

SPECIAL PLANTS FOR JUNE AND JULY 2021

WITTUNGA TRAIL

Several species in the list below are from the fynbos, a South African low shrubland with extraordinary species richness growing on nutrient-poor soils in areas with a Mediterranean climate. Similar areas around the world include the kwongan of WA, the chaparral of California, and the matorral in Chile.



See over page for map

- 1 *Chamelaucium uncinatum* 'Early Mist'** Geraldton wax Cultivar
Geraldton wax grows on sandy soils in full sun in its native habitat, the Quindalup dunes between Geraldton and Perth, WA. The flowers are attractive to bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects and have been sold internationally as cut flowers since the 1970s. 'Early Mist' is one of many cultivars with flower colours ranging from white or cream, to pink, red and purple.
- 2 *Diospyros* spp.** Southern Africa
Wittunga is well-known for its historic persimmon, *Diospyros kaki* from Asia, in the Terrace Beds (A) but also has a collection of *Diospyros* from southern Africa. Three species from the collection can be found here. The tall shrub with marble-sized red fruit is bluebush (*D. lycioides*). The fruit is edible and the flowers attract insects and birds. The tree with bladder-like, green fruits is blackbark (*D. whyteana*). Its roasted seeds have been used as a coffee substitute. The clipped shrubs either side of the path are false blackbark (*D. scabrida*). Compact growth, glossy leaves and bronze new foliage make it ideal for hedging.
- 3 *Brachychiton rupestris*** Bottle tree Central Qld to northern NSW
The bottle tree is named for its bulbous trunk which has a significant store of water in the fibrous tissue of its inner bark. It sheds its leaves in extremes of drought, but can maintain some photosynthesis in the green tissues of its outer trunk and branches. Aboriginal people squeezed water from the fibrous inner material extracted from the trunk in times of need, and used the fibres to make string for fishing nets.
- 4 Species from the family Proteaceae** Southern Africa and southern WA
The newly-planted bed between the fynbos beds (F) and the playground features shrubs from the family Proteaceae. Grey-leafed Western Australian woolly bush (*Adenanthos sericeus*) outlines the top border. The rest of the bed is planted with hardy species from southern Africa, some already in flower. There are proteas (*Protea* spp.), cone-bushes (*Leucadendron* spp.) and pagodas (*Mimetes* spp.).
- 5 *Aloe plicatilis*** (now *Kumara plicatilis*) Fan aloe South Africa
Fan aloe, a shrub or small tree endemic to a limited area of the Western Cape, is named for its clusters of strap-shaped leaves in two opposite rows fanning out at the ends of the short branches. One of few 'aloes' found in the fynbos, its racemes of scarlet flowers are pollinated by bees, monkey beetles and sunbirds. Thick corky bark and succulent leaves which resist burning allow it to survive fast-moving fynbos fires.
- 6 *Phyllica pubescens*** Cape featherhead South Africa
The aptly-named featherhead displays hairy leaves lining branches that end in a flattened flowerhead, with rings of feathery bracts surrounding the tiny white flowers. The flowers have a faint cinnamon scent which attracts a variety of pollinators. The capsular fruits contain seeds with an elaiosome (fat body). In its native fynbos the seeds are spread by ants which carry off the seed (myrmecochory) and eat the elaiosome.
- 7 *Eucalyptus caesia*** Central wheatbelt, WA
A few metres to the west of the path stands a small mallee, endemic to an area of granite outcrops east of Perth. The specific epithet (from Latin; caesia - bluish grey) refers to the waxy bloom on the flower buds, fruit and branches, which gives the attractive silvery appearance. Notice the curling, reddish, 'minirichi' bark which looks stunning after rain.
- 8 *Casuarina cunninghamiana*** River she-oak Vic, Qld, NT
The feathery, greyish-green foliage of river she-oak consists of fine, jointed, photosynthetic stems with a crown of tiny leaves at each node. Look for little balls of tiny red female flowers along the stems. The flowers on male trees are clustered in reddish-brown spikes at the ends of branchlets. Although it is the largest of the *Casuarinas* in Australia its fruiting 'cones' are quite small, but nevertheless an important food source for red-tailed and yellow-tailed black cockatoos. Groves of river she-oak also spread by means of root suckers, so are often planted along the banks of rivers or other waterways to help reduce soil erosion.
- 9 *Eucalyptus albens*** White box Qld, NSW, Vic, SA
The trunks of these handsome trees are covered with rough, pale-grey to white, short-fibred bark, often becoming tessellated. The upper bark is smooth and white, shedding annually in short ribbons. The flowers, also creamy-white, occur in groups of seven on a branching inflorescence. It is suitable for use in windbreaks, as shade for livestock, and for erosion control due to its large spreading roots.
- 10 *Grevillea infundibularis*** Fan-leaf or funnel-leaf grevillea SW Western Australia
Endemic to a small area of the Fitzgerald River National Park this sprawling shrub grows in heathland or the understorey of small to medium trees, where its bright-red flowers may appear throughout the year. New leaves are often distinctly funnel-shaped, hence 'infundibularis' derived from the Latin word for funnel. The mature leaves with radiating veins and toothed margins are an attractive feature of this unusual grevillea.