

## **BAUERA RUBIOIDES: The Australian Dog Rose**

*By Jennifer Liney*



The English Dog rose (*Rosa canina*), is a very prickly, deciduous, wild climbing rose that uses its large prickles to hook on to a support. The flower is open, pink, with 5 petals and with a bunch of yellow stamens in the middle. The early settlers in Australia thought the plant that they saw growing on creek banks and wet rocky slopes, with arching branches and pink open flowers with prominent stamens, reminded them very much of the Dog Rose from ‘home’, so that was what they commonly called the species the botanists had named *Bauera glabrifolia*. Dog Rose is still used today, but *glabrifolia* was changed to *rubiifolia*, a name that in turn was discarded in favour of the present name *rubioides*.

*Bauera* is after the brothers Bauer, Franz and Ferdinand, fine botanical artists who specialised in painting Australian plant species. Franz was employed by Joseph Banks, while Ferdinand, possibly more talented than Franz, sailed with Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of the continent. Ferdinand also made an extensive personal collection, much of which is now housed in the Vienna Herbarium. Some years ago there was a wonderful exhibition in Canberra of Ferdinand’s exquisite work.

The specific name of the Dog Rose, *rubioides*, is derived from the resemblance of the leaves of a young *Bauera* plant to the genus *Rubia*, a group of sprawling herbs and sub-shrubs native to the Old World, Africa and temperate Asia and America.

*Bauera rubioides* was first placed in the family Cunoniaceae, a family to which *Callicoma serratifolia* and the genus *Ceratopetalum* belong, but later was given its own family – Baueraceae. However, recently the botanic powers that be have decided to revert to the original placing and it is now back in the Cunoniaceae.

The species was named by Henry C. Andrews, a prolific British plant collector and publisher of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1797 he published the first volume of a ten volume work called *The Botanists Repository of New and Rare Plants*. This series consisted of beautifully detailed, painted illustrations of mostly Old World plant species, illustrations that today are of great value. In naming the plant species that he illustrated, Andrews says he “avoided synonyms and was faithful to the Linnaean system”.

As was the common practice of his time, Andrews did not travel to Australia to study the plants from the new colony. Rather, he worked on plants others brought to Britain and that were grown on in nurseries and wealthy collectors’ establishments. He wrote that *Bauera rubioides* “...a native of Port Jackson, New Holland, was first raised at the seat of the Hon. the Marchioness of Rockingham ... in the year 1793; and from a plant in the conservatory ... our drawing was made”. It was noted that the plant can also “be increased by cuttings”.

*Bauera rubioides* spot flowers throughout the year, but puts on a wonderful show in late winter and spring, especially if the weather is not too hot or too dry. It is one of our local Australian plants that we should all try to grow.