

SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

November 2020

The Amazon Water Lily Pavilion near the beginning of this month's walk has reopened after many months of work on refurbishment of the heritage pond. The lily has recently been reintroduced and is now producing its first flowers.

See over page for map

*An Australian native



- *1 ***Banksia blechnifolia*** Fern-like or southern blechnum banksia Southern WA
This unusual prostrate banksia has deeply-lobed, bluish-green leaves, reddish hairs on the young growth and large reddish-pink flowerheads turning cream towards the base. A slow-growing species, it makes an attractive, drought-tolerant garden plant on well-drained soils. The woody follicles usually open when burnt.
- 2 **SA Water Mediterranean Garden**
This Garden is home to species with a range of features common in plants adapted to a Mediterranean climate. The fine hairs or waxy coatings on grey or silver-leaved plants reflect sunlight keeping the leaves relatively cool. Those same hairs slow the rate of water loss by trapping moisture near the leaf surface. Such features make aromatic plants such as the yellow-flowered ***Phlomis fruticosa*** (Jerusalem sage) and ***Teucrium fruticans*** (germander) with its pale, lilac-blue flowers particularly hardy in our hot, dry summers. Elsewhere in this garden you may see other attractive grey-leaved plants eg ***Cistus sp.*** (rock rose) and ***Artemisia californica*** (Californian sagebrush).
- *3 ***Cordyline terminalis*** 'Cannaefolia' Palm lilies, cabbage palms Cultivar
A palm-like species with a number of cultivars developed for their ornamental green, reddish or purplish foliage. Terminal racemes of small, scented, white or pale mauve flowers are followed by bright red berries. Both the cordyline and ***Lomandra filiformis*** 'Savanna Blue' at the front of the bed produce very tough fibrous material, making them popular and suitable for weaving functional and sculptural basketry.
- *4 ***Scolopia braunii*** Gunstock wood, mountain cherry Cape Jervis to Cape Yorke Peninsula
Panicles of creamy-white flowers are forming on this Australian rainforest species, now considered part of the willow family (Salicaceae). After fruiting, its red berries will turn black as they ripen. In contrast to this tree, a 1925 photo shows the tall, slender form of a specimen elsewhere in the Adelaide Botanic Garden.
- 5 ***Phoenix theophrasti*** Cretan date palm Eastern Mediterranean
Just inside the Palm Garden is a clustering palm which grows up to 15 metres tall, usually with several stems. One of three palms endemic to Europe, it is found in southern Greece, Crete and nearby islands as well as some places on the Turkish coast. The leaves are used for celebrating Palm Sunday in Crete, and the fruit, an oval yellowish-brown drupe containing a single seed, is edible though not particularly palatable. It is named for Theophrastus, the ancient Greek "father of botany".
- 6 ***Senecio viravira*** Dusty miller Argentina
Dusty miller is an evergreen, perennial subshrub with branches covered with dense white hairs. The button-like creamy-yellow flowerheads form in clusters held above the softly-furry grey to white foliage in summer and autumn. The name for the genus comes from the Latin 'senex' meaning 'old' or "old man" in reference to the downy head of seeds.
- 7 **Aromatic plants** SW quadrant of the Economic Garden
On a warm day you may catch the aroma of 'horseradish' from ***Armoracia rusticana***, a perennial from the family Brassicaceae (eg mustard, wasabi, broccoli, radish). Originally from SE Europe it has been cultivated since antiquity for its root, which used as a spice, or a condiment usually combined with vinegar. The feathery foliage of the nearby fennel (***Foeniculum vulgare***) from the carrot family smells of anise. Along the curved path you will find several highly perfumed plants including ***Rondeletia amoena***, a 3m shrub from the gardenia family, with dense clusters of tubular, pink flowers.
- *8 ***Pouteria australis*** Black apple, wild plum Qld, NSW
Now ***Planchonella australis***, this rainforest tree from the family Sapotaceae grows to 30 m tall in its native habitat, often with a fluted trunk and rough brown bark. Look for the large plum-shaped edible fruit which is fibrous, but sweet when ripe. It contains 2 to 5 brown shiny seeds 2 cm long. The tree was harvested by colonists for its yellow-patterned wood which is hard and suitable for rulers.
- 9 ***Acokanthera oblongifolia*** 'Variegata' African wintersweet, dune poison bush Cultivar
In its native range in South Africa and Mozambique ***A. oblongifolia***, may reach 6 m or more in height, but this cultivar is usually much shorter. Best admired from afar, all parts of this handsome, evergreen shrub, with its fragrant, pink-tinged, tubular flowers, contain a highly toxic glycoside. In the past, an arrow poison prepared from its sap was used to bring down game as large as elephants. An established weed in parts of coastal NSW and Queensland, it belongs to the same family as oleander.
- 10 ***Drosanthemum hispidum*** Hairy dew-flower, miniature pig-face South Africa
Dew-flower ('drosanthemum') is a hardy, small succulent from the ice-plant family with a mat of fleshy, leaves, mostly hidden by pale, magenta flowers. Glitter from the leaves is caused by reflection from tiny, domed papillae on water-filled surface cells. Plant in well-drained soil in a rockery, or to stabilise banks.