

CALGAROO

August 2021



Eucalyptus parramattensis - Calgaroo

Newsletter of the Parramatta and Hills District Group
Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

***Program for the remainder of 2021**

Saturday 28 August Bushwalk Cobar Ridge Marramarra National Park. Leader Marilyn Cross

Saturday 25 September Garden Visit. Garden of Alan and Jean Wright Baulkham Hills

Saturday 23 October Bushwalk O'Hara's Creek Cranstons Road Dural. Leader Jennifer Farrer

Saturday 27 November Christmas Breakup at Gumnut Hall. Speaker Malcolm Johnston
"Cattai Creek from the source to the Hawkesbury"

All activities start at 2 pm.

**Every event is subject to possible COVID restrictions. Jennifer will advise us by email if they apply.*

Bushwalk Marramarra National Park, near Fiddletown - Neverfail fire trail

Saturday 28th August 2021

Marilyn Cross

Start 2.00pm Finish 4.00pm Approx 4km

Meet at the very end of Bloodwood Road at the locked gate where the Neverfail Track begins. The Neverfail Track out to Collingridge Point is a 10 km out and back trail near Fiddletown and is rated as moderate. We'll be walking a maximum of 4km depending on the wildflowers we see along the track.

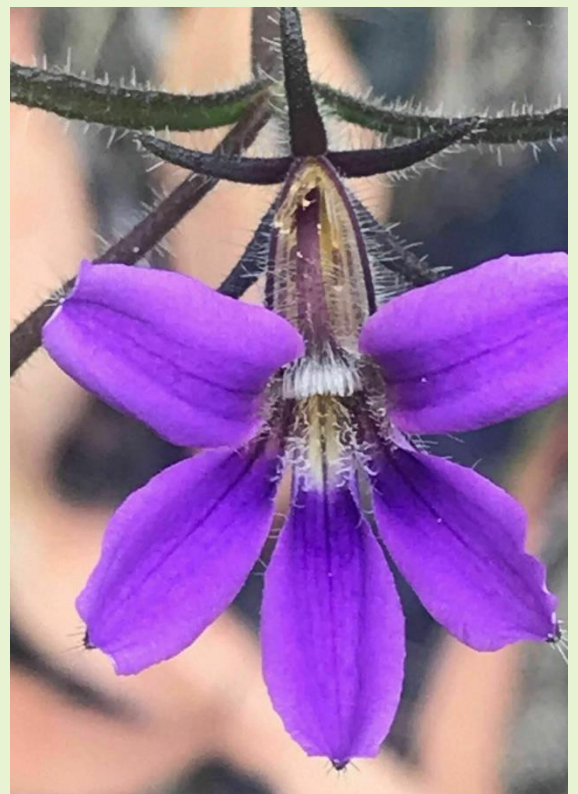
Last year on an NPA walk later in the year, we saw a great variety of wildflowers.



Flowers we may see on this walk:

Caleana major (Flying Duck Orchid)

Scaevola ramosissima



Collector's Corner - Hakea 'Burrendong Beauty'

Neil Marriot

Early in the 1980s I was in regular contact with George, Peter and Hazel Althofer from Burrendong Arboretum near Wellington in inland NSW. I used to send them cuttings and plants from White Gums Nursery, and in return they would exchange plant material with me.

One of the most attractive plants they sent me was *Hakea crassinervia*, which George described as a lovely, low, semi-prostrate spreading shrub around 0.4 m tall and 1.5 m wide. *Hakea crassinervia* was described by Meisner in 1845.



However, research by Alex George showed that it was in fact a natural hybrid between *Hakea myrtooides* and *Hakea petiolaris*, both of which grew in close association in the Darling Range where the type of *Hakea crassinervia* was collected. George recounted that material was sent to the Arboretum from Alex, however this may not be correct, as the ANPSA Guide to Australian Plants points to the plant possibly arising from seed collected from plants of *Hakea myrtooides* and *Hakea petiolaris* growing together in the Arboretum.

Having grown many seedlings from both these hakeas, I find it highly doubtful that a seedling grown in Burrendong Arboretum would look identical to the natural hybrid from the Darling Range.

However, it doesn't really matter! What is important is that this is a truly beautiful low spreading hakea. On realisation that it was not a species, but a hybrid, I immediately registered it with ACRA as Hakea 'Burrendong Beauty' in recognition of its origin, and also to promote the Burrendong Arboretum throughout the nursery trade. Once registered, I produced a picture label and sold many plants – it was an extremely popular and hardy new plant for the nursery trade back in the 1980s.

Despite originally being promoted as a low groundcover, large old plants can reach up to 1.5 m tall and 3–4 m across. However, they always start off as lovely low plants, and with regular judicious pruning can be kept small and compact. However, I love the way our large old specimens sprawl through surrounding plants, creating a real spectacle when in flower from autumn through to winter.



The flowers are dense, prolific and massed in every leaf axil along all new branches. This is why regular pruning to promote a good flush of new growth before summer will reward you with a mass of flowers the following autumn and winter. The white styles contrast vividly with the rich pink perianth, which is full of nectar, attracting honeyeaters and bees to the garden.

Today it is still available in the nursery trade, but only if you search for it – it seems that old and reliable plants are scrapped in favour of the new and untested! Get out and find a few – they are tough, provide a real show in the garden during the duller months of the year and attract lots of native birds while doing so.

This article was published in the June 2021 edition of Growing Australian, newsletter of APS Victoria. It's reproduced here with the author's permission.

It's all Greek to me

Angela Michaelis*

I've been learning Ancient Greek. The most common question from my friends is "Why?" and some think it a bit lame when I say that I loved learning Latin at school, so 50 years later, I thought it time to try Greek. But if they still look sceptical, I say "and it will help with the language of botany".

And it does, as so much of scientific terminology has its roots in Greek (sometimes via Latin).

Let's begin at the start of the alphabet (Greek word, from the first letters, *alpha* and *beta*). Some genus names come straight from Greek, like our Australian floral emblem, **Acacia** (*Akakia*, meaning 'thorny' – the original Acacia was *A. arabica*, the Egyptian Thornbush). Or **Agathis** (*agathos*) meaning 'good, excellent'. If you've seen a mature *A. robusta*, it's hard not to see why.

Or **Agonis** – and that is where it gets interesting. Because it is when we start looking at the component parts of the word that Greek is really going to come in useful. Agonis is really **a+gonis**, meaning 'without+angles'. You already know those two parts: think 'atheism' - **without** a belief in a god) and 'polygon' a shape with many (*poly* – yes, it's Greek) angles. And Agonis tends to be weepy plant – without angles. Think *A. flexuosa*, Willow Myrtle. So when you meet that simple prefix a +, the name may be telling us the plant is without something – **aphylla**, for example, is without leaves.

Actino is another interesting prefix, meaning a 'ray', or 'spoke of a wheel'. So, we have **Actinotus**, the Flannel Flower, and **Actinodium**, the lovely small WA shrub that looks like a daisy but isn't. What they have in common is their ray-like petals.

In other words (Greek words **actino+morph**, meaning ray+shape), the flowers of these species are actinomorphic. That's a useful botanical term to describe a flower that is radially symmetrical. That means that you can draw a line anywhere through the middle and end up with the same pattern, like the spokes of a wheel, on each side.

Of course, there are Greek words in botany that are just fun – **Achillea**, the botanical name for the common Northern Hemisphere plant yarrow, is from the name of the Greek hero of the Trojan War, Achilles. He is said to have used the herb as a cure for arrow wounds. I knew Ancient Greek would come in handy?



**Angela (Angie) Michaelis learned about native plants when helping her husband Mark Ferrington run specialist nursery Sydney Wildflower Nursery West for nearly 20 years. She is a qualified horticulturalist, a linguistics graduate and the ABC's former Pronunciation Officer. So, bringing plants and language together is a natural interest.*

Quotations

In order for something to become interesting, all one needs to do is to look at it closely enough.

- *Gustave Flaubert*

Beauty constantly surrounds you and awaits your discovery, if you will only walk outside your busy life for a moment and open your eyes.

- *Bradley Trevor Greive*

A flower's appeal is in its contradictions – so delicate in form yet strong in fragrance, so small in size yet big in beauty, so short in life yet long on effect.

- *Terri Guillemets*

Lasting effects of a bushfire

Ian Cox

On Australia Day in 1975 an intense bushfire swept through parts of Castle Hill, Kenthurst and Glenorie. I know this because we had just bought our block of land at Castle Hill, and it got singed. Fortunately, we hadn't started to build the house!

The fire was helped by a strong, hot and dry westerly wind. Where I now live at Kenthurst, the bush was burnt by this very hot fire, and only a few tree trunks were left standing.

Several homes at Kenthurst were destroyed.

Scars from this long-ago fire can still be found in the bush.

This majestic eucalypt looks normal, viewed from the north.



But it's not. Here's the same tree from the south. You can see the hollowed-out trunk caused by the 1975 fire.

The tree would have been fairly large then, and may now be up to 100 years old.

This nearby tree had a large branch blown off in a severe wind recently. The branch was weakened by the trunk damaged by the 1975 fire.

The eucalypts are hybrids between *Eucalyptus racemosa* and *Eucalyptus haemastoma*.



This large Turpentine, *Syncarpia glomulifera*, is close to the walking trail starting at the end of Jones Road Kenthurst.

As you walk past this tree it looks normal. If you have a closer look, you'll find it's anything but normal!

The trunk, hollow to a height of three metres, is divided into two from the base, and one side is split again. Above the three-metre hollow, the now-two trunks have transformed themselves into normal/whole trunks, giving no hint of the drama below.

This abnormality was caused by fire, probably more than one.





Here's more fire-damaged trees from the fire trail at the end of Porters Road Kenthurst:



All trees pictured in this story caught fire near the ground. The fire then funnelled up inside the trunk. This is one reason it's dangerous for RFS firefighters when they patrol the bush just after a fire has gone through.

The fire often does not kill the tree. It partitions off the damage and grows around it. Sometimes nature is good at repairing itself!

So next time you're out in the bush, keep an eye out for these old warriors!

Thanks, Lesley Waite, for your help with this article.



Photo Gallery



Buds of *Kunzea baxteri* open first on the underside.

The remarkable colour tones of *Eremophila cuneifolia*. These beautiful eremophilas come from central and north-west Western Australia. You can grow them in Sydney as long as they're grafted, usually onto myoporum rootstock.



Close up to a bud of *Xylomelum pyriforme*, (Woody Pear), from Lesley Waite.

Members' meeting 24 July 2021

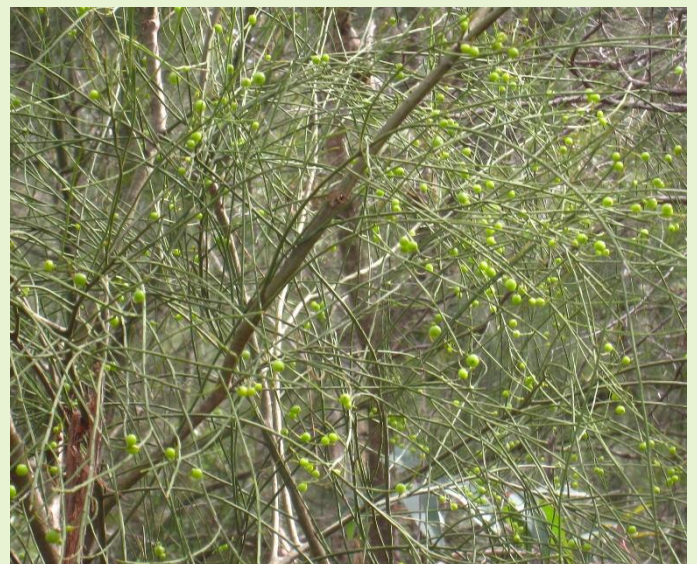
Jennifer Farrer

The extension of the lockdown meant that we were unable to hold a face-to-face meeting as planned. The speaker was to be Lachlan Turner, who was going to inspire us to get out in the bush and take some photos as good as the ones he takes. Lachlan was scheduled to speak to us in April 2020 during the original lockdown. So, it is really unfortunate that we had to reschedule his talk yet again. Hopefully he will come to our meeting in February next year.

Instead, we availed ourselves of the NSW Region's professional Zoom account to hold a meeting online. I used a PowerPoint presentation which I have presented to community groups in the past on several occasions. The topic was "Plants used in Colonial Sydney".

The first settlers in Australia lived at the end of a very long and unreliable supply line. All the necessities of life arrived here after a long sea journey from England, South Africa, India or China. Bush tucker has become a novel addition to our diet to-day, but in the early years of settlement and exploration, experimenting with local plants for food, drink and medicine was essential.

It was very important for those who arrived here on the First Fleet to start eating fresh food to avoid scurvy, a condition caused by the absence of Vitamin C in the diet. People scavenged salt-loving plants from the shores of Sydney Harbour, such as Sea Blight (*Suaeda australis*), Samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), and Warrigal Greens (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*). The ships' surgeons encouraged people to drink tea made from the leaves of Native Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*), which do contain Vitamin C, and because of their sweet taste were also called Sweet Tea. Another seasonal source rich in Vitamin C was the fruit of the Native Currant (*Leptomeria acida*).



Left - Native Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*)

Right - Native Currant (*Leptomeria acida*).

There are many native fruits around Sydney, but the ones which appealed to European tastes included the Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii*), Sandpaper Fig (*Ficus coronata*), Native Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*), Pigface (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*) and Five Corners or the Ground Berry (*Styphelia laeta*).

When it came to beverages, tea was made from the leaves of the Tea Tree (*Leptospermum polygalifolium*), Coffee was made from ground wattle seeds, and leaves from the Hop Bush (*Dodonaea triquetra*) replaced traditional hops in beer making.



Native Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*)



Hop Bush (*Dodonaea triquetra*)

Everyone in the First Fleet was responsible for constructing their own accommodation. Only Governor Phillip had a prefabricated house brought from England for him. The most popular building method was a type of adobe known as wattle and daub. Frames were made by weaving flexible stems. Wattle is an old English word meaning to weave in and out. The flexible stems were provided by the Black Wattle (*Callicoma serratifolia*) and the Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*). This early use has given us the popular name for Acacias in Australia. Originally the preferred roofing material was thatch made from rushes but soon shingles cut from Casuarina trees were found to be superior material.

Other every-day needs were also provided from bush plants. Mangrove ash was found to be the best ash for soap making. Fibre came from plants such as the Flax Lily (*Dianella* species). Bushranger's Bootlaces was the popular name for *Pimelea linifolia* because its stems were good for tying up boots. Heavier duty ropes were made from the inner bark of Stringybark trees. Leather was tanned using wattle bark, and still is today.

Native plants also provided cures for common ailments. Dennis Consider, one of the First Fleet surgeons, distilled Eucalyptus oil from the leaves of the Sydney Peppermint (*Eucalyptus piperita*). Kino from the Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) was dissolved in water and taken to cure diarrhea.

After the presentation Alan and Jean Wright showed us flowers from some of the wattles flowering in their garden at the moment – *Acacia vestita*, *Acacia aphylla*, and *Acacia iteaphylla*. Pip Gibian also had some flowers to show including a very fine specimen of a late flowering *Banksia spinulosa*.

The meeting was recorded and will be available to view on YouTube.

It's your *Calgaroo*

Send your articles, comments, observations and photos for the next Calgaroo to itcox@bigpond.com



Parramatta and Hills District Group

Secretary - Jennifer Farrer: apsparrahills@gmail.com 0407 456 577

Editor - Ian Cox: itcox@bigpond.com

Join us on Facebook: [here](#)

Our website: [here](#)