

SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

The selection this month includes some of the many plants flowering or fruiting in Adelaide's generally mild, winter weather. Keep your eyes open for more as you follow the trail.

July 2019



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

- *1 ***Alectryon subcinereus*** Wild quince, bird's eye NSW, Qld
The canopy of this tree, laden with its colourful fruits, extends to the main path just north of the Molossian hounds. The fruit is a capsule, usually with two lobes, each containing a glossy, black seed embedded in a bright-red, edible aril. Birds spread the seed after eating the aril.
- 2 ***Vepris lanceolata*** White ironwood South Africa - Western Cape to Kwa-Zulu Natal
Set between the Palm House and the last of the autumn colour of the swamp cypress in the lake, this spreading tree from the citrus family doesn't attract much attention here, but in 2014 it was listed as a tree of the year in South Africa. Its trifoliate leaves with undulate margins are said to be aromatic when crushed. At home it is host to larvae of the citrus swallowtail butterfly, and birds feed on the fruits on female trees.
- 3 ***Aloe zebrina*** Zebra aloe Southern Africa from Namibia to Mozambique
This small, variable, compact succulent is normally found growing in dry thickets but may also grow in marshy meadows on riverbanks. Dye from the roots is used in basket-weaving in Botswana, and cakes are made from the flowers in Angola. Women use powdered stem and leaf bases as a medicine after childbirth, and, like other aloes, the bitter juice is used as a disinfectant for wounds.
- 4 ***Luculia pinceana*** India (Khasia Mountains)
L. pinceana is a drought- and frost-tender evergreen shrub from the gardenia family with, sweet-scented flowers which you may smell before you see them. Broad umbels of bright pink buds, set amongst dark-green, prominently-veined leaves develop into large clusters of tubular, pink flowers in autumn and winter.
- *5 ***Howea forsteriana*** Kentia or thatch palm Lord Howe Island
Named, according to one source, for the Forsters, father and son naturalists, with Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific. Others attribute the honour to William Forster, once briefly Premier of NSW. It is vulnerable in the wild but is grown prolifically as a garden or indoor plant. It was very popular in Europe and the US in the 1870s. Queen Victoria arranged to have Kentia palms around her coffin as she lay in state.
- 6 ***Helichrysum petiolare*** Silver bush everlasting, liquorice plant South Africa
This large, sprawling shrub from the daisy family is a hardy, drought and wind resistant plant adapted to a range of soil types. The dense, furry grey-green leaves smell faintly of liquorice. It is important in traditional medicine, and has essential oils with potential anti-microbial, anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.
- 7 ***Pinus canariensis*** Canary Island pine Canary Islands
A handsome pine to 40 metres, with an open crown of regular, candelabra-like, upswept branches. The trunk has very thick, fissured bark with a striking reddish-brown and buff pattern. It supplements the Canary Islands water supply as it grows in the cloud forest belt where the fog condenses and drips off the leaves increasing precipitation under the canopy four-fold.
- *8 ***Eucalyptus maculata*** Spotted gum East coast of Australia
Now classified as *Corymbia maculata*, this impressive eucalypt can grow to 45 metres with a straight trunk and smooth powdery white, grey or pink bark often with a patchy appearance as the bark sheds irregularly in many-sided flakes. Maculosus is Latin for spotted. Honeyeaters are attracted to masses of small, white flowers appearing from winter to spring.
- *9 ***Ficus superba* var. *henneana*** Cedar fig Endemic to eastern and northern Australia
The cedar figs immediately west of the Conservatory Gate are worth a look just for the striking pattern of buttress roots radiating from the trunks. The translucent fleshy figs, turning purple as they ripen, are produced more or less year round, providing a reliable source of food for at least eight species of bird in their natural habitat, including the green catbird, the regent bowerbird and the rose-crowned fruit-dove.
- *10 ***Templetonia retusa*** Flame bush, cockies' tongues Coastal SA to Shark Bay, WA
On either side of the **fish trap sculpture** - a reminder of the ingenuity of the traditional owners, the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains - are several 1-2 metre shrubs covered in deep-red, pea-shaped flowers. These attractive, hardy plants are adapted to a dry Mediterranean climate, but also do well as cultivated plants on well-drained soils in more humid temperate climates.
- *11 ***Acacia 'Little Nugget'*** Cultivar
This low growing wattle on the NW corner of the settling pond is a dwarf form of *Acacia pravissima* which grows along streams or in moist sheltered sites, in the higher parts of the Great Dividing Range in south-eastern Australia. Each golden-yellow, globular flower-head is made up of 8–12 individual flowers. The masses of flower buds on this cultivar promise a spectacular display.

*An Australian native