# NEWSLETTER

# PLANTS OF TASMANIA NURSERY AND GARDENS

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Hello for autumn (well I'm a bit late - I guess it's hello for winter) 2002. Summer down here in south east Tasmania was cool and wet, but officially only 1.4 degrees cooler than average! Can you believe that! It turns out that the previous two summers have been warmer than average, (I can definitely attest to that!) so we were lulled into a false sense of security. Anyway I have to admit that I didn't mind this summer - I didn't move to Tasmania to enjoy heat! And the watering has been pretty easy.

And now autumn - wow! Just about the warmest on record! Amazing, and very, very pleasant.

Our plants have enjoyed it too. At this time of year, as usual, we have lots of lovely, healthy new stock for sale, including some promising plants new to our lineup.

# NEW PLANTS

A great new addition to our alpine range is the Sage Cushion Bush, *Pterygopappus lawrencei*, endemic to Tasmania, and often forming part of bolster heath in many alpine areas in the state. (Bolster is the name for hard cushion plants).

We have been delighted to find that *Pterygopappus* is very happy in our potting mix. It actually grows about twice as fast as the other noteworthy bolster plant we have in stock, the dark green Heath Cushion Plant, *Dracophyllum minimum!* So instead of being excruciatingly slow, it's just damn slow! I have planted some of both species in the same pot to see how well we can recreate a 'bolster mosaic landscape', as you often see in the high country.

Pterygoppapus lawrencei is a light sage green in colour and softer in the leaf than the Heath Cushion. The small, bluish, hairy leaves form tight rounded hexagons. Flowers are small and white. At this stage, we recommend pot culture.

Another unusual plant now in stock, and from the complete opposite in habitat, is *Isopogon ceratophyllus*, the Horny Cone Bush. (In case you are wondering, the common name appears to be derived from the cone like flowers and the antler shaped leaves. And no, I didn't make it up). This *Isopogon* harks from S.E. Australia, but is restricted to Flinders Island as far as Tasmania is concerned. It has a fascinating foliage, both intricate and dashing, however it is also prickly and the plant has a reputation for unreliability in the garden. We've certainly grown very nice specimens in pots, and I also have one doing well in the garden. Best in a warm, sandy or well drained light soil and only light fertiliser in a pot, and probably add none in the garden.

From alpine to Flinders and now back to the cold midlands. *Barbarea australis* is known as **Austral Winter Cress** and as the name implies, is edible, with tasty, peppery shoots. (The cabbage white butterfly also seems to know what the name implies). It is rare in the wild, found only along a few water-courses in central (midlands) Tasmania. To 30cm with small yellow flowers. It can be short lived, but grows readily from seed.

We have this year a new *Bracteantha* in our range. This one is *Bracteantha bracteata*, the **Golden Everlasting**. As with the other Bracteanthas, it is quick growing up to about 70cm, with golden yellow everlasting, daisy-like flowers. The plant however, is not everlasting. Expect 3-5 yrs. A hearty cut-back after flowering is recommended. This species was collected up the east coast.

Two new ferns. The Rainbow Fern, Calochaena dubia is a spreading fern, similar to the Bracken Fern, but more of a lime-green in colour. It can withstand drier, and more open conditions than most ferns.

The Slender Tree Fern, Cyathea Cunninghamii, occurs rarely in the state, and is not easy to collect spores from, as it is very quick growing and does not reach sexual maturity for maybe 20-30 years! I can see why it's rare. Compared with our ubiquitous Dicksonia (manfern), this Cyathea has a very slim-line trunk which can grow up to 30cm in a year. It needs a cool, shady, moist and sheltered position to do well.

Gahnia sieberiana, the Red Fruited Saw Sedge, makes a large decorative clump of arching foliage to 1.5 or 2m, but is finer in its foliage than Cutting Grass. Sieberiana also has a slightly serrated leaf edge so is best planted away from paths. A handsome pond-side specimen.

We have a new coastal form of *Allocasuarina monilifera* in stock. (Providing the rabbit hasn't eaten it all - we've had a bunny trapped in the nursery and we now know it's favourite food plants). The **Coastal**Necklace She-oak is a nice compact form, generally with more of a bluish tint to the foliage. Young plants can be quite prostrate in their early growth. It should make a nice reliable, dense screen or hedging plant.

And last but not least, we have *Isolepis inundatus* the **Swamp Club Rush**, a small bushy, fine foliaged rush to 30cm. It is a bright, light green in colour, and would be most decorative edging a pond, in a moist or wet spot in the garden. Also looks attractive in a pot. If you'd like something that will spread around in a moist spot, this *Isolepis* would be great, as it seeds readily.

## SEEDS

Very exciting! The suspense has been building, and finally, Wildseed Tasmania have released a range of packets of Tasmanian seeds for sale! And beautifully presented they are too. Lovely photos, lots of info, and divided into groupings eg. Eucalypts, Alpine plants etc. At this stage the range includes 40 species.

Very nice for those of you who'd like to dabble in a bit of propagation and excellent for visitors and as gifts. The packets are \$3.50 each and some contain up to 200 seeds! Congratulations Wildseed - today Tasmania, tomorrow the world?

And speaking of seeds.....

We are often asked how we propagate our plants, ie seeds or cuttings? Well it's approximately 50/50. Like any random sample of world flora there are some plants that germinate readily, and some that don't. Of the difficult ones, many will strike well from cuttings. However the majority of our cutting grown plants are selected forms that we wish to present as a known product.

For example, most Tasmanian tea trees are upright growing shrubs with white flowers. However in the world of gardening, low shrubs, groundcovers and plants with different flower colours, are much sought after. As we only grow Tasmanian plants, and our range of tea trees extends to only half a dozen species, it is good news to find variations in the tribe. The low and prostrate tea trees are generally found in windswept coastal or mountain situations. Over thousands of years of being blasted by the winds, it is only the flat growers that survive! And it is from these plants that we often take cuttings, thence to replicate the plant as it was growing in the wild. Nowdays in our catalogue, from an original seven species of upright, white flowering tea trees, we have for sale an extra thirteen or more forms, all propagated from cuttings, so our range of tea trees is extended to over twenty!

## HEDGING ABOUT THE BUSH

We are quite often asked for plants to form a hedge. My dictionary says: 'Hedge - a row of bushes or small trees planted close together, esp. when forming a fence or boundary.' I guess this need not necessarily be pruned, but when I think of a hedge, pruning is definitely part of the concept. To form a fence or boundary with plants leads me to think of three styles.

- 1. Informal, mix of species, little or no pruning.
- 2. Informal, one species, little or no pruning.
- 3. Formal, one species, regularly trimmed into a solid mass.

Most people who enjoy gardening predominantly with indigenous plants would probably tend towards the first type - the informal, with a species mix. Firstly, because our 'bush' is so informal, and we feel comfortable with that style, and secondly, because we are deliberately trying to leave the exotic garden world behind, and there is a lot of formality associated with more 'traditional' gardening.

However we should remember that all the plants humans have collected to use in gardens were once growing wild somewhere, presumably in quite informal situations. As we began to shape our world to suit ourselves we introduced more linear spaces - roads, walls, canals, fences. These edges provided opportunity to plant rows of single species. Inspiration could have come from natural edges such as river banks and coastal fringes. A row of a single species can be very dynamic, make a very powerful statement and also be very directional.

So why not use Australian / Tasmanian plants formally? Why not indeed. One practical consideration - most hedges require reliable, hardy, and usually long lived plants. A well trimmed hedge either side of your front path with a couple of 'Oh so obvious gaps' is not really what's required! With this in mind, you need to select your plants carefully.

Three Tasmanian indigenous hedges I have seen over the last two decades have left an impression. (I guess all that means is that I remember them!) The first, in Scottsdale, back about 20 years, was a formal myrtle hedge, *Nothofagus cuminghammi*, about 3m high, half as wide, and extending for the length of the boundary. Beautifully trimmed, and in perfect health! My guess would be, probably dug up from a forest roadside, 20 to 50 years previously. Scottsdale has of course, a beautiful growing climate and terrific soils.

The second, in the rural countryside out of Scottsdale (must have been my impressionable years) was not so much a hedge, but an avenue - huge eucalypts, majestically lining either side of the gravel road as I drove through the paddocks - not in straight lines, somewhat staggered and with differing spaces, but because of their size and isolation from other trees, a totally astounding and powerful statement. These trees, probably *Eucalyptus regnans* or something equally as big, would have been remnant forest I expect, left along the roadside when the paddocks were cleared, or just regenerated, out of the reach of stock and ploughs, to form the avenue I experienced.

Thirdly, bordering a caravan park in Bicheno, a nice hedge of *Kunzea Ambigua* with their fine, soft foliage and aromatic flowers in spring. These plants were definitely there previously on the site, and subsequently pruned for convenience and effect.

Another hedging effect one can spy, common especially in northern Tasmania, is that of *Melaleuca ericifolia*, where it has been left, usually along watercourses, and can form quite thick, completely naturalised plantings, courtesy of its ability to sucker. (This is the plant used for 'tea tree' fences - not really a tea tree at all).

I recall a nursery colleague from the north-west, relating how occasionally customers arrive at his nursery enquiring after plants to form a hedge, screen or windbreak, and outlining all the hard work they had just

completed by grubbing out the local 'tea tree'! I do believe there may have actually been the occasion when he sold them exactly the same plants that they had just removed!

I have chosen the following list of Tasmanian plants to fulfil the two crucial attributes of a good hedging plant. Firstly they should be reliable as a garden plant, and preferably long lived. Secondly they must be able to be easily pruned and have the ability to grow new foliage from low down in the shrub.

I am surprised at how many hedging plants I've found. I expect now in coming years to regularly see Tasmanian plants' hedges, criss-crossing the countryside, neatly trimmed and abounding with health and vigour! (Have I mentioned my shares portfolio in Black and Decker?)

But a word of caution. If you have your heart set on a particular species, remember that a long hedge will require a lot of plants - check first to see if they are in stock. Also, a great tip - buy a few extra plants at the same time, and pot these on to keep as spares. Then if you get some deaths in the first couple of years, you'll be able to slip your spares straight in. Trying to find an advanced specimen of exactly the same species, a year or two down the track, is often impossible!

N.B. For some plants, you'll note that I've recommended cool, moist sites. This would include Ferntree, Collinsvale, almost anywhere in the Houn Valley or further south, or the north of the state, especially the Scottsdale area and the northwest. In good soils and with adequate moisture, plants recommended for cool, moist sites, can be planted in full sun.

However in the Hobart suburbs and East Coast etc, a moist, cool site usually has to be a part of the garden with some shade and extra moisture.

# TASMANIAN PLANTS FOR HEDGING

Acradenia franklinii Whitey Wood

A dark green, neatly foliaged shrub, endemic to Tasmania. Found on the west coast, it can be tall and open in the rainforest, but in cultivation, proves to be very compact and quite hardy in open situations, although I wouldn't recommend a hot spot. I have found it to be very reliable, and feel it would make an excellent hedging plant. Lovely white flowers in spring. Hedge height, 1-2 m.

Allocasuarina monilifera Necklace Sheoak-Coastal Form

A bushy, compact, grey-green, fine foliaged Casuarina. In its natural state it reaches about 1.5m high and wide. We haven't tried it yet, but it should be fine as a hedger. Hedge height, 1-1.5 m. One thing though, it does have male and female plants, so the flowering may differ along a hedge. (Note however that many hedges will not flower, if they are constantly pruned.)

Bauera rubioides Bauera

Not as reliable or long lived as some, but forms wonderful natural hedging along tracks in the wild. Soft of foliage and with delightful pink or white flowers in spring, Bauera would be a lovely hedge in a moist, coolish site, perhaps being suited to an informal style, due to its possible impermanence. Hedge height, 0.5-1.2 m.

Callistemon viridiflorus Lime Bottlebrush

A slow to medium grower with smallish, deep green leaves. Quite bushy by nature, it is easily trimmed. Very hardy and long lived. Flowers in late spring are greenish yellow. Callistemon viridiflorus is endemic to Tasmania, where it is found in sub-alpine regions. Hedge height, 1-1.5 m. (There are some forms of Callistemon pallidus which would also be good hedgers. A sub-alpine form which we sometimes have in stock would be excellent for a 2-3m hedge.)

Callitris oblonga South Esk Pine

Blue-green, dense, fine foliage and its slow to steady growth make the South Esk Pine a good candidate for a hedge. Long lived. It trims well and can handle dryish conditions. Hedge height, 1.5-3.0 m. (The Oyster Bay Pine may be good for hedging too, possibly prone to bare patches later in life; 2.0-5.0 m.)

Calytrix tetragona Fringe Myrtle

Perhaps not long lived enough for a long term hedge, but the compact, fine, light green foliage jumps out at you and says 'hedge me'! Worth trying in light soils, sandy and coastal sites. Would be a good flowerer. 'McLeods Flowermaster' would be my choice - we have a beaut one in the garden, 10 years old now, and it still looks superb. Hedge height 0.5-0.8 m.

Coprosma quadrifida Native Currant

Fine, dark foliage and spiky sharp bits, but would you know, this plant is heavily grazed by native animals in the wild! I think if it was missing the spikes it wouldn't exist! Anyway, it grows back thick and bushy. Ideal for hedging I'd say. Hedge height, 0.5-1.5 m.

Correa alba White Correa

A soft foliaged, coastal shrub with grey-green leaves and white bell flowers. Hardy and long lived. Small leaved forms would be preferable. Hedge height, 1-1.5 m.

Correa backhousiana Coastal Correa

Dense, olive-green foliage, with pale, lemon-green tubular flowers. Hedge height, 1-1.8 m.

Diselma archeri Cheshunt Pine

Very slow growing, but equally long lived, this conifer would make an excellent low hedge in a cool site. Hedge height, 0.3-1.0 m.

Dodonaea viscosa Hop Bush

This vigorous, dark green bush would make an excellent larger hedge, especially in drier areas. Hedge height, 1.5- 4.0 m.

Eleocarpus reticulatus Blueberry Ash

Large, pale green leaves with interesting yellow and pinkish tonings. From Flinders and King Islands, it would prefer good soils, and not too dry. Hedge height, 1.5-3.0 m.

Eucryphia lucida Leatherwood

In a cool, moist site, Leatherwood would make an excellent hedge. If clipped sparingly, just after flowering, it should flower aromatically, every year. We have the normal green form with white flowers, two pink flowering forms (best in some shade), and a variegated leaf form. Hedge height, 1.5-5.0 m.

Eucryphia milliganii Small Leaved Leatherwood

Also for a cool, moist site, this Leatherwood has small, dark green leaves with small white, aromatic flowers in mid to late summer. Slow growing. Should clip very nicely. Hedge height, 0.5-1.5 m.

Kunzea ambigua Sweet Scented Kunzea

A great hedger. Quick growing, fine foliaged and aromatically flowered if clipped sparingly. However don't forget, the quicker growing the plant, the more often it will need pruning! Depending on how neat you want to be. Grows almost anywhere. Hedge height, 1.5-3.0 m.

Leptospermum glaucescens Western Spread

The first of the tea trees. *Glaucescens* is normally a light, upright grower here in the south east, however this form from the north west is a great bushy little number for a lower hedge. White flowers in summer. Hedge height, 0.5-1.2 m.

Leptospermum grandiflorum Eastern Tea Tree

One of our few autumn flowering shrubs. We have seed grown plants and two cutting grown forms, 'Bicheno Pink' and 'Silver Lighthouse'. Nice dense shrubs. Hedge height, 1.2-2.5 m.

Leptospermum lanigerum Woolly Tea Tree

A good hedging species for a moist site. Very fast growing. We have forms with different leaf colour. Hedge height, 1.5-4.0 m.

The form, 'Granville Spread', is slower growing, but would be excellent for a lower hedge in a moist spot. Hedge height, 1.0-2.0 m.

Leptospermum nitidum Shiny Tea Tree

A dense, slower growing tea tree from western Tasmania. Would make a great lower hedge. Keep reasonably moist. Hedge height, 0.8-1.5 m.

Leptospermum scoparium var eximium Spreading Tea Tree

A dense shrub, with medium growth rate for average to dry-ish conditions. Flowers - late spring. Hedge height, 1.0-2.0 m.

Melaleuca ericifolia Swamp Paperbark

As the name implies, a splendid candidate for a moist or wet situation. Whilst ideal for some situations, due to its suckering ability, not for every site. To use as a hedge, best in a larger country garden - or in town between concrete drives, for example. Fast growing. Hedge height, 3.0-4.0 m.

(Editors note - this is taking too long - I'm going to be briefer!)

Melaleuca gibbosa Small Leaved Melaleuca

For average to moist sites, attractive mauve flowers. Hedge height, 0.6-1.2 m.

Melaleuca pustulata Yellow Paperbark

A bushy, endemic Tas. shrub from the east coast - dry or moist sites. Hedge height, 1.2-3.0 m.

Melaleuca squamea Swamp Melaleuca

For average to moist sites, mauve flowers in spring. Hedge height, 1.0-1.8 m.

Melaleuca squarrosa Scented Paperbark

Average to moist sites. Yellow flowers. Quick, narrow, upright growth. Hedge height, 1.5-2.5 m.

Micrantheum hexandrum Cream Cascade

Cream flowers, soft arching foliage, slow to medium. Hedge height, 0.6- 1.0 m.

Monotocca glauca Golden Wood

Upright, medium to fast, for a cool, moist site. Long lived. Hedge height, 1.5-3.0 m.

Myoporum insulare Boobyalla

Large glossy leaves, well drained and coastal, fire retardant. Long lived. Hedge height, 2.0-4.0 m.

Nothofagus cunninghamii Myrtle

Upright growth for cool, moist sites. Long lived. Hedge height, 1.5-5.0 m.

Phebaleum squameum Satinwood

Upright growth for cool, moist sites. White flowers, spring. Hedge height, 1.2-3.0 m.

Phebaleum squameum subsp. retusum Small Leaved Satinwood

Rounded, shiny leaves, white flowers in spring, average to dryish sites. Hedge height, 1.0-1.8 m.

Pittosporum bicolor Cheesewood

Narrow, upright growth, moist, cool sites. Long lived. Hedge height, 2.0-4.0 m.

Podocarpus lawrencei Mountain Plum Pine

For moist, cool sites, slow growth, use upright forms. Long lived. Hedge height, 0.6-1.5 m.

Westringia brevifolia (& W. rigida) Coastal Westringias

Well drained and coastal sites, medium to quick. Hedge height, 0.8-1.5 m.

Zieria cytisoides Dwarf Zieria

Soft foliaged, silvery-grey leaved, well drained and coastal. Hedge height, 0.5-1.0 m.

And that's it for the hedge plants. As most of you probably won't be doing hedges, the other real value of this list is that it indicates reliable, hardy, bushy plants - and plants that can be pruned effectively.

And now, last, but not least, a new segment in our newsletter - favourite plants of our nursery staff.

# STAFF FAVOURITES

#### Dave

Bedfordia linearis (Slender Blanket Leaf) is fast growing in my sandy Kingston garden. It was looking like an also-ran initially, but is now arching and curving in the trunk with a pleasing S-bend to its woody stems. It's good to have a plant that can go up, hesitate, decide to grow sideways, before re-grouping and looking skyward once more. The long slender leaves are a pale green, with a frosty appearance on their undersides. They are sparse on my young plants and are upwardly inclined and radical in their distribution, so the plant is one that gives an open aired and three dimensional appearance. Flowers are bright yellow, up to 1cm long and lend a pleasing contrast to the foliage.

One of my favourite plants is Microcachrys tetragona, the Creeping Strawberry Pine, which is a prostrate conifer from alpine areas. It can spread up to 1.5m wide and may live for over 50 years. It is slow growing and prefers plenty of moisture and good drainage. The Creeping Strawberry Pine can handle full sun, but prefers some shade, especially in the heat of summer. A cool root run can be aided by mulching. This plant can look fantastic growing in an old tree stump or planter, so that its stems cascade over the edges. the small fruits are edible when they turn bright red during summer, tasting like a nutty strawberry. It is also a Tasmanian endemic, making it very special.

## Paulette

It's impossible for someone who works in a nursery like ours, to pin down their favourite plant, so my favourite for today, is the Plume Grass, Dichelachne. At the moment we have two species in stock, Dichelachne crinata and Dichelachne rara. As you can tell from their common name, the main feature of these plants are their tall plume-like flower spikes. The stems are up to 1.5m tall, topped with flowers up to 25cm long, that start life bright green and dense, then gradually open, turn purplish, then become straw coloured as the seeds develop. They are a great ephemeral addition to a garden. The flower spikes from a forgotten plant can rise up year after year, and provide a beautiful pastel, upright contrast in a leafy green garden. Or try mass planting in a tub for a seasonal display. They thrive, from sea level in hard coastal sites to highland situations. These two Dichelachnes, an easy and rewarding pair!

Lindy

One of my favourite plants is Eucryphia lucida, or Leatherwood, an endemic Tasmanian plant, found in high rainfall areas. It is a lovely small tree to about 5m in a garden situation, with an extended flowering season from late December to March or April. Flowers are strongly fragrant, often prolifically produced and rich in nectar. They are especially loved by bees which produce the uniquely flavoured leatherwood honey. The flower is white (also pink cultivars available), relatively large (20c piece size), with four open petals, slightly cupped with many prominent stamens.

A hardy, reliable, relatively fast growing wet forest species, which is easy to grow in most gardens, provided they have moist conditions and some shade if in a warm climate. Mulching is recommended. Can be grown as a single specimen, a group planting or as a screen. They do very well in large pots in a cool position - some extra water in summer is nice and low phosphorous Osmocote, or similar, in spring is recommended. Leatherwood can be propagated from seed or cuttings. This year, due to our long warm autumn, our feature potted leatherwood is still flowering profusely, and its almost winter!

The Coastal She-oak, Allocasuarina verticillata, is often overlooked as a worthy horticultural addition to a home garden. For me it is not only a beautiful tree, but also has strong childhood associations. Having spent long summer holidays at the beach, Allocasuarinas were an integral part of my coastal landscape memory. The sound of the wind softly whistling through the leaves had already seeped into my consciousness. Combined with the rhythm of the constantly rolling waves against the rocks, and the feel of the grainy beach sand, made me love coastal scenery.

From a distance, the soft, grey-green crown of the tree has a speckled texture, but at closer inspection it is the drooping branchlets that are joined at regular intervals which gives this appearance. The small flowers add a deep reddish-pink haze to the branches which are followed by decorative cones on the female plant. The delicately patterned young bark becomes textured, furrowed and corky as it ages, and as it sheds its ageing foliage it produces a self-mulching layer at the base of the trunk.

To have a beautiful plant tolerant of saline soil and salt spray is fortunate for a lot of gardeners. There are many who live in coastal environments and it is important to design our gardens so they have a sense of belonging to the surrounding landscape. In its natural habitat it grows in pure stands. I think every coastal garden should have several. It will grow from 4 to 10 metres, slowly and will grow in clay as well as sand and withstands quite dry conditions, although it can tolerate some wetness. We are planting a grove of at least 7 she-oaks, (I like to plant in odd numbers as nature is rarely symmetrical) planted through white gravel for our own small coastal landscape.

My favourite, this week, is the trunk of a gum tree! At home, I live surrounded by gum trees, in a clearing amongst dry sclerophyll woodland - White Peppermints, Silver Peppermints and hybrids between the two; and at the nursery, the Blue Gums there are the largest and most powerful plants in the garden. Eucalypts are the signature tree of this southern continent. The clean, strong lines of their trunks bedecked with casual clusters of foliage, are as Australian as you can get

Sometimes at Ridgeway in easterly weather, when the clouds descend, and a gentle quiet embraces the hills, the mist in the background really highlights the graceful Eucalypts, the moisture on their smooth bark enriching the colours and the patterns on the trunks.

So many beautiful Eucalypts. I recall Eucalyptus johnstonii on the Shadow Lake track past Lake St. Clair. So smooth, such creamy tones in the trunks - if a tree trunk could be sensual, they were the ones! Eucalypt trunks are amazingly good at framing views. Because they drop their lower foliage, and often their early branches, one can usually see past them. Without taking up much space in a garden - a trunk may take up 30cm round - they can create space. There is space before them, space after, and indeed space under them. Plant a bunch of them. Even put from 3-7 in the same hole - you'll end up with a sculpture of trunks, absolutely unique to your garden, and taking up hardly any more space than one gum! I love em.

Have a great winter, one and all - keep the home fires burning - and if you need some healthy exercise - go Cheers for now, Will and staff. gardening! We look forward to seeing you at the nursery.