



Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 264 – May 2011

April Plant Sale



The weather had been nothing short of spectacular for the week preceeding, but the Plant Sale weekend, April 9 and 10, dawned cloudy and windy with the promise of rain. The crowds were good on Saturday morning, and all the sellers reported a steady trade.

But the afternoon was quiet, and when the predicted rain hit at around 3.30 most closed up shop for the day. The now traditional BBQ tea for the workers started early, and was a lot of fun, with good food, fine wine, great company and entertainment courtesy of Arthur, Frank, Judith and Ade.



Maybe we could start a band??

Sunday was cloudy, windy and cold and the crowds stayed away, although the numbers picked up a little in the afternoon. Although we showed a profit, some thought will be given to be sure we maximise our return next year.

A big thank you to **Arthur and Linda Pape** for the use of their gardens and to all those club members who helped out over the weekend. Special mention to Frank for his organisation, Tina, Sheila and Penny for manning (womaning?) the canteen all weekend, Matt and Pam for the BBQ, and so many others ...a huge and heart-felt THANK YOU!



The 'Man in the Silly Hat' sells another plant

We have a good number of plants that did not sell and we will be holding stalls at markets and the like over the next few months to try and move them. We will let you know where and when, so that everyone can assist with the sales. There is a wide variety of very healthy plants in 100 and 150mm pots. Club

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members can purchase them at cost, \$5 and \$8, by contacting Frank Scheelings.

Our Last Meeting

Our speaker for the April meeting was State President Cathy Powers, who spoke to us about the biodiversity in the Brisbane Ranges.

Cathy, and husband Ron, live on the border of the Brisbane Ranges National Park. Her love of natural history, and her passion for photographing it, has given her an intimate knowledge of the biodiversity within the Brisbane Ranges.

The Ranges are a plateau of sedimentary rock, stretching roughly from Bacchus Marsh to Maude, which were laid down in the Ordovician period, about 450 million years ago. Over time the rocks were pushed up into a series of folds, and as sea levels fell the ranges were exposed.



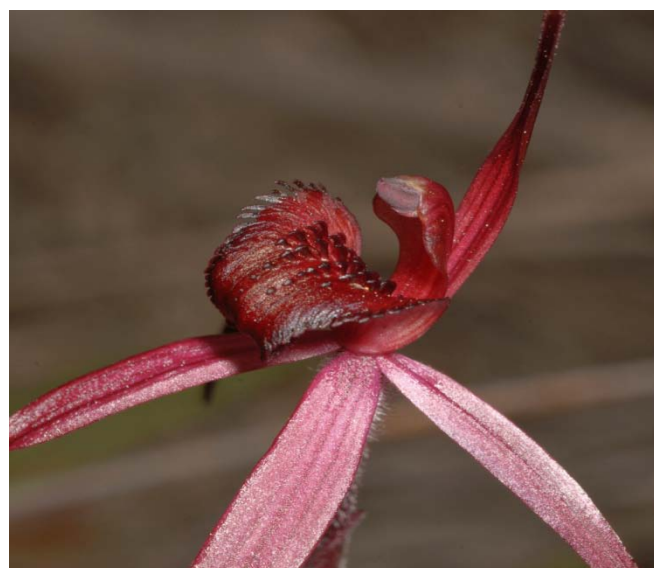
The kooris of the area were the Kurung people, a branch of the Wauthurong, and numbered 300-400 at the time of white settlement in the 1830s. Squatters had claimed all the land by 1840 and the Kurung were reduced to just 30.

Gold was discovered at Steiglitz in 1853 and though sparse, was mined until 1890. Settlers and miners

Biodiversity

cleared large areas of forest in their quest for timber, and undoubtedly changed the habitat of the Brisbane Ranges in doing so. In 1866 about 1500ha were set aside for water catchment and work began on the Stony Creek dam and a series of brick lined channels and tunnels. Water flowed into Geelong for the first time in 1873.

The habitat in the Brisbane Ranges today is diverse – with steep rocky gorges, grasslands, sclerophyll forests, sedge swamps, damp gullies and man-made lakes. There are over 600 species of wildflowers to be found, and some, like *Grevillea steiglitziana* and *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* ssp *glabella* are found nowhere else. There are rare plants like *Olearia pannosa* ssp *cardiophylla*, the Velvet Daisy-bush and *Arachnorchis clavescens*, the Crimson Spider-orchid, which until recently was only known from a single plant. Over 100 orchid species are listed for the B.R.N.P and Cathy has photographed many of them.



Arachnorchis clavescens – Crimson Spider-orchid

The Brisbane Ranges are also rich in fungi – some good, some not so good. Many plants, and particularly orchids, share a symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizal fungi, which assist in the uptake of carbon

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from the soil. Without the fungi, the orchids simply cannot exist. Phytophthora (though strictly speaking a mould) is the cause of widespread destruction of the Grass-trees, *Xanthorrhoea australis*, by causing root rot. Phytophthora lives in damp soil and can be carried on the feet of humans and animals like Echidnas. They dig for their food, or for protection from predators, and pick up the spores in the soil adhering to their fur and spines. In their wanderings they drop infected soil into a new area and the cycle begins again.

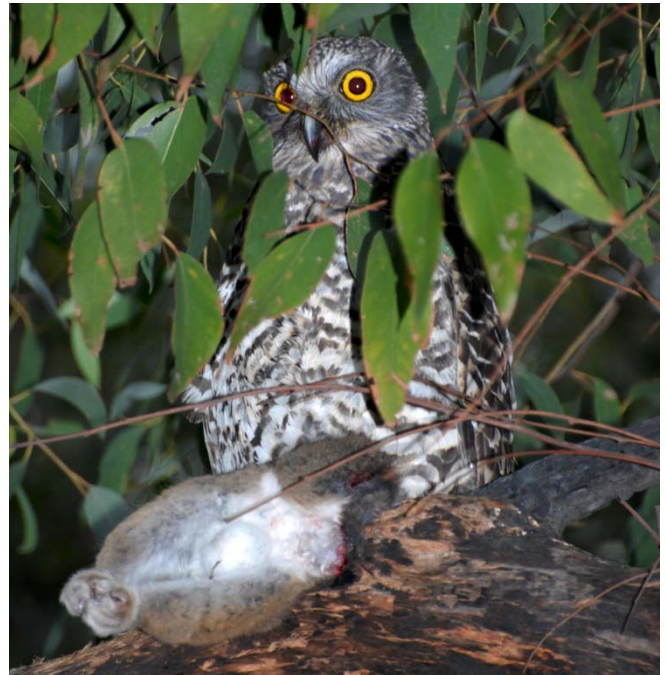
As well as echidnas, the Brisbane Ranges is home to a surprising number of native animals - kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, dunnarts, phascogales, possums, gliders, rats and bats all live and interact within the park. Some are vegetarian, like the koalas and possums, and some like the bats, antechinus and phascogales are hunters living on small lizards, insects and other invertebrates.



Eastern Grey Kangaroo – *Macropus giganteus*

Hunters are well represented in the bird population too, with powerful owls and wedge-tailed eagles taking larger prey, and boobooks, barn-owls, falcons and kites feeding on smaller animals and insects.

There are 66 species of honeyeaters recorded for the B.R.N.P and large numbers of ducks, swans and water-fowl visit and breed on the water storages.



Powerful Owl with Ring-tailed possum dinner

The Brisbane Ranges are also home to many tiny creatures - hunters and hunted. Snakes, spiders, lizards, frogs and wasps all eat insects, and each other. Many insects are nectar feeders and the flowering plants rely on them for their existence. Many of the orchids have specific pollinators, and go to great lengths to trick an unsuspecting wasp into doing their 'dirty work' for them.

So we see great biodiversity in the Brisbane Ranges, and diverse systems are healthy and self-sustaining. As Cathy said – "It's all a matter of balance".

Cathy's talk was wonderfully informative and entertaining, and her photography is stunning. Thanks Cathy, for a memorable evening. You can see more of Cathy's photos on her website :-

<http://www.banjarah.com/>

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Plant Table

Though there were a very few specimens by our usual standards we were very pleased to have National President, Paul Kennedy visiting us, and he agreed to talk about the plant table for us.

Ken is the leader of the Hakea study group, and so a specimen of Hakea 'Burrendong Beauty' caught his eye. A hybrid of *H. petalaris*, it strikes readily from cuttings, best taken in March. With its prostrate habit and striking purple/red and white stem-hugging flowers, it is a must have plant for the garden.

The gorgeous kangaroo paw, *Anigozanthos* 'Autumn Blaze' has lovely orange/yellow flowers as the name suggests. It flowers in summer and then, if pruned back, flowers again. Ken suggested that *Anigozanthos* be cut back hard – to about 50mm – between April and June for best results.



A brilliant red *Beaufortia squarrosa* from Frank Scheelings' garden though stunning, flowers very

sparsely. Ken suggested that the plants grow in and around boggy areas and require good moisture to flower profusely.

A beautiful, tiny cultivar of *Correa reflexa* prompted much discussion about correa deaths all down the east coast of Australia over summer. Suggestions included the rain, humidity, fungus or a combination as the culprit. But, while there have been many losses members reported that seedlings were appearing when they have not done so before. Who knows?

Plant of the Month

Grevillea leptobotrys

Ken Westley won the raffle, as did many others. Thanks to Margaret Guenzel for making so many lovely double-flowered *Alyogyne*s available as prizes this month. But Ken's was the first ticket drawn and he chose *Grevillea leptobotrys* which was brought in by yours truly.



Grevillea leptobotrys is a low, sprawling shrub with flat, much divided, grey-green leaves. Its native habitat is the south west of Western Australia where it grows on sandy, gravelly or loamy soils on laterite or granite. It likes hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters, but doesn't do well away from WA on its own roots - mine are grafted onto *G. robusta*. The lovely



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little pink/mauve flowers are on racemes at the end of the branches and occur in late spring and summer, although there seems to be some flowers all year round.

They like a warm, sheltered position, preferable in dappled shade, and need good drainage. My first *G. leptobotrys* was purchased about 5 years ago and planted (wrongly) in full sun in an open position. Although it survived, it did not grow at all for three years. It was on its last legs, and so I took a risk and moved it to another part of the garden. There it is more protected and after 12 months has quadrupled in size. It's such a pretty plant that I recently purchased another and I hope, with a little more knowledge now, that this one will also flourish.

April Excursion to Cranbourne

Matt Baars

After a pleasant journey through Melbourne ably conveyed by Ade, a man of many talents (mostly hidden) and guided by 2 or 3 navigators of varying reliability and knowledge, we arrived at the Cranbourne Gardens. The bush surrounding the driveway seemed as I remembered except for evidence of recent fires.



The brave band sets off for parts unknown

I enjoyed the walk up from the car park, the path being lined with casuarinas and banksias in a formal planting. I think this area showed some good thinking and planning as the plantings have come together very well and show that native plants can effectively be used for formal settings.

We then launched an assault on the café, which after the initial skirmish of placing orders settled down to a pleasant and relatively quiet meal, no doubt aided by the lack of wine.

The gardens were a bit disappointing as about 70% of the area, virtually the whole centre, was a construction site. Although it will be great when finished, it was not well advertised, so none of us knew that this was happening. There are some great plants and original plantings surrounding the new area, which are getting to a good size and you can see what the designers' intentions are. It was also interesting to see where some areas were not thriving even with well drained beds and good rain. Even the experts can have trouble with plants.

We enjoyed seeing the Bandicoots, which seemed plentiful and not too shy, nice to see them making a comeback.



Southern Brown Bandicoot - Isodon obesulus

The Friends Nursery was opened for us and we came away with a good selection of plants, not many of us can get away without buying plants when we come across a nursery. It was then decided that while we were in the area we would visit Wayne Turvill's Orchid Nursery.

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Our navigators again amazed us with their skill, but Ade got us there anyway. Another spending frenzy ensued ... I can't help myself with native orchids, I am glad they twisted my arm about going there.

Now that we had our fill of plants it was time to look after other appetites and off to Springvale it was. The Vietnamese restaurant was as good as we remembered and Frank and Roger went out and got wine for the ladies before the mood got too ugly.

It was time to head home and we younger members were entertained with renditions of songs from the olden days, quite a few of our members were around then. It is amazing how wine can improve the "singing" capabilities of people.

It was a good day and we all had a great time. I think it is great that as a group we can have these sorts of outings and have fun while pursuing our varied interests. Over the years many people have organised these outings and it is good that we still have people who will put in the time and effort to continue the good work. I look forward to the next trip.

May Excursion

Bendigo

A list will be available at the May meeting for those interested in our next excursion to the Bendigo region on Sunday, May 29th. We will visit the Goldfields Revegetation Nursery, and more. The weather will play a major part in just what we do, and where, but a good time will be had by all. There will be just 24 seats available, so you could get in early by emailing me ☺

Australian Open Garden Scheme

1-2 May. Tall Timbers. Open on Sunday and Monday, Tall Timbers is a tranquil retreat where exotic plantings are cleverly merged with the surrounding native forest. A landscaped creek and series of large pools are linked by cascades. There is also a 2Ha bushwalk. Lunches and teas are available Sunday only. 3560 Yarra Junction Rd, Piedmont (near Noojee) 10am – 4.30pm. \$6 entry.

7-8 May. View Street. This breathtaking garden occupies a spectacular riverside position. Large, stone-walled terraces hold an exceptional collection of perennials, the amphitheatre is ringed with ornamental grasses, and the river flats and billabong have been replanted with indigenous species. 1 View Street, Alphonston. 10am – 4.30pm. \$8 entry.

Some More Plant Sales

1 May. APS Yarra Yarra Autumn Plant Sale and Propagation Demonstration from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm. Cnr Main Road & Brougham St, Eltham. Demonstrations are from 1.00 – 2.00 pm.

21 May. APS Melton & Bacchus Marsh Annual Plant Sale, Melton

Another favourite

Tony Cavanagh

Tony's favourite this month is *Eremophila biserrata*.



The unusual flowers of *Eremophila biserrata*

I have been very pleased with the way this plant has grown for me, so much so that I keep propagating it and putting in more specimens! It is one of those rare plants that are, and remain, absolutely flat on the ground. My oldest example is probably five years old, covers an area about four metres across and even though it is growing among other shrubs, never shows any inclination to climb or scramble through them. It

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is almost the ideal ground cover but unfortunately really can't take much foot traffic.



Eremophila biserrata comes from an area in southern Western Australia around Hyden and Lake King where it grows in the open or in light overhead shade on sandy and clay loams. It seems to adapt to most soils providing they are well drained but not too dry or dry out over summer and is one *Eremophila* that benefits from some summer watering. I found that one young plant in an open, sunny position had much of its new growth burnt off on a windy 43 °C day so young plants benefit from mulching and being kept damp in hot weather. It roots easily from cuttings, in only three or four weeks with nearly 100% success, when taken in February/March. The foliage is bright green and the flowers, while somewhat sparse, are an interesting red/purple. My plants flower in January/February. It is a plant I highly recommend.

Our Next Meeting

Neil Anderton

Our next meeting is May 17th, and the Speaker is Neil Anderton, who will talk to us about growing terrestrial orchids for conservation, and a few hints on growing them at home.

Neil retired in 2007 after spending his working life as a chemist, the last 34 years working in the CSIRO

Division of Animal Health, researching poisonous plants, and toxic plant associated fungi and bacteria responsible for livestock deaths in Australia.

In the late 1990's Neil became involved with the Friends of Inverleigh Flora and Fauna Reserve. During this time his interest in orchids grew, and he joined Geelong ANOS in late 2005 and ANOS Victoria in early 2006. This interest rapidly became a passion, and Neil became heavily involved in the Terrestrial Orchid Study Group, Conservation Group, and the Terrestrial Seed Propagation Group, where he learnt how to germinate orchids from seed both asymbiotically (without the mycorrhizal fungi) and symbiotically (with the fungi).



Inverleigh Spider Orchid

On his retirement in 2007, Neil became more active in field conservation and orchid monitoring with DSE, and, in 2008, became an Orchid Conservation Volunteer at the Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne, utilising the skills learnt at the ANOS Victoria Terrestrial Seed Group to grow endangered orchids for reintroduction into the wild. Neil sees his volunteer work as giving back to the environment for the enjoyment he receives from orchids and wandering through the wonderful Australian bush.