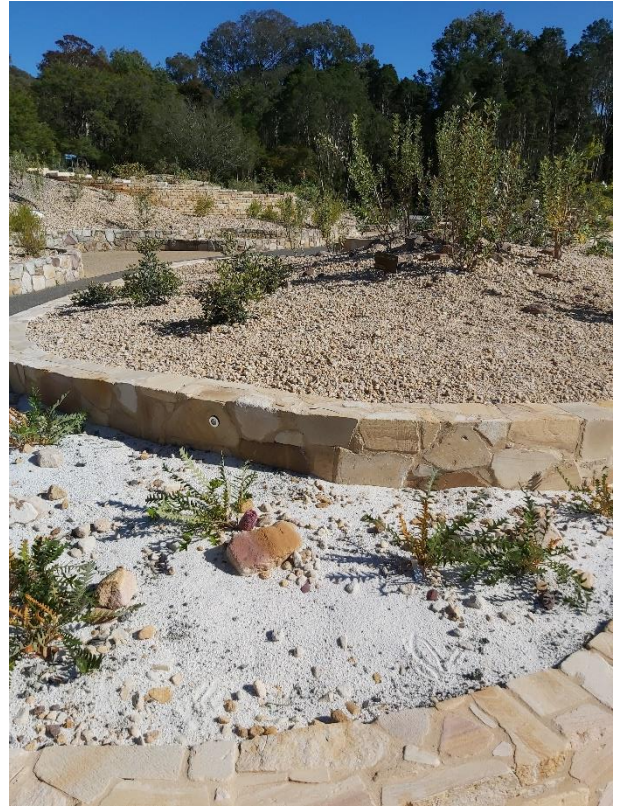
Orchids are also having a great time, with the tiny *Caleana major*, Flying Duck-orchid growing in small colonies of up to 30 plants, and the rare *Calochilus pulchellus*, which occurs at just 3 locations in the Shoalhaven area having possibly its best flowering since being first recorded. We have never seen so many **Drosera**, with *D. pygmaea* particularly evident with its bright red basal leaves and tiny pink flowers. But we were more impressed with *D. binata*, with white flowers so large we scarcely believed they could belong.

There was so much on show, to relate the story would take a newsletter by itself, so I'll finish by noting that yes, we did record some **Isopogons** and **Petrophile**. With so few of our National Parks currently open to public visits, I would recommend everyone takes the opportunity to visit Little Forest Plateau while the show is on.

## Australian National Botanic Garden Canberra

Members are probably aware that the Gardens recently unveiled a new Banksia garden, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Gardens in 1970. More than 70 species of Banksia are now establishing in the garden, and members might be interested to learn that Phil Trickett has been for the last few years grafting many difficult species for the project. Vice-President Geoff visited the garden on a recent trip to Canberra, and was enthusiastic about the development. Now that covid restrictions are easing right across the country, it's a good time to get out and about. Geoff recommends that we take a trip to the Capital, and see for ourselves this impressive new addition to the displays at ANBG.

**Part of the new Banksia garden.  
Young it may be, but over time this project will be a wonderful display of the very Australian genus Banksia. Photo by Geoff**



As what has been a difficult year for everyone comes to a close, may I second President Di's thoughts in wishing all our members the very best of Seasons Greetings, and a prosperous and fulfilling New Year. If things go to plan, and the virus is kept under control, Group meetings will again be possible indoors, although as shown over the past few months, outdoor gatherings are very popular. Please give some consideration in joining the committee for the benefit of the Group, or at least offer the Committee Members some guidance as to what our program should include. Looking forward to seeing everyone at ERBG in December, and again at meetings in 2021.

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