



AUSTRALIAN
PLANTS SOCIETY
— Geelong —

Correa Mail

Newsletter No. 274 – May 2012

APS VICTORIA QUARTERLY CONFERENCE NEWS

Planning for the quarterly conference which we are hosting is going well. The venues, speakers, gardens, meals and itinerary are all established. But, we have had limited response from members to our request for assistance over the conference weekend. We will be contacting you directly, and there will be a strong push at the May meeting, to get all positions filled, and all helpers assigned a task.

There is no registration fee for members who sign on to help out, you will need to pay only if you wish to attend the lunches or dinner and speaker. Registration forms are available on-line from our website, or at the May meeting.

We look forward to every member contributing in some way to a successful conference. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

APRIL MEETING

Graeme Woods

Graeme spoke to us about his passion – Grevilleas. He was a very entertaining speaker who kept us amused and informed, and delighted us with some beautiful photos, taken mostly by his wife, Roslyn.

Grevilleas belong to the family *Proteacea* which spreads across Africa, Central Asia and Australia, but mostly centred around Australia. 350 grevilleas across the entire country, from tiny shrubs to huge trees like *G. robusta* or *G. striata*. Three flower types, 'spider' like *G. superba*, 'upright brush', like *G. magnifica* and 'toothbrush', like *G. tetragonoloba*.

Graeme originally imported a sandy soil deemed suitable for grevilleas, but soon found the local loam worked just as well. It is important to prepare the hole for your Grevillea properly. Water with ½ strength Seasol and ½ strength Power-feed, then fill with original soil with sand added. Graeme suggested 'Rooster-booster' as a good and cheaper alternative.

Drainage is important, most don't like wet feet, and Graeme lost quite a few plants when the rains returned. Don't water too much.



© RW GREVILLEA SUPERBA
Typical spider flower – *G. superba* – photo Roslyn Woods

Providing cuttings to nurseries and grafters is a great way for Graeme to replace rare or endangered plants when they do succumb to the elements or old age.

While the 'Queensland hybrids' in the Robyn Gordon complex respond very well to pruning, many true species do not, so just prune to shape. Nor do they like to be moved, so choose your planting site carefully.

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Feeding should only be necessary in very sandy soils or if your grevilleas are in pots. Propagation, cuttings and grafting are best done in the hottest time of year. Cross-breeding is an issue with grevilleas in a garden setting, they are remarkably promiscuous.

Graeme showed a couple of photos of his 3.5 acre – 1.4 hectare garden in Gisborne, where he has 250 true species, and many hybrids growing. He then took us on a tour of the Grevilleas in a most interesting manner ... alphabetically.

G. armigera – The name means ‘armed’. A large, very prickly shrub from W.A., remarkable for its black flowers.

G. batrachioides – Rediscovered in 1991 at Mt. Leseur, W.A., after being on the ‘missing’ list for almost 100 years. Grey/green foliage with pink/cream terminal flowers

G. bipinnatifida – This is the parent of most of the Robyn Gordon complex and other Queensland hybrids, with large red or orange spider flowers..

G. cagiana – A medium shrub from W.A., it does not have many flowers, but the iridescent orange colour can’t be missed.

G. dielsiana – A compact , prickly shrub, it has very sharp leaves, flowers can be red, pinkish, and orange.

G. eriobotrya – A large shrub, 2m x 4m, the Woolly grevillea has very soft, woolly white/cream flowers.

G. eriostachya – With large, bright orange/yellow flowers, it is an icon of the outback, dripping with honey.



The toothbrush flowers of *G. tetragonoloba* – photo by Roslyn Woods

G. fastigiata – A dense, erect shrub with tiny needle-like leaves and red-orange flowers

G. georgeana – A seriously prickly large shrub, 2m x 3m, with magnificent scarlet and white flowers.

G. globosa – a small shrub with tiny flowers, turning black with age.

G. hookeriana – Another black flowering W.A. grevillea, it is a largish, dense, spreading shrub with a long flowering time

G. insignis – Graeme suggested to an admirer that using ‘insignis and in health’ might help her to remember the name of this plant. She went to a nursery and asked for Grevillea ‘Forpoorer’. It is a bushy shrub with holly-like leaves and lovely deep red/pink spider flowers.

G. intricata – a very delicate, prickly shrub with creamy white upright flowers.



***Grevillea magnifica* – photo Roslyn Woods**

G. juncifolia – Found across inland Australia, it is a medium shrub with masses of spectacular orange/yellow flowers, dripping with nectar.

G. kenneallii – A large shrub, 3m x 3m, with masses of creamy/white flowers

G. kennedyana – Features attractive grey foliage with and brilliant red flowers.

G. leucopteris – The original ‘smelly socks’ grevillea. A dense shrub with massed cream/yellow flowers on long emergent stems.

G. mangliesioides – Attracts blowflies with its strong, rotten meat smell. It is a dense shrub with red or greenish/white flowers for most of the year.

G. nivea – So named because of its white branches.

G. oligomera - lovely purple-red upright flowers, like *G. magnifica*.

G. paradoxa – very sharp, vivid purple/red upright flowers on a very prickly upright shrub to 2m.

G. petrophilloides – difficult to grow, but good hybrids with *G. magnifica* are available. Flowers on the end of long, emergent stalks. Comes in red and white.

G. polybotrya – An erect largish shrub to 4m, its masses of pink, white or creamy flowers have a lovely caramel smell.

G. plurijuga – , a low spreading shrub, with red and white coloured flowers on long arms . It works well on a standard.

G. quercifolia – A sprawling shrub with upright pink/mauve flowers. Great in a rockery

G. rhyolitica – lovely red flowers and softer foliage. There is also a gold one available.

G. rudis – Small erect, yellowish/white flower on top of longish stalks, each flower may last a year

G. shuttleworthiana – A small shrub with masses on very yellow flowers on long, emergent stems.



G. plurijuga

G. superba. A large shrub with gorgeous pink spider flowers.

G. stenomera – an interesting shrub with grey-green foliage and orange/red flowers.

G. treueriana – A small shrub 1.5 x 1m with extremely hard, sharp leaves but vivid red/orange flowers.

G. umbellulata – A small shrub with sharp leaves, completely covered with furry, white/mauve flowers in spring.

G. victoriae – grows in the high country of Victoria, NSW and ACT. Now has 17 ssp. with red or orange pendulous flowers.

G. yorkrakinensis - a prostrate shrub with orange or red flowers named after the place first found: Yorkrakine, *G. yorkrakinensis* is not uncommon and found inland in a strip from just south of Geraldton to north east of Esperance.

G. zygoloba – lovely white flowers with heavy honey smell.

Also in Graeme's collection, but not in the Grevillea Book yet:- (I hope I got the names right)

G. acripogon (used to be called *G. xerophylla*. The name changed, ruining Graeme's alphabet), *G. squiresii*, *G. mercerii*, *G. nancinensis*, *G. hyslopilii* and *G. simplex* – which smells very strongly of banana custard!

Graeme also collects Banksias and Hakeas and we will certainly ask him back to talk to us again in the future. WE also hope to pay a visit to Graem and Ros's garden in November. My thanks to Ros Woods for the fabulous photos used in this article.



***Grevillea yorkrakinensis* – Photo: ukwildflowers.com**

PLANT TABLE

Matt Baars conducted the plant table, with his usual dry humour. There was a good selection of plants, given the time of year, and some lively discussion was entered into.

Grevilleas in flower included *G. treueriana*, *G. nana*, *G. tenuiloba*, *G. georgeana*, *G. bipinnatifida*, *G. fililoba*- 'Ellendale Lace', *G. 'Billy Bonkers'*, *G. 'Majestic'*, *G. 'Ivory Whip'*, *G. 'Peaches'n'Cream'* and *G. 'Pink Surprise'*.



***G. nana ssp nana* on a standard in my garden**

Eremophilas were well represented and it was noted that they are particularly favoured by kangaroos at Anglesea, making them hard to grow there. *E. maculata* has many colour forms now from white, pink, yellow to deep purple. *E. altenata* has a lovely pink flower

Correas seem to have recovered from the mass die-off last year and are beginning to flower again. There were a good number of cultivars on show.

Westringias are becoming more popular in nurseries with some lovely, tough white forms available.

There were also a couple of “native hibiscus” in purple and pink, and some discussion was had as to whether they were *Alyogyne* or *Hibiscus* sp.

Margaret brought in a lovely little *Olearia australoma* from a single 40 Ha site in east Gippsland. It was thought to have become extinct in the bushfires, but has been seen again. It is well established in cultivation.

Native climbers were represented by *Billardiera iridescens* and *Pandorea jasminoides*. Both are vigorous climbers and need to be kept in check.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Grevillea georgeana

We have fallen out of the tradition of assigning the choice of ‘Plant of the Month’ to the raffle winner, and the task of writing to article to the owner of the specimen in question. This will change next month. Meanwhile, in honour of our guest speaker, I have chosen to write about my favourite *Grevillea*.

Grevillea georgeana was introduced into cultivation by Olde and Marriott in the 1980s. It occurs naturally in Western Australia in the inland south-western region and restricted to ranges north of Southern Cross between about Koolyanobbing and Diemals. It grows in open shrub-land or on plains in shallow, stony soils on ironstone. Its magnificent red and white flowers are seen in Spring and summer.

Perhaps the most striking of all the *Grevilleas*, *G. georgeana* does best as a grafted plant onto *G. robusta* stock. It should be planted in an open, warm, full-sun position. It is remarkably prickly, even unpleasantly so, and care should be taken when siting the plant so that dead leaves are not blown onto pathways or into other garden beds. They will easily penetrate leather gardening gloves and seem to last a long time without breaking down. Weeding beneath a *G. georgeana* is an experience, and should be undertaken with great care!

G. georgeana is named in honour of W.A botanist A.S. George, and is pollinated mainly by birds. It is visited by many species of honeyeaters, and its prickly

habit make it ideal habitat for small birds in the garden, a perfect deterrent to predators.

If you have a hot, sunny position in your garden and are prepared to do battle with the spiny leaves, do yourself a favour and get a *georgeana*. You won’t regret it.



The magnificent flower of *Grevillea georgeana*.

MACROZAMIA COMMUNIS AS A POT AND GARDEN PLANT

Tony Cavanagh

Some 18 years ago, we were travelling through southern coastal New South Wales with our youngest daughter. She was intrigued by the many colonies of “cycads” we saw in the forest and suggested that I should try to grow a few plants in our home garden. I found out that they were most likely to be *Macrozamia communis*, and that there were around 24 species in Australia. I was able to buy “seed” from one of the seed suppliers, that is if you can call woody oblong objects about 3cm by 3cm “seed”, and planted them out in my usual seed raising mix.

It is probably just as well that I knew nothing about raising *Macrozamia* from seed or hadn’t read the dire warnings in Rodger Elliot’s *Encyclopaedia* (“seed has an after-ripening period of about 12 months and usually takes 18 months or more to germinate”) or I probably wouldn’t have started. It took a few months but I eventually had 6 seeds germinate. Those which seemed to do best were only part buried. Over the next couple of years, I tried further sowings but no

more germinated so I guess that they lose viability fairly quickly.

Having germinated the plants, I put them firstly into “six inch” pots and as they grew, transferred them to successively larger ones. What amazed me was that as long as you kept water up to them, they required no attention in the pot and just kept on growing, remaining green and healthy. A couple even flowered in the pot, I think female cones. After about 10 years, most seemed to have reached maturity, about 1.5m high, with leaves around 0.75 to 1m on a trunk about 0.5 to 0.75m high. By this time they were in 40-50 cm pots and still looked healthy so we just shifted them around the garden when required and kept watering them.

In October this year, we found a couple of places in our front garden where we could plant some of them out. Getting them out of the pots was a real challenge because the leaflets are so PRICKLY and they needed a large, deep hole, no easy feat in our shallow soils over clay. Anyway, two are in the ground after 17 years in pots and are looking great. Attached is a picture of one in our “open forest” and I must say, they add a lot to this section of the garden.



Macrozamia communis – After 17 yrs in a pot

APS GEELONG MAKES THE NEWS

The following article, written by John Van Klaveren, appeared in the Geelong Independent on March 30th. Great publicity for the Club. The photo is by Tommy Ritchie.

“Buy Australian” is a well-worn slogan these days but a group of Geelong plant lovers are hoping “Grow Australian” becomes just as popular. The Geelong group of Australian Plants Society runs an annual autumn native plant sale as part of its campaign for more indigenous flora.

President Harry Webb said the beauty and variety of native plants hooked new members. “We promote Australian plants because Australia has the best flora

in the world,” Harry said. “We’re an active group and keep ourselves informed on the latest news and trends on Australian natives. I only have a small garden but I have 200 different plants in it, such is the variety available.”



Harry, Gaeton, Pauline and Roger fly the flag.

The group’s regular meetings include a “specimen table” for which each member brings from their garden a sample of flora and tells its story.

“There are so many advantages of native plants,” Harry emphasised. “They attract native birds, propagate plants by spreading the seed and are natural to the environment. We leave the exotics alone.”

The group formed in 1966 as part of Australian Plants Society, now boasting an estimated 1200 members in Victoria alone. Links have been forged with Geelong Field Naturalists and Geelong Environment Council. The club was involved in major plant projects including Elcho Park Golf Club and Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.

“There was a lot of enthusiasm for native plants in those early days, even though they were hard to come by,” Harry said, “so people learned how to propagate them from seeds and cuttings and often swapped plants to build up collections. It’s a lot easier to obtain a greater variety of native plants these days – there are whole nurseries dedicated to them.”

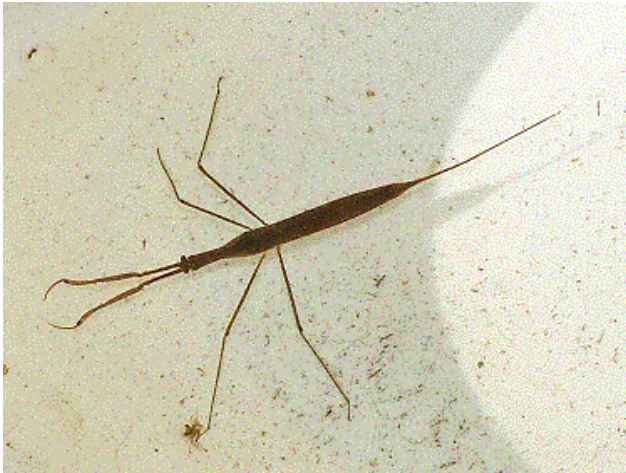
Harry said the group encouraged good-natured competition for bragging rights. “We organise trips to the outback to observe what’s around and every time it makes you realise what a great variety of plants we have. There are outings to different gardens. We’ve visited Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, Anglesea Heath, Brisbane Ranges and Inverleigh Common.

“We have some members with excellent know-how developed over the years and you learn from the veterans of the club. We also hold working bees at rail trails and nature walks.” Harry said more information on the club was available by emailing apsgeelong@gmail.com or visiting apsvic.org.au.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our Next Meeting 16th May

Our speaker is Dierdre Murphy from the Corangamite Catchment Authority and she will be talking to us about the aquatic life of the Barwon. WE have encountered Dierdre at the Brisbane Ranges Wildflower show and the Sustainable Garden Expo on the waterfront and she is always surrounded by a crowd of interested on-lookers. I'm sure you'll enjoy her presentation.



Water Scorpion – Rantara sp.

APS Victoria Quarterly Conference Geelong

Another reminder that we'd love everyone's help on 16th and 17th of June. Send in your registration form (attached) or let Harry or any committee member know if you are able to help.

July Meeting - AGM and Photo Competition.

The July meeting will be our AGM. We are always looking for new members on the committee and to fill positions of importance within the club. At least one current member is resigning, so there is room for new blood. Give it some thought.

The now legendary photo competition will continue at this year's AGM. After the elections, the photo competition will be judged once again. The categories are Australian Plants, Australian Wildlife, and Australian Scenery. You can enter as many photos as you like, so be in it. Fabulous prizes in each category await those who score the greatest number of votes from members present. Tony Cavanagh, please note: Photos of Verticordias will not be accepted 😊. Winner's photos will be published in the August *Correa Mail*.

SPEAKERS' PAYMENTS

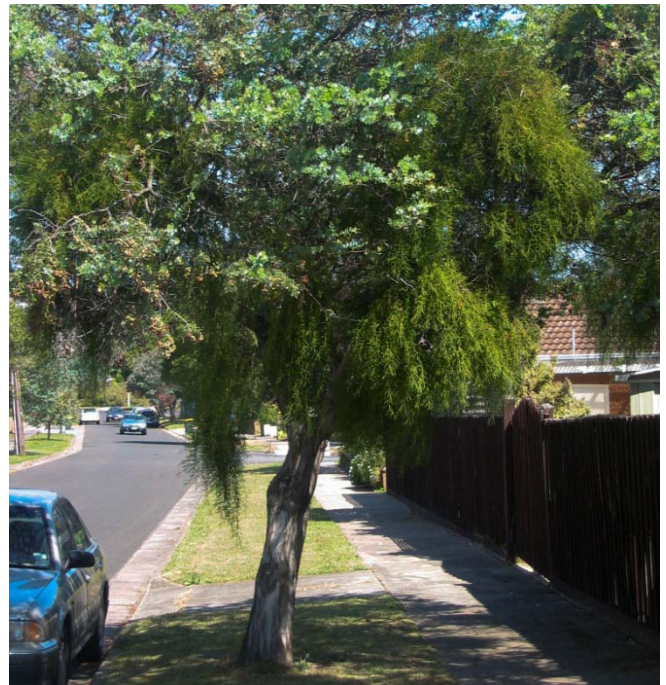
A question was asked about payments / gifts for our guest speakers. Committee members understand

why some speakers are given gifts, but members may not. Here's how it works.

Speakers are asked to speak at our meetings and a fee for travel etc. is discussed. That fee is paid to the speaker by cheque. The speakers are also invited to join members for dinner before the meeting at the club's expense. Those that choose not to join us are given a bottle of wine or similar, as well as travel costs. Those who come for dinner just receive their expenses. I hope that makes it clearer.

WHAT'S IN THE BUSH STREET? Mistletoes

Some years ago, I was working in Newtown on a street where the street trees are *Acacia baileyana* – the Cootamundra Wattle. I was sitting in the car having a cuppa when I noticed one of the trees didn't look quite right. Closer inspection showed it was hugely infested with mistletoe. It was December, and there were flowers and fruits on the mistletoe. It made me stop and look at mistletoes in a different light. I could only recall seeing them on Eucalyptus sp previously, and this mistletoe looked very unlike those 'common' ones. To this day I don't know what species it was. Now that I am a little more interested in plants I returned to the street in question, but the tree, and the mistletoe, are dead. So began a quest to learn more.



The mystery mistletoe

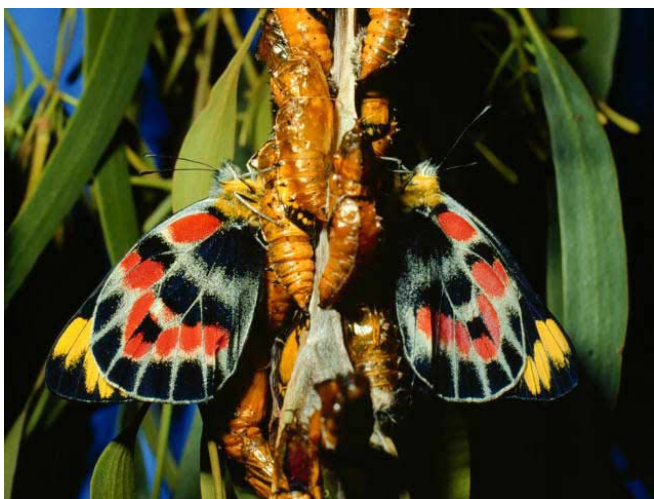
Mistletoes are found throughout the world, and the original term applies to *Viscum album*, the plant featured in many European stories and folklore.

Mistletoes are partial parasites of many trees. They do have chlorophyll and are capable of photosynthesis, but they possess no root system, or

rather a highly modified root system, and rely on their hosts for water and mineral salts from the soil. These 'roots' are called haustoria and serve two functions: they anchor the mistletoe firmly to the host, and they tap the hosts system for water and salts.

The mistletoe fruit is a single-seeded berry, often brightly coloured with very unusual adaptations for bird dispersal, germination and attachment. The outer coat of the fruit hides a sticky layer of viscin, which is very sweet, and covers the seed. Birds feeding on the fruits often have specialized feeding behaviour, swallowing the seed whole after squeezing it from the fruit skin. In Australia the Mistletoe Bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*), and some honeyeaters are responsible for seed dispersion. Mistletoe birds swallow a seed and defecate within 10 minutes. The sticky viscin is still largely intact, and as the bird wipes its rear across the perch, the seed is glued to the branch by this sticky substance. Germination is spontaneous, and it is thought that the viscin stops germination prior to ingestion by the bird. So, mistletoe distribution is restricted by the presence of birds which feed on the fruit. There are no mistletoe birds in Tasmania, and no mistletoes either.

Mistletoes provide food for butterflies also, with many species of *Delias*, the Jezabels, and *Ogyris*, the Azures, feeding exclusively on mistletoes.



Imperial Whites – *Delias harpalyce*. Museum Victoria

Mistletoes often mimic their hosts in form and colour – some more than others. The mistletoe *Amyema cambagei* so closely resembles *Casuarina cunninghamiana* that it is virtually indistinguishable from its host. However, it also parasitises other genera, with which it shares no resemblance. I suspect that 'my' mistletoe was *A. cambagei*.

The common local mistletoe, *Amyema pendula*, seen regularly on Eucalyptus among others, shares this trait. In form, colour and presentation it closely resembles a Eucalypt. Throughout Australia this phenomenon includes the more common host genera,

including *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia*, *Casuarina/Allocasuarina*, and *Melaleuca*, and several mistletoe genera, including *Amyema*, *Lysiana*, *Muellerina*, *Diplatia* and *Dendrophthoe*. It occurs in virtually all open woodland associations. So, host-parasite resemblance seems to have been established independently many times, and may be an important evolutionary feature in Australian mistletoes.



***Amyema pendula* – Drooping Mistletoe. Anglesea**

Australian mistletoes also practice epiparasitism, where one mistletoe becomes the host for a second species. Indeed, one member of the Viscaceae is an obligate epiparasite, and only parasitises other mistletoes.

Eucalypts have a particular problem with mistletoes. Eucalypts have a drought protection system in which the pores on their leaves, the stomates, close over in times of low water to reduce loss through evaporation. The mistletoes don't have this facility and so host trees suffer more from drought stress than their mistletoe free cousins. However, fire kills mistletoes, and a bush-fire is a sure way to rid eucalypts of their burden for a period.

Superstitions about mistletoe are widespread in many cultures in different parts of the world, and therefore involve numerous mistletoe species other than *V. album*. Mistletoe is more often a good omen than a bad one. Uses for mistletoe, which often involved special recipes and complicated rituals, include gaining protection from fires, keeping witches away, as a divining rod to find hidden treasure, keeping horses from straying, promoting fertility in domestic herds and crops, giving strength to wrestlers, success to hunters, avoiding military service, protecting from wounds in battle, forcing evil spirits from hiding and making them tell the truth, preventing nightmares, providing refuge for woodland

spirits in winter, and keeping witches from meat in the smokehouse.

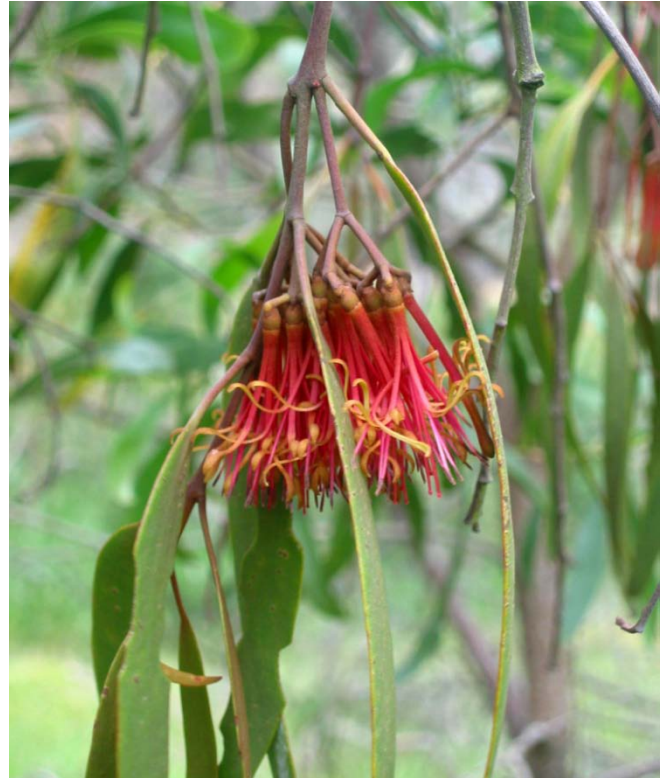
Mistletoe was used medicinally either by placing it on the affected part or by drinking a decoction of the plant. At various times in various parts of the world it has been used to treat epilepsy, the bites of mad dogs and wild animals, strained muscles, toothache, sores, itch, weakness of vision, impetigo, dandruff, regeneration of lost fingernails, common cold, ulcers, poisoning, promotion of muscular relaxation before childbirth, to hasten menstruation, treat warts, snakebite, fever, syphilis, beri-beri, ringworm, headaches, gout and worms.

The aborigines had names for the mistletoes, but don't seem to have used them in medicine or as food source.

So, have a closer look at Mistletoe next time you come across one It could just cure your dandruff!

Editors Note: b Information for this article comes from the ANGB website. Read more at:

<http://www.anbg.gov.au/mistletoe/>



***Amyema pendula* flowers - Anglesea**