

SPECIAL PLANTS FOR APRIL AND MAY 2021

WITTUNGA TRAIL



Autumn weather in South Australia is usually very pleasant with mild sunny days and cool nights. It's the perfect time to explore the interesting variety of plants in Wittunga Botanic Gardens. See over page for map

- 1 Bank of correas** Australia
Did you know that correas are members of the Rutaceae family; the same family that contain oranges and lemons. *Correa* is a genus of eleven species of flowering plants and is named after Portuguese botanist, Jose Correia da Serra. They are very hardy plants and are drought tolerant when established.
- 2 Hibiscus 'Aussie Pink'** Native hibiscus Hybrid
The result of careful breeding of three native *Hibiscus* species has produced this fast growing and bushy plant, useful for informal hedging and screening. The flower petals can be used for making drinks and cordials. A good waterwise and low maintenance plant that attracts bees and butterflies.
- 3 Haemanthus coccineus** Blood lily South Africa
One of the surprises of late summer/autumn is this plant with flower heads that look like bright shaving brushes popping up from underground bulbs. The leaves usually occur after flowering from about April to October. They are rarely seen simultaneously with the flower. The leaves die down from about October and the bulb lies dormant during summer. This is an adaptation to the dry period of the year when all above-ground parts dry out and so help prevent moisture loss through transpiration.
- 4 Hakea petiolaris** Sea urchin hakea Southern WA
Hakea petiolaris is an erect shrub to small tree reaching 2-9 metres in height. Taxonomists have recently divided it into three subspecies on the basis of leaf size and flower colour. Notice the attractive, pale grey-green leaves which are broadly obovate in shape and range from 5-15cm long by 2.3-6cm wide.
- 5 Banksia attenuata** Coast or candlestick banksia South-west WA
Usually a small tree, but often a shrub in drier parts of its range. It is pollinated by several species of honeyeater, as well as the honey possum, *Tarsipes rostratus*. This species is said to be one of the inspirations for the big, bad banksia men created by author May Gibbs.
- 6 Hakea francisiana** Grass leaf, or bottlebrush hakea WA and SA
The young stems and the margins of scales on the flower buds in the leaf axils of this young specimen are an attractive, rich red-brown. When those buds open they will produce long racemes of striking pinkish-red flowers. The Latin species name honours George Francis, the first Director of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, and the common name refers to the prominent (grass-like) parallel veins on its long, linear leaves.
- 7 Eucalyptus cosmophylla** Cup gum South Mt Lofty Ranges and Kangaroo Island
Cup gum, a small tree or mallee with cup-shaped, woody fruits, is endemic to SA. Its flower buds are tinged with pink, and open to reveal a mass of creamy-white stamens. Here, it can be grown to attract birds, and for screening or shelter, but is said to have been grown in Paris for cut flowers as early as 1900, probably for the mix of buds, flowers and foliage. *Cosmophylla* is derived from the Greek for ornamental leaf.
- 8 Melaleuca styphelioides** Prickly paperbark NSW, Qld
This paperbark grows in eastern Australia in coastal swamps and tableland gullies. It can reach 8-15m high and 3-8m wide. It has short, slightly twisted leaves with sharp points. The bottlebrush-like white flowers appear in summer. The lovely, white bark is smooth, soft and papery, peeling off in fine layers.
- 9 Protea 'Pink Ice'** South Africa
In Greek mythology, Proteus had the ability to assume any shape and so this name was chosen for this highly variable group of plants. There are about 100 species most from the Cape Province of South Africa. They are relatively easy to grow if they are provided with sandy, acidic soil with perfect drainage and full sun. They are very showy, slow growing, popular garden plants and are bird attracting.
- 10 Strelitzia nicolai** Natal wild banana South Africa
This tropical looking plant can grow 12m high and 4m wide. The leaves can reach 2m in length and tear easily in strong winds. The blue and white flowers give it the common name of giant white bird of paradise. The genus was named after Queen Charlotte, wife of George III. She was from the house of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Leaf stalks are dried and used to make rope for building. The young seeds are edible and tasty.
- 11 Nymania capensis** Klapperbos/Chinese lantern South Africa
This beautiful large shrub to small tree produces dull red flowers but attractive, pinkish, puffy seed heads. This genus only has one species. It is well-adapted to dry conditions and can survive a wide range of temperatures (-4°C to 44°C and above). It has been reported to have been used in folk medicine for the treatment of convulsions.