

SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

March 2020

The selection this month in many cases features plant characteristics other than flowers, but you should still see many species in flower or fruiting as you follow the trail. Keep an eye out for the inconspicuous ones which the bees have found.



The numbers refer to locations on the map on the reverse of this sheet

- 1 *The Dahlia Garden***
At their best in late summer, the many hybrid dahlias in this garden are jointly managed by the Dahlia Society of SA and staff of the Botanic Garden. Surrounding the beds is a hedge of *Quercus ilex* (holm oak), named for the resemblance of its foliage, particularly the young leaves, to hollies in the genus *Ilex*.
- *2 *Syzygium oleosum*** Blue lily pillly Qld, NSW
An attractive addition to a garden, blue lilly-pillies have a long flowering season and glossy oval leaves that release an aromatic fruit scent when crushed. The young fruits will mature into edible blue-purple berries which are crunchy and light with a mild sweetness. They can also be used in jams, jellies and sauces.
- 3 *Quercus ilex*** Holm oak, holly oak Mediterranean region
If left to grow unhindered, a holm oak from the hedge around the dahlia beds would eventually develop into something like the large, evergreen specimen seen here. Holm is the ancient name for holly. The small acorns are edible and mature in a single season. This species is commonly used to establish truffle orchards, where the truffles grow in ectomycorrhizal association with the roots of the trees.
- *4 *Balhogia inophylla*** Scrub bloodwood Qld, NSW, Norfolk Island, New Caledonia
B. inophylla is a member of the Euphorbiaceae, a large family with many species producing an often very toxic, milky sap, causing severe skin and eye irritation. Scrub bloodwood exudes a watery, pale-pink sap from damaged tissue which darkens to red when dry, hence the common name. Treat it with caution.
- 5 *Betula pendula*** Silver birch Europe and parts of Asia
Silver birch is a medium-sized, deciduous tree which owes its common name to the beautiful, white, peeling bark on the trunk. Its flowers are borne in structures called catkins, both the long, slender male catkins and shorter, stockier female catkins borne on the same tree. Both pollination and eventual dispersal of the winged seeds is by wind, a mechanism typical of species with dull, inconspicuous, unscented flowers. It is the national tree of Finland, and apart from its well-known role in the Finnish sauna, it has many other uses.
- 6 *Ginkgo biloba*** Maidenhair tree Temple gardens of China and Japan; cultivated world-wide
The maidenhair tree is popular in gardens around the world for its beautiful foliage. The females produce fleshy seeds smelling of rancid butter when ripe, so males like this one are often planted in preference. This species is the last surviving member of a genus which has changed little for 80 million years
- 7 *Quercus cerris*** Turkey oak Northeastern Mediterranean
Tall trunks with dark, furrowed bark characterise these deciduous oaks, which are easily identified by their unusual acorns, long and thick with cups covered in soft mossy bristles. The acorns are bitter and only eaten by a few bird species. Fast growing and long lived, they are considered pests in northern Europe because they harbour a wasp parasite that damages the acorns of *Quercus robur* (English oak)
- 8 *Quillaja saponaria*** Soap bark tree Chile
Best seen from the internal sawdust path, this species was once included in the rose family, but now is one of just two species in the family Quillajaceae. The inner bark contains a saponin which forms a lather with water. Extracts of the powdered bark have a wide range of uses, from fire-fighting foams to foaming agents for drinks, among other technical applications. Andean peoples used extracts to treat chest complaints.
- 9 *Psidium cattleianum*** Strawberry, or cherry guava Brazil
Strawberry guava produces purple-red fruit which can be eaten fresh or used for jam. Its roasted seeds have been used as a substitute for coffee. However, it is listed among the world's 100 most invasive aliens, and has become naturalised in rainforest systems of tropical areas across the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- 10 *Ziziphus jujube*** Jujube, Chinese date Uncertain due to long cultivation; possibly S. Asia
This small, deciduous, thorny tree bearing small pear-shaped fruit has been cultivated in Asia, Europe and Africa for thousands of years. The edible fruit, an oval drupe, is smooth green when immature with an apple-like taste and texture. The mature fruit is purple-black and wrinkled like a date. Widely eaten as a fresh snack or processed in many ways, it is also used in traditional Chinese and Korean medicine.
- 11 *Sophora japonica*** Japanese pagoda tree, Chinese scholar tree China
Now known as *Styphnolobium japonicum*. Despite its name, this species is not a native of Japan. A popular ornamental, it is grown for its late summer panicles of white flowers. In its native China flower buds were used for traditional medicines, and the leaves and flowers for teas. The last emperor of the Ming dynasty was said to have hanged himself from an historic pagoda tree when Beijing fell to rebel forces.

*An Australian native