

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

(Closed Christmas day, Boxing day and Targa afternoon)

9am-5pm (Winter 9am-4pm)

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Hello, Plant lovers of the new millenium !

Over millions of years our planet has evolved an **amazing array of botanica**, (not to mention all the other stuff) each to its own niche. Whence it all began, is lost in the dreamtime.

Now, in a mere thousand years or so, one animal species has gained the ascendancy - us - and we are moving the goal posts so fast, that we have no idea of the long term consequences. Are we spoiling our own nest?

We have now altered so much of the earth's landscape to suit ----- us. There is a naivety there, but we don't have the excuses anymore. We are not remote isolated communities each mucking up our own back yards - we know it's happening almost everywhere - but still - that constant pressure to clear more land, fish more sea, make more stuff - growth, always growth. Well, enough of that.

We are fortunate indeed, here in Tasmania. We've **still got lots of the natural stuff** out there (and I doff my cap to all those who have helped to preserve it). And when it comes to plants, we've got our own **unique collection**. It is absolutely a wonderful thing, to be growing some Tassie plants at home, for which you have much admiration (and justly so), then to go for a walk and see those plants in the wild, doing their own thing - especially if you've not seen them in their natural habitat before. It is our hope, here at the nursery, that as more and more of our indigenous plants are established in gardens, so an increasing number of people will discover those plants, 'in the bush', thus developing more of an appreciation for their natural state.

Roll on the new millenium.

It is our pleasure, in this season of mists and mellowness, to present to you ----- **the autumn collection!** And what a selection! We have **never had such an extensive range**, with so much choice and in such good nick. In fact we're in the process of opening up some more space so as to display it better. And now we've had some rain!!!! I had forgotten what it looked like!

Apology: I didn't quite get round to last spring's newsletter. Sorry. I blame the GST. It's been a really useful thing to blame for quite a while now.

And now for something completely different.

MINI GOLF

We are excited to have been involved this season in the development of the **Putters Adventure Golf** project in Moonah. It is proving to be an unusual development, certainly in two aspects. One is the **quality and scale of the landscaping** - waterfalls, ponds and streams, on an enormous scale, beautifully presented, and constructed by one of the premier craftsmen in this field, Chris Calverly of Launceston. Secondly is the choice of plants. Sam Harry, the project manager, has a real affinity with the Tasmanian flora, so along with plants from our nursery and others, the 18 holes of mini golf will be set - almost exclusively (there are some mainland natives and a few remnant exotic trees) - amongst our indigenous flora! I was commissioned to position the plants, when the gardens were ready, and that task is almost complete. Thousands of plants have now gone in, and in 3-5 years it should be a really lovely garden.

Opening this autumn, it will be as much fun admiring the plants and water features, as putting around the course with ones' kids, grand-children or friends. I am hoping to maintain a horticultural interest in the developing gardens, and advise on infill plantings, pruning and general maintenance.

It is a real delight to discover a commercial development, being deliberately adorned with our Tasmanian flora, not because *'the council requires us to put in some plants, lets put in a few cheap natives'* but rather because the project manager loves the Tassie plants, and actually wants them in his development!

It has been quite a **challenge**, but exciting, to position the plants so they will develop into **beautiful gardens** for the customers to play through, and I sincerely hope that the enterprise is an outstanding success, so demonstrating the role, that well planted local flora, may have in the future.

I should add, the building housing the cafe and function room, is huge. And dynamic. It is a really exciting and sculptural building, with a mini 18 hole putting course completely under cover. It has some exciting bits - the kids will love it. The outside course is also 18 holes (and about 18 waterfalls) and just to complete the story, the cafe will be licensed, so there is a 19th!

The whole product is something you'd expect to find in Sydney or Melbourne, or even the Gold Coast - but on the Gold Coast it'd be tacky - this is a quality product! Am I biased - yep - I love it!

SALE

We have some hundreds of plants left over from last year, chiefly in square tubes. They're big in their pots and they're rootbound, and we've got them out for sale at 10 plants for \$8.50. Now before you get too excited - they're nearly all trees - Eucalypts and wattles. Good for big blocks really. Most of them will be fine - they'll be slower to get started, but if you're on a budget, they may be just the thing.

FLOWER SHOW

The **Australian Plants Society** will be holding its Wildflower Extravaganza at the Hobart city hall early in November this year - I'll keep you posted. It'll be an **excellent presentation**. The theme this year is a **Gondwanan** one - our links with New Zealand, South America and Antarctica. Apart from lots of yummy plants on display (and for sale) there will be many interesting presentations of a more scientific nature. (More on that in the spring newsletter - about October.)

CATALOGUE

Our 2001 catalogue is now out. One dollar (send 4 x 45c stamps if you'd like it posted) or free if you spend over \$10 on plants. We have almost 30 new additions since the last catalogue, some are plants we have stocked before, now re-available, but most are new to our line up. Some of the new species are.....

NEW PLANTS THIS SEASON - I've picked out the following to whet your appetite.

Apalochlamys spectabilis Showy Cassinia An unusual species. Looks for all the world like a weed! Big furry leaves grow on the lengthening stem in the first year, followed by sprays of straw coloured flowers on stems to 1.5m in the second, whereupon the plant apparently dies. It's a biennial! And in fact that's the way it could be used in the garden. It'd make a showy backdrop for smaller plants. Anyway I don't really know it yet, so we'll have to wait and see.

Cryptandra exilis Coastal Cryptandra A slow growing, low plant, endemic to Tasmania. Fine lacy foliage and tiny white flowers. Another plant I know nothing about yet, but it's very nice in the pot. We hope to have its absolutely splendid cousin, *Cryptandra amara* available next year - it's a beauty!

Helichrysum dealbatum Cardigan River Carpet A prostrate, suckering, spreading, grey-leaved daisy from the banks of the Cardigan River in western Tasmania. White flowers in summer, on stems to 15cm. Should form a nice mat in a moist soil. Found by horticultural colleague, Jim Mcleod. Very attractive in a pot. The plant, not Jim.

Lagenifera stipitata Blue Bottle Daisy Forms a low spreading, suckering mat in a moist spot. Small blue-mauve daisy flowers in summer on stems to 15cm. Sun or part shade. This attractive little number was located by horticultural colleague, Les Payne. Also, most becoming in a pot. The plant too.

Philotheca virgata Prostrate Twiggy Wax Flower (Originally known as *Eriostemon virgatus*) A low spreading form of this usually upright shrub. Light, bright green foliage spreads to 1m. White flowers in early summer are a delight. Seemingly slow to get started, but terrific in flower. Found by my horticultural self on the west coast. Beautiful in a pot.

Gaultheria tasmanica Red Tasmanian Waxberry A slow growing prostrate, suckering plant, endemic to Tasmanian mountains. Tiny, shiny red berries in summer. Requires a cool moist position or as a pot plant. We will be introducing a form with soft yellow berries in a year or two.

Helichrysum pumilum var spathulatum Tiny Alpine Daisy A small clump of grey-green leaves, only a few centimetres high gives rise to 'Lipstick' red buds nestling in the foliage in spring. Over a few weeks the stems grow to about 5cm high, the buds fade and the flowers open to small white daisies with yellow centres. It's a little gem, if only for its brief bud colour, and it's unbelievably slow to grow.

Milligania densiflora A striking plant, with arching leaves to 40cm. Flowers are white or pinkish, very attractive on stems to 40cm. Temperamental. Cool, moist, well drained spot or pot. Endemic to alpine Tasmania. It'd be an absolute winner - if only it was reliable.

Apodasmia brownii Coarse Twine Rush (Was *Leptocarpus brownii*) A clump forming, erect rush with grey-green stems to 50cm or more. Happy in coastal or moist sites, withstanding dry conditions once established. This plant is very handsome in a pot, especially a black one!

Ehrharta stipoides Weeping Grass A grass of variable habit, from low spreading, to 60cm, with flowering stems to 1m. Can be used as an informal lawn, in sun or shade, with occasional mowing. Likes average to moist soils. It does sound interesting.

Archeria eriocarpa A very slow growing shrub to 1m. Endemic to Tas. rainforests and mountains. Small pink flowers. Needs a moist cool spot or pot. This is the first *Archeria* we have cultivated - I'm looking forward to the others.

GROWING TASMANIAN PLANTS IN POTS

As our feature article, this newsletter, I will muse on the wonderful displays one can develop by growing our local flora in pots. Now, pot culture is not for everyone. Plants in pots do need a bit of extra attention, and regularly, and that's called watering. If regular watering - and that may mean every day or two in summer - is not what turns you on, I'd suggest keeping your greenlife in the ground. But for those of you who may be in a unit or townhouse, or with decks, patios or other paved areas; a few terracotta pots, **brimming with beautiful Tasmanian plants** is an absolute delight.

Every second Tasmanian plant will grow happily, outdoors, in a pot! So there's masses to choose from. Our current catalogue has a pot suitability rating for every plant listed. The rating system is from 1-10, where a low range indicates a plant not so suitable for pot culture, and a high range being very suitable. For example, *Isolepis Aucklandica*, the Cushion Club Rush (Cat. page 18) has a pot suitability rating of P1-3, thus is not recommended for growing in a pot. (Note: P = Pot). In this case the low rating is due to this plant's propensity to die out in patches, so looking unsightly.

On the other hand, from the same page, *Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*, the Button Grass (apart from having one of the longest names in living memory), is a superb tub plant. We have given it a rating of P6-9. Button Grass will give little trouble, looks great and have an effective pot life of up to 10 yrs +.

One important facet of successful pot culture, is to choose the right plant for the situation. For example, even though *Anopterus glandulosus*, the Native Laurel, has a pot rating of P7-9, if you keep this plant in a hot sunny position, you will not have success. The Laurel is a rainforest plant and is one of the most exquisite and reliable of pot plants (I've had one happily in a pot for 15yrs) but it needs to be in a cool position. In the case of a Laurel, some morning, or dappled sun, will be well to its liking.

When looking through the catalogue, you will notice quite a few plants with a rating that spans both, not so suitable, and suitable, eg P3-7. If we take 5 as the dividing line between suitable, and not so suitable, then what does this rating mean? Usually, this mid-range rating indicates that this particular species may look good, and do well in a pot, but might need extra attention. Alternatively it may grow really well, but not present itself so nicely.

NOTE 1. The catalogue rating systems, both for pots and gardens, are meant as a guide only. Of course there are always exceptions. We welcome feedback from your experiences. This way, we can adjust the rating system as we learn more, and provide greater accuracy with the ratings.

REQUIREMENTS OF PLANTS IN POTS

1. Chose a suitable plant or plants for your position. A hot and windy deck would be a fine place for a Banksia or Trigger Plant, but not for a Huon Pine or Native Laurel.

2. Use potting mix - not soil. Most plants in pots require good drainage and most soils do not drain well in this situation. We sell potting mix in 20 litre bags for \$5.50. This is exactly the same mix we use for our own plants, and has a suitable acidity, with the right balance of nutrients, so it's good stuff.

3. Do not plant small plants into too large a container. Pot into the next size up whenever practicable. If you have a lovely big pot and you've just got to have a particular plant, but it's a wee bit of a thing, it is usually best to pot it up into a medium size plastic pot, then sit that pot into the bigger pot. Then you can pot on next year. **Hint** Pot on in spring or early autumn for the most reliable result. Mid summer potting can cause problems with some plants, and winter potting is fairly ineffectual.

4. Regular watering. In summer, every day or two or three (depending on the plant's size in the pot, how vigorously it's growing and how exposed the position is) In winter, every week or two. Watering is a

variable thing, and how much is required depends on many factors. This can be a bit daunting for new-comers, however once the main principles are acquired, it's not so hard. In most cases, each water should be enough to soak the entire rootball and have some leaking out the bottom of the pot.

One of the primary concerns for those keeping plants in pots is, what do you do when you go away? Options: install a dripper system on a timer (but still have someone check it every now and then), ask reliable neighbours, friends or family to water, or take your plants to board with someone. However in all cases be prepared to wear some losses, because what someone else does, is never quite the same as what you do.

5. Feeding. Unlike their counterparts growing in the ground, a pot plant has only a finite zone from which to source nutrients. Our potting mix contains slow release Osmocote, a fertilizer (in our case with a low phosphorous content, suitable for our indigenous plants) that eeks out the nutrients over a 9 month period. We also add iron, dolomite and a dash of faster acting nitrogenous fertilizer, the latter, only in the warmer months.

If not repotting every year, nutrients will be required. For these plants we dig small holes in the top of our potting mix in spring, and add a teaspoon or two or three, of Osmocote, then cover it up. Alternatively, if there is room below the rim of the pot, we scatter the osmocote, then cover with a centimetre or two of potting mix. We also can (once or twice a year, usually if the leaves are looking pale) give a liquid feed of a seaweed based fertilizer. Follow instructions on the container, and use a dilute dose.

6. Pruning. Can be little or lots (although if you trim too often you'll probably prune out the flowering bits). Some plants will get leggy, and may need a trim once or twice yearly to keep them bushy. Others you may prefer to prune to expose the trunk. You can trim to be formal or informal, windswept or funky. The sky's the limit.

Speaking of windswept or funky - brings my mind to Bonsai. Not everyone's cup of tea. Takes a bit more care and attention, but can be highly rewarding. Whereas many potted plants are grown to be well foliated and florific, potted plants of a Bonsai nature tend to display the trunk and branches, relying far less on flowers for their impact. I won't delve into the secrets and subtleties of Bonsai with Tassy plants now, but I do have an information sheet at the nursery and examples to view - even some to buy.

7. Multi-planted pots / Gravels and rocks Often, pots look most attractive with a mix of plants. A pot with an upright plant could have a low spreading companion, wide low pots can have a mix of plants - a miniature garden. The use of a rock or rocks and gravel as a mulch, can enhance this presentation. If planting a combination, try to avoid having one species that is too vigorous growing, as it may quickly overpower the other plants.

Note: Often potted plants take up positions of prominence at our residences - either side of the front door, on the deck or patio etc. Because of this, we like them to be looking their best - which sometimes they don't. It is useful to have a space off to one side where plants can be placed for a bit of a trim and a fertilise, to recouperate before being brought back out for show. Extra plants can be housed in this area so that if one plant is off duty, another can fill its place.

SOME REALLY GOOD TASSY PLANTS FOR POTS

Although one in every two Tasmanian plants is good for pot culture, here is a list of some of my favourites. Most of these comply with the **three desirables** of pot culture, **1.** To look good in a pot, **2.** To last a long time, looking good, and **3.** To require minimal maintenance to look good. Good, we've got that settled then.

Note: Most of these plants could have their pot life extended, to be happy and healthy for a life time, if the bonsai technique of root pruning was employed after 5 or 10 years or more.

WILLS' TOP TWENTY (not ranked - just alphabetical)

- 1 **Anopterus glandulosus** **Native Laurel** I've had a fine specimen in the same pot for 15 years - and looking good. (Mind you, it's a big pot) Lovely big shiny leaves, beautiful clusters of spring flowers, white or pale pink - beloved of honey eaters. It's a ripper! Prunes easily too.
- 2 **Athrotaxis cupressioides** and **Athrotaxis laxifolia** **The Pencil Pine** and the **Intermediate Pine** Ten to fifteen years, trouble free in a pot, is to be expected. Stately conifers. Both superb.
- 3 **Banksia marginata** **Silver Banksia** Beautiful, informal, striking plants. The spreading forms are especially good. The yellow, upright flowers in autumn are a highlight, just ask those nectar sipping birds.
- 4 **Dampiera stricta** **Blue Dampiera** A humble plant, low growing and slight. We've had one in a hanging basket for many years, and it's flowered all summer, every year. A beautiful blue. Extra nice.
- 5 **Eucryphia lucida** **Leatherwood** What a magnificent plant - soft green well structured foliage and beautifully simple, four-petalled white flowers in summer, with the waft of Leatherwood scent for many months. We have also, two pink flowering forms and a form with variegated leaves, the latter with a pink blush to the foliage when young. If I was a bee, I'd be in heaven!
- 6 **Ferns** Most of the ferns are just fabulous pot plants for that shady cool courtyard or corner. Some of the bigger growing ones may need regular potting on (and watering) but apart from that, nothing much goes wrong with them. A potted collection, with various foliages, can look very becoming.
- 7 **Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus** **Button Grass** The signature of the plains of the south west of Tasmania. A thick tuft of leaves to 50cm gives rise to long slender stems with creamy white globular flower heads, there-after reverting to their nuggety brown countenance for which they are so well known. A very striking plant in a pot.
- 8 **Lagarostrobos franklinii** **Huon Pine** Well, what can one say. A beautiful plant with light to bright green weeping foliage, slow enough to last in a pot for many many years. Unreal - and a great bonsai.
- 9 **Libbertia pulchella** **Pretty Grass Flag** This tiny tuft of bright green fan shaped leaves, shows off with delicate white flowers on stylish stems to 15cm, in early summer. The tiny seed capsules that follow are exquisite in their own right. Lovely in small pot, or underplanted with a bigger plant. Exquisite.
- 10 **Nothofagus cunninghamii** **Myrtle** Oh yer! we just have one good plant after another! The exquisite beauty of the Nothofagus foliage is unparalleled, both in the individual leaves, and their arrangement on the stem. Long lived, easily pruned, autumn tonings in the new growth - who could ask for more? Fantastic.
- 11 **Ozothamnus ledifolius** **Mountain Spice** (Compact Form) A slow growing mound of bright, waxy foliage, forms a compact bush. Flower buds are reddish-orange in spring, gradually opening to white flowers. In summer on warm days, the spicy aroma from the leaves wafts through the air.
- 12 **Patersonia fragilis** and **Patersonia occidentalis** **Purple Flags** Lovely pot plants. Tufts of slender leaves rise 20 - 30 cm from the pot, with bluish or mauve flowers in summer on stems to 20 - 50 cm (depending on the species).
- 13 **Phyllocladus asplenifolius** **Celery Top Pine** I love this plant (I love them all - lucky I work in a nursery). Handsome, yet intricate, well ordered foliage, grows into a pyramidal tree of very pleasing stature. The tiny flowering structures and developing seed capsules on a mature plant are like decorations.

14 Restio tetraphyllus Tassel Cord Rush This beautiful plant has suffered a name change - *Restio* has become *Boloskion* - anyway, at least the plant's the same. Grows quickly into a dense tuft of light, bright green foliage, with tassels on the ends and looks most decorous. It does like regular potting on, and will grow quite big, but for many years is a great pot plant.

15 Richea dracophylla Dragon Leaf Richea Oh so striking! A wondrous foliage plant for a shady spot and when old enough to flower, very exciting. The large tapering leaves cascade from one or more upright, 'bamboo like' stems, the unusual flowers are large, creamy coloured, and striking.

16 Richea pandanifolia Pandani Hail to the monarch of the Richea. It is so exciting to be able to grow this fabulous plant. The ultimate in foliage plants, with huge tapering leaves from a central stem, slow growing but very rewarding. Not so easy in the ground, but in a pot we've found it very reliable. Superb.

17 Richea scoparia Scoparia The compact alpine form of this plant makes a handsome pot plant, growing into a neat rounded shrub, and after many years (about 5-7) will flower in the pot. Flowers can be white, pink or red - ours I believe, come from a creamy gold flowering specimen. Very, very nice.

18 Stylidium graminifolium Trigger Plant What a fascinating plant, with its active little flowers. It's reliable in a pot (as long as you don't pot it on in mid summer) but remarkably not so in gardens. A good sized potted plant, is a real delight, with many stems of pink flowers, blooming for many months.

19 Tasmannia lanceolata Mountain Pepper Such a handsome plant. Bright green leaves and red stems. Males and females. The males have the better flowering display - cream, in spring. The females have the glossy black berries in late summer and early autumn. And, both leaves and berries can be used as a hot spice in cooking. Now there's a useful plant, decorative and edible!

20 Xyris operculata (and mates) Yellow Eye We have four Xyris species in Tasmania, and they all make quite striking pot plants. They form dense tufts of short leaves with many slender flowering stems to 30cm, with yellow three-petalled flowers in summer. The stems then remain, with the small, black rounded seed capsules looking quite decorous.

Now this list of 20, came from my list of about 40 favourites, (which comes from my list of heaps more plants I really, really like) so there's a few to choose from.

And now, I'm sorry to say, that's your lot for the day. We look forward to seeing you at the nursery, and trust that your garden grows like no other!

Best wishes,

From **Will**, and the **Plants of Tasmania** team - **Lydia, Paulette and Lindy**, and an occasional **Keryn and Dave**.

P.S. (or should that be P.B.) - PLASTIC BAGS

We're always happy to receive plastic shopping bags (and cardboard boxes if you've got heaps floating around) to pack plants into. If they tend to collect at your place, we'd love to recycle them at the nursery. Mind you, for the good of the planet we should all be using our own string bags or other reusable containers, so if you have your own containers to your pack plants into, that's even better.