



Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 328– May 2017

APRIL MEETING

Attila Kapitany

Our speaker at the April meeting was Attila Kapitany, who talked to us about the 'succulent' plants of Australia's east coast. Attila was at pains to explain again that he uses 'succulent' as an adjective, rather than a noun. So, he is referring to plants with the ability to store water in their tissues – leaves, stems, roots and tubers – as opposed to the more generally understood cacti and their relatives.

In his usual very entertaining manner, Attila went on to talk to us about two main groups – orchids and ant-plants. He tended to get side-tracked in his enthusiasm and promised to 'get back to that later' ... though he seldom did. ☺

Many of the epiphytic and lithophytic orchids of eastern Australia have characteristics which Attila describes as succulent. The leaves are often fleshy, and the 'psuedobulbs' are quite obviously water storage devices. Dendrobiums, Dockrillias and Bulbophyllums, for example, are orchids with succulent leaves and bulbs. *Pyrorchis nigricans*, a widespread terrestrial orchid, has a water storing tuber below ground and a large, single leaf. These plants tend to flower profusely after fire.



Pyrorchis nigricans flowering after fire. Anglesea

Ant plants are interesting epiphytic plants in the genera *Myrmecodia* and *Hydnophytum*. The plants have large swellings at the base, where they are attached to their host tree. These swelling have a number of hollow, interconnected chambers, which are inhabited by several species of ants. In a symbiotic relationship, the plant provides shelter for the ants, and the ants provide protection from insects and other creatures which may like to eat the plant.



Ant plant in situ.

ON THE TABLE

with Frank Scheelings

Once again we had a small but interesting table and some lively discussion.

There were a number of Correas on the table this month – many of them hybrids and cultivars whose names have long since ceased to exist in our aging brains. Among them were a true species *Correa alba*, a true species *C. pulchella*. Both have contributed many hybrids and cultivars and three or four were on display. There was also a *Correa* 'Pink Mist' – a dense shrub with deep pink flowers. It originated from a wild population of *Correa pulchella* on the southern Yorke Peninsula and was selected by G. O'Brien of Tea

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Tree Gully in South Australia. The cultivar was propagated by Anstey Park Nursery in Adelaide.



Correa 'Pink Mist'

A number of *Thryptomenes* were present among them a lovely weeping specimen that I'll call 'Roger's Mystery'. It came from Roger Wileman's garden, although he claims he'd never grown a *Thryptomene* plant before this one. It's origins are a mystery indeed.

There were several *Eremophilas*, including *E. oppositifolia* (or, arguably – and we did – *E. alternifolia*). It features deep purplish flowers and needs to be pruned well to avoid it becoming 'leggy'. There was also a lovely specimen of *E. pterocarpa*, with palish pink flowers on beautiful, long, grey/green foliage.

Among the *Acacias* were *A. aphylla* which was one of Attila's specimen's, a 'succulent' *Acacia*. The other of note was *Acacia pendula*, which is a lovely specimen tree to 10m+. It is found from northern Victoria, across the plains of NSW to southern Queensland. There is an astonishing specimen in the car-park at the Geelong Racecourse on Breakwater Road. I wrote an article about this tree in the Newsletter December, 2013.



Acacia pendula at the Geelong Racecourse

Another particularly interesting specimen was *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* – the Silver-leaved Mountain

Gum. It is an attractive large shrub or small tree which is unusual in that it retains its juvenile foliage into maturity. It almost never produces adult leaves. The flowers yellowish white and appear close to the stems between the leaves. It is a rare plant known from only two wild populations. It is grown commercially for foliage in the cut-slower industry.



***E. pulverulenta* – Silver-leaved Mountain Gum**

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Banksia baueri

John Bell won the raffle last month, and, as Plant of the Month, chose *Banksia baueri*, which was brought along by Frank Scheelings. Frank writes ...

PLANT SALE

2017

Our plant sale was a little different this year, on a number of levels. Due to poor sales on Sundays in previous years, and after consultation with our growers, we opted for a one day sale – Saturday 22nd April.

Following one of the wettest Aprils for many a year, and after 75mm of rain on the Thursday and Friday, Arthur's property was well and truly wet. The first three vehicles in the gate became bogged, so the decision was taken to close the car-park, forcing patrons to park on the road and walk in. This was not

an easy task to organize, and special thanks goes to Bruce McGinness for his amazing organizational skills.

Luckily, the weather held and the crowds were good early, remaining steady until mid-afternoon.

The growers all reported good sales, and a brief verbal report from our treasurer suggest we made almost as much money as previous years, for only half the work. All in all, a good result.



Thank you to all the members who helped out with organization, preparation and cleaning up, and to all who helped out on the day. As always we are extremely grateful to Arthur and Linda Pape for making their property available. And finally, thank you to our growers for their continued support ...

- Special Effects Nursery - Colac
- Glenleith Nursery – Waurin Ponds
- Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens - Melton
- Vaughan's Australian Plants – Pomonal and Teesdale
- Otway Greening – Pennyroyal
- Melaleuca Nursery - Inverloch
- Chris Fletcher – Yarra Glen
- The Plant Hut - Glenmaggie



NEXT REGULAR MEETING

16th May

Our speaker will be Graham Patterson, author of *“Coastal Guide To Nature And History: Port Phillip Bay”* Graham’s book details the human and natural history of the Port Phillip area.

In an online article Graham wrote – *“Decades ago I set myself the challenge of walking Victoria’s coastline. Having always been a keen bushwalker, it seemed an interesting lifetime goal. In the years since, I walked different stretches whenever it was convenient, slowly joining the dots. Sometimes friends or family joined me, or picked me up or dropped me off. Often I walked alone. There have been a few kilometres such as at the top of Western Port and in Corner Inlet where mangrove-lined streams forced me to paddle my kayak. I have now covered more than half of the 1700 kilometres of Victorian coastline, but I may need another lifetime to complete the distance”*.

A UNIQUE STURT’S DESERT PEA FLOWER

By Tony Cavanagh

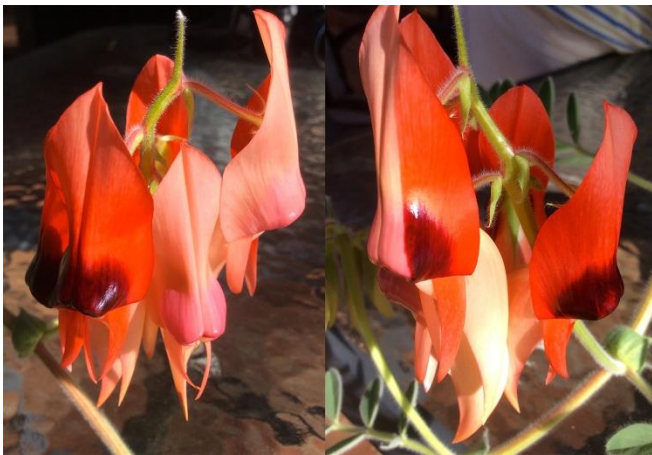
I recently visited Doug McKenzie’s garden here in Ocean Grove to see what he described as a “chimera” Sturt’s Desert Pea - *Swainsona Formosa*. Specifically, one with several different coloured individual flowers on the one raceme. A raceme is a group of flowers, typically 5-6 in this species. This particular group comprised three traditional flowers, red with a black “boss” and long red “keel”, two which were pink with a darker pink boss and pink keels, and, strangest of all, one which was “half and half”, split vertically with one half red and black, the other half pink and darker pink boss, with an unbelievable white keel.



A ‘typical’ Sturt’s desert Pea

Doug has been growing Desert Peas for many years and is the pioneer grower in Australia of grafted plants of Desert Peas. This allows them to be grown as pot plants and also prolongs their life as garden plants. His son Pete is following in the tradition and apparently, this particular plant was grown from seed that Doug and Pete had collected from their own

hand pollination experiments with several colour forms, including pure white.



Chimera raceme, left. Split flower - white keel, right

It seems like the genetics might be a trifle mixed up but I was fascinated to see the different colours in the individual flowers on the one raceme. The “split” flower was especially intriguing and apparently, this is the first raceme on this plant which was other than normal. Attached are a couple of pictures to show “normal” racemes and to try to show the unusual features in this plant, not all that easy as the contrast between the various colours was not great. Has anyone else seen unusual variations or “sports” in plants they have grown or found in the bush?



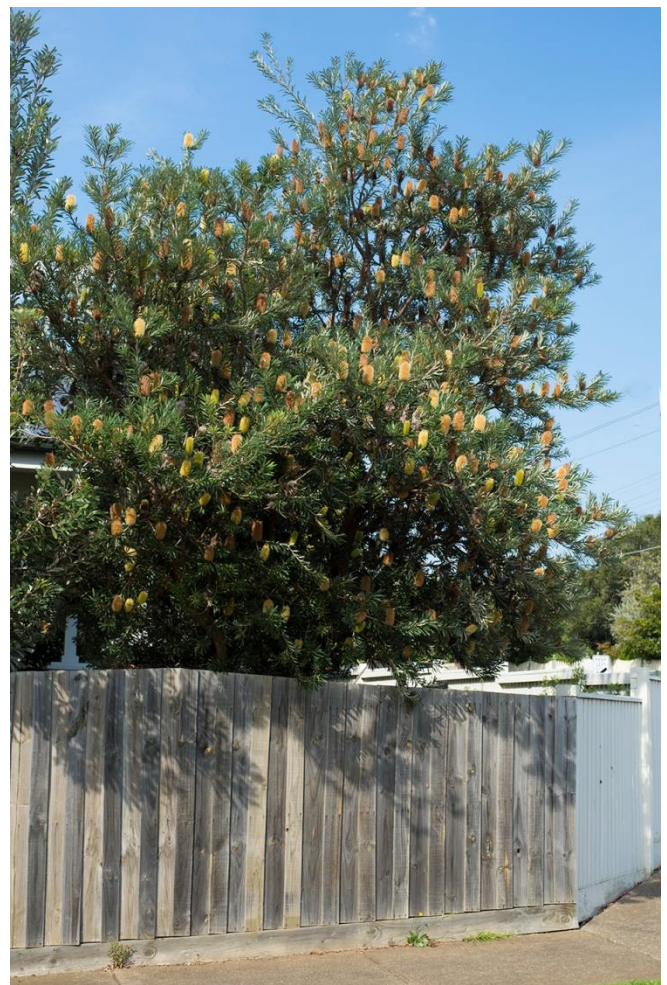
Additional Note: Doug has just notified me that the next raceme has opened and it appears that all the flowers will be pale pink (see final picture which

shows the new raceme below the “chimera” one. Curiouser and curiouser!

A FAVOURITE TREE

Some years ago I started a regular ‘A Favourite Tree’ article for the magazine. But I was a little disheartened when a number of my old pals were felled, or pruned to the point of destruction, and I lost heart. Just recently a magnificent fig, which has dominated the Belmont street scape since I was in High School (back in the 3rd century BC) was removed.

But, my attention was drawn to a great specimen of *Banksia integrifolia*, also growing in Belmont, which flowered profusely this past summer. It is on a corner block in Roslyn road, and has been growing steadily for a few years, without producing the wonderful display of a few months back.



B. integrifolia – the Coastal Banksia – is a fast growing tall shrub to 5 metres, or can be a largish tree to 15m, depending on its situation. It occurs naturally on the coast and nearby hillsides from the central Queensland coast to Port Phillip. It is wind and salt tolerant, and moderately tolerant of drought and frost.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June Meeting – Tim Uebergang from Melbourne University will talk about the 160 year old System Garden.

July Meeting – AGM and Photo Exhibition

APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE.

Once again I'm asking for assistance with editing the newsletter in August and September, while Penny and I are away on holidays. I've had a tentative offer of help with one issue, 'if no-one else put's their hand up', but I'd love to hear from someone who will take on both issues enthusiastically. Please contact me if you can help.

And while you're in a giving mood, and help with articles or ideas for the magazine will be gratefully accepted at any time 😊

GYMPIE GYMPIE – Queensland Stinging Tree

*Matt Baars sent me an article by **Amanda Burdon**, from a 2009 edition of Australian Geographic Magazine. I've included excerpts here which I hope you all find interesting. Ed.*

Marina Hurley's dedication to science was sorely tested during the three years she spent in Queensland's Atherton Tableland studying stinging trees. The entomologist and ecologist's first encounter with the Gympie-Gympie stinging tree produced a sneezing fit and left her eyes and nose running for hours. Even protective particle masks and welding gloves could not spare her several subsequent stings – one requiring hospitalisation – but that was nothing compared with the severe allergy she developed.

"Being stung is the worst kind of pain you can imagine - like being burnt with hot acid and electrocuted at the same time".

Proliferating in rainforest clearings, along creek-lines and small tracks, the Gympie-Gympie stinging tree - *Dendrocnide excels*- has long been a hazard for foresters, surveyors and timber workers – some of whom are today supplied with respirators, thick gloves and anti-histamine tablets as a precaution. More recently, the hairs covering the plant's stems, leaves and fruits have also posed a danger to scientists and bushwalkers.

North Queensland road surveyor A.C. Macmillan was among the first to document the effects of a stinging tree, reporting to his boss in 1866 that his packhorse "was stung, got mad, and died within two hours".

Writing to Marina in 1994, Australian ex-serviceman Cyril Bromley described falling into a stinging tree during military training on the tableland in World War II. Strapped to a hospital bed for three weeks and administered all manner of unsuccessful treatments, he was sent "as mad as a cut snake" by the pain. Cyril also told of an officer shooting himself after using a stinging-tree leaf for "toilet purposes".



Image courtesy Black Diamond Images

He's had too many stings to count but Ernie Rider will never forget the day in 1963 that he was slapped in the face, arms and chest by a stinging tree. "I remember it feeling like there were giant hands trying to squash my chest," he said. "For two or three days the pain was almost unbearable; I couldn't work or sleep, then it was pretty bad pain for another fortnight or so. The stinging persisted for two years and recurred every time I had a cold shower."

So swollen was Les Moore after being stung across the face several years ago that he said he resembled Mr Potato Head. "I think I went into anaphylactic shock and it took days for my sight to recover," said Les, a scientific officer with the CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology in Queensland, who was near Bartle Frere (North Peak) studying cassowaries when disaster struck.

It was perhaps this rapid and savage reaction that inspired the British Army's interest in the more sinister applications of the Gympie-Gympie stinging tree in 1968. That year, the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down (a top-secret laboratory that developed chemical weapons) contracted Alan Seawright, then a Professor of Pathology at the University of Queensland, to dispatch stinging-tree specimens.

"Chemical warfare is their work, so I could only assume that they were investigating its potential as a biological weapon," said Alan, now an honorary research consultant to the University of Queensland's National Research Centre in Environmental Toxicology. "I never heard anything more, so I guess we'll never know."