

NEWSLETTER

PLANTS OF TASMANIA
NURSERY AND GARDENS
65 HALL ST RIDGEWAY 7054



OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK - 9am - 5pm (Winter 9am - 4pm)
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Newsletter 21

Spring 2008

Hello and happy spring gardening!

It **must** be spring. I looked at the six day forecast and it said *windy* for five of them. Oh well, I guess it's just a good way to make us appreciate the calm! When it comes.....

Our plants are late flowering this year. Usually when I sit down to transcribe the spring newsletter, I'm full of expressive language, regaling you with tales of our wondrous plethora of floral magnificence! Well it looks like we'll just have to wait a little longer..... maybe until the flower show!

Yes indeed, the wonderful extravaganza that transforms the City Hall into a native plant-lovers delight and a wonderfully aromatic experience.....the **Wildflower Show!** If you're in town on the weekend of the **18th and 19th of October**, don't forget to check it out.....even though I'm there every time, it never ceases to amaze and inspire me! This year there will be displays of many different garden styles, using only Australian plants. We will be there too, with a beautiful display, featuring.....whoops, almost told you..... sorry, it's a secret, you'll just have to come and see.

Not to mention **Island Bonsai**; Tassie's newest bonsai nursery (Island Bonsai will be at the City hall as well)yes, I opened up the new business on the second weekend in September.....it's come up very nicely! All the bonsais that were at Plants of Tasmania (plus more) are now down the street at **37 Hall St** at Island Bonsai. We will be open on the 2nd weekend of every month (Oct 11th - 12th, Nov 8th - 9th, Dec 13th - 14th) or by mutually agreeable appointment during the week. Please phone me on 6239 1920, if you'd like to have a look other than on the open weekends, as I am quite often able to open up.

We've got lots of lovely bonsai pots available, heaps of bonsai wire, a good range of tools and lots of great plants all ready for bonsai that I've been hoarding until now! Tsk, tsk! And I am also taking **bonsai classes**. Places are still available in the classes that run up to mid November, so please phone me at Island Bonsai on 6239 1920 if you are interested and I can send you some details. After November, I won't be running classes over summer, but will start up again next autumn when it's cooler.

To complete this spring's roundup of horticultural experiences, Island Bonsai will also be having a stall among many other nursery specialists, at the **Collectors Plant Fair** at **1115 Huon Rd, Neika**, on the weekend of **Nov 1st and 2nd**. A great event and set delightfully in Sally Johansohn's beautiful gardens!

So, is that enough dates for your diary? Good, because that's all I can think of!

Tasmania's Wonderful Leatherwood

The Leatherwood tree (*Eucryphia lucida*) is one of our most delightful and well known native plants. Beloved by bees and apiarists alike, it is also a fabulous garden tree, flamboyantly displaying its well-displayed and aromatic flowers through summer. The tree I have at home, invariably, without fail, bursts forth with its first flowers the week before Christmas, so I can have a sprig on the festive dinner table!

And now, new evidence has come to light, that has both amazed and delighted me. I discovered a Leatherwood, planted in a garden in Kingston, in full, open, completely undisturbed and unadulterated sun and wind....I mean this plant was really exposed! The bush is about 3m high, dense, a wonderful green, and as healthy as you could want! This is not a spot I would have recommended for a Leatherwood!

So why is this rainforest tree doing so well, you ask?

OK. Good question. Thought you might ask me that! Well I believe that this garden was well mulched with a fine, composted pinebark, then with coarser bark over the top. The Leatherwood, I believe, has its roots into this now wonderfully extra-well-composted layer of organic matter, and I've no doubt is quite adequately watered as well. I dare say the soil may well be quite nice also.

So, the lesson here? You can plant a Leatherwood in the Hobart region, in full sun, in a prime spot! All you need is good soil (easily beefed up with lots of compost), extra compost again, mulch on top, good drainage and good deep regular watering, especially in summer. Once the plant is established, say after two years, watering once a fortnight in the summer would be fine..... well OK, once a week then.

This is very exciting! On a similar vein, the council in Smithton in North West Tasmania is about to embark on a plan to plant Leatherwood trees as street trees! I think this is terrific news! They should thrive there. It would be even better if every town (and city) took it upon themselves to feature their local indigenous flora in their street plantings and town landscaping.

For those of you unfamiliar with Leatherwood, it is a tree of the wet forests in western Tasmania. In fact if you take a map of the island and draw a line from the top centre to the bottom centre, probably 99% of Tassie's Leatherwoods will be on the left! In the dense forests, they may take a long time to reach up to the light and flower. I have seen an article that suggests that it may take 75 years for a tree to commence flowering, and that the best nectar is available from about 100-230 years! So for honey producers, old growth forests would seem to be quite valuable.

However I remember seeing young, bushy, vigorous Leatherwoods growing on the sides of new roads in the south west, probably only 15 years old, in full sun (or however much they get in the south west) and covered in flower.

In the nursery we can grow them from seed or cuttings. A seed grown plant may take 5-10 years to flower, but cutting grown plants can flower in one! Many plants from cuttings will do this, as the part of the plant taken for the cutting is probably going to flower next year, so it does! (In a similar vein, cuttings taken from a Huon Pine are always hanging down, so the new plant grows in a very cascading, bushy habit, whereas seed grown Huons can be much straighter and more erect. Observing the Huons down by the Airwalk, I noticed young, slender, erect pines reaching up for the light amongst other trees, back from the bank, but overhanging the river, bushy cascading models. Maybe the tall ones were seed grown and the riverside ones vegetatively propagated, after floods for example).

The Leatherwood flower is beautiful. A simple, four-petalled, single-rose-like flower, about the size of a twenty cent piece, and with a distinct aroma..... the aroma of Leatherwood honey! Even if you're not so keen on Leatherwood honey, the scent of the flower is delightful!

The base model Leatherwood has a white flower, which is just lovely. Two other models, discovered by Ken Gillanders (from the now closed down, Woodbank Nursery), have pale pink flowers, Pink Cloud and Ballerina. These too, are very beautiful, but I suspect a bit more prone to petal browning in an exposed spot. There are also two variegated leaf forms in our range, Leatherwood Cream and Leatherwood Silver, both with white flowers. Leatherwood Cream has delightful pink tonings in the new leaves every year, and Leatherwood Silver has silvery tonings. All are splendid pot plants. The best flowering, either in pot or garden is in plenty of light.

Leatherwood is also readily pruned, and could easily make an excellent hedge. We have a plant, about 2m high in a big pot at Plants of Tasmania. It is about 20 years old, flowers like a trooper, usually en-masse in January, then more lightly all the way through to May, and I have kept it at the same height for the last 10 years with a yearly prune. Left to it's own devices in a suitable site, a bush might grow to 5 metres in ten or fifteen years. In a really good spot, such as a moist, fertile river valley, say in the Huon, it could grow into a tree over time!

Eucryphia lucida has a smaller cousin from the high country, *Eucryphia milliganii*, the Dwarf Leatherwood. This too is a delightful plant, with smaller, glossy leaves and flowers the size of five-cent pieces in about February/March. The scent is the same. This species is slower growing and smaller of stature, maturing at about 2-3 metres. It may well need a bit more of a cooler spot, but then again with plenty of compost dug in, maybe not! Also, an excellent pot plant.

For those of you with an interest in bonsai, I have a lovely little *Eucryphia milliganii* doing very well. The leaves and flowers are a perfect size for a miniature tree. I haven't really attempted the larger species yet, but there's no reason why it should not be as good.

If you do decide to have a go, and plant some *Eucryphia lucida* in an open, sunny spot (don't forget the compost), please let us know how they go. But certainly, if you feel you just can't bring yourself to plant them in the open, they are of course excellent with some shade. However, still dig in compost and keep up the watering. Then you can get your own hive! (Hollanders, on the Brooker - opposite Officeworks - have complete bee raising kits.....but without the bees!)

We have good quantities of Leatherwoods (and also Native Laurels) for sale at the moment, so to celebrate their excellent potential as garden plants we are offering the following discounts till the end of the year (or until we are down to 20% of the stock available).

White or pink Leatherwoods in 14cm pots
at \$12.50 each (lovely plants, about 60-70cm high)
Buy two.....get two free!

Beautiful Native Laurels in 20cm pots
at \$25 each (glossy-leaved 60-70cm high)
Buy one.....get the second for \$10 !

(All other Leatherwoods and Laurels, 20% off)

Other beaut plants looking good this spring

Richea dracophylla We have beautiful plants in 14cm and 20cm pots, at \$18 and \$36 respectively. They are a striking addition to the fernery and also look superb in a pot.

Richea pandanifolia Our plants in 75mm tubes took on delightful purple hues this winter in response to the extra cold. Totally desirable. Love them! Also so good in a pot.

Telopea truncata Tasmanian Waratah Just about all in tubes, but we have a great selection at the moment with choices of red, compact red, yellow, and our pink and cream form. They need special conditions but are just fabulous if you can get them going! Prices range from \$4.85 to \$15.

Diplarrena moraea White flag Iris This delightful harbinger of longer days, floats its shapely flowers above the strap-leaves, like waving flags. We have very nice specimens available in 14cm and 20cm pots.

Huon Pine Lagarostrobos franklinii We now have an extensive collection available in four pot sizes. Delightful in a tub with its soft cascading foliage or in a fernery, it holds its green colouring best in a shady position. Dig in lots of compost or potting mix if planting in the garden.

New area to be developed

Because we have moved our bonsai down the street to Island Bonsai, we now have a spare shadehouse to furnish, so we are proposing to display more of our beautiful rainforest and alpine plants, and pot up some of our best plants into attractive pots, for instant effect on your patio, or maybe for Christmas presents.

Nursery Sale

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, Plants of Tasmania Nursery is available for sale. We have had a few serious nibbles, but as yet no takers. If you fancy a tree-change (albeit small trees), please contact Will at the nursery. It's a great business, with excellent, dedicated staff.

In Conclusion

We hope you enjoy spring 2008, and that rain falls when required (just joking). Some of you are no doubt living in seriously dry countryside. We do hope ample precipitation comes your way soon.

Looking forward to seeing you at the nursery (and the Flower Show).

Best wishes, **Will** and staff, **Peter, Linda, Paulette, Lydia, Sam, Qug and Karen.**