



AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR CONTAINERS STUDY GROUP



SSN: 0814-1010

NEWSLETTER # 35, April 2020

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Leaders' Comments:

Welcome to the second of the Newsletters that we have produced as new leaders of APC Study Group. These certainly are difficult and uncertain times with most people being confined to their homes and apartments for an unknown length of time. In a way, that makes container plants even more important since most apartments have a balcony on which you can grow a plant or one can grow some native plants indoors to provide some connection with the natural world. Thank you to all those who have sent in contributions for this Newsletter and we encourage all of you to add your thoughts no matter how small or large. A picture or two and some text would be greatly appreciated by all including the editors.

Ian Roberts, SA

Me thinks container plants for some natives may be the way of the future - I just cannot get many through the first summer in the ground. Also it allows me to grow acid soil loving plants that are impossible in my 8.5ph soil. Keeping the containers weed free & remembering to fertilize is my main problem, & the occasional one dropping dead overnight!! A few pics attached of plants from last year (I gave a talk on container plants).



Scholtzia capitata



Darwinia leiostyla



Chamelaucium ciliatum Stirling Range Form



Chamelaucium uncinatum 'Ligita'



Chamelaucium crenulata 'Scooper Dooper'



Chamelaucium sp.



Eremophila cuneifolia



Eremophila sp.



Eremophila glabra subsp. *tomentosum*



Hypocalymma robustum



Lechenaultia sp



Pimelea ciliatum



Pimelea ferruginea "Bonne Petite"



Hypocalymma sp.

Lawrie Smith, Qld

Microsorium punctatum 'Grandiceps'

Terrestrial Elkhorn Fern;Crawling Fern



A widely distributed tropical terrestrial or lithophytic fern to 1.2m tall, spreading by creeping rhizome and often forming dense colonies. Generally found in coastal central Queensland from Fraser Island north as an understory in semi protected locations on rocky headlands and sand dunes.

When young and vigorous the fleshy, upright 'strappy' fronds form an erect cluster of leaves, with various degrees of crinkling. Individual fronds are long lived and as they age they tend to arch over and need considerable space to show their form to advantage. Sometimes a plant will display fronds with crested tops and frilly edges.

Best suited to moist well drained sandy soils in part shade to full shade, it is very hardy once established and will tolerate considerable exposure if well-watered. The rich emerald green fronds become lime green in sunny conditions.

Microsorium punctatum is very easy to grow and a hardy ground cover, or feature specimen container plant, which is extremely attractive in all seasons, both indoors or out.

My specimen is one of several growing in large earthenware containers 400mm high x 400mm diameter, generally residing in the bush house but brought out to the terrace for special occasions. As I recall the original section of rhizome was collected more than twenty years ago from a headland near the town of 1770 – which is one of James Cook 'Endeavour' landing places where Joseph Banks collected specimens. It established well in the rainforest section of our property at Whiteside and from that source the container specimens were started about ten years ago. It must have been a good soil mix that I used because they have never been repotted, but now the rhizomes are becoming so dense and compact it is obviously time to divide and start new containers and/or colonise the parkland over the fence from our new smaller garden. The shaded areas under the Melaleuca forest on the moist sandy loams around the Wallum wetland lakes will provide a very suitable habitat.

Phil Allen, SA

Tasmania lanceolate (Mountain Pepper)

I've been growing male and female plants in pots under eucalypts at our property in Meadows. This is native pepper with pepper corns and leaves being used to add spice to cooking.

I lost a few planted in the ground last summer. They certainly don't like the heat or hot winds. The remaining 8 are thriving - shooting and flowering. Not sure how big they will grow in pots, but can reach up to 4m in the wild. Surprisingly the strongest plants came from Bunnings Mile End who source them from Humphris Nursery in the Dandenong Ranges.

We're moving to Mannum soon and also traveling around Australia so will be a challenge to keep them happy.



Riitta Boevink, Tas

Thought I'd send you a recent photo of a container plant I am fond of:
This is my *Paphia meiniana* (*Agapetes meiniana*) from Queensland. It has done well for many years in hanging basket in a shade house in our garden in north west Tasmania. It flowers for a long time and has never been affected by the mild frosts we get in winter. Was slightly affected by scale at one stage, but that was easily remedied with white oil.



Anne Campbell, SA

Stimulating a grass tree to flower!

Treatment: 13 days in the dark with no water in transit from Canberra to Adelaide via Sydney!!

In February 2013 a grass tree *Xanthorrhoea johnsonii* hybrid x 'Supergrass' was bought as a seedling at Kuranga Nursery in Melbourne and duly planted in a large pot (50L, 500mm) with native plant potting mix – the size of the pot selected to allow for growth over the long term and reduce the need for transplanting too soon if the need arose. It was watered via a drip system – daily in summer and less frequently in winter (every 3 days) for about 2 min. It was outside but a little protected at the edge of a small pergola and so was exposed to the elements, catching the western sun in the afternoon in particular (see below).

It grew steadily, developing into quite a handsome plant about 1m wide by 1m high by October 2015. It continued to grow and by March 2019 I noticed that a dense central cluster of new leaves had developed. I was about to relocate to the Adelaide Hills in the middle of that year so was anxious to take it with me having ascertained with the SA Quarantine authority that this was permitted. I prepared it for transport (June 25th) by clipping away the large lower skirt to reduce the area it took up. However, it was going to be a tortuous journey from the time of loading into the transit container to its delivery (8 July) – some 13 days in the dark with no water. I was not optimistic but delighted to find it survived and proceeded to administer liquid seaweed fertilizer, now and then. Several weeks later a friend happened to peer down through the central cluster of leaves to find the beginnings of a flower spike (12 August 2019)! By 21st September the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the brown flower spike (of some 400mm) had appeared above the leaves and was clearly visible. By 3rd November, the flower spike was fully covered in white flowers (starting first on the north side); it was glistening with nectar and became the target of several yellow-crested cockatoos; indeed, one of them demolished about 10 cm of the spike. Fortunately, after shooing them away with much clapping and shouting, they did not return and by early January the sharp-edged seeds were well developed.

The plant label information indicated that it was likely to be a good performer – whether it actually develops a trunk remains to be seen.



September 2015 – to the left of the white BBQ

Bruce Cadoret, Vic

Please see attached photos, we put these pots in the front, they receive full sun from approx 11 am every-day.

I have a standard *Grevillea plurijuga* 'Purple Haze' but as it was bare at the base, I decided to plant some seeds of the Western Australian everlastings for extra colour.

In the other pot there are a *Correa pulchella*, along with a *Casuarina* 'Cousin It', doing well plus in the front pot *Grevillea nivea* 'Scarlet King' with *Myoporum parvifolium*.



Grevillea plurijuga 'Purple Haze' base on left and top on right

This is our first attempt at growing a Quandong, it also needs a companion plant although we are not sure what it is - maybe an *Eremophilia*. My partner Alison was recently in Mildura where she found this Quandong (red) at the Mildura Native Nursery, unfortunately we did not receive a tag. As we had not seen this before and we are interested in growing bush foods we thought to give this a go. Do you know where else you can get Quandong? Hopefully it will survive, we planted in a mixture of sand and native potting mix. It is up against the house and receives afternoon sun, if successful we might give you an update as it grows.



Banksia baueri or Possum Banksia

Robyn O'Dea, SA

I am at Yongala, South Australia. Extremely cold bitter winters, extremely hot summers. Have recently moved to Yongala so for last 18 months have been building up my eremophila, correa and grevillia collection in pots. To be portable, and to be able to move them if I have issues with the terrible frosts we get here at Yongala. Only started building collection in last 18 months, visited Bev Rice a few times at Dutton, SA to collect cuttings. Attracted particularly to eremophilas due to their hardiness and our low rainfall and trying weather. I am interested to gain knowledge of eremophilas and build collection of plants. Have around 75. different eremophilas now.



Ed note: the above images were extracted from a video made by Robyn of her collection of pots

Margaret Lee, SA



Have just **been potting up my flannel flowers and thought you might like a photo of the parent plant**

As my soil is alkaline clay I can only grow them in pots. Also makes it easier to water as it needs more than most plants in my garden. It is rarely grown here and is a great help at drawing attention to our stall at fairs, markets, etc.

Fran Middleton, ACT



A Cautionary Tale

I've had an *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* 'Prima Donna' (the pink flowered form of the Blueberry Ash), a rain-forest plant, happily surviving in a pot since spring 2016, coping with Canberra winters, flowering modestly each year. In early December 2019 during the memorably hot, dry, smoky summer it burst into abundant bloom but within days I realised that it seemed to be really struggling in these conditions and was also rather top heavy. Reason should have dictated that I move the pot to a more shaded position, perhaps thoroughly dunk it in water, wet the foliage to simulate a sub-tropical downpour..... anything except what I actually did! On a scorching day I decided to transplant it to a bigger pot and while doing so discovered that it had already sent a rather large root through the drainage hole into surrounding soil. So, root severed, plant potted up a couple of sizes (intending to also pop in some white *Viola hederacea* I had propagated) and moved to a shadier spot, I placed this now huge and heavy ensemble onto castors and stood back and admired the gorgeous thing! A couple of days later the whole plant started wilting dramatically and I had to perform emergency surgery, sacrificing much of the foliage and all those lovely flowers! Occasional Seasol as a tonic (and a G and T for me!) and fingers crossed, I watched all through the rest of that hideous summer as my lovely plant started to put out tiny shoots of characteristically copper-coloured new leaves. As the third photo (early April) shows, it survived!

Lessons learnt (and I actually have a framed piece of paper that says that I ought to know these things):

Wrong time - should have been re-potted in milder weather long before it was struggling.

If you have to sever a large root, immediately remove a substantial amount of top growth to keep the balance right for transpiration.

A rainforest plant growing in a dry climate will, of course, send out an exploratory root so don't place pots directly on top of soil.

Try to emulate natural growing conditions and protect rainforest plants from the sun during extreme weather.

A tonic may help plant and person after such an ordeal.



Crowea saligna "Large Flower" in a pot, the only way we can get them to grow in our garden

Ros and Ben Walcott, ACT

***Banksia plagiocarpa* 'Hinchinbrook' or Blue Banksia**

We planted this unusual banksia from Hinchinbrook Island, Queensland in a pot ten years ago. This plant can grow to 5m tall and has pale blue grey flowers in bud, which are dull yellow when open. The first plant lasted only 3 months before it died. The second plant was put in a pot in August 2019 and, so far, is thriving even through the severe drought and heat of summer 19/20. The velvety red new foliage is a feature and lasts for several months. I am hoping to keep this plant thriving long enough to get cones.



Banksia victoriae – Woolly Orange Banksia

We planted this banksia, bought from Kurunga Nursery, in a pot in November 2013. It has always been a rather awkward shape, but has bloomed well with brilliant woolly orange cones. It has grown to about 2m high and 1.5m high for us in a pot. This banksia is native to a restricted area north west of Geraldton in Western Australia.



Banksia victoriae in summer position, in winter the pot is moved under the eaves of the house



Banksia victoriae flowers, the youngest above left, with rusty orange flowers progressing up the brush

Boronias in pots

Boronias are so rewarding in pots for those of us who cannot grow them in the ground. They flower for long periods and have both scented flowers and foliage. They like protection from hot sun, wind and frost and plenty of water. We have success with them for five years or so, then the heat manages to carry them off and we replant.



Boronia anemonifolia

Boronia anemonifolia was planted in a pot two years ago and has flowered well.



***Boronia megastima* 'Lutea'**

Boronia megastima 'Lutea' forms a shrub 1.5m high and 0.5m wide with fine aromatic foliage and fragrant yellow flowers. Our original plant was planted six years ago and performed well every year for five years. The original plant succumbed to the heat two years ago so we have planted another one.



***Boronia coerulescens* (above)**

Boronia coerulescens or Blue Boronia was planted in a pot 9 years ago. This is a small shrub to 50cm with short thick linear leaves and bluish pink flowers over a long period. My original plant from Belair Nursery in SA flowered well for six years until I unwisely cut it back in 2017. The plant resented being trimmed and promptly died. The new plant was put in a pot six years ago and has flowered well every year since then. The advice on the label was that this plant is difficult to maintain in optimum condition for more than three years, but I have found it more reliable than that.



***Boronia denticulata* (above)**

Boronia denticulata is a rounded shrub 1m x 1m with strongly aromatic foliage and many showy pink flowers in spring. Our original plant from ANPS Canberra sale was planted 9 years ago and flowered really well until we made the same mistake by cutting it back. Heat stress finished it off two years ago and we have planted a new specimen which we will not cut back!



Boronia heterophylla



***Boronia heterophylla* (photos bottom of previous page)**

Boronia heterophylla forms a stunning shrub in a pot growing to 1.5m high and 1m wide with narrow fragrant foliage and masses of bright pink flowers over a long period. Our original plant went into a pot four years ago and performed brilliantly until we went to Melbourne in November 2019 for a week and the pot was only watered twice instead of every day. The plant succumbed to the heat so I have planted anew.



***Boronia* 'Purple Jared' (photos above)**

Boronia 'Purple Jared' is a standout plant in a pot. It grows to 1.5m tall and 1m wide with many scented purple bell flowers hanging gracefully from the branches. This plant is a cross between *B. heterophylla* and *B. megastima* and blooms over a long period. Once again our plant performed excellently for six years before being discarded and we replanted two years ago.

Telopeas or Waratahs in pots

Telopeas are another species which do remarkably well in pots for those of us who cannot grow them in the ground. They bloom extravagantly for at least a month.

Telopea 'Braidwood Brilliant' is a hybrid between *T. speciosissima* and *T. mongaensis* and has cherry red flowers and is frost hardy. It can form a small tree to 3m high and 1.5m wide in the ground but is smaller in a pot. We had no luck with this plant in the ground but it has grown well and flowered in a pot. It was produced in 1962 by our late friend Robert Boden, once Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Telopea 'Corroboree' flowers prolifically with deep red blooms and is said to be frost hardy once established. We cannot get this plant to grow in the ground despite our best efforts, but it grows well in a pot. It is a hybrid between *T. speciosissima* x *mongaensis*.



***Telopea* 'Essie's Gift'**

Telopea 'Essie's Gift' is a particularly lovely compact waratah with deep pink blooms which grows to 1m high and 1.5m wide.



Please send us your thoughts comments and ideas and when we get enough, we will produce another Newsletter.

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