



# Australian Plants Society South East NSW Group

Newsletter 118

May 2016

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

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## Next Meeting

Saturday June 4 2016

## A Gardening Q & A Session at Punkalla

The winter months can be an opportunity to ponder, maybe focus on problem areas in the garden, plantings, design, plans for rejuvenation, opening up a new area, a new path.....

With this in mind we're providing an opportunity for exchange of ideas, sharing of information, even problems to be solved! We often don't have time for this at our regular meetings so here is your chance to get together and talk all things garden! Bring along your questions; pest problems, design issues, what to grow where and anything else bugging you in the garden. We also want to hear of your brilliant successes and clever tips, cherished references both in book form or favourite website.

Also samples of what's flowering at your place or that stunning piece of foliage that's a feature, photos of a brilliant design ..... all for a giant show and tell session.

So come along and be inspired on the first weekend of winter, problems solved and ideas to carry you forward to spring.

We will meet at 10.30 am at the home of Jenny and Pete John (see map for directions). Bring morning tea and lunch as well as all your questions and show and tell items.

**See map on page 8**

## President's Message



I've been replacing some plants in the garden that have not tolerated either wet conditions or the past few dry months. We all like to grow different plants and particular favourites, but sometimes those plants just don't appreciate our efforts to provide the growing conditions they prefer!

There is one genus however that I have found to be very adaptable, the humble Callistemons. Wet or dry they continue to flourish producing flowers in both autumn and spring. The groundcover, *Callistemon* "Rocky Rambler" is looking a picture at the moment and another favourite *C. sieberi* has just finished, its pale pink brushes turning cream. Sometimes it pays to stick with the trusted and true!

**Margaret Lynch**

## Report on last meeting by Margaret Lynch

Photos are from Sue Grahame and Karen Cockerill

### Friday May 6<sup>th</sup> Visit to Australian National Botanic Gardens



***The main path at ANBG***

Our group, which included some guides from ERBG, gathered for a cuppa on a delightful autumn morning at the ANBG café. There we met our guides for an informal chat before heading off into the Gardens.

Following the disappointing news that we were not able to visit the nursery due to an outbreak of myrtle rust, we instead were shown the "Growing Friends" propagation area where plants sourced from the collection are grown for sales each spring and autumn.

We then divided into groups for a pleasant and informative stroll through the older displays of Myrtaceae and Proteaceae





**Admiring the sculptural cauliflower Hakea, *Hakea corymbosa* from W.A.**



**Asteraceae garden ANBG**

then continuing on to the Sydney Region Gully. The Gardens undertook major earthworks in 2013 to remodel the entrances as “sandstone country” using a crushed sandstone growing medium which has allowed the iconic sandstone species to flourish.

This natural gully area is a haven for birds and a delightful ecological display. The Red Centre Garden with its striking red sand and landscape design representing ecosystems from desert plains to rocky escarpments is unquestionably a considerable achievement and major attraction.

After a delightful morning we regrouped on the eucalypt lawn for a picnic lunch to the sounds of music wafting across from a musical festival. After lunch we continued through the rock garden, the gymnosperm plantings and then through the amazing rainforest gully. It was agreed a wonderful opportunity to spend a leisurely day with knowledgeable guides viewing a wide variety of Australia’s native flora.



**Thorny Devil sculpture at the Red Centre garden, with Chris, Jenny, Jenny and Peter, and Sue**



## Saturday May 7<sup>th</sup> National Arboretum, Canberra

On another beautiful autumn day in the capital we met our guide and STEP member at the National Arboretum for our viewing of Forest 20, the Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park.

On the way an interesting walk through the *Quercus engelmannii* (evergreen oak) forest, a rare species of North American oak classified as vulnerable.

Unfortunately the neighbouring forest of *Acacia caerulescens* (Buchan blue), also a threatened species from a small area in Gippsland was doing poorly with many trees dead (possibly water issues).



**STEP Garden with guide Tony Lawson**

The STEP area, unlike the other forests of the arboretum displays understorey shrubs, grasses, herbs and ferns. Our guide outlined the history and development of STEP as a regional botanic garden designed to help educate visitors about the flora typical of the southern tablelands. Sixteen species of eucalypts along with *Brachychiton populneus* and *Allocasuarina verticillata* represent the trees of the region. These and the other plants have been placed in their relative landscape positions from low lying grasslands to the more elevated dry and wet sclerophyll forests. While the arboretum provides some support the area is worked and managed by an enthusiastic band of volunteers.

**After a short break we then joined another guide for an autumn tones walk.**

This walk was specially devised for Tree Week to showcase autumn colour and was enhanced by a selection of poetry readings.

Our guide led us to 6 vantage points to take in the vistas and forests.

In keeping with the “wide brown land” sculpture, “**Australian Autumn**” by **Dorothea Mackellar** was one of the poems recited:

**This is the gentlest season of the year.  
From mists of pearl and gold  
The slow sweet hours unfold  
To crystal colours, still  
As a glass, but not so chill.**

**All birds speak softly in the Autumn bush.  
One bellbird from the deep  
Like a call heard in sleep  
Chimes in the bronze-gold gloom  
Cool greenhood orchids bloom.**

Two glorious autumn days in which to enjoy two of Canberra’s wonderful attractions.



**Guide Anna talks about the work at the Arboretum**

## Committee news

### Future activities

Your committee continues to work on an evolving program of interesting meetings for this year, activities which will hopefully add to our knowledge of Australian plants, and encouraging all members to get involved.

<b>July 2</b>	Wattles
<b>August 6</b>	Grevilleas
<b>September 3</b>	Grasslands, with Friends of Grasslands date to be confirmed
<b>October 8</b>	AGM Meeting at Horse Island
<b>November 5</b>	Garden visit to Cliff Williams property, and driving Western Distributor Road looking at spring flowers

Note changes to the October and November meetings to accommodate our hosts

**If you have any issues or ideas, any of the committee would appreciate your input. (see page 10)**

### ***Olearia tomentosa*: a coastal survivor**

There are about 25,000 species of daisies world wide, with about 1000 present in Australia. The **Asteraceae** family is one of the largest and widespread of all the plant families, with species occurring in every continent and in every land based community except extreme alpine. The family includes many weeds, as well as useful economic, horticultural and agricultural species.

The daisy flower takes many outward forms, but always it is a compound head of tiny individual flowers called florets.

Many species have structures that look like petals around the outside, but these are still separate flowers.

The 'petal' is a ligule, or appendage, and the whole is known as a ray floret.

The centre of the head is made up of several different kinds of floret, some fertile, others not, depending on the species.

Some seeds have a plume of hairs on the top in differing shapes and sizes, again depending on the species (wind dispersed), while others have an arrangement of hooks, bristles or spurs (animal or object dispersed).



***Olearia tomentosa* "flower" and buds**



A feature of this family is that many species, while they do produce seeds, frequently do this by means of apomixis; that is, the seeds are produced without fertilisation occurring. In other words, these species do not necessarily require the presence of male pollen to form viable seeds (fancy not needing a man!!).

Apomixis assists reproduction where pollination is restricted, or potential pollinator partners are remote. Plants produced in this way are therefore clones of the parent plant, but to prevent the reduction of genetic diversity, complicated processes take place during germination and growth. The strategy has allowed the plants of many daisy (and other) species to become invasive and to successfully exploit new spaces.

This was not meant to be a botany lesson, but a piece about *Olearia tomentosa*, Wrinkled Daisy Bush, but I became carried away by the fascinating characteristics of the daisy family.

So, to *Olearia tomentosa*.

*Olearia tomentosa* is a smallish shrub with round, wrinkled, and sometimes toothed, furry, leaves that inhabits dry forests, scrub and heaths along the New South Wales coast and inland to the lower Blue Mountains and the Budawang Range.

It rather likes exposed headlands, often clinging precariously to pockets of acidic, sandy, well drained soil.

In these circumstances, the furry, thickish leaves help the plant to withstand salt laden winds.



The flowers are from two to five centimetres across, the ray florets blue or white and the central disc florets yellow. The seed, or achene, has a plume of feathery bristles in the style of a Dandelion.

The species was first named *Aster tomentosus* after the English daisy *Aster* in 1798 by J. C. Wendland, a German horticulturist and author of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The specific name, *tomentosus*, means soft, referring to the soft feel of the leaves. In 1836 the name was changed to *Olearia* by A. P. De Candolle, probably after Adam Olearius, another 17<sup>th</sup> century German botanist. The species was recorded as being introduced into England and Europe in the mid 1790s.

In spite of having no internet and email, these 17<sup>th</sup> century plantsmen must have had an efficient communication system across a whole range of European nations. Specimens were collected in Australia (and other countries), sent to Europe and England by sea, grown on in specialist nurseries and distributed to plant scientists for study and naming. Many of these plantsmen must have been on good terms with each other, too, as the same botanists keep cropping up both as authors and as generic and specific names.

**Jenny Liney.**

**Photos by Karen Cockerill**

## Yellows

by Leigh Murray

Some of my favourite plants have yellow flowers. And one of my least favourite garden sights is yellowed foliage: in this case, yellow is definitely not mellow. It's a sign of distress, usually dryness.

With the recent unusually dry, warm spell, we've been 'blessed' with quite a wide range of plants with yellowed foliage. These include *Lomandra longifolia*, *Calytrix tetragona*, *Hakea sericea* and *Westringia* 'Wynyabbie Gem'. And a *Corymbia maculata* that's survived doggedly at Queanbeyan despite being repeatedly squished by large falling branches of *Eucalyptus goniocalyx*. I expect all of these ailing plants to 'green' up once there's enough soil moisture, possibly except the *Westringia* – these seem somewhat susceptible to death from dryness (and borer at Tuross).

One of the successes at Tuross is *Acacia pravissima* 'Little Nugget'. This is a dwarf form of the normally large shrub (sometimes huge – we had one at Queanbeyan that would have been over 5m x 5m – it eventually succumbed after about 20 years in a very dry, exceptionally well-drained spot). 'Little Nugget' only grows to about a metre high and wide, and it has a neat, dense habit with unusual wedge-shaped foliage. It is a shrub that's attractive year-round.

Another yellow-flowering success at Tuross is *A. fimbriata*. We planted one when we began the garden and, with inadequate pruning, it grew into a gangly 4 metre tree that refused to recover from any hard pruning (unlike *A. covenyi* which shoots from the most amazingly hard, bare wood). The *A. fimbriata* was recently busted off in a gale. But in the meantime, it had seeded 3 plants, all in very convenient places. Having learnt a thing or two about its pruning needs, I've kept the three little ones small and bushy, and they make the most beautiful foliage plants. They have pretty yellow ball flowers – although they are now so frequently pruned that they don't get much of a chance to flower (and so they aren't likely to seed more plants). On the other hand, for sheer flower power, it's hard to beat an *A. buxifolia* in full bloom. It's a stunner.

And for age, we have an *A. floribunda* at Queanbeyan that would be about 40 years old. It was kept tip-pruned by a besotted cat during its early years languishing in a pot, but it hasn't been well-maintained since, so ours is rather daggy now. This species can look beautiful in full bloom.

A staple of our gardens is *Correa glabra*, a tough shrub which comes in many different forms. Most have yellow flowers. It's not showy – just neat, reliable, long-flowering and very attractive to birds. Eastern Spinebills, in particular, fancy the flowers big time.

Another yellow-flowering bird favourite is a prostrate form of *Grevillea juniperina*. It can spread to a few metres with dense, ground-hugging foliage and pretty yellow spider flowers dotted about.

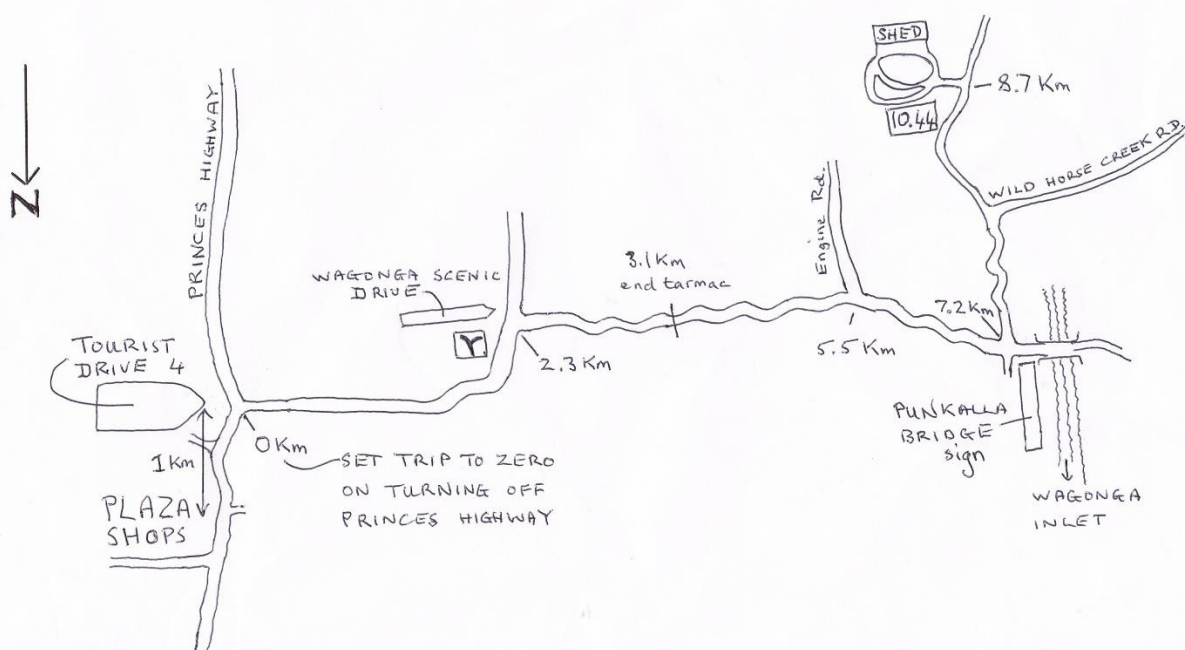
Other yellow-flowering good performers for us include *Anigozanthos flavidus* (the flowers of some forms are wonderfully strong yellows), *Banksia integrifolia* and *B. marginata* (pale lemon), *Eucalyptus conferruminata* (with fist-sized yellow bird-magnet balls, often sold as *E. lehmannii*), and *Hibbertia aspera* and *H. scandens* (bright yellow). There are tons of yellow-flowering plants once you start thinking about them. And yellow is such a wonderful, cheerful colour (unless it's the foliage...).



*Hibbertia scandens*, definitely yellow

Newsletter Editor and Sue continue to enjoy the delights of Tasmania, although the weather has turned typical, with cold winds and sometimes squally rain, but we have managed to get to most of our desired destinations without drama. After making it south to Ida Bay, the rain set in and the road further south was closed so we returned to Hobart, where snow fell to 600m., but suddenly the sun returned and we headed back south to Bruny Is. for a few days. We were advised on more than one occasion, that if the weather was crook, just wait 10 minutes, for it is sure to change. And it does! Back to the big island, as Brunyites call Tassie, we spent a few days on Tasman Peninsular, but avoiding the bustle of Port Arthur, and are now heading up the east coast, camping at the Bay of Fires. Will have to head to St Helens to get the newsletter away. Home around mid June all being well. See you then.

Getting to Pete & Jen, 10.44 Punkalla-Tilba Road	MORE DETAIL
Leave Princes Highway 1 km south of Plaza	1 km south of PLAZA shops, take right "TOURIST DRIVE 4" and <u>here set trip to zero</u> , or note odometer
Take all signs "TOURIST" or "SCENIC DRIVE"	After 2.3 km, take "WAGONGA SCENIC DR", (a right turn, on a crest)
Turn left 30 m short of old wooden "PUNKALLA BRIDGE" (signed)	At 5.5 km, pass Engine Rd.; at 7.2 km SHARP LEFT 30 m BEFORE "PUNKALLA BRIDGE" sign
10.44 is first house on left (1.5 km)      If probs. ring 4476 3576	At 8.7 km, enter double gate of 10.44



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