AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY — Geelong —

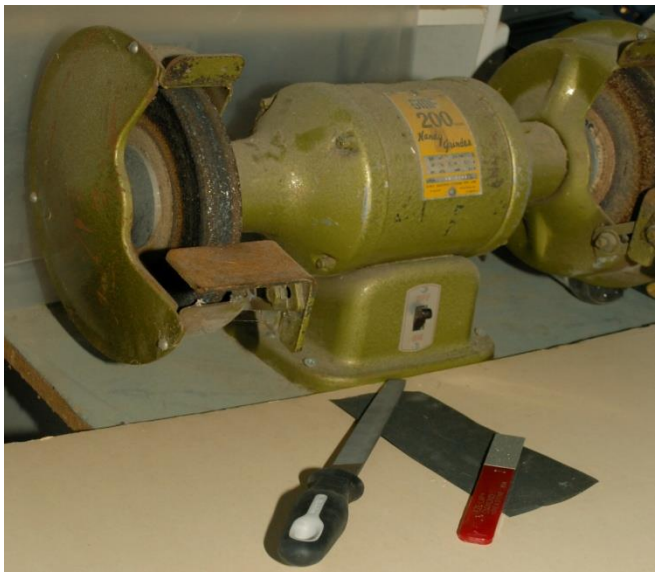
# Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 291 – November 2013

**OCTOBER MEETING** **Members' Night**

Matt Baars talked to us about a problem plaguing us all … keeping our cutting tools sharp. The requirements are basic –

- A couple of good quality, reasonably fine files. They should be sharp and you should feel them cutting the metal of the tool. If they run over it like a glass bottle they are blunt and should be discarded. Files are used on the blades of clippers, pruners, secateurs, axes and spades.
- A diamond sharpening steel for fine finishing of knives. These have small industrial diamond powder imbedded for fine grinding.
- Whet stone for fine finishing of knives and chisels. Lubricate these with oil or kerosene.
- Emory paper for fine finishing also. Nail a strip to a block of wood for ease of use.
- An electric grinding wheel to make larger jobs easier – not necessary, but a good tool.



**Pretty much all you need**

Tips:-

- File away from the cutting edge, not towards it. This helps to avoid injury.
- Push the file forward and across the edge. Small serrations left by the file aid in cutting.
- Stainless steel is not ideal for cutting tools like clippers and secateurs as it will not hold an edge.
- Carbon steel holds an edge, but will rust.
- Keep tools in good order and avoid rust by spraying with WD40 or similar.
- Cheap tools usually won't hold an edge, or can't be resharpened.

**Benjamin Scheelings** has been experimenting with Australian natives as subjects for bonsai. He brought along a beautiful little Moreton Bay fig – *Ficus macrophylla*, a *Banksia serrata*, and his latest project – a Melaleuca forest!

Benji suggests looking for plants with small leaves to keep the proportions right. The growing medium is important. Benji uses a layer of stones to aid with drainage under a mixture of potting mix, sand and coconut peat. Stones on the top are for aesthetics and to keep the growing medium in place.

In bonsai there is a saying "It always rains twice'. So water the plant, wait ten minutes or so for it to soak in, and water again. But don't let the roots stay wet. It is advisable to take the plant from its pot every couple of years, prune the roots and replace it in the same pot. This helps keep the plant from becoming pot-bound, and also replaces the 'sour' medium. Roots should be pruned in the season opposite to foliage growth.

Feeding is essential for any plant in a pot and Benji uses a weak solution of Seasol. Continuous early pruning encourages the trunk to grow. Once this is

established, leaves and branches are trimmed for aesthetics and wires used to shape the plant.

**Benji's *Ficus macrophylla***

Banksia, Ficus, Kunzea and Eucalypts are all possible candidates for bonsai, basically any plant that you can coppice might work in bonsai.

**Tina Scheelings** told us about her growing interest in orchids, which started 30 years ago with Cymbidiums. Her first ever flower was eaten by Benji who was just crawling at the time. Not a great start.

A few years ago Roger took a busload of APS Geelong members to Wayne Turville's Australian Orchid Nursery in Tyabb, and Tina was instantly struck by the many forms and colours available.

They are easy to look after requiring little maintenance besides water, food, and an occasional re-potting. They can be taken indoors as a display plant when in flower, and in fact Tina's crop decorated the church for their daughter, Magdalena's wedding. The flowers last about 6 weeks and are a delight.

They recently visited an orchid nursery at Merrigan, and Tina was overwhelmed by the sweet, heady scent of the Dendrobiums in the hot-houses. Although as enjoyable and rewarding exercise, Tina did warn that it can be an expensive hobby . So, be warned ☺

Tina's orchid was a deep purple *Dendrobium kingianum x speciosum* hybrid … specifically Johnathon's Glory x Wonga.

**ON THE TABLE**

Frank Scheeling and Roger Wileman conducted the discussion about our specimen table, and a very varied table ( and discussion) it was.

Chamlauciums featured strongly with many different cultivars and colour forms. A lovely form of *C. floribundum*, "Sweet Rosy" is a deep pink/red and white; "Sweet Sixteen" is a delicate pink and white. Both are smallish for Chamelauciums at 1.5m x 1.5m. Colours ranged from white to purple, and flower sizes from 6mm to 25mm across. Chamelauciums are wonderful plants giving colour for many months of the year; first with the buds, then the flowers. Once the flowers are gone, the bracts continue to make an interesting show. All stages are great in cut flower arrangements, and the flowers last a good few weeks in a vase with regular water changes.

**"Sweet Rosy" – a *C. floribundum* cultivar**

There was also a hybrid *Chamelaucium x Verticordia plumosa*, which was a mass of rich purple flowers, a very striking plants indeed.

Melaleucas are in abundance at this time of year, and this was reflected on our table. *M. citrina* with lemon yellow terminal flowers was a standout, as were two colour form of *M. fulgens*; a bright red and startling purple. *M. micromera* has tiny yellowish flowers, no bigger than the head of a match and *M. wilsoni* is a lovely shrub with mauve/pink flowers, found around Bendigo.

Kunzeas continue to delight me with their varied forms and colours. *K. recurva* is a multi-stemmed with profuse pink/mauve pom-pom flowers. *K. ambigua* has masses of white flowers along the stems, and the *K. baxteri x pulchella* was a startling bright red.

Swainsonia gelegifolia, the Darling Pea, is a small, dense, shrubby plant with bright purple/mauve pea flowers in its natural habitat of inland NSW and Qld. Though still quite showy it tends to be a bit sparse and leggy in the local gardens.

There was a lovely white *Lasiopetalum sp*. with creamy white flowers; the old favourite *Thomasia purpurescens* - a must have plant with its masses of dark-centred mauve flowers and John's Banksia coccinea 'Scarlett' , a deep red and pale grey flower with astounding and beautiful symmetry.

Grevilleas again featured strongly, with true species *G. endlicheriana, G. georgiana,G. zygoloba* and *G. trueriana*. But the majority were hybrids – Peaches'n'Cream, Molly, Superb, Pink Candelabra, and Midas Touch - which all have large and very colourful flowers, many of which have flowers in most months of the year.

**"Midas Touch" – *G. juncifolia x 'Honey Gem'*.**

Another notable was a small Petrophile, *P. ericafolia*. As the name suggest, the leaves are very heath-like, and the flowers and are wooly, yellow tufts on the end of each stem.

*Kennedia nigricans*, the Black Coral Pea is a vigourous climber with large shiny deep green leaves and stunning, latge black and yellow pea flowers. Great to cover an old fence, or your house, if you're not careful.

There were two Prostantheras – an lovely purple one and a very pretty yellow one – those conducting the discussion claimed 'brain-fade' as to the specifics.

*Phebalium squamulosum var. argentium* is a shrub to about 1.5 metres covered with subtle pale yellow flowers.

And interestingly a white form of *Stypandra glauca*, which is usually a bright blue. According to Roger, this white 'form' resulted from the application of a poison, which didn't kill the plant, but changed the flower colour.

**PLANT of THE MONTH** ***Eremophila flaccida***

*E. flaccida* is an attractive shrub featuring purple/brown flowers, mostly hidden under the foliage from May to September. Found in central west Western Australia between Wiluna and Karatha, it grows on stony or clay soils on hillsides, ridges and clay flats. In its natural habitat it is a dense shrub to 1.5 metres, but it is smaller in cultivation in this part of the world.


**Photo courtesy Florabase and A.P. Brown**

**NOVEMBER MEETING** **Hakeas**

Graeme Woods is the speaker for November, and his topic is hakeas, of which he has a large collection. Most of you will remember when Graeme spoke to us last year about Grevilleas. We followed up in November, with a visit to Graeme and Ros's garden in Gisborne. Graeme is a very knowledgeable and entertaining speaker, and I know you will enjoy the last meeting for 2013.

**2014 SPEAKERS.**

Your committee has been hard at work arranging the 2014 calendar. We have the first half of the year locked away, and would like to hear from you if you would like to speak, or know of anyone interesting who would make a good speaker.

| | |
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| January | In recess |
| February | BBQ at Arthur and Linda's |
| March | Wilma Trew – 'The Tree Project' |
| April | Frank & Ade – 'Exotic Birds' |
| May | Matt Baars – 'Weed-busting' |
| June | Cathy Powers - tba |
| July | A.G.M and Photo Competition. |

**XMAS BREAK-UP**

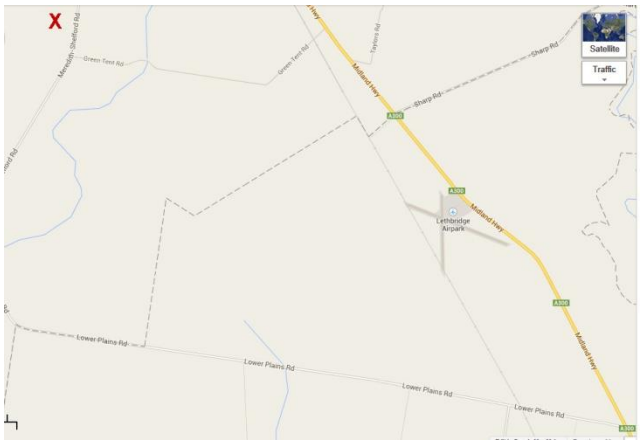
Saturday December 7th is the date, and Liz Wells' place near Meredith is the place. There'll be a lamb on the spit – BYO everything else. Campsites are available for those who don't want to make the long drive back to Geelong in less than perfect condition. Directions to Liz's House are as follows :-

1. Take Midland Hwy through Lethbridge. About 2 Kms past the 100km sign turn left into Lower Plains Road. Go to the end (about 10kms) turn right and about 2kms go past Green Tent Road on your right. 400 m past Green Tent road on the LEFT is Liz's rammed earth entrance.

OR

2. Continue past Lower Plains Road about 6 Kms, will see Happy Hens Chook farm on the right. 400 m past turn left into Green Tent Road. Go to end (3.4km) turn right and first entrance on left (400m) is my entrance.

Green Tent Road is an all weather dirt road, Lower Plains Road is sealed but several Kms longer to Liz's place.

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**AUSTRALIAN OPEN GARDEN SCHEME**

**2 & 3 November –** Voss Garden 80 Lakeside Drive, Gheringhap. An interesting native garden.

**9 & 10 November** - Valleyview, 23 Sutherland St, Teesdale. A predominantly native garden full of contrasts.

**16 & 17 November-** Shorney Garden, 136 Silverwattle Drive, Invermay. A celebration of Australian flora and fauna on 7 acres. Extras include donkeys, goats and a hen house.

**23 & 24 November** - Nash Garden, 85 Hawkes Rd, Humevale. Inspirational bushfire recovery garden with grass paths leading between beautiful mass plantings of eucalypts and other flowering natives.

**A FAVOURITE TREE** ***Corymbia eximia***

In Roslyn Road, near the Rugby Street corner, is a massive eucalypt (now Corymbia), with large deep green/grey leaves, and yellowish flaky bark. It is a striking tree, if only because it is such a large specimen for a residential block. At this time of year it is transformed into a mass of creamy white blossoms which all but cover the canopy. It is magnificent!

As I write the flowers have started, and, by mid November, the tree resembles a giant ice-cream cone.

***Corymbia eximia***, or the Yellow Bloodwood, is a native of New South Wales, around the Sydney Basin.

It grows mostly in high rainfall areas on shallow sandstone soils, often in fire prone areas.

It was first collected near the Grose River by Robert Brown and Ferdinand Bauerin October 1803. It was described as *Eucalyptus eximia* by Johannes Conrad Schauer in 1843. The species name is derived from the Latin *eximius*, meaning exceptional or uncommon, which may relate to the distinctive and unusual appearance of either the bark or flowers of the tree. In 1995, the *Eucalyptus* genus was split into three genera by Ken Hill and Lawrie Johnson, with *E. eximia* transferred into *Corymbia*.

The yellow bloodwood grows as an attractive gnarled tree, up to 20 metres tall. It may have a multi-stemmed stunted habit when growing on an exposed position. The distinctive bark is a yellowish fawn colour, and flaky. The adult leaves measure up to 20 cm long and 2.5 cm wide, and are greyish green, thick and veiny, and lanceolate (spear-shaped) or falcate (sickle-shaped)They have a prominent raised yellow midrib and taper to the end. They are arranged alternately along the stems.

There is another, smaller *C. eximia* in Church Street, just down from McCurdy Road, opposite Hamlyn Street. By the time you read this newsletter, both will be a mass of flowers, and well worth a look.

**STRANGE TREES INDEED. Syzygium cormiflorum**

My friends, Dennis and Claire Greenwell, have recently returned from their annual three month trip north, to escape Geelong's less than balmy winter. They spent much of the time in the tablelands inland from Cairns.

Claire took many wonderful photos of birds, plants and characters encountered on the trip, which I enjoyed over a glass or two of *Chateau Cardboard*. Among them was a very strange tree, *Syzigium cormiflorum*, the Bumpy Satinash.

**Flowers of *S. cormiflorum* – photo Claire Greenwell**

*Syzygium cormiflorum* can grow as a tall rainforest tree to 30 m in height with a trunk 1 m diameter at chest height. Large specimens can have buttressed trunks. The bark is fibrous and flakey. The leaves are very variable in size, but average around 13 by 6 cm.

Bumpy Satinash (and other rainforest trees) exhibit '***cauliflory***', which means the flowers and fruits do not appear on the branches, as is the case in most trees, but on the trunk.

The flowers appear in most months of the year except December and January, but mostly July to September. These are followed by white or cream fruit which are 3 to 6 cm in diameter.

Victorian colonial botanist Ferdinand von Mueller described the bumpy satinash as *Eugenia cormiflora* in 1865, from a collection by John Dallachy at Dalrymple's Gap near Rockingham Bay in Queensland. It was transferred to the genus *Syzygium* in a revision of the genus in 1983. Other common names include white apple, wild apple, watergum and Cairns satinash.

***Syzygium cormiflorum* fruit**

It is found from Townsville to the Iron Range, and from sea level to altitudes of 1200 m, with cauliflorous forms more common at higher elevations and ramiflorous at lower elevations. The fruit is not particularly palatable to humans, but the Southern Cassowary eats the fruit and flowers.

**GRAMPIANS CAMPOUT** **Frank Scheelings**

Twelve members had an enjoyable "camp-out" at the Grampians on the weekend of the 12th and 13th October at The Southern Grampians Wilderness cottages; this was to coincide with the Pomonal flower show. A few of us decided to travel up on the Friday night, staying in Avoca. A beautiful place for an overnight stay, cabins had massage chairs and a coffee maker! We shared a wonderful meal at the Avoca Hotel.

The morning drive was an hour to Pomonal and there were those of us who had to be persuaded to continue rather than do a tour of the local wineries. The Pomonal flower show was excellent, with plants well labelled and leaving us wondering why our specimens were so poor in comparison. The variety of plants for sale outside was outstanding, and business was brisk by the size of the grin on Philip Vaughan's face.

**Members enjoying the garden visit**

Following this we went for a garden visit and cup of tea to Roger's friend Brian (? ) who had a botanic mix of natives and exotics re-enforcing the opinion that everything grows better in the Grampians. Then onward to our "camp" – a surprisingly long trip, which was not helped by the frequent stops when something interesting was found on the side of the road. We evidently were not lost.

Once there, Tina prepared our evening meal of boned leg of lamb with roast vegetables, preceded by broad bean dip, home-made pate and an anchovy and garlic dip. We all wallowed around a fantastic warm pot-belly stove made out of gas bottles; a substantial amount of wine was consumed – they know who they are.

The next day, after bacon and eggs for breakfast, we went our separate ways – Roger and Phil went fishing and did catch a fish; no photo is available as I did not have my macro lens. Matt and I went walking, and found 12 different orchid species, only to be trumped by Roger who had seen a yellow spider orchid by the side of the road while driving at 80 kph. He was convinced it was a new species and named it Xantharachnorchis wilemanii in honour of his new bride.

**Roger's yellow spider orchid**

The evening meal again was a magnificent fare, again prepared by Tina, of Moroccan chicken with couscous, preceded by our dips. Our hosts John and Naomi joined us for tea and generously brought some bottles of local wine and we sat around the stove well into the night.

The next day was spent wandering around the bush until it was time to get back to Geelong. In short, a wonderful, sociable weekend with some very wonderful friends.

**WHAT'S IN THE ~~BUSH~~ GARDEN** ***Galium aparine***

With the warm weather and a bit of rain, the weeds have taken off again. One in particular takes my interest – Cleavers, *Galium aparine.* This information is from the Kew Gardens website :-

*Galium aparine* is a straggling climber, growing up to 3 m long, with slender 4-angled stems. Its narrow leaves can reach 7 cm long and are arranged in groups of 6-8 around the stem. The whole plant is covered in

minute hooked hairs, and can cling to skin, fur and clothing, so much so that it feels sticky. The flowers are tiny, white, 4-petalled tubes, developing into small round fruits, often borne in clusters of two or three. These fruits are also covered in hooked hairs which catch in the fur of passing animals or the clothes of humans. This is an efficient distribution mechanism that has contributed to the plant's wide geographical range.

**Cleavers – *Galium aparine***

*Galium aparine* is naturally widespread throughout Europe, North America and some parts of Asia, and occurs as far north as Alaska and Greenland. It has been introduced as far south as Australia, New Zealand, and the sub-Antarctic Islands. It can be a troublesome weed of cereal crops (especially in Europe and North America). Heavy infestation can cause significant yield losses, and its seeds can be difficult to separate mechanically from those of crops such as canola. *Galium aparine* can be found growing naturally on scree slopes and shingle banks.

The whole plant is edible, though not particularly tasty, and in China, for example, it is eaten as a vegetable. Its seeds can be roasted to prepare a sort of coffee substitute, though lower in caffeine. It is also reputed to have a number of medicinal properties, having been used in traditional medicine (usually as an infusion) to treat kidney problems, skin disorders and high blood pressure among other ailments. Archaeological evidence suggests that it may have been used in this way for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Cleavers is still used by medical herbalists today, although scientific evidence regarding its effectiveness is still lacking.

As children, we used to grab handsful of this plant and stick it on other kids' backs or in their hair, where it stuck fast. Apparently, there is a rather cruel Scottish children's game involving Cleavers. The trick is to persuade somebody to allow a piece of it to be put in their mouth - then pull it out fast. The hooks being rather sharp, the game is called 'bleedy tongues'!

**Close-up of the leaf and 'sticky' barbs**

Also known as Ladies' Bedstraw or Goosegrass it grows from a smallish rootstock, and can be easily removed from the soil. But should the seeds be allowed to mature, they are viable in the soil for up to eight years. So, get it early.

**MONEY DOES GROW ON TREES ABC News**

*I heard this story on the ABC News recently. The article is by **Kesha West**. The link at the bottom of the article will take you to the ABC News online where you'll find a video interview with CSIRO Geochemist, Mel Lintern, and the audio of the ABC Radio report.*

Geoscientists in Perth have discovered gold particles in the leaves, twigs and bark of eucalyptus trees, claiming a "eureka" moment which could revolutionise gold mining.

CSIRO researchers believe the trees, sitting on top of gold deposits buried deep underground, suck up the gold in their search for moisture during times of drought.

"We weren't expecting this at all," Dr Melvyn Lintern, a research geochemist at the CSIRO and the study's lead author, said. "To actually see the gold particles in the leaves was quite a eureka moment for us."

**Dr. Mel Lintern – CSIRO Geochemist**

Dr Lintern said the trees appear to be telling scientists what is happening under the earth's surface. "The particular trees that we did the research on appear to be bringing up gold from a remarkable 30 metres depth, which is about the equivalent of a 10-storey building," he said.

The research group used the CSIRO's Maia detector for x-ray elemental imaging at the Australian Synchrotron in Melbourne to analyse extremely small particles at high resolution.

The portions of gold are about one-fifth the diameter of a human hair. Dr Lintern said even 500 trees growing over a gold deposit would only yield enough gold for a wedding ring.

The researchers said they have also found gold in the leaves of other trees, such as the Acacia mulga. "We've actually found gold not only in trees but in shrubs that are growing beneath the trees as well, so (it is) not restricted to any particular trees at all," Dr Lintern said.\

**Discovery could make exploration cheap, quicker**

The discovery, the first of its kind in the world and the first time gold particles have been found in living material, will undoubtedly generate huge interest from within the gold mining and exploration industry. Former Newmont Mining Geochemist, Nigel Radford, says the implications for gold exploration are huge.

**WA gold Country, where the discovery was made**

"A lot of this stuff has been speculated about for some time, but the identification of the gold particles in the leaf materials is completely convincing and very, very important for the future of mineral exploration," said Mr Radford, who has worked in mineral exploration his entire working life, most recently with US-based Newmont, one of the world's biggest gold mining companies.

Mr Radford believes it has the potential to make gold exploration much quicker and cheaper. "Ideally, any mineral exploration team would like to collect their samples on-surface," he said. "If you can sample on-surface, it saves all the cost and all the time involved in drilling holes."

## CONGRATULATIONS ROGER AND SHEILA

Our very own Roger Wileman and Sheila Deakin were married on Saturday 19th October. The informal ceremony, attended by family and friends was held at Barwon Edge, on the river at Newtown, in perfect weather. Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Wileman.

**The Happy Couple**

**OUR FACEBOOK PAGE**

As you should be aware, we have an APS Geelong Facebook page, which is starting to get some attention from the general public. I know that many of you are not part of the Facebook crowd, but you can still be of assistance to the club.

Please email Ade with photos of interesting plants from your garden, so that he can include them on the page. Even if *you* don't look at it, others will. To date, all photos are from Ade's garden, and he's running out of ideas!!

This is just another way we can fulfil our club charter by promoting Australian Plants.

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