

**AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY – NORTHERN GROUP**  
**NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2010**

**Meetings** are held on third Tuesday of each month (except December and January) at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road, Trevallyn at 7.30 pm when the Northern Group library is available to members.

A **Committee (business) meeting** will be held separately from normal meetings at least every three months as and when required. Notice will be sent by e-mail.

**Propagation Sessions** are held on first Saturday of each month at Sharon Percy's place at Grassy Banks, South Bridgenorth Road. Time is from 1 pm to 3 pm.

**Welcome to new members:** We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and other events.

**Activities since August 2010 newsletter:**

**17 August: General Meeting:** Two Plant of the Month segments were given, one by Margaret Killen, the other by John Duggin. John chose a quiz type presentation with a small flower often seen in gardens from spring to summer and which occurs widely in temperate Australia. He showed it in detail illustrating all parts and discussing habit, habitat and distribution and asked if anyone recognised it.

It was a herb 10-60 cm high that occurs in grassland or grassy woodland with narrow alternate often stem clasping linear to lanceolate leaves 5-20 cm x 1-3 mm and flowers 15-25 mm wide with 5 sepals and 5 hairy petals that are blue or whitish in colour with blue venation. It was indeed *Linum marginale* (native flax)

**Our guest speaker** for the night was APS member **Will Fletcher**. His topic was the intriguing 'Bonsai with Native Plants'. Will is well-known as the former owner of the Ridgeway Nursery. He now runs a bonsai nursery in Hobart where he sells native plants and grows and sells bonsai plants.

Plants that Bonsai successfully include: *Acacia axillaris* (midlands wattle), *A. melanoxylon* (blackwood), *A. leprosa* subsp. *graveolens* (varnish wattle), *Allocasuarina crassa* (cape pillar sheoak), *A. littoralis* (black sheoak), *A. monilifera* (necklace sheoak), *Atherosperma moschatum* (sassafras), *Athrotaxis cupressoides* (pencil pine), *A. x laxifolia* (hybrid pine), *A. selaginoides* (king billy pine), *Banksia marginata* (silver banksia), *B. serrata* (saw banksia), *Callistemon pallidus* (yellow bottlebrush), *C. viridiflorus* (prickly bottlebrush) and *Cyathodes glauca* (purple cheeseberry).

Will explained that the origin of Bonsai was in China 2500 years ago and was later copied by Japan. He gave a slide presentation showing the above species, and more. He brought many specimens with him and showed us how to achieve the bonsai. A cutting is taken from the tree and planted in the pot, with a node as the root. The plant is then trimmed to the desired shape and thin wires are used to hold the roots and the branches in the desired positions. Many of the plants were up to 20 years old, some much younger, but all looked healthy and attractive.

**1 September – Wattle Day** came and went with little fanfare, although the wattles themselves in full flower were very much in evidence along the roadsides and in local gardens. In the forests too, especially on the East Coast north of St Helens there were outstanding flowerings of black and silver wattles together with varnish wattles. We have never seen them so heavily flowered before.

**4 September** – The plan was **Plant Propagation Day** at Nursery at 1am and before that from 11 am collecting cutting material from Simmons' garden but heavy rain saw a quick run around the garden under umbrellas and no propagating day!

**2 October – Propagation Day** was a small affair with the members away on the excursion to Rocky Cape. Plenty of potting on and planting of seeds was undertaken by those who did attend.

**21 September – Plant of the month** - Prue Wright chose *Kennedia prostrata* of family Fabaceae – the same family as *Swainsona formosus* – Sturt's Desert Pea. *K. prostrata* commonly called 'Running Postman' and first described by Robert Brown in 1812, is not nearly as stunning as the Desert Pea but still is a very attractive plant and useful for the garden.

*Kennedia* is an Australian endemic genus with 15 or 16 species. They grow all along the Eastern seaboard from NSW to southern half of WA. *K. prostrata* grows in sandy soils on rocky outcrops and dry eucalypt forests. Leaf shape is trifoliate, each leaflet about 1 cm across with wavy edges. Flowers are a bright 'postbox' red pea flower 1 to 2cm in size, usually occurring singly along trailing stems in springtime sprawling over rocks and through other plants. It is possibly eaten by rabbits and wallabies as plants Prue finds never seem very large. Without competition from browsing animals, it spreads to over 3 sq. metres in 2 years but can be trimmed if necessary. This year however it was damaged by a severe frost.

It flowers and sets seed over a long period. Pods are up to 5cm long with 6-8 seeds, brown when ripe in summer, when the pod will expel seed by twisting and throwing it some distance. A paperbag over ripening seed may catch it before this happens.

To propagate the seed it must be first scarified – either by scratching the surface or soaking in hot water. Prue tried both methods with a 50% strike rate. Plants may be grown from cuttings too. *Kennedia* is a native plant of West Tamar, will never become a pest and take over the garden, and the pillar-box red flowers are fantastic.

**Guest Speaker was Peter Tonelli** from the North-west Coast and his subject was 'Native Orchids of Tasmania'. He gave a fascinating talk, describing the distinctive construction of the flowers and that they are unique in having their reproductive parts in one unit, the column. Flowers consist of 3 sepals and 3 petals in 2 whorls, the front petal greatly modified and called the labellum. The labellum comes in many different strange and diverse forms.

Flowering plants evolved 140 million years ago, in the Jurassic period. Orchids have been traced back 130 million years and are the second largest plant species in the world. Fossilised pollen dates orchids back to 80 million years ago. Australia has more than 1200 species of orchid in about 100 genera, 90% endemic, the majority being terrestrial (or ground) orchids.

Early orchidologists were Robert Brown, botanist on Labillardiere's expedition who explored the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. J.D. Hooker on the way to the Antarctic 'palled up' with R.C. Gunn, noted Tasmanian botanist, Leonard Rodway, who wrote the 'Flora of Tasmania' published in 1903, W.H. Nicholls, H.M.R. Rupp, Jack Firth, author of the first book on Tasmanian orchids, Dr.W.M. Curtis, and currently David Jones.

#### **REPORT ON APST TRIP TO ROCKY CAPE 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER – 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER**

Our trip to Rocky Cape National Park attracted 8 members. We were treated to sunny weather on Saturday as well as an amazing variety of plants. Don Abblitt and his sister Janine Cranney did a wonderful job locating and identifying the orchids for us. On Sunday our orchid guide was Barry Dudman. This area is an absolute gem for plant enthusiasts and the scenic coastline is so beautiful. It must be one our best kept secrets as we had the place to ourselves for most of the weekend. I have a long list of plants and this is just a sample and many on the list were not in flower so the area entices you to return for another visit. Here is a somewhat shortened list:

*Acacia genistifolia*, *A. myrtifolia*, *A. terminalis*, *A. verticillata*, *Allocasuarina* sp., *Aotus ericoides*, *Banksia serrata*, *B. marginata*, *Astroloma humifusum*, *Boronia anemonifolia*, *Bossiaea rossii*, *Derwentia derwentiana*, *Dianella tasmanica*, *Epacris impressa*, *Eucalyptus nitida*, *Hibbertia procumbens*, *Kennedia prostrata*, *Leptospermum glaucescens*, several *Leucopogon* sp., *Olearia stellulata*, *Philotheca verrucosa*, *Tetratheca pilosa*, *Zieria* sp.

*From Roy's orchid list: Pterostylis melagramma, P. nutans, P. pedunculata and P. nana. Pyrorchis nigricans, Acianthus caudatus, Cyrtostylis reniformis, C. robusta, Caladenia and Corybas sp. Microtis unifolia and Diuris orientis.*

## **REPORT ON HERITAGE FOREST GARDEN**

'After the very successful planting event on National Tree Day I was very disappointed that the Weedbuster Week activity I had planned for the 12<sup>th</sup> September was a dismal failure. The only people to attend were Martin Spillane and I. It was a wet and miserable day so after fifteen minutes of waiting we abandoned the event.

I attended a meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September with staff from LCC and Utas to discuss the idea of making gardening in the APS Heritage Forest Garden an Active Launceston activity early next year. There would be a coordinator supplied by LCC/Utas and I have indicated that I would be willing to attend to provide input from the APS. These sessions would be conducted over a 12 week period. They would work on the same principle as other Active Launceston programs. People are encouraged to attend but they do not have to commit to every session. If this goes ahead this would be a good avenue to promote the garden and the objectives of APST. I have been asked to comment on program content.

I attended the Heritage Forest Advisory Committee meeting 29<sup>th</sup> September. There is more attention being paid to this reserve now with several suggestions for development of areas within it. Several of the soccer playing fields are being resurfaced due to heavy rain making them unplayable during winter. There is a Conservation Volunteers Australia team redoing the track through the Native Precinct. The equipment in playground beside the Hoo Hoo Hut is being replaced and refill planting of natives has occurred around this play area. There is also a team of Youth Justice workers detailed for weeding work in the reserve. A new trail is being constructed through the area. It will connect to Vermont Rd and Remount Rd and hopefully eventually be extended to connect to the Dover Village Trail. The extra staff member has been doing some work in the APS garden which has lightened my load a little. As there have been such poor attendances at weeding working bees this year I have stopped having official ones. I go when I can and a couple of locals are doing the same. Over the winter months this has worked well but more workers will be needed from now until the Active Launceston program starts.' LM

**21 October** – Thursday – A working bee is scheduled at Heritage Forest Garden from 10 – 12 noon. Contact Lynne on 6344 5611 for details

My thanks to John D, Prue, Lynne, Maureen and Roy for their notes on the different events that I was not able to attend.

**19 October** – Club Meeting – Our speaker will be Iona Mitchell speaking on 'Gardens for Wildlife. Plant of the Month will be given by Maureen Johnstone.

**29/31 October** – **ANNUAL MEMBERS GET TOGETHER** to be held at St Helens.

**Meeting times for excursions:** Friday afternoon on **29th** to go for a local walk lead by Roy Skabo meet at Roy's place at 300 Gardens Road at 1 pm.

**On Saturday 30th** meet at Winifred Curtis Reserve at 9.30 am. – you will find it just before arriving at Scamander from St. Marys, opposite the Upper Scamander turn-off .

**Sunday 31st.** Roy and Paul will lead a trip to Ansons Bay Road. Meet at the Anchor Wheel Motel at St. Helens, time to be advised. Contact Trevor or Roy for further details. 3.

**6 November - Propagation Day** at Grassy Banks – a special day – **note the change of time to 2-4 pm**. After this session Sharon has invited those present to have a cuppa followed by a wander around the garden. We will then have a BBQ to celebrate our first year at ‘Grassy Banks’. Please bring your own meat and drinks.

**16 November – Club Night – Outback Odyssey** to be given by member, Julie Nermut. Julie and her husband, Wen, travel regularly to the inland to many fascinating outback places.

**3-5 December – Weekend trip to Hobart - EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST** are needed as soon as possible so as to arrange this trip if enough members are interested in going. Please contact Roy on 6334 6787 or email [rlskabo@gmail.com](mailto:rlskabo@gmail.com)

**10 December** – Friday – Christmas Party at Max Fry Hall.

**11 December – NOTE CHANGE OF DATE** – Propagation day at Grassy Banks from 1-3 pm.

Marion Simmons