

N E W S L E T T E R

PLANTS OF TASMANIA NURSERY AND GARDENS 65 HALL ST RIDGEWAY 7054



OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

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ph (03) 6239 1583

fax (03) 6239 1106

Newsletter 14 Autumn 2005

Hello good horticultural folk,

Apologies for the late newsletter. Still, as they say, B.L.T.N.

It is so easy to become caught up in one's day to day life - work, family, commitments - forgetting about the value of visiting the great outdoors. (And newsletters!) Even though I work with Tasmanian plants day in and day out it's still inspiring to get out into the wilds.

In February I enjoyed a three day walk into one of Tasmania's fabulous wild areas - Cape Pillar on the Tasman Peninsula. Cape Pillar extends a bold finger of soaring dolerite cliffs well into the Tasman Sea and is tipped by the rocky, windswept Tasman Island, home to baying seal colonies below, and a lighthouse above. Our walk at the end of the peninsula was regularly punctuated by the roaring of the seals, wafting in when the wind was in the right quarter. We were almost 300 metres up and looking across perhaps a similar distance, and even though we had a fine line of sight to where they were, no doubt basking on their rock ledges, they were too far away for us to see them. It was just one small but noteworthy experience that combined with many, to make this a memorable walk.

Having an interest in bonsai, Cape Pillar was a delight for me. Due to its exposed position, many of its plants have battled to stay upright, and the resultant twisting and turning of trunks and branches is quite dramatic. To set off these dynamic plant forms, there were often massive cliffs, diving down seaward, and of course, the sea itself, disappearing towards the horizon, New Zealand and the Antarctic.

Cape Pillar has fascinating flora. As I head off from Ridgeway, and cross the Tasman Bridge, I always feel I'm heading to the east coast, a warmer sunnier clime. But the Tasman Peninsula weaves a southern magic. The road gradually eases round to the right until upon alighting, I find myself geographically well south of Hobart! So, although I feel like I'm on the east coast, a glance at the map tells me I'm also virtually on the south coast, one of the windiest and wettest parts of the state! And indeed the cold fronts regularly rake across this peninsula, dumping copious moisture. (So pick your travel time!)

If I hadn't realised from the map, the flora tells the story. To find Oyster Bay Pine, an east coast tree I associate with drier sunny aspects, growing virtually next to a plant of wet forests, *Richea dracophylla*, the Dragon Heath, is astounding. It is indeed an area where east meets south. Pretty logical really, I guess.

Allocasuarina crassa, Cape Pillar Sheoak (a wonderful plant) occurs here - and almost nowhere else! We saw this sheoak, which can grow to a small tree in a sheltered spot, growing absolutely flat, on the aptly named Hurricane Heath, along with many other normally upright species, all growing prostrate, not daring to lift so much as a leaf for fear of having it blown away. We had to cross this exposed area twice. The first time we were virtually blasted off our feet - some in our group took to crawling - and on the way back it was just plain windy!

Other memorable plants from this neck-of-the-woods were:

Bedfordia salicina Blanket Leaf Some of these were enormous, with beautiful trunks! Lots of twisting and turning here too. The tallest one I measured was 12m, and the trunk was over a foot through near the base! In other areas where there had been a fire, the blanket leaf was sprouting like a lawn!

Leptospermum glaucescens Smoky Teatree We walked through 'Lord-of-the-Rings forests', the track winding hither and thither, a plethora of lithe trunks writhing skyward. On the southern-most portal of our walk, up an exciting outcropping ridge called the blade, were two gale-blasted teatrees (with views for ever), only a couple of metres high - and who knows how old - all twisted with knotty trunks, both dead wood and live, but with healthy tufts of leaf and flowers at the ends. The Tasmanian equivalent of the literati bonsai style!

Hakea lissosperma Mountain Needlebush Growing short and stubby on the edge of the cliffs.
Banksia marginata Silver Banksia Numerous twisting trunks and branches. Very dynamic.

But even though it was plainly apparent - the evidence of the effects of wind - some parts of our trip were wonderfully sheltered. The afternoon we walked in, we entered into a misty, quite enchanting forest, dominated by statuesque, spreading stringybark trees, and found a perfect camping site, level and sheltered, and within 20 metres of fresh water! That night we could hear the gusts of wind in the canopy, but our tents barely rustled.

So it was a walk of great contrasts, wonderful vegetation and very exciting landscape! Along with fine companions, it was a most memorable walk, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

The horticultural lessons gained were very interesting. It really hit home how given one species of plant, one might either grow it into a tree, or conversely keep it very well trimmed. On Cape Pillar, nature does both. It seems to me that there are probably many, many Tasmanian shrubs that would make wonderful small trees over time. One could let a bush grow, then trim foliage away from the trunk, gradually forming a small tree. Or at the other extreme, with the same shrub, clip foliage regularly to form into a formal hedge! And of course, any number of permutations in between.

Our new catalogue is just out. We've dropped a few plants off, either because we don't have them in stock for the foreseeable future or because people just don't buy them. But of course we've got new plants listed, including a couple of old favourites back in the nursery after an absence.

In most gardens, planting in winter is perfectly O.K. I do nearly all my planting in winter, then I seldom have to water. If you have an area that might get a bit boggy through winter, it may be useful to make small moundings to plant into. This could be as small as the size of a wide upturned bowl, or could be a slight mounding of the garden area itself.

SOME NEW TASMANIAN PLANTS IN THIS YEAR'S CATALOGUE

In the Groundcovers and Plants up to 1m section:

Boronia nana Dwarf Boronia A delightful little number, but small and lightly foliated. Low and spreading to about 40cm. Very nice soft-pink flowers for most of summer. \$4.50

Derwentia derwentiana **Derwent Speedwell** A fast-growing perennial to 1.2m, with sprays of pale blue flowers in summer. Can be hard pruned after flowering. Likes a moist spot. From \$2.85.

Mazus pumilio **Swamp Mazus** A mauve flowering, suckering groundcover for moist to wet soils. May be invasive. (Which in the right situation could be ideal!) \$3.50

Pimelea filiformis **Trailing Riceflower** This delightful groundcover, spreading to 1.5m, is endemic to northern Tasmania. The delicate foliage, is a fine backdrop for the pink buds and cascade of small white flowers in spring. \$4.50

Rhodanthe anthemoides **Chamomile Sunray** A small, rockery-sized grey-foliaged plant from alpine and Tasmanian midlands environments. A showy array of white paper daisies are displayed on slender stems to 25cm in summer. Withstands extreme cold. Cutting back after flowering encourages new growth. \$3.50

Sambucus gaudichaudiana **White Elderberry** A close relative of the common backyard elderberry, this native species grows quickly to about 1.5m in good soils with adequate water. White flowers are followed by clusters of ((edible)) white berries. Bushes can be hard pruned, quickly resprouting. \$3.50

Spyridium vexilliferum **Propeller Plant / Helicopter Plant** This horticultural gem was proving difficult, so we employed a specialist propagator. To 50cm, and seemingly flowering all year. (The plant, not the propagator). Limited numbers. \$8.50

Stackhousia monogyna **Forest Candles** An attractive small plant to 40cm with very attractive creamy white flowers in spring. Not a long lived plant, but delightful. Expect 3-5yrs. From \$2.85.

New entries in the Alpine section:

Aciphylla procumbens **Mountain Celery** A slow, low-growing, bright green, feathery-foliaged plant to 15cm and spreading. Creamy white flowers. Best in a well composted, moist site or pot. \$8.50

Centrolepis monogyna **Western Pincushion** We've had it for sale for a while, but I forgot to include it in the catalogue! It's a beaut little slow-growing, bright-green mound for a moist to wet spot or pot. I've also seen it growing under water in an alpine tarn, so that might be an interesting challenge! \$8.50

Celmisia saxifraga **White Snow Daisy** Slow, low, with silvery foliage and snow-white daisy flowers in late spring. For a moist, well-composted spot or pot. \$8.50

Leionema oldfieldii **Mountain Waxflower** A slow (surprise, surprise), soft foliaged shrub to 1m, endemic to Tasmanian mountains. White flowers in late spring. (Used to be *Phebalium*) \$6.50

Other plants new to this catalogue:

Poa clivicola **Snowgrass 'Mountain Blue'** An interesting, bluish, tussock grass from Tasmanian mountains. The seed heads can actually germinate whilst still on the stem! This tussock grows to about 50cm, and although it harks from moist zones, will no doubt be fine for the average garden. \$2.85

Hakea ulicina **Furze Needlebush** When I saw these plants growing on Flinders Island some years back, I was mightily impressed by their well armoured foliage. They were about 1.5m high and spiky, spiky, spiky!!! No real sign of that on the young nursery plants. They look soft, delightful and positively take-home-able. However I guess genetics will prevail. If you want something serious to block up that hole where the neighbour's dog gets through, buy one of these! From \$3.50.

Hovea lanceolata Hill Hovea We have had difficulty in growing Hoveas, which is disappointing as most of them would be splendid in the garden. The hill hovea grows to about 1.5m in a well drained spot and has mauve pea-flowers in spring. Worth a try. \$3.50

Olearia archeri Archer's Daisybush A rare, endemic shrub to 1.5m. Reasonably large, thick, pale-green leaves and stems, produce sprays of white daisy flowers in late spring. \$4.50

Pimelea nivea Bushman's Bootlace We have some of these fine plants in stock, including the larger leaved, more compact coastal form. \$8.50

Pomaderris pilifera Hairy Dogwood A similar looking shrub to the yellow dogwood. Slightly smaller leaves and the flowers are a brighter yellow. To 3m. From \$2.85.

Asplenium bulbiferum Hen and Chicken Fern Back in stock this year, the bright, pale, juvenile foliage of this hardy fern is a nice contrast to other ferns in the fernery. Can also be indoors. From \$4.40.

(Other new ferns available this season are: *Asplenium trichomanes subsp. quadrivalens*, *Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*, *Cystopteris tasmanica* and *Lastreopsis hispida*.)

Gaultheria lanceolata Waxberry This endemic mountain plant is slow growing, up to 30cm with white berries. A moist, well-composted, cool site is required. Not many in stock. \$6.50

Prionotes cerinthoides Climbing Heath A spectacular, autumnal, red-flowering rainforest plant, endemic to Tasmanian rainforests, where it can be seen climbing many metres up shady, moist tree trunks. In nursery pots it is incredibly slow, but glossy red tubular flowers will still form on small plants. \$6.50

Trochocarpa disticha Lune River Heath Another endemic Tasmanian shrub. To 2m, with stiff, shiny-leaved, fan-shaped branchlets. Small, pink flowers are followed by mauve berries. Grows in moist, cool forests, so we would recommend a similar spot in the garden. Slow. \$6.50

STAFF NEWS

Congratulations to our staff member, Paulette, who has just produced a bouncing, baby girl! We hope to see her back in a part-time capacity in the future. Lydia is now working part-time and has an exciting new project, starting her own nursery, growing scented plants, which she loves, and I'm sure lots of other people will too!

To fill in the space (left by losing hours from two of our most experienced staff), we have appointed Linda, whom you may well have met already. Linda has many years experience at a native nursery in South Australia. She has been learning Tasmanian plants at a great rate of knots, and we're very happy to have her on board.

Our trainee Peter, continues to toil away tirelessly (which is just as well, 'cause I seem to fritter the day away doing bug-all! - that's a horticultural version of another expression), and Sam pops in two days a week, to make sure we're all behaving ourselves!

As usual, at this time of year, we have masses of healthy young stock, just perfect for late autumn and winter planting. Given this year's rather delightfully warm autumn, the ground is most likely warmer than normal for this time of year, so if planting now, I would expect many plants would get their roots out quite nicely in the next month or so.

We trust your gardens are growing magnificently, and look forward to seeing you, when you next feel the need for some new plants.

Horticulturally yours,
Will Fletcher

