

N E W S L E T T E R



PLANTS OF TASMANIA
NURSERY AND GARDENS

NO.4 SPRING 1998

65 HALL ST RIDGEWAY 7054

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

9am - 5pm (Winter 9am - 4pm) ph (03) 6239 1583 fax (03) 6239 1106

Hello good gardeners! Welcome to Spring 1998. We've had a pleasant winter up here on the ridge. Most of the frost drains away into the valley and I haven't had to knock any snow off the shadehouses - well not yet anyway. It's also been very pleasant closing the gates at 4pm for three months - our new winter hours - but now it's back to serious business, 9am to 5pm for the next nine months. (Apologies to anyone who came up after four, during winter.)

Spring. I think 90% of Tasmania's plants must flower in spring - it's a time of great activity for our birds and bees, in fact one could assume, a time of **over indulgence!** We've had such a plethora of blossom in recent years in the nursery spring garden, that I'm sure I've missed appreciating some plants, as their neighbours loudly proclaim their **colourful and aromatic wares.** I remember when the garden was young and every plant was clearly apparent, surrounded as they were by a sea of fresh pine bark. Every flowering was clearly seen, appreciated and remarked upon.

Now the garden is eight years old, and one plant flows into another, and there's great **thickets and tangles** of foliage, (enough to secure the intimacy of a whole family of bandicoots) and waves of spring flowers blend from one bush to the next.

As always, some shrubs start flowering early - different ones every year. We comment on these of-course **with wise intent** - it's the weather, it's the dry year, the warm winter. Last year it was probably the wet and the cold season. I do like this unpredictability - it adds spice. (I'd not be happy in a nursery where one had to ensure 10,000 plants flowering on mothers day - even if they were Tasmanian flowers.)

I also like the unpredictability of plant growth. Everyone designs their garden - we all expect something of our plants. Even a beginner with one plant in a pot. We expect flowers, bushy leaves - maybe we expect a plant will die! Arrrrr - but mother nature has a hand in this. Maybe the flowers don't come (perhaps next year), maybe the plant grows open and free. It doesn't die. But it doesn't look so bad. And there's that groundcover growing up through it, starting to flower, looks alright, didn't plan it that way, but it looks alright. **Nature's having a say here,** doing a bit of self designing. It's great - helps to make every garden different. The unpredictability of gardening strikes again! But I digress; back to spring.

SALE

What's happening? First up, we're having a bit of a **sale.** Mainly excess stock in our square tube lines - make way for new seasons plants etc. Anyway make a note if you need a whole lot of plants to poke in somewhere - maybe to screen the neighbours or as a windbreak - as they won't come much cheaper than this. We'll be selling them at **10 plants for \$5!** The sale starts on Saturday, October 17th, and we're

giving you, our regular customers, first pick of the bunch. We'll advertise in the press from the following Saturday.

FLOWER SHOW

A big happening in November. The Society for Growing Australian Plants is putting on its biennial Flower Show extravaganza at the City Hall. Now if you've not been to one of these before, try to get to this one - they are always superb! Pop the dates in the diary: Nov - Fri 13th, Sat 14th and Sunday 15th. There's something for every one - plants for sale (from native nurseries and society members), lots of exhibits, a kiddies corner (leave them for a while to make little creatures out of gumnuts and other bits and pieces), a craft stall and much, much more. It can be an educational and inspirational experience!

----- NEWS FLASH! -----

The nursery has just decided as part of our display at the flower show to include a bushfoods cafe! Kris Schaffer, our resident bushfoods expert has been trialing recipes for scones, biscuits and other delicacies with most intriguing flavours born of the Australian bush. I tasted a savoury scone recently with a dash of seaweed and alpine Baeckea, and it was delicious! We will be serving regular coffees (mind you - very good coffee) and assorted teas as well, both conventional and bushy!

We will be using Australian and Tasmanian flavours. Examples of what we hope to have on the menu are as follows (with prices to suit all budgets):

Scones - savoury - Baeckea / wakame seaweed
- Native pepper / cheese
- plain - Lilly Pilly Jam, honeys, Native currant jam, Quandong jam

Biscuits - with Macadamia butter or Native pepper cheese

Macadamia shortbread

Fudges - Macadamia, Leatherwood, Lemon myrtle, Wattle seed

Australian Dreamtime Tea, Billy Teas and Native herbal teas

NEW AND INTERESTING PLANTS IN STOCK

The *Olearia* genus is a group of plants of horticultural interest. There are many examples of *Olearia* in Tasmania, most of which have quite striking displays of daisy flowers, usually white but sometimes purple or pink. Unfortunately many *Olearia* are unreliable in cultivation, often being short-lived in the garden. *Olearia phloggopappa* is one of the better known *Olearias*. Where did the name come from? Good question. Usually white in the wild, coloured variants have been popular in cultivation for many years now. (I suspect the mainland forms may be longer lived than their Tassy cousins in cultivation) We have a batch of purple flowering phloggopappas coming on. They should be ready in their tubes by mid October. *Phloggopappa* grows very quickly to about 1.5m and covers itself with blossom in early spring. Very, very showy. If it survives. Try a very well drained site but not too dry.

Olearia lirata, **Dusty Daisy Bush**, is another fast growing *Olearia* to 2m. When it's in bloom you can't look away, it's a mass of white! Grows happily in drier sites and is prone to legginess, so play with the secateurs after flowering if you'd like it bushy. Flowers in about Nov/Dec.

Olearia ramulosa, **Twiggy Daisy Bush**, is a smaller member of the tribe. We have a couple of coloured forms in stock, a pink and a mauve. These two forms originally grew amongst many others at Howden, but now the land has been cleared. *Ramulosa* has tiny leaves and delicate daisy flowers in late spring or early summer. Plant it in amongst other stuff, if you don't require the leggy look. Very pretty in flower.

And a quick mention of *Olearia argophylla*, the **Musk**. The biggest of this daisy tribe, and probably the longest lived in the right site. To 5m, with large pale green leaves and handsome clusters of creamy white flowers in late spring. Best in a moist site. (Our baby musks will be ready soon.)

There are many other *Olearias* out there including some rather special alpine and sub-alpine species.

Other plants. We have some *Gonocarpus montanus* now available. **Mountain Raspwort**. It's a spreading soft-foliaged ground-cover, with shiny green leaves and reddish stems. It makes a great groundcover in pots, to other upright plants. Likes to be moist.

Eucalyptus vernicosa - subcrenulata **Varnished Gum** An interesting mob, these Varnished Gums. At their most alpine existence their leaves are tiny and round and they can have a mature size of less than a metre. Down the slopes the plants tend to get taller, and the leaves bigger. And then you tend to get *Eucalyptus subcrenulata*, **Alpine Yellow Gum**. But where does one end and the other begin? *Subcrenulata* can grow to 20m. Anyway we've got some lovely *vernicosa*-ish gums potted at the moment; densely foliated, slow growing and shiny of leaf. It's a guess, but we reckon 3-5m. Beautiful!

Billardiera scandens **Apple Berry** We now have these climbers in stock. They hark from the north of the state. The tubular bell flower is a pale green-yellow followed by plump fruits of a similar colour. The flesh is edible (if eaten raw we suggest spitting out the skin and seeds) with a flavour reminiscent of stewed apples. The vine is a light to medium climber.

Trochocarpa thymifolia **Delicate Trochocarpa** This is such a little gem! Tiny leaves, pendulent sprays of tiny bell flowers and clusters of mauve berries. And like many alpine plants - slow. Lovely in a pot or somewhere close in a cool garden (where you can get down on your hands and knees to admire it).

Cyathodes petiolaris **Eastern Whorled Cheeseberry** Another alpine gem. A low, slow shrub to 30cm. Once again, beautiful in a pot where its dense leaves with their intricate venation can be admired; it also features flowers followed by berries; this time, red. Endemic to Tasmania, as is the *Trochocarpa*.

BONSAI

No doubt you've all been hanging out for the latest bonsai news! We've had a shipment of new pots in. (mind you, I've filled most of those and I've had to order some more). I have now crafted 40 or 50 of the **new seasons styles**, but I'll need to let them settle in before they appear on display. (I expect to have them out sometime in late Oct or November). Some of you will be pleased to hear that the majority of the new constructions are very definitely **for sale**, however I will be a bit pushed for bonsai display space. Sometime in 1999 I hope to expand the bonsai shade-house.

TASMANIAN BUSH TUCKER

This is the second part of our notes on Tassy bush tucker. Last newsletter we looked at edible berries and fruit, now it's on to the leaves, teas and seeds. First up however I'll repeat last newsletters' introduction.

As many of you are aware there are some native plants in Tasmania which have **edible bits**. Fruits, shoots, berries, leaves, seeds, sap, flowers, pollen or tubers can be edible - even palatable.

Unfortunately our European colonising predecessors, by wiping out most of the original inhabitants, so destroyed most of the wealth of knowledge, gained over many thousands of years. Some small portions of information were recorded by early white botanists in Tasmania, and some from archaeological remains, but most of the knowledge we can access, originates from Aboriginal people on the mainland. (Relevant for the Tasmanian species that also occur interstate.)

Kris Schaffer has a keen interest in the edible nature of our indigenous flora, and has prepared the following notes from her research. (NB. Edited and added to by Will) She is a member of the Australian Food Plant Study Group set up by The Society For Growing Australian Plants.

WARNING Please note that this information has been obtained from a number of references, and we pass it on in good faith, however we advise extreme caution. As well as many plants being edible, **some are poisonous**. (On some plants one can find both edible and poisonous bits.) At all times be cautious. It could be very unpleasant (or worse) if one started to experiment. Be extra cautious with children. Three points should be stressed.

- 1. Plant Identification** Don't guess. If you're not positive on the identification of your plant, or which bits are the edible bits, either find out from someone who knows, or forget it.
- 2. Conservation** Please observe State and Federal regulations designed for the protection of our native flora. (Especially if you're into wood chipping.) Remember also that for our native birds and animals, these edible bits (especially fruits and berries) may be part of their existence - so harvest lightly, or grow your own.
- 3. Partake Sparingly** Some foods have substances that may be harmful in excess. Plants in the wild can be very variable, so start with small amounts. (For example: Many people have heard of early Europeans using Sassafras to make a tea or tonic. However Sassafras contains safrole, a possible cancer causing agent, so its use now is not recommended.)

EDIBLE LEAVES AND TEAS

Acaena novae-zealandiae **Buzzy** Leaves can be infused for tea. (And seeds can be infused into your socks!) A plant I really quite like in the garden with its glossy leaves, but it can need a regular trim.

Acacia mearnsii **Black Wattle** A bark tea can be used for indigestion. Caution - contains tannin.

Atherosperma moschatum **Sassafras** Caution - see item 3, above. Leaves can be infused for tea - use only a small amount. Early settlers drank this tea. Has also been used to make wine.

Baekea gunniana **Alpine Baeckea** Leaves in cooking (eg. scones or roast meat) or as a refreshing tea. Lemon tasting and very aromatic. Leaves can be used fresh or dried. (We have prostrate and upright forms for sale - nice planted beside pathways to brush past!)

Carpobrotus rossii **Pigface** The succulent green leaves of this coastal ground-cover can be eaten in a salad or cooked.

Correa alba **White Correa** The leaves of this coastal shrub can be infused for tea.

Kennedia prostrata **Running Postman** Another mainly coastal plant. The leaves can be infused for tea, the stems can be used for twine and the nectar from the flower, for a drink. What a plant!

Kunzea ambigua **Sweet Scented Kunzea** Can be infused as a tea and included as a flavouring in cooking. (There is a hand cream available now, with a Tasmanian, Kunzea based perfume. Very nice too.)

Leptospermum rupestre **Mountain Tea Tree** Makes a very nice tea. *Leptospermum riparium* and *Leptospermum lanigerum* can also be used for tea and as herbs for cooking.

Mentha australis **Native Mint** **Caution:** Use sparingly. Too much can muck around with oestrogen balances. Tea for coughs and colds and also for food flavouring.

Phebalium montanum **Alpine Phebalium** Leaves can be used in a salad. eg potato salad. (It's flowering now in the nursery, and scores 10 out of 10 in that department. A beautiful groundcover.)

Tetragonia sp **New Zealand Spinach or Warrigal Greens** Salads, raw, steamed or as substitute spinach pie. Tetragonia was taken to France as early as 1820 and has been used as a steamed or stirfry vegetable in many households. (**Editors note:** I heard a French cheff interveiwed recently. He grew up with Tetragonia growing in the family vegetable garden, and was surprised when he visited Australia to find it growing wild around the coast, and not even recognised as a food plant!)

SEEDS

Acacia (Wattle) seeds are used in biscuits, icecream and chocolate. They have a high protein content. The dried seeds are commonly roasted and ground. Green pods can also be cooked on a cool fire and the green seeds eaten - they taste like peas. (For further information on wattle seeds, refer to Bushfoods Magazine No. 4).

Tasmanian wattle seeds which can be used are:

Acacia mucronata **Narrow Leaf Wattle**, *Acacia verniciflua* **Varnish Wattle**, *Acacia verticillata* **Prickly Moses**, *Acacia melanoxylon* **Blackwood**, *Acacia dealbata* **Silver Wattle** and *Acacia sophorae* **Coast Wattle**.

Bulbine glauca **Rock Lily** The seeds can be eaten like peas. The roots can also be eaten.

EDIBLE FLOWERS, NECTAR AND POLLEN

Acacia dealbata **Silver Wattle** The pollen and/or flower can be used in pancakes. (Perhaps not for people with allergy to wattle pollen).

Banksia marginata **Silver Banksia** and *Banksia serrata* **Saw Leaf Banksia** Pour a cup of warm water over the flower spike to get the nectar. (NB Leave the flowers on the bushes for the honey-eaters and pigmy possums and also so the plants can set seed.)

Callistemon sp **Bottle Brushes** As for banksias.

Grevillea australis and *Hakea sp* Nectar can be sucked from the flowers or eaten as a garnish on salads.

Kennedia prostrata **Running Postman** Nectar from flowers. Grow your own as a garnish for salads.

Melaleuca sp **Paperbarks** Pollen from flowers can be eaten.

Richea scoparia and *Telopea truncata* **Waratah** Nectar can be eaten.

Viola hederaceae **Native Violet** and *Wahlenbergia stricta* **Bluebell** Flowers can be used in a salad or as a garnish. How's this for a recipe - coat flowers with beaten egg whites and dust with icing sugar. Great for cakes or for children with icecream or deserts.

Xanthorrhoea sp **Grasstree** Pour water over cones for nectar, or pick a few flowers and infuse.

These references have been used in the collation of this information as well as personal experience.

Australian Bushfoods Magazine
(we stock this publication - \$4.95)

Wild Food in Australia - AB & JW Cribb

Bush Tucker - Tim Low

The Bushfood Handbook - Vic Cherkoff & Jennifer Isaacs

Bush Foods - Jennifer Isaacs

Next issue - Roots and Growth Tips! Have a great spring and summer, and we look forward to seeing you at the nursery.

Our regards for the season,
Will, Kris, Lindy and Mark.