

NEWSLETTER

PLANTS OF TASMANIA

Nursery and Gardens

65 Hall St

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Open 7 Days a week – 9 am to 5 pm

Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday



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Hello, and welcome to the spring newsletter for 2009!

It's been a wet, wet, wet winter and now spring throughout Tasmania, and the island is looking beautiful. Up at the nursery we have had over 800 mm in the 6 months from April, compared to less than 300 mm last year – what a turn-around! Frogs are calling outside as I write this, and the grass is in need of a mow. Plants in the bush and the garden will respond wonderfully to all the rain, and now is a good time to plant.

News from the Nursery

Nursery sold

In the last newsletter it was mentioned that the nursery was for sale. A purchaser was finally found, and I, John Gibson, and my wife, Kerrie Swadling, took over in early August. Will Fletcher is staying on for a while to provide advice and assistance to us. He is spending more time at his new nursery, Island Bonsai, just down the road from Plants of Tasmania, which is open on the second weekend each month. He is also still available for landscaping consultations for designing gardens with Tasmanian native plants.

Kerrie and I have purchased many plants from the nursery over the years, and the time was right for me to leave my scientific career to grow plants instead. I learnt my plants in the Canberra area, and after 20 years in the state I am still discovering new joys in the Tasmanian flora.

It is anticipated that the nursery will continue to run in much the same form that it has been since Will opened it in 1991. The same range of plants will be grown, with the fundamental aim of making Tasmanian plants available to gardeners and landscapers remaining. Some

minor changes will be made: the nursery now has an email address (plantsoftasmania@gmail.com), and we are in the process of developing a website. The website will allow you to view pictures of all plants we have available for sale, create your own plant lists for particular purposes, and, eventually buy plants over the internet. The web address will be www.potn.com.au – check this address around Christmas time, by which time it should be up and running.

If you would prefer to receive future newsletters by email, please email the nursery.

New plants

It has been a bit quiet on this front recently, but we do have seedlings of the new endemic Tasmanian Eucalypt, *Eucalyptus nebulosa*, growing. These aren't available for sale yet, but if you would like some put away for you contact the nursery. *Eucalyptus nebulosa* is a small peppermint that grows on soils derived from serpentine rock in a high rainfall area to the west of Tullah. How it will grow in drier conditions and in richer soils is as yet uncertain. See http://www.flickr.com/photos/nuysia_pix/3212914401/ for a spectacular photo of the gumnuts of this species.

New web resource

Have you ever wondered what some of the more obscure Tasmanian plants look like? About how to tell a liverwort from a hornwort? Do you want to know what a plant looks like when planning your garden? A new website developed by Greg Jordan at the University of Tasmania provides a wealth of information for the serious or casual botanist. The site, <http://www.utas.edu.au/dicotkey.htm>, provides a detailed botanical key for all Tasmanian flowering plants, conifers, ferns, mosses and liverworts. For nearly every species there are photos and a short description. If you don't want to go through the complexity of a key (which most of us don't!), there is a page that lists genus names that provides links that can take you to the plants you are interested in. You can use this website along with our catalogue to choose your plants before you come to the nursery (but then that would take away the pleasure of browsing in beautiful surroundings!

Endemic Tasmanians

Tasmania has over 400 endemic plant species – plants that grow naturally nowhere else in the world. Other plants native to Tasmania also grow on the mainland, or in rare cases New Zealand. While this makes Tasmania's flora special, many of these plants have close relatives on the mainland, which reflects similarity in climate and that fact that Tasmania was connected to the mainland as recently as 10 000 years ago. What is perhaps more exciting are the **genera** that are endemic to Tasmania. In these cases it is not only that the species is endemic, but also that the **genus** is only found in Tasmania. There are 19 such genera that are found only on the island, and for all but four of these – *Odixia*, *Milligania*, *Planocarpa* and *Arthrotaxis* - there is only a single species within each genus. This means that well known

species such as Huon Pine (*Lagarostrobus franklinii*), Mountain Rocket (*Bellendena montana*), White Waratah (*Agastachys odorata*), Native Plum (*Cenarrhenes nitida*), Climbing Heath (*Prionotes cerinthoides*), Tasmanian Purplestar or Hewardia (*Isophysis tasmanica*) and Horizontal (*Anodopetalum biglandulosum*) have no close living relatives.

A recent article by Andrew Rozefelds, of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, discussed these endemic genera and their origins. He was able to break them up into two main groups: ancient endemics of the west coast and central highlands, and more recently evolved genera from the east. The west coast species were dominated by pines and members of the Proteaceae (think Banksias and Grevilleas). The pines are most closely related to species in South America, South Africa and New Zealand, in addition to mainland Australia. This reflects a Gondwanan origin – the ancestors of these species grew on the supercontinent Gondwana, which consisted of South America, Africa, Australia and Antarctica, and which finally split up about 30 million years ago. For example, Twenty-five million year old fossils of the closest relative of *Diselma*, *Fitzroya* (a genus now limited to South America), have been found in Tasmania, and it is probable that *Diselma* dates back to this time. Western Tasmania has clearly been a long time refuge for these genera, in part because of the regular high rainfall that would have continued while other parts of Australia have gone through wet and dry cycles (maybe those west coast plants are thinking of re-invading eastern Tasmania at the moment!)

The genera endemic to the east coast of Tasmania – including the pea genus *Stonesiella*, the daisy genus *Odixia*, and a genus in the family Malvaceae, *Asterotrichion* – are more likely to have evolved relatively recently, as they have close relatives on the Australian mainland or in Tasmania. As there is no fossil record (probably reflecting their later evolution) it is hard to estimate when these plants first appeared.

Many of the species in these endemic genera are well known in cultivation. At Plants of Tasmania we grow and sell:

Agastachys odorata (White Waratah): A difficult to grow plant from the west coast that requires cool and moist conditions. (Limited stock at the moment.)

Arthrotaxis cupressoides (Pencil Pine): From high altitudes on the west coast and central plateau, it makes an impressive container plant, though will also do well in the garden.

Athrotaxis selaginoides (King Billy Pine): This iconic Tasmanian tree grows in high rainfall areas of the west coast and central plateau. It makes a good, though slow growing specimen tree (to 2.5 m in 10 years) in the garden or a large pot.

Arthrotaxis x laxifolia (Intermediate Pine): A natural hybrid between the other two species of *Athrotaxis* that is the easiest to grow (and fastest growing) in the garden.

Asterotrichion discolor (Native Hemp): A fast growing, cold-hardy tree to 5m that grows next to streams in SE Tasmania.

Bellendena montana (Mountain Rocket): A widespread, slow growing shrub that produces white flowers in spring, and distinctive red seed capsules in early autumn. Plant it in the garden or in a pot.

Cenarrhenes nitida (Native plum): A shrub or small rainforest tree from the west coast with shiny leaves. Suitable for a damp area in the garden or a pot. White flowers are followed by purple fruit.

Diselma archeri (Dwarf Pine): This well-rounded conifer from high altitude grows as a prostrate shrub in exposed areas, or as a tree up to 6 m high when protected. It is slow growing (to 1 m in ten years), and does well in pots.

Isophysis tasmanica (Tasmanian Purplestar) A striking, slow-growing iris from southern Tasmanian mountains with purple or yellowish star-like flowers on slender stems. Grows best in a pot or a cool, moist, well drained spot.

Lagarostrobos franklinii (Huon Pine): Iconic, slow growing plant from the west and south of Tasmania. A handsome tree plant that grows to 2 m in ten years that also can be used in bonsai.

Microcachrys tetragona (Creeping Pine): An alpine, slow growing prostrate pine that produces edible red fruits. Great cascading from a basket.

Milligania densiflora (Silky Alpine Lily): A striking but temperamental plant with arching leaves and white or pinkish flowers from western alpine areas. Grows best in a cool, moist well drained situation or pot. (Limited stock at present.)

Odixia angusta (Aromatic Odixia): An open, many branched vigorous shrub to 2 m from the Tasman Peninsula. It has attractive white flower heads in spring and scented foliage.

Planocarpa nitida (Black-Fruit Cheeseberry): A rare species from the central plateau that has small white flowers, followed by flattened black fruit. It needs a moist, cool site in the garden or a pot.

Prionotes cerinthoides (Climbing Heath): A slow-growing gem from western and southern Tasmanian rain forests that likes shade and plenty of compost.

Pterygopappus lawrencei (Sage Cushion Bush): This alpine specialist grows as a low silvery, grey-green mound of tight foliage that has small white daisy flowers in summer. It grows best in a pot or in a cool, moist well drained site.

Stonesiella selagonoides (Club-moss bush pea): This rare and distinctive pea grows near a few rivers on the east coast. It grows to 2 m, and has lemon-yellow flowers in spring. (Out of stock at the moment.)

We don't have Horizontal, as it would be suitable only for the most unusual gardens and it doesn't like the nursery pots! The other Tasmanian endemic genera we miss out on are *Tetracarpea* and *Winifredia*.

We hope that this list gives you some new ideas about growing some special plants. Come up to the nursery to look at these plants, and browse through the rest of our extensive stock.

We look forward to seeing you soon

John, Will, Linda, Peter, Paulette, Qug and Karen