

NEWSLETTER

PLANTS OF TASMANIA

Nursery and Gardens

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Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday

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Hello, and welcome to the autumn newsletter for 2011!

I always seem to start with the weather – when I meant to start writing this it was pouring with rain, but today is sunny and warm. That reflects autumn, doesn't it – a time when the soil is moist and there is still enough sunshine for growth. In a nutshell, a great time to get into the garden, get your hands dirty and plant some new plants!

This is our 25th newsletter: a quarter of our way to 100. Will Fletcher opened the nursery in 1990, and began these semi-annual newsletters in 1996. These old newsletters have a wealth of information in them, and I plan to scan them all and get them onto the website soon. I'll also put up an index so that you can find articles easily.

News from the Nursery

The nursery is looking really good at the moment, with the abundant fruits of last spring's propagation now on display. Many of the plants that we propagate from cuttings have really taken off over the last few weeks, with luscious new growth sprouting out all over. We also seem to have daisies for all situations! Our range of plants is at about its maximum at this time of year – we are yet to run out of things that will be in short supply in spring!

One thing that we have been doing is rejuvenating the gardens. This will take a little while to achieve, but a lot of straggly old plants have been removed and it all feels a lot clearer. We have to be careful, as the garden is not only to show off particular plants. We also use many plants as sources of cutting material, so we have to make sure that these ones are looked after!

New Plants

We are always on the lookout for new plants to get into our system. It takes a while to build up enough stock of many plants to get them out into sales. Next season we hope to have a beautiful form of *Dianella amoena*, the cushion *Abrotanella forsteroides*, and a new West Coast form of *Helichrysum pumilum*, amongst others, available. Here is a list of species that are either new to the nursery or have been missing for a while but are in the sales area now.

Phebalium daviesii – Davies' Phebalium. An extremely rare shrub from near St Helens on the east coast that was for a long time thought to be extinct. A soft, fine-foliaged shrub to 1.5 m with starry lemon-yellow flowers in spring. Recommended for a moist, well-drained position. We have good numbers in stock.

Lasiopetalum baueri – Slender Velvet Bush. This small coastal shrub grows to 70 cm high by 1m wide. It has red-brown flowers and attractive foliage, especially the new growth. This species has a remarkable distribution, as it also grows in the mallee regions of western Victoria, NSW and South Australia. Not surprisingly, it likes dry conditions.

Beyeria viscosa – Pinkwood. An erect pyramidal shrub or small tree to 3-5m often found along streamlines. Hardy in dry or well-drained conditions, and prefers some shade. Readily trimmed. Seeds 'pop' on warm days.

Vittadinia muelleri – Narrowleaf New Holland Daisy. A small rare and endangered daisy from the Hobart area (it grows in the grasslands at the battery at Bellerive). It has small purple flowers and sets abundant seed. It is suited to dry conditions.

Mentha australis – River Mint. Another rare and endangered plant in Tasmania, though widespread on the mainland. This perennial herb has strongly aromatic leaves with small white to lilac flowers in spring and summer. The leaves can be used in beverages or as a garnish in salads. Aboriginals used an extract of boiled leaves for coughs and colds. **However, note that use of this plant can cause problems for pregnant women.** It likes moist conditions, and, as it can be invasive, it is best grown in a pot.

Olearia archeri – Archer's Daisy Bush. A shrub to 1.5 m, rare, and endemic to Tasmania's south-east. It has stiff green leathery leaves on silvery stems that give rise to clusters of pure white daisy flowers in spring.

Astroloma pinifolium – Pine Heath. A fine-foliaged shrub to 50 cm with yellow tubular flowers. It does best in a sandy or light, well-drained soil or as a pot specimen. It is quite hard to propagate, but we have good stocks at the moment.

Pellaea falcata – Sickie Fern. A small fern growing to 60 cm. Young growth often has pink tonings. This fern withstands some sun and drier conditions than most ferns. It can be grown in a pot or in the garden.

Discounts

I thought that would grab your attention! We are now giving 10% discounts on plants to members of the Australian Plants Society Tasmania. If you would like to join this group (and for lots of other information about Tasmanian plants), go to www.apstas.com. We are also giving the same discount to Wildcare members. Wildcare is a volunteer organisation that supports national parks in Tasmania. You can join when you renew your national park pass, or go to www.wildcaretas.org.au. The discount is on otherwise non-discounted plants only – and it doesn't apply to non-plant items. And even though joining both organisations is an admirable thing to do, the discount will only apply once!

Rhamnaceae

The feature family in this newsletter is the Rhamnaceae, which includes some well-known Tasmanian species. Members of this family are spread throughout the world in 50-60 genera and approximately 900 species. All Tasmanian species are within the tribe Pomaderreae, which occurs across Australia and New Zealand. This broad distribution suggests that this tribe has an ancient Australian origin.

In Tasmania most of the members of the Rhamnaceae grow in heaths and dry sclerophyll forests, though some species, e.g. *Pomaderris apetala*, are important understorey plants in wet forests. At the moment we have 11 species and forms from the Rhamnaceae family in stock at the nursery. Some of these plants are particularly useful for landscaping purposes, and, while not as showy as some, can have attractive foliage and flowers. The species we have are:

Cryptandra amara – Sweet Winter Cryptandra. This plant looks delicate, with its tiny leaves and flowers, but in fact comes from the dry midlands. Like many plants in this area, it is threatened through clearing of native grasslands for farming. We grow our plants from cuttings, with the original material coming from near Tunbridge. *Cryptandra amara* is a slow growing, wiry shrub to 30 cm that has masses of tiny, sweetly scented bell flowers in winter. It grows best in a cool but sunny site in well-drained soil. It also looks good in a hanging basket or a pot.

Pomaderris apetala – Dogwood. This species typically grows in the understorey of wet forests across Tasmania. It has large, grey-green leaves, and older plants develop an attractive smooth, grey trunk. The flowers are greenish-brown, and occur in large bunches in spring. Dogwood grows quickly to 4-7 m in moist sites, and unlike many Tasmanian plants is of low flammability.

Pomaderris elachophylla – Small-leaf Pomaderris. In Tasmania this species is limited to small areas near Ansons Bay and scattered sites along southern margin of the Central Plateau. It is an attractive, slender stemmed shrub to 2 m with creamy yellow flowers. It does best in a

well-drained site – and it also grows well in dry, shady conditions, which makes it a very useful plant for the garden.

Pomaderris elliptica – Yellow Dogwood. In comparison to *Pomaderris apetala*, the yellow dogwood usually grows in drier conditions, though can extend into wet forest. It grows to 3-4 m high, and has handsome shiny elliptical leaves. Large heads of creamy-yellow flowers occur in spring. It grows best in sun or partial shade in a well-drained position. Another useful fire-retardant plant.

Pommaderris pilifera – Hairy Dogwood. This species is very similar to *Pomaderris elliptica*. The yellow flowers are perhaps the most ornamental of the species that occur in Tasmania.

Spyridium gunnii – Forest Dustymiller. Many *Spyridium*s have spectacular floral bracts, often white or cream, surrounding the flowerheads. This species grows on Tasmania's west coast, as well as Flinders Island. It is a tall shrub or small tree that prefers a well-drained position and extra water during dry times. Plants grown close to each other form a dense screen.

Spyridium lawrencii – Small leaf Dustymiller. An endemic Tasmanian species that grows naturally in dry areas of the east coast. It is a petite, low-growing shrub to 60 cm that grows in sun or shade. (Note: we are still selling this as *S. microphyllum*, and will change when we do a new label order)

Spyridium parvifolium – Coast Dustymiller. We sell two forms of this delightful plant. 'Winter Mist' is a vigorous, soft-foliaged shrub to 1-8 m that presents a showy display of white bracts in autumn and winter. 'Flinders Crinkle Leaf' has smaller, crinkly leaves a bit like a *Nothofagus*. It grows to 1 m high by 1.5 m wide, and has dusky-white bracts around the flowerheads in spring and summer. Both forms do best in drier, well-drained sites.

Spyridium obovatum – Velvet Dustymiller. A handsome shrub, endemic to Tasmania. It has soft green leaves and small cream flowers in spring. It grows to 2-4 m, and is recommended for most well-drained sites. The floral bracts are not so well-developed in this species.

Spyridium ulicinum – Arching Beauty. A dense, endemic shrub to 3m with attractive fine foliage. It has masses of very attractive creamy-yellow flowers in spring. It does best in a moist, partly-shaded part of the garden.

Spyridium vexilliferum – Propeller Plant. Perhaps the most spectacular of our *Spyridium*s, as the large, white elongated floral bracts give the plant a dramatic look. It grows to 1 m in dry, well-drained sites (including coastal) in full sun or part shade. Tip pruning will result in a more compact bush, and staking while young helps develop a stronger plant.

We hope this list gives you some new ideas for interesting and useful plants for the garden. See you at the nursery soon!

John, Linda, Peter, Sam, Qug, Karen and Jono