

SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

April 2020

This month's walk leads past several of the installations associated with the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art. For those interested, sites close to, or housing, an installation are marked in the following text with a hash (#) symbol, but don't get too distracted from the plants



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

- *1 *Triodia irritans*** Porcupine grass ('spinifex') Arid and semi-arid areas of inland Australia
Midway along the path through the patch of vegetation in front of the State Herbarium porcupine grass is growing in association with *Eucalyptus gillii*, a mallee eucalypt from the North Flinders Ranges. These spiny hummock grasses in *Triodia* and related genera cover immense areas of Australia, either as grasslands, or as understorey in mulga or mallee communities, providing food and refuge for many small mammals and reptiles. These fibrous grasses are an ideal food source for termites which underpin the food chain.
- 2 *Helianthus annuus*** Sunflower North America
Here set amongst a row of young pistachios these tall, erect annuals, are grown as garden plants and as important oil and seed crops. Each flower head consists of many tiny, five-petalled flowers (florets) in a central disk surrounded by attractive, but sterile, ray flowers. The disk flowers mature into fruits which exhibit the most efficient packing of seeds in spirals, mathematically described by the Fibonacci sequence.
- *3 *Chionanthus ramiflorus*** Native olive Northeast Qld, Southeast Asia, India, China, Nepal
Take the ramp on the left as you enter the Bicentennial Conservatory (#) from the south and you will soon find a native tree from the olive family (Oleaceae). In the wild, these trees form scented panicles of white flowers followed by small, blue drupes similar to those of the commercial olive (*Olea europaea*). Though not edible by humans, native olive fruits are a major food source for the jagged-tailed bower bird in Queensland.
- *4 Rock Garden**
This rock sculpture represents the underlying fractured rock aquifer – the eventual destination of water harvested from First Creek for use in the Gardens. The grass-like plants bordering the macrophyte pond help filter pollutants from the water, and provide habitat for dragonflies and other aquatic wildlife. The wetlands collection includes species from the genera *Carex* and *Baumea* (family Cyperaceae) as well as *Apodasmia brownii* (coarse twine rush) from the southern hemisphere family Restionaceae. Across the creek, east of the dead house (#) is a stand of young river red gum, a eucalypt associated with watercourses
- 5 *Cedrus libani*** Cedar of Lebanon Eastern Mediterranean
The national emblem of Lebanon, this tree is native to the mountains of the Eastern Mediterranean basin although only small remnants of the original forests survive. This young specimen has some time to go before it achieves the broad horizontal spread typical of the species, which can grow to 40 m. Cedar wood is prized for its fine grain, yellow colour, fragrance, durability and resistance to insect damage.
- 6 *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'** Atlas cedar Cultivar
C. atlantica is native to the Atlas mountains of Morocco and Algeria. The clustered needles can vary from dark green to bluish. This cultivar has been selected for its glaucous (blue-green) foliage. It grows to around 30 m and is common as an ornamental tree in temperate climates
- 7 *Cedrus deodara*** Indian cedar Western Himalayas and slopes of the Hindu Kush
Indian cedar has some resistance to fungal pathogens and pest insects, so locals often store food in rooms constructed from its timber. Look for pollen cones on all three cedars, or on the ground beneath. Those with good eyes may be able to see barrel-shaped female cones higher in the canopy.
- 8 *Neoregelia zonata*** One of many species of tank bromeliad Brazil
Most plants in the north corridor of the lily pavilion, including *Neoregelia zonata* at the western end, are from the pineapple family (Bromeliaceae) which has over 3400 known species native to the tropical Americas in more than 50 genera. Look for blue flowers nestled in the tube-like, watertight crown of variegated leaves of *N. zonata*. Many species of small organisms live out their whole life cycle in tank bromeliads.
- 9 *Cydonia oblonga* 'Smyrna'** Quince Cultivar
Quinces belong in the family Rosaceae, along with roses, apples, pears and many berries. This cultivar, named for the ancient city of Smyrna, originated in Turkey. Here it is growing as an espalier, where plants are trained along wires or against a wall, saving space and allowing easier fruit harvest. In colder climates the warmth of the wall extends the growing period. The French 'espalier' comes from the Italian spalliera meaning 'something to rest the shoulder (spalla) against'. Look for an installation# on the lawn to the north.
- 10 *Aloe barberae*** Tree aloe South Africa northwards to Mozambique and E. Africa
Now *Aloidendron barberae*, this tree aloe outside the Palm House (#) has a forked branching pattern with terminal rosettes of long, narrow, grooved leaves. Named in 1874 after Mary Elizabeth Barber, a self-taught naturalist from the Cape Colony who made a name for herself in botany, ornithology and entomology, Some Adelaide weavers dry, rewet and stitch the leaves together to make long baskets and sculptural artwork.

*An Australian native