

NEWSLETTER

PLANTS OF TASMANIA
NURSERY AND GARDENS
65 HALL ST RIDGEWAY 7054



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Welcome to spring! I do believe it's slightly warmer! The days are certainly longer - that's nice. An interesting winter this year. For one, it started in April! Very long. Secondly, very dry. What'll spring bring?

In fact, what'll the next ninety four springs bring? Check out the just released movie, from Al Gore ex-Presidential candidate of the United States, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and you might get some sort of idea! Wow! It's a documentary, but it is superb! I urge everyone to see this movie. It is hard hitting and very, very sobering. We're in for serious climate change and we'll have to do a lot more than just plant plants!

However, speaking of which, what a lovely time of the year to do just that. Loosen up that bit of ground, select some favourite species, pop them in, and they'll get established before summer, so you can go away for a week or two without worrying about the watering. And to inspire you, we've arranged for lots of them to be in flower! Which means if you haven't got a favourite plant yet, drop by soon - you're bound to find one!

As extra inspiration this spring, the Hobart group of the Australian Plants Society is putting together another **terrific native plants display** at the **City Hall. (Oct 6th, 7th and 8th)** If you haven't been to one of these, try to get to this one, as they don't happen every year, and they are always superb. They are nothing like the traditional flower show with thousands of flowers lined up in vases, but more like a presentation of inspiring gardens, with oodles of great planting ideas. There is always an educational component involved, also books, artwork and a fabulous 'kiddies corner' (supervised) where your little ones can construct their own individual creatures out of nuts and seed pods.

As well, there will be half a dozen native nurseries present, all showing off their best plants for sale, including us! We will be putting on a beautiful and inspiring display, this year designed and constructed by my creative staff - I am taking a back seat, and looking forward immensely to seeing the finished product!

But wait, there's more - on the following weekend, we will also be in attendance at the **Collectors Plant Fair**, organised by Sally Johansson at her Plant Hunters Nursery, 1115 Huon Rd, Neika. (**Sat Oct 14th, 10am - 4pm** and **Sun 15th, 10am - 3pm**). Set in Sally's beautiful garden, will be a dozen or so specialist nurseries, proudly displaying their wares, nearly all exotic plants mind you (but some pretty amazing ones).

So, for a **classy exotic experience**, go to Sally's weekend, but for an **extravaganza of Australian plant sensations** and inspiration (including the most delightful aroma as you walk through the door) get down to the city hall on Fri 6th, Sat 7th or Sunday 8th Oct. What's more it's **free!**

GARDEN DESIGN - Musing on featurism

I was walking along Chimney Pot Hill Rd this morning, enjoying the beautiful dawn, the fresh crisp air, and the green. Dappled green. Shades of green. Lots of shades of green, melding, folding into each other into the distance. It's a very relaxing ambience.

How different the typical suburban garden. A generalisation I know, but still..... If you spend a lot of time in 'the bush', a drive through suburbia often seems so garish. Overly coloured, in fact, overly featured. In many gardens, almost every plant is a feature! Not much melding, not much folding. Maybe the bushland vista along Chimney Pot Hill Rd would be boring. Or maybe, (as mentioned in two recently released garden books - more on that later) many people see the local indigenous plants as having their proper place in their local indigenous bush-scape, which they enjoy when they are in it, whereas gardens should have a different sort of look, with different sorts of plants. There's tradition as well. And conformity. And what's available, or presented, in the local nursery.

But featurism is probably inevitable in our western society, especially at the present time in Australia. We are a wealthy society, built on a premise that we should produce more, sell more. We are urged to grow. We want bigger, brighter, faster. We want the latest model. We throw the last one away.

It is the same in the garden. We want the new plant. The bigger flower. The new colour. We can hardly help it. In many ways it's natural curiosity. We like the stimulation. It's so easy to get carried away - next thing, we've got a garden full of features! Not perhaps a designed garden, nor perhaps a relaxing garden.

Nursery customers walk into their suburban garden centre and look for something new, something special, something magnificently in your face! Wow! look at that colour! And the nursery industry loves it. It sells more plants, it makes people happy, and it makes a viable business for the nursery owner and staff. Our business is exactly the same. We're constantly on the lookout for that new colour, that new form. We find it exciting and so do the customers. Give Plants of Tasmania Nursery another 100 years in the trade, and we'll have fine-tuned the plant selection to have nothing but the best Tasmanian feature plants available!

It's a disturbing side effect of capitalism on the rampage. Newer, bigger, better, more! Not very good for the environment of our planet, (see film) although the nursery plants side of things is relatively harmless. I have heard, that in this last generation in Australia, the average house size has doubled and the average family size has halved. (Thinking ahead; house size quadrupled? occupied by half a person?)

Anyway, back to the botanical side of musing. Beware the over-featured garden, for it will not be relaxing. We live in over featured times. However, it's a complicated story, and there's much more to it. For example - most front gardens are not made for relaxing, but for showing off. They're not so much for us, as for the neighbours, friends and passers by. And they do tend to be the gardens with the most featurism.

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Shortly I'll list some of Plants of Tasmania's **feature plants** for the season - bigger, better, more flowers! Also some good green ones. We do very good shades of green.

But first, as promised, a short note on two recently released books on ordinary Australian gardens, both by Tasmanian authors, and both good reads.

Jamie Kirkpatrick is a local geographer and ecologist, and is very well spoken (and well spoken of) and knowledgeable on matters of the Tasmanian flora and ecology. He has published and had a hand in publishing many fine works on these subjects. However, this latest work concentrates on the suburban garden, and is a very readable (and personal) investigation of "the garden next door".

The book is titled **THE ECOLOGIES OF PARADISE - Explaining the garden next door**, and is well introduced by the words on the back cover:

'Ordinary domestic gardens are largely unsung, except in commercials for pesticides. This sensitive, sympathetic, seriously amusing treatise tackles the causes of differences between domestic gardens without once mentioning Versailles.

What is a garden? Why do some people plant trees? Why do others like concrete edges? How can you garden for the ecology - or alternatively, The Economy? What are the roles of limiting factors, divas, birds, nativists and permaculturalists in creating the most locally diverse ecosystem on little planet earth? How can you tell the attitudes of people from the plants you see in their gardens? How can you create a garden without using the garden industry?

If your life has been empty to half full without answers to any of these questions, this is the book for you.'

The second book is by Peter Timms, and is titled **AUSTRALIA'S QUARTER ACRE - The story of the ordinary suburban garden**, and is an absorbing look at the history of Australia's ordinary gardens, with plenty of photographic examples.

Both books have personal information on the author's own gardens and their impressions of others, and being written from their Hobart based perspective, adds considerably to their interest for local readers. As well, they are both thought-provoking works, and I look forward to re-reading them in the future.

Some Fine Tasmanian Plants

Quite often in the spring newsletter I wax lyrical on some of the wonderful Tasmanian plants that are flowering profusely at the time, (as once again they are). However, given that I've just got stuck into the dangers of featurism, I shall this time mention a well-rounded mix of Tasmanian plants and discuss the virtues of each, including their green-ness.

***Comesperma volubile* Blue Lovecreeper** Well, there you go, the first plant is a feature plant! Couldn't help myself could I? Delightful in the Tasmanian bush, firstly because of its intense and surprising blue - an unusual colour in our bushscape - and secondly because you really don't know it's there until it flowers, so slight is its foliage, and therefore with a low green-ness component. It seems to be quite hardy when planted, and can be allowed to grow into existing bushes, up a tree trunk (with maybe a little supportive help if required), or on a trellis, with or without other vines. It's a gem!

A little secret: courtesy of one of our observant customers, we have a bright pink version coming on - feature, feature! - new plant, new plant! - it's a good, deep strident pink, quite outstanding (probably ready next spring, I think), but personally, it's the blue that does it for me!

***Tasmannia lanceolata* Mountain Pepper** A well presented foliage plant, the crisp, green, oval-shaped leaves contrasting with its reddish stems. It sits well in a cool, moist, well-composted site or is handsome as a pot plant, once again in a cool setting. It is also easily trimmed.

The mountain pepper comes in male or female plants - the males have a more noticeable floral display, in a soft creamy yellow, but not something you'd notice from a distance, whereas the females are very subdued in the flower department, but they come up with the goods in summer with their glossy, black berries. As well, many people use both the leaves and berries in cooking.

The pepper's verdant green would either meld well into a rainforest/ferny type setting or could be set off as a feature, for example, against a backdrop of finer foliage.

***Anopterus glandulosus* Tasmanian Laurel** In the same ilk as the pepper, but with larger, glossier leaves and with larger, more outstanding flowers, the laurel requires the same growing conditions as the pepper and is also a beautiful pot plant for a cool spot. Flowers range from white to pink and are attractive to honeyeaters.

***Phyllocladus asplenifolius* Celery Top Pine** Another one of our larger-leafed Tasmanian plants, and also for cool, moist spots, the celery top usually grows with a conical shape in its youth (probably the first 50 years), which makes it a fine Christmas tree, for those so inclined. It would sit well in a garden with the last two plants, providing there is enough room for it to progress to tree size. (That's unless you wanted to hedge it! I hadn't thought of that before - seems like sacrilege - but I'd say it would hedge quite well!) The celery top is a perfect pot plant for a cool spot, I've got one at home; it gets dragged inside every year for some seasonal frippery. It's about 2m high and has been in the same pot for about 10 years!

***Leptospermum lanigerum* Woolly Teatree** The old woolly teatree pops up in moist areas right round the state. I remember walking the Cradle - Lake St. Claire overland track some years back in January, and the most striking flowers out at the time were the masses of snowy-white woolly teatrees. At the nursery we have several forms available; one we call 'Bronze Summer' with attractive coppery or purple-hued new growth and white flowers in summer; another is 'Woolly Pink', with small blue-grey leaves set off by pale pink flowers in summer - a pleasant look.

Although they come from moist sites, most garden situations would be fine, especially with the occasional soak in dry periods. They prune very easily (in fact would make fine hedges - 2m to 4m high) and are very fast growing to about 5m.

***Daviesia latifolia* Bitter Hop Pea** Having not had many of these for a time, we now have plenty in stock. Whereas the earlier, large-leaved plants mentioned were for moist, cool sites, this shrub occurs in well drained moist sites and also quite dry situations. The leaf is large and undulating, the new growth is well coloured in reddish tones, and the yellow (with red) pea flowers occur up the stems in spring. It is certainly a plant with contrasting leaves for gardens, and will grow to about 1.5m.

***Stackhousia monogyna* Forest Candles** Now this one I did notice, just now commencing it's flowering. It's one of my favourite, grassy woodland type plants, with attractive candles of creamy white flowers, flowering up the 40cm stems for up to two months. Unfortunately the plants are not long lived, however cutting back after flowering may extend their lifespan to about five years. They look lovely amongst grasses and/or other small flowering heathland plants.

***Lagarostrobos franklinii* Huon Pine** You've probably never heard of this one! It's a great foliage plant for a moist to wet spot or pot. The bright green cascading foliage is a feature, and as long as its got plenty of moisture, it's pretty hardy. We've got one planted near the edge of the nursery pond (dam) and I've never had to water it! Too easy! Would you like to know how big they'll grow - well, this one has put on about 1 metre in 10 years, so I dare say it'll be about four metres high the last time I set eyes on it! And very nice it should be too.

***Lomandra longifolia* Sagg** The humble sagg. Well why not? It is so hardy. And if you put it in a nice bit of soil and water it more, you'll be amazed. Not only bigger, but lush and weeping! The same goes for a potted sagg - if you give it extra, it gives right back! Isn't life wonderful.

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Have a great spring. If this lack of rain continues, we'd better talk about gardening-in-the-dry next time. We look forward to seeing you at the nursery and at the flower show at the City Hall if you can make it.

Horticulturally yours, *Will* and wondrous staff, *Linda, Lydia, Paulette, Peter, Quig and Sam.*