

Pro White

by Leigh Murray

When I first started gardening, I didn't value white flowers much at all. Most of all I loved pinks, and then purples and yellows. Favourite plants included *Crocea* 'Poorinda Ecstasy' with bright pink starry flowers, purple *Hardenbergia violacea* and the delightful *Thysanotus*, and yellow *Acacia beckleri* and *A. spectabilis*.

Over the years, my Think Pink view has been somewhat modified by some special white-flowering plants: three adored by butterflies, one that can look magnificent in flower along the top of a fence, and an outstanding specimen plant.



Of the three adored by butterflies, one is a *Leptospermum*, species unknown, which we call Butterfly because it's such a drawcard. (To my untrained eye, it looks rather like *L. brevipes* or *L. scoparium*; it grows to about 4m.) It's hugely popular in early summer. *Bursaria spinosa*, which occurs naturally on our land at Queanbeyan, is a major attraction for butterflies, as is *Baeckea densifolia*, which also pulls in the bees (native and exotic). (I've just discovered that it's now called *Harmogia densifolia*.)

(Photo of *Leptospermum brevipes* by Jackie Miles, copied with her permission from her native plants

website <http://thebegavalley.org.au/plants.html>)

Clematis aristata looks magnificent in flower. It likes to climb high, but it can also be trained along a fence. It was in that spot that we fell in love with it. White flowers stand out in the early evening – they're real eye-catchers.

For a specimen plant, *Myoporum floribundum* (common name 'Snow in Summer') is hard to beat. Even unprepossessing examples, as ours often are, grab attention. A good example in full bloom is a knockout. They have a delicate appearance, with a beautiful weeping form. The tiny white flowers appear mainly in early summer (with occasional smaller repeat flowerings if tip-pruned), clustered along the tops of the branches, looking like snow. Insects, especially small ones, are strongly attracted to the flowers, so there's usually an entourage. It grows quite well in Queanbeyan although it prefers more moisture and less exposure than it gets on our rocky ridge. I've lost plants at Tuross; perhaps it doesn't like salt-laden winds. It's very easy to strike from cuttings – I just put pieces in glass jars of water on the kitchen sill, and pot them up when there are good roots.

Insects love white flowers, particularly small white flowers – and now, because I love watching butterflies and bees and beetles, so do I.