

NEWSLETTER

PLANTS OF TASMANIA

Nursery and Gardens

65 Hall St

Ridgeway TAS 7054

Open 7 Days a week – 9 am to 5 pm

Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday

Phone: (03) 6239 1583 Fax: (03) 6239 1106

Email: Plantsoftasmania@gmail.com Newsletter 24 Spring 2010

Website: www.potn.com.au



Hello, and welcome to the spring newsletter for 2010!

The calendar says the end of September, but it is blowing and snowing outside so it doesn't feel quite like spring yet (or then again, maybe we should expect this in Hobart in September!) Roll on warm sunny days and spring flowers!

News from the Nursery

This is the main propagation time in the nursery. In July, we start doing hundreds of punnets of cuttings, with the plant material largely coming from stock plants within the nursery. The cuttings then sit in a greenhouse for a few weeks or longer developing roots before being potted up into 75 round tubes and shifted out into a shade house to harden off. They are then moved out into our open storage area, and then finally into sales. In September we start on growing plants from seed. We either collect the seed ourselves from plants in the nursery or in the bush, or use a commercial seed collecting agency. After the seeds germinate the new plants are pricked out into square tubes, and then go through the same hardening off process as the cutting grown material.

We are slowly making a few changes around the nursery – nothing major, but we're developing new areas to make finding plants easier. The old bonsai area, for those of you who have known the nursery for a while, is being tuned into our new Bushfoods section. We will soon put up signs detailing how you can use each plant in your cooking or straight from the bush. Copies of an information sheet with all this information are available at the nursery (and it is all on our website as well!).

There have been a few staff changes over the last few months. Will Fletcher finished up in June after helping the new owners settle in since the sale of the nursery. His input was much appreciated. You can still chat to Will at Island Bonsai, just down the road from Plants of Tasmania, on the second weekend of every month. Longstanding staff member Paulette Whitney left in August to pursue her own business interests, which include growing a wonderful range of food plants. Paulette is much missed by both the staff and customers. We have welcomed a new staff member, however. Jono Esling has just completed his horticultural certificate, and has a deep interest in Tasmania's native flora.

New plants

We have a lovely new saltbush available, *Atriplex paludosa* (Marsh Saltbush). This came originally from the Ralph's Bay area. It has green-blue leaves and grows to 1.5 m. Another new coastal plant is *Einadia nutans* (Climbing Saltbush). This may not win any prizes for beauty, but it is a very hardy and useful foreshore plant.

We also have available a few plants of *Tetracarpaea tasmannica* (Delicate Laurel), which is very rare in cultivation. These plants prefer a moist, well-drained situation, and have beautiful cream flowers a little similar to the laurel. However, it is not at all related to the laurel (*Anopterus glandulosus*), but rather is the only member of its genus and family (Tetracarpaeaceae), both of which are therefore endemic to Tasmania.

We are building up stock of a few other new plants, and hope to have some of these out in sales within the next few months. Keep an eye on the website!

Website

Our website – www.potn.com.au – has been up for a while now, and is proving very popular. Over 1500 people are accessing it every month. While some look at only one or two pages, others spend much longer, going through every page. The site is not yet completed – it is still planned to add more lists of plants, as well as more links to information about particular plants from other sources. However, all the information in the printed catalogue is also available on the website. At the moment, there is a link from each plant to its page on the Tasmanian plant key developed by the School of Plant Science at the University of Tasmania. These pages have photos and information about where the plants grow naturally. When we make new species or forms of plants available for sale, information about these plants will be put on the website.

A recent addition to the website is a list of garden designers and landscapers who use our plants. If you want to get some work done in your garden or are designing a new garden, these are the people to go to. If there is anything else that you would like to see on the website, please send a message and we will endeavour to get the information available.

New Books in Stock

There are a few new books at the nursery at the moment. Not all of them deal specifically with Tasmanian plants, but rather are useful additions to the library of anyone interested in native gardens. We have just received stock of 'Correas: Australian Plants for Waterwise Gardens', by Maria Hitchcock. This is a beautiful book that details all the species and cultivars of this genus, including the Tasmanian species. At \$35.00, this is a good buy. We also have two books by Keith Handreck, the Australian guru on the design of waterwise gardens. These are 'Gardening Down Under: A Guide to Healthier Soils and Plants', and its companion volume 'Good Gardens with Less Water'. We also have 'Planting Wetlands and Dams', which is a practical guide to wetland design and construction. Finally, we have also just received copies of the new edition of 'Common Orchids of Tasmania', which has been out of print for quite a while. This is one of a series of booklets produced by the Australian Plants Society of Tasmania.

STOP PRESS: Look out for the new, lavishly illustrated book by Mark, Annie and Hans Wapstra about Tasmanian plants. It will be available early November, and we will have stock at the nursery.

Other items

We have a new style of tree guard available. These are made of tough plastic mesh, rather than solid plastic 'bags', which allows the plant to become used to strong winds. There are also advantages in the plants being lightly grazed (i.e. any branches or leaves that stick out through the mesh), as this stimulates the production of foul-tasting chemicals in the plants that deter further chomping. These tree guards are available in three sizes to match the size of the plant being protected.

Plants of Tasmania Nursery out and about

The nursery will have a stall and display at the Hobart Wildflower Show, to be held on Friday 8th -Sunday 10th October at the Hobart City Hall. There will be many displays at the show highlighting the joy of native plants. We will also have a stall at the Plant Hunters' Special Plant Fair, held every second year at 1115 Huon Rd Neika (4.5 km past Fern Tree). This is a gathering of smaller Tasmanian nurseries selling hard to find or propagate plants. We will have an interesting selection of plants, including many unusual alpine and rainforest species.

Plants from Plants of Tasmania Nursery have been used widely around Hobart. A great example is at Putters Adventure Minigolf in Main Rd, Moonah. It is well worth a visit to see a maturing Tasmanian native garden. We have also recently supplied a lot of plants for the new Saffire development near Coles Bay. Plants were collected from the site prior to the beginning of construction, and then thousands of new plants propagated. These have now been planted out and add to the ambience of this development.

Melaleucas

This newsletter highlights Melaleucas, well-loved flowers of the Australian bush. Melaleucas are in the family Myrtaceae, so they are related to tea-trees (*Leptospermum*), bottle brushes (*Callistemon*) and eucalypts. Melaleucas occur naturally across Australia and into south-east Asia. They are widely used as garden plants, but are also grown commercially as they are sources of anti-bacterial oils.

Tasmania has six species of Melaleuca:

- *Melaleuca ericifolia* – Swamp Paperbark. Forms dense thickets in swampy areas and along stream banks in the north of the state. It grows up to 8 m, and has cream flowers. Due to clearing, *Melaleuca ericifolia* swamps are now a threatened ecosystem.
- *Melaleuca gibbosa* – Slender Honeymyrtle. Grows up to 2 m in wet heaths along the north and east coasts. It has small leaves and mauve flowers in spring/summer.
- *Melaleuca pustulata* – Warty Paperbark. Restricted to the east coast, where it is often found in well-drained but moist conditions along riverbanks. Grows to 2 x 2 m.
- *Melaleuca squamea* – Swamp Honeymyrtle. An erect shrub that grows to 2 m in wet heaths from sea level to 1500 m. Mauve or white flowers in spring.
- *Melaleuca squarrosa* – Scented Paperbark. A shrub or small tree (2.5 m) with distinctive ‘square’ foliage and lemon flowers in spring/summer. Grows in heaths, where it prefers wetter areas.
- *Melaleuca armillaris* – Giant Honeymyrtle. This well known mainland species is restricted in Tasmania to a few islands in Bass Strait. (We don’t stock this species)

Looking down this list one thing becomes obvious – all of these plants like their feet in damp conditions! If you do have a wet spot, any of these species will grow happily, providing colour for extended periods. All of the species are useful in designing waste-water treatment systems as Envirocycle. However, they all grow quite well in drier sites, so if your garden is not a bog don’t feel left out. The smaller species respond well to pruning, resulting in denser bushes and better flowering. They are good hedging plants, providing a thick but attractive barrier. We have a hedge of *Melaleuca gibbosa* in our gardens, near the frog pond.

We grow the first five species listed from seed, as well as other special forms from cuttings. These include *Melaleuca squamea* ‘Hurricane’, which is a prostrate form that grows to 20 cm high and 1.5 m wide that originally came from a very windy spot, and *Melaleuca squarrosa* ‘Coastal Carpet’, which grows to 30 cm high and 1.5 wide and has cream flowers. *Melaleuca ericifolia* ‘Jim’s Twister’ is an unusual spreading form that has branches going off in all directions. *Melaleuca gibbosa* ‘Pink Passion’ is a form with spectacular bright pink flowers, rather than the usual mauve. This makes a great feature plant. Finally we grow a hybrid, *Melaleuca squamea* x *squarrosa*, which has leaves a bit more like *Melaleuca squarrosa* and pinkish flowers.

All in all there are lots of interesting Tasmanian Melaleucas to choose from that can be used for many purposes in the garden – soaking up water, hedges, feature plants and oddities!

We hope to see you at the nursery soon!

John, Linda, Peter, Sam, Qug, Karen and Jono