BUDAWANGIA*

AN E-NEWSLETTER FOR ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN THE NATIVE PLANTS OF THE NSW SOUTH COAST

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Aims: To connect those interested in the native flora of the NSW South Coast, to share up to date information on the flora of the region and to broaden the appreciation of the region's native plants.

Editorial

This month was a mixed bag weather-wise; on and off rain (drizzle really) and hot humid days, with some cool days. The moist conditions and the hot weather are promoting many plants to put out new growth. Ferns produce their new shoots at this time of year, and these can be colourful and attractive. The suburbs are a blaze of colour; with the tree trio of Jacaranda, Flame Tree and Silky Oak all flowering this month; these trees are often planted together providing a very colourful streetscape. It does not look like a big flowering year for Flame Trees, as few can be seen along the escarpment, although a couple have been noticed. The photograph below was taken at Macquarie Pass in mid-November. NSW Christmas Bush is certainly in good flower this year.

This edition contains another piece on a rare plant community in the region, namely coastal saltmarsh. This is followed by articles on identifying elkhorns and staghorns, a new mystery weed, the origin of the word Budawang and finishes with a note on a very rare local rainforest tree, *Gossia acmenoides*. A late addition is a book review from a friend of Italian descent who prefers to eat his weeds rather than cursing them and ridding his backyard of them.

A reminder to readers that a free plant identification service is available by sending a photograph, scan or specimen of the plant to me; contact information is shown on this page. I would be pleased to receive appropriate articles, however small, on interesting observations, new discoveries, plant name changes, etc., up to two A4 pages, including some photographs. Deadline is one week before the end of the calendar month.

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* *Budawangia* was a monotypic, endemic genus named in 1992 and restricted to the Budawang Range on the western edge of the South Coast region. This genus was discarded in September 2015 with the publication of a review of *Epacris*. The newsletter retains the name in memory of this once endemic genus and the mountains bearing the name.

Saltmarsh

Saltmarsh is low-growing vegetation occurring in situations where there is at least some influence by seawater, which determines the species present. Such vegetation may grow around coastal lakes, estuaries and rivers and sometimes extends quite a way inland if there is tidal influence. Less common occurrence are on rocky coasts where small amounts of sediment accumulate in pockets amongst the rocks.

Plants in the saltmarsh respond to micro-changes in topography. A few centimetres height can make a considerable difference in species presence and dominance. The division into the lower, middle and upper saltmarsh, each of which contain a distinctive suite of species, reflects this situation. The lower saltmarsh is often inundated with saltwater and is very salty, the upper saltmarsh is less often inundated and is less salty. The upper saltmarsh will often blends into an adjoining swampy area dominated by freshwater.

The following species characterise the saltmarsh in our region:

Lower saltmarsh

Sarcocornia quinquenflora, Wilsonia spp.

Middle saltmarsh

Suaeda australis, Chenopodium glaucum, Mimulus repens

Upper saltmarsh

Selliera radicans, Phragmites australis, Juncus kraussii, Samolus repens, Apium prostratum

The interesting parasitic plant *Cuscuta tasmanica,* which parasitises saltmarsh plants, appeared in Newsletter No. 5.

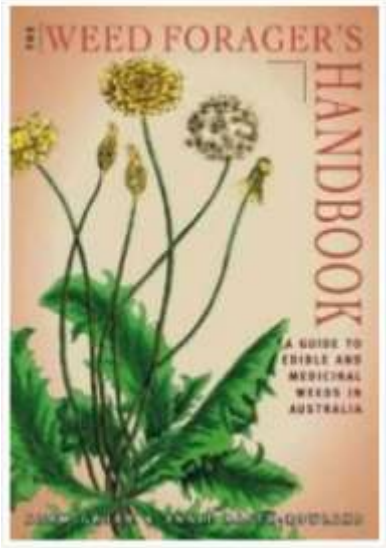
Above the saltmarsh there is usually a stand of Swamp Oak *Casuarina glauca,* the width of which depends upon the adjacent topography. On broad low-lying land, freshwater swamps develop with species such as *Melaleuca ericifolia, Melaleuca linariifolia* and *Phragmites australis*.

A broad area of saltmarsh growing on the exposed edge of Lake Wollumboola during very low water level.

The succulent saltmarsh plant *Sarcocornia quinquenflora*; this species is abundant on many estuaries in the lower saltmarsh.

On the south coast, large areas of saltmarsh can be found on Minnamurra River, Comerong Island, Currambene Creek (Jervis Bay), Cullendulla Creek (Batemans Bay) and further south on many coastal lakes. Coastal saltmarsh vegetation is under pressure from various quarters, including drainage and filling of coastal lowlands, unnatural sediment input to estuaries, localised destruction by vehicles, installation of infrastructure and general disregard. This has prompted the NSW Scientific Committee to list Coastal Saltmarsh as an endangered ecological community in NSW; this community is termed “Coastal Saltmarsh in the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner Bioregions”.

Review: The Weed Forager's Handbook



American philosopher-poet Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: "*What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not been discovered*." And so my interest in wild fare was kindled by the culinary possibilities of garden "pests" such as Stinging Nettles *Urtica* spp. and Chickweed *Stellaria media*.

Sites such as www.eatthatweeed.com are terrific resources and relevant to Australia, but the information is not always readily available, especially in mobile phone black spots. Conveniently, 'eatthatweed' creator Adam Grubb has condensed his knowledge and experience in a very attractive and handy field guide - *The Weed Forager's Handbook* by Adam Grubb and Annie Raser-Rowland - that slips easily into a bag or backpack. Costing about $20 (mine was c.$18 delivered from The Book Depository), it is a great companion to identify and assess the eating qualities of commonly encountered wild plants.

The first thing that struck me on leafing through the handbook was how many edible species of weeds I had been fighting with over the years. It is reassuring to know that it wasn't strange for me to harvest young tender Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* (although my family might beg to differ) and that I should really give Fat Hen *Chenopodium album* a go. Similarly, the native Purslane *Portulaca oleracea* is now on my 'must try list'; I'm looking for the right occasion to savour Mallow and I appreciate Grubb's sage advice about Stinging Nettles that are well past their prime (can be kidney irritants due to the cystoliths, apparently). And did you know that common plantain *Plantago lanceolata* has medicinal properties as well as potential as a salad additive? Not to mention the digestive qualities of plantain's seed husks. Other weeds that could have featured in my diet include Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Amaranth *Amaranthus* spp. and Blackberry Nightshade *Solanum* sp.

The book contains some very useful advice about weeds to avoid (Castor Oil Plant *Ricinus communis* or Hemlock *Conium maculatum* anyone?) and the top ten rules for the weed appreciator such as rule #1 - identify your plant beyond a shadow of a doubt. Having no botanical qualifications whatsoever but an unfettered curiosity about wild foods and unconventional nutrition I treasure my copy of the Handbook. It's one for the glove box of the forage truck.

Claude Morson, Canberra

Mystery Weed

This weed will be well known to those familiar with the grazing lands of the tablelands.

Budawang

While clearly an Aboriginal word, the origin of the word *budawang* is not clear. The name today applies to the Mount Budawang, Budawang Range and Budawang National Park, names so familiar to bushwalkers. On seeking advice from historian Bob Snedden, he reported that the first use of the word appears to be in the

diary of surveyor Robert Hoddle in 1828. During his mapping work for Thomas Mitchell, the culmination of which was the production of Mitchell's Map of the Nineteen Counties in 1834. Hoddle wrote *"For some days was unable to proceed from wet weather and a thick brush, on the mountain ridge south of Currock billy and Mt. Budawang, Buckenburra River is about a chain wide near Baleira....."*. Mount Budawang was subsequently shown on Mitchell's map of 1834 (see the book *Pigeon House and Beyond*, page 32). There is a suggestion that the word is a corruption of *burrawang*, the Aboriginal word for native cycads *Macrozamia* spp. One fact that perhaps militates against this is that *Macrozamia communis* does not extend as far inland as the Budawang Range.

A rare rainforest tree in the Myrtaceae

The rainforest tree *Gossia acmenoides* (Myrtaceae) is very rare in the south of the state, with only a handful of records from the South Coast. The species grows mainly in dry subtropical rainforest at low altitudes and in the region occurs from Wollongong south to Jamberoo Valley. This is an outlying population from the main distribution which is northwards from the Hunter Valley. While superficially alike to other trees in the family Myrtacese, Lilly Pilly *Syzygium smithii*, Brush Cherry *Syzygium autsrale* and Ironwood *Backhousia myrtifolia*, it has some quite distinctive features. The most obvious are the smooth, multi-coloured bark and the small shiny leaves.

Given the rarity of the disjunct Illawarra population, in May 2014 the NSW Scientific Committee listed that population as an endangered population under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (NSW). The specimen found at Albion Park and featured below was infected with Myrtle Rust, a pathogen identified by the NSW Scientific Committee as a major threat to this southern population.

If you know of any occurrences of this tree in the Illawarra, could you please let me know.

Foliage of *Gossia acmenoides.*

Multiple trunk of *Gossia acmenoides.*

Bark of *Gossia acmenoides.*

Leaves and buds of *Gossia acmenoides.*

Photographs of a tree at Albion Park, October 2015.