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Northern Group Newsletter October - December 2023

October opened appropriately with two garden visits on **Thursday, 4th.**



The Illawong Place garden of Virginia and Bill Greenhill was designed on a well drained sloping block. It is a mixed garden which favours native plants, with a special interest in grevilleas. Approximately 16 members enjoyed the morning wandering amongst the many trees and shrubs, noting splashes of colour, combinations of various plant forms, and interesting sculptural touches.

< *Boronia heterophylla*
v *Anigozanthos* sp. and *Prostanthera rhombea*





Grevillea sp.



O. lirata

G. curviloba

Olearia lirata plus *Grevillea curviloba* provide an outstanding display on a southern bank.

>



Phebalium squamulosum



Grevillea sp.

The earlier garden visit at New Ecclestone Rd. was described by Sharon as an acreage with a beautiful setting, backing onto natural bush.



Eutaxia obovata

Melaleuca hypericifolia

The planted part of the garden was established 8-9 years ago when the house/shed was built.

It is not a 'flowery' garden but swathes of mass planted *Acacia myrtifolia*, a prostrate *Melaleuca hypericifolia* and *Eutaxia obovata* made a colourful impact, covering the back bank on the driveway.



Close-up *Eutaxia obovata*



A magnificent prostrate *Acacia howittii* festooned another bank in front of the house, along with multiple *Phebalium squamulosum*, and a very pretty *Baeckea linifolia* - just to name a few.

< *Scaevola aemula* (not in flower) was lining the steps.

Thank you to Sharon for another successful day with a little extra excitement about a waratah hedge in bloom along Stephensdale Rd. - well worth a stop and moment of delight.

Saturday 7 October, Propagation, Windsor Park Nursery

Many members helped on this important day, the last propagation before the plant sale. While a few members continued to propagate new stock in the Stables, others were tackling the meticulous task of pricking out seedlings and potting them up for the shade-house development stage. Those members working outside were weeding pots, sorting them and organising the new sale labels to ensure that all plants were in alphabetical order.



Time for a drink and some of Fran's delicious rhubarb cake among other tasty treats - thanks to generous members.

Thursday 5 & Saturday 7 October, Working Bees at Cambridge St. Reserve Wednesday 11 October, Reserves Conservation Committee Meeting,

Various tasks that occupied volunteers this month included tackling invasive garden escapees such as bluebells; mowing an area of garlic plants and disposing of the cut plants to prevent further seeds being spread next year. Volunteers also planted 80 seedlings of the native grasses *Poa labillardierei* and *Microlaena stipoides*. The aim was to rejuvenate a small area in the eastern end of the reserve. Also more poa grass seedlings at the nursery needed to be potted on.

The meeting saw Dale Luck temporarily undertake the role of Landcare Liaison Officer to deal with such administrative matters as insurance on behalf of APST. Also the committee is to seek regular meetings with CoL representatives to facilitate the conservation objectives for the reserves. Other matters dealt with the planned flower walks at both reserves i.e. details about the letter box drops, permits and barbecue organisation.

Andrew, Roy and Louise kindly conducted the walks on Saturday 28th around Cambridge St. Reserve. (More details on the Conservation/Reserves Committee in Roy Skabo's report at end of newsletter.)

It was a little after 9 o'clock on sale day and set up was almost complete. Plant trays lined the bank with others on tables. Signs were up; the final information labels were being put on the trays; the pay stations and merchandise table were in order and members were dodging around the 20 - 30 people already looking through the trays deciding which plants to purchase - all well before the opening time.

As usual, it was a most promising start to the sale that for two and a half hours remained consistently busy. All but 5 of the 45 original trays of plants were sold and nine new members signed up. Members put in long stints without a break e.g. Fran, Sharon, Rosemary and Helen L. 'chained' to the sale tables were exceptionally busy. It was another remarkable effort - one that rewards Janet and those members who so conscientiously contribute to the first Saturday in the month propagation/nursery sessions.

The nursery has become an expanding 'industry' and too much for one in the manager's role. It needs around three members to share this role. This enables a better apportioning of the responsibilities at the nursery. In particular, Janet has stepped back from sale days. It is now time for someone (or two) to run the autumn sale with the usual support of the conscientious members. Who will it be? Who will put a hand up to be part of the new managing group? With 3 or 4 members it means the responsibility, the workload can be shared and it allows for more freedom when a one member can't be there.

October General Meeting

In general business Janet thanked all who helped in the success of the nursery and the excellent sale day. She suggested April 6th be the date for the autumn sale. As Janet has resigned from the organisation of future sales Roy P. thanked her for her years of effort and suggested that a small group take on the responsibility for the next sale in autumn.

It had previously been agreed that our internet site would be closed but after a query from the treasurer it was also agreed that we would keep the domain name so that enquiries can be redirected to the new site. Reminders were given for upcoming events such as the Cambridge St. Reserves Committee flower walk and sausage sizzle plus the November wildflower walk at Carr Villa. The Launceston Horticultural second spring native plant display needed a few members to sign up for this task.

(Deferred) Plant of Month:

Cyphanthera tasmanica

Janet Hallam



< *Cyphanthera tasmanica*, the Tasmanian rayflower, is a little known member of the Solanaceae family, an endemic plant which is listed as rare. It does, however, regenerate well after fire because its seeds last in the ground for up to 20 years.

It is found on the east coast and is between 2 - 4 metres tall, has grey-green foliage and creamy white flowers with purple striped throats.

Possibly it could be a good garden plant with moist well drained soil but Christine Howells says that it can be temperamental. In Phil Watson's experience it is ideal for gardens but does need pruning to keep it compact.

Photo: Natalie Tapson



Noel chose the Tasmanian myrtle, *Nothofagus cunninghamii* which he described as impressive in stature unlike *N. gunnii*, its shrub-sized, deciduous cousin.

N. cunninghamii is a dominant species in cool temperate rainforests in southern Victoria as well as Tasmania.

It flowers from November to December, and each flower is unisexual with male and female flowers on the same tree. Its seeds are fertile from December to February and they germinate in 6 - 8 weeks.



N. cunninghamii is more closely related to *N. moorei*, as both have smaller leaves which are thought to have developed over geological time as the climate cooled. Noel wondered if perhaps *N. gunnii* might have developed its deciduous nature in order to survive the cold winters.

Speaker: Fiona Scott, 'Marine Plants'

Fiona, the honorary curator at the Tasmanian Herbarium and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery began by saying that the title of her presentation 'Marine Plants' is used loosely as very few of the specimens are true plants.

They have no roots, no stems, leaves, flowers or xylems, however, they do photosynthesise.

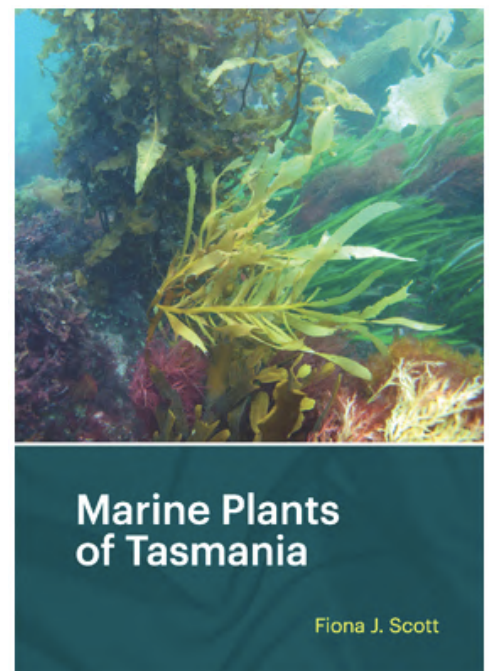
Fiona is an expert on algae and has written the well regarded text, *Marine Plants of Tasmania*. >

As a taxonomist she finds it easier to categorise seaweeds in their taxonomic groups, listing three major groups i.e. Greens, Browns and Reds plus two others, the Bluegreens, and finally Seagrasses which are monocots so they are plants.

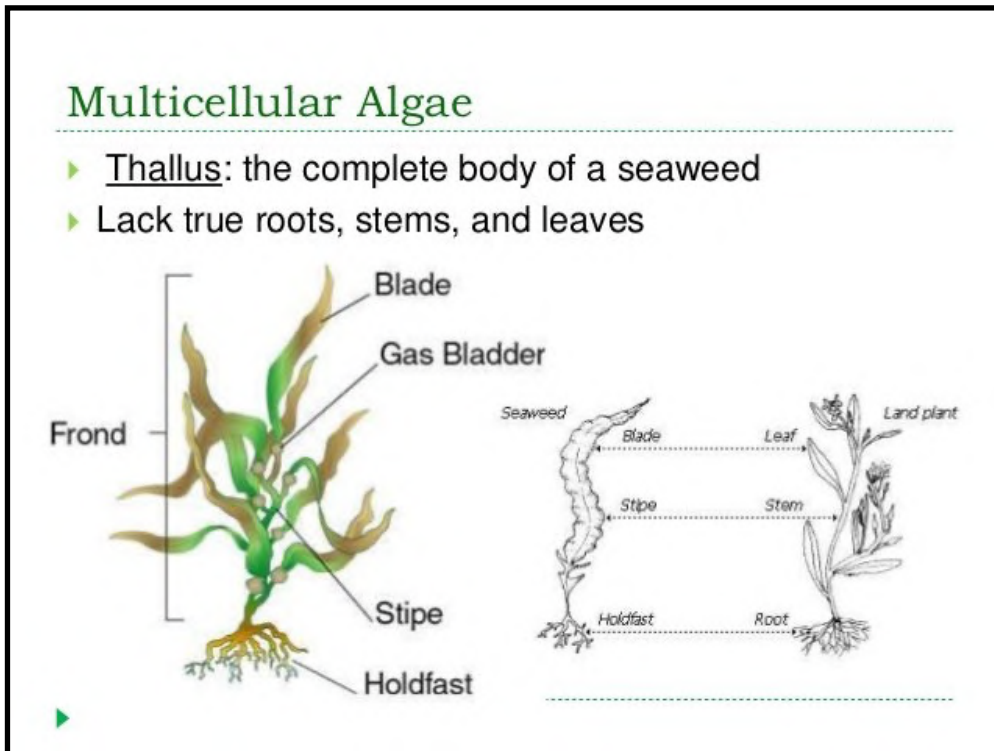
"Sometimes," Fiona says, "it's the eyes you are looking with that will determine which category you use." For example a field ecologist might find it better to look at marine plants in their functional groups such as the thick, leathery kelps which can alter the community around them by giving shelter for fish or invertebrates, whereas some of the fine turf-forming algae might be the main food source for numerous animals. Other functional groups are the course-branched, fine branched, membranous, calcified and gelatinous groups. Also functional grouping is better if you can't identify to species level.

On a simplified tree of life diagram it showed all seaweeds lumped together but Fiona noted that none of the seaweeds are particularly close to each other. There is much that distinguishes the groups from each other e.g. the Bluegreens are more closely aligned to bacteria than to other algae.

The numbers of seaweed worldwide are stated as 10,000. There are 2,500 in Australia and according to Fiona 635 recorded i.e. given a name in Tasmania. This is a huge underestimation because there are more than a thousand here.



A graph showed that the group proportions were the same with the red algae having a much larger number than the other groups. Nevertheless because of their size and structure the brown algae are more obvious.



< This diagram shows the basic terms used in seaweed description.

The holdfast holds onto the rocky substrate or is anchored into the sand.

There is a stipe and from this the blades spread out. Collectively this is known as a frond.

Some species have a tiny gas bladder which enables the plant to have flotation in the water column because as photosynthetic organisms they need to be as near to sunlight as they can be.

The presentation focused on seaweeds, highlighting clear, vivid examples from each of the five groups.

The Green group has several interesting genera, such as *Ulva*, *Caulerpa*, *Codium*.



Ulva is an obvious genus of which there are probably 5 or 6 species recorded in Tasmania.

< *Ulva australis* (sea lettuce) is a lettuce-like algae which with the right conditions can form huge rafts over exposed reefs.



Caulerpa genus has approx 15 - 20 species in Tasmania.

They have a slimy feel and have a range of different forms e.g. *C. flexilis* has branched fronds on one plane; *C. brownii* has simple upright fronds.

< *Caulerpa cactoides* has an interesting vesiculate form.

The *Caulerpa* species have long running stolons which are anchored in the sand. These produce photosynthetic upright fronds so they can disperse and grow vegetatively, forming huge meadows such as one Fiona described seeing on King Island.

Brown algae also have a variety of species, but it is the kelp genera that is well known and economically important. *Macrocystis pyrifera*, (giant kelp), has a 'fantastic holdfast'.

Fiona's photo clearly shows the haptera with a dendritic pattern that holds the kelp on a rocky surface. Usually it has one or sometimes several very tough, leathery stipules off which beautiful blades emanate towards the sunlight. >



Because this algae is so tall it has a distinctive and very important gas bladder at the base of each blade.

This is a very important feature which ensures the photosynthetic blades are near the surface able to access the sunlight. <



Durvillaea, bull kelp, has recently been divided into two species: *D. potatorum* and *D. amanthiae*. It is used as an important alginate in the food industry - important and longstanding in Tasmanian. Fiona noted that it is only kelp that is cast, not growing, which is collected, dried and chipped or turned into a powder to be exported as an alginate.

Brown algae such as *Sargassum fallax* and *Phyllospora comosa* are common, growing 1 - 2 metres tall thus providing habitat for herbivorous fish or for invertebrates to use as a nursery ground to lay eggs etc. Other Browns look fine and fluffy under water but are tough, dry and unattractive out of it.



Fiona noted *Undaria pinnatifida*, (wakame), an invasive brown species which probably arrived in ballast or on a ship's hull. It is an aggressive invasive species releasing tens of thousands of spores which unfortunately, are happily settling here in Tasmania, parts of the mainland, and also in New Zealand.

Red algae have much greater numbers than all other groups with a wide range of species.



A lot are very filamented, fluffy and difficult to identify without viewing under the microscope. It is important to work out the cellular arrangement and structure. For some species it is the only way to identify them unless they are in a reproductive phase.

< There is also calcium carbonate in some of the red algae in Tasmania so they consequently have a brittle feel to them.

< *Tsengia feredayae*, a slimy species which only grows in southern Tasmania. The whitened parts in Fiona's photo shows the calcification in this species.

Other red algae include *Rhodoglossum gigartinoides*, with beautiful ruffled membranous blades and the eye-catching *Leiomenia cribrosa*, distinctive because of its holey nature.

Photo of *L. cribosea*, a Herbarium specimen on display at supper. >

Centroceros clavulatum has a fine red 'leaf' but at low tide it is just a heap of shaggy hairs which when viewed under a microscope are stunning. Note in centre box the ordered arrangement of branching necessary for identification of this species.



Photo: iNaturalist

< *C. clavulatum*

v species.wikimedia.org



Photo: KP

Leiomphala cribrata
Herb. No. 442562
CURRENT NAME
TASMANIAN HERBARIUM (DIE)
CC-0 BY-NC-ND
TASMANIAN HERBARIUM, Hobart HO 442562
Flora of Tasmania
KALPOMNACEAE
Kalpomna cribrata Har.
Loc.: West Pine Point
Lat.: 43° 17' S Long.: 147° 00' E Coordinates precision: 2
Alt.: 0 m Date: 20 Dec 1993
Det.: P.J. Scott
Number: 1

Fiona described erect and crustose coralline alga. More information on this fascinating algae can be found at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coralline_algae

Fiona moved from her coverage of the Greens, Browns and Reds to the other two groups which in comparison to the first groups, are a minor component of the marine flora.

From the **Blue-green group**, more closely related to bacteria, Fiona noted a *Calothrix* and a *Rivularia* species.

Pictured at right is an unidentified blue green algae pointed out during the Low Head excursion. >

The blue-green algae was a barely noticeable tinge in the sand but as Fiona pointed out it is doing its job. It produces oxygen through photosynthesis, bringing oxygen into the marine system - oxygen which is needed by the fish and invertebrates which are very important (and generally unnoticed).



Photo: KP



Photo: G.J. Edgar from Tinderbox area

< **Sea**

grasses are true plants with true roots, stems

and leaves. They often have runners that grow in sandy areas. These are important because they will bind the sand together, stabilising shallow or rough weather areas. Seagrasses reproduce under water but the spermatozoa are motile because they have to swim.

< *Zostera tasmanica*, (strap weed) is one of the more common species where the stolons stretch out over the sand. Along its length it is sending up its photosynthetic leaves. They become an excellent food source for invertebrates as well as fish. *Posidonia australis* is another seagrass which is very important in Tasmanian waters. In East Bay on Deal Island it takes up almost the whole bay - a scene described by Fiona as a 'gorgeous strap weed meadow'.

In conclusion Fiona pointed to the future direction for seaweeds and the growth in industrial potential. There are several seaweeds that are gaining commercial interest. *Undaria pinnatifida*, the invasive species is being harvested as wakame and used in the edible market in soups, salads etc.

Durvillaea is being harvested mainly for its alginates. *Lessonia corrugata*, another kelp, is being investigated for seaweed chips. In addition *Asparagopsis armata* is being used in trials as a feedstock additive aimed at reducing the methane gas produced by farm animals.

The vision for the National Seaweed Strategy 2025: *A high tech and high value sustainable seaweed industry supporting thriving oceans and coastal communities*. The strategy statement identifies numerous 'critical success factors' based on industry leadership, production capability and innovation. It highlights the potential importance of seaweeds in alleviating climate change and especially in encouraging ocean farming projects.

Wednesday, 18 October, Excursion East Beach Low Head

At the previous night's meeting, members were given the details on 'marine plants' but standing on the East Beach shore, looking at banked-up dried rows of seaweed did not seem to correlate with the many glistening, colourful photos seen the night before. However, it was not long before Fiona worked her magic and soon following her advice to 'start with the form' (What are its features? What does it look like? What is its colour?) she opened the window for us to see into this seaweed world.



Note the form:
a holdfast
strongly
attached to
rock, the stipe
and blades.
<

Washed up
dried
seaweed >



Possibly *Sargassum* species >



<
Finding
the form:
a long
stipe with
blades
and gas
bladders.

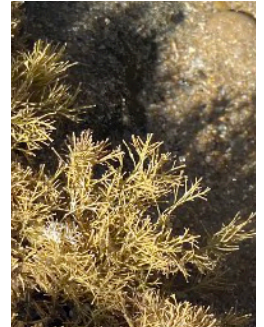
Colpomenia sinuosa (possibly) >





< A calcified red algae specimen.

Note the segmented stipe - interesting because it is the red segments that are hard calcium while the white sections are flexible, enabling movement in the water without being broken by the waves.



Fiona's book was handy to have with us to verify identification.



< Calcified red algae

Hormosira banksii >

These were just a few of the finds made in a couple of hours. Combined with Fiona's guidance, the morning was a fascinating one - thanks to Fiona's knowledge and passion for the unknown.



Saturday 21 October, Garden visit to Rosemary and Alf's Garden, Gravelly Beach



So much to see and admire. To wander around this extensive, thoughtfully designed garden is always a treat which approximately 20 members enjoyed.



Tuesday 24 Oct.



28 Nov.



19 Dec.

TNGarden Working Bees, Carswell St.

October numbers were good; the weather friendly so that much was done. The numbers were down in November so not quite as much achieved. However, around 10 members managed the earlier December working bee and found many patches of young fresh weeds to pull, an easier task after the 20+mm of rain the night before. In addition extra mulch was spread on beds - all in time for a welcome drink, the sweet and savoury nibbles and, sadly, the last of the Longman muffins for 2023!



Cassinia aculeata (centre)
Clematis gentianoides in seed (below)



Jill, not hiding in the bushes but weeding under them!

Thursday 25 October, Chauncy Vale Excursion, Bagdad

An early start for those travelling from Launceston but 11 members met Graham Greene at 9.30. These photos provide glimpses of a most interesting day.



Photo: S. Talbot



Zieria



Pittosporum bicolor



Boronia anemonifolia



Lentecobulia luniperina

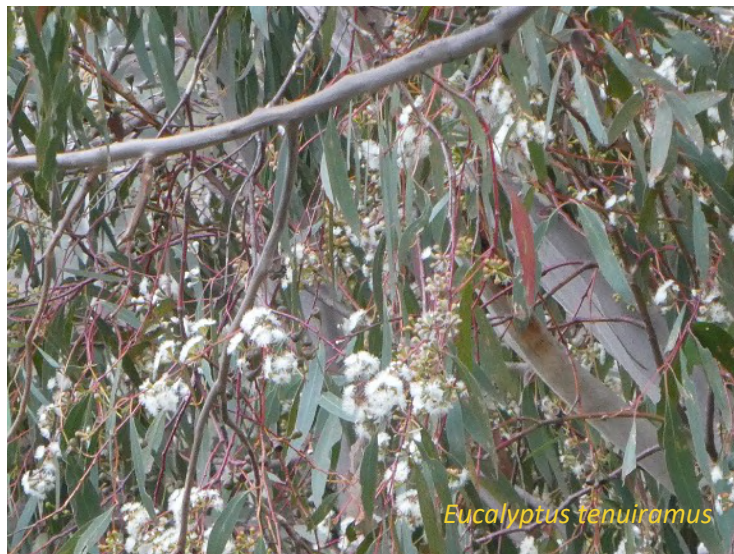


Leucopogon encoides

After a look at the map members followed the trail that led to the caves then the Lagoon and Lookout over to Flat Rock. Along the way several plants drew attention, and some discussion about species. *Lissanthe strigosa* was the first to face the camera. Others included *Zieria arborescens*, *Bossiaea riparia*, *Boronia anemonifolia*, *Pultenaea juniperina*, *Notelaea ligustrina*, a goat-trimmed *Dodonaea* etc.



Also noted were *Dichondria repens* in flower, *Goodenia lanata*, *Ozothamnus* sp., *Olearia lirata*, *Olearia phlogopappa*, *Leptecophylla juniperina*, *Pomaderris* sp., *Acacia dealbata* while sprawled at ground level were *Lomandra* and attractive grasses.
<



Eucalyptus tenuiramis

From the caves members looked out over the valley through heavily flowering *Eucalyptus tenuiramis*, (the silver peppermint). Graham listed the many eucalyptus species e.g. *Eucalyptus pulchella*, *E. delegatensis*, *E. obliqua*, *E. globulus*, as well as *E. viminalis*, *E. amygdalina* - all part of this vital dry sclerophyll, woodland conservation area.

After lunch the walk stretched through more woodlands looping back to end at Day Dawn Cottage, where members were reminded of the Chauncy family's generosity and their wisdom which ensured this area of sclerophyll forest will remain protected from development and free for the public to enjoy.



November 3 - 6 November, State Get-together, Tasman Peninsula

Those able to travel south for the State Get-together enjoyed an excellent weekend, packed with a range of walks suitable for all participants. The planning and thorough preparation ensured that everything flowed smoothly with members having a range of choices for each day. The paperwork was clear and informative, the accommodation at Lufra was convenient and meal times provided the opportunity, so important at such events, to share and discuss the days' experiences or just to 'catch up' with APST friends.



The Hobart Group hosting the Get-together organised a 4 day programme. It included a Tesselated Pavement walk on Friday afternoon with Keith Corbett to describe the geology.

Unfortunately Keith was ill and unable to take part but Christine was able to fill in a little of what Keith had intended to say.



The flora was also interesting and despite the windy conditions members managed to find plants of note. One example was *Xerochrysum papillosum* at the base of the cliff.

There were two 7-8 km walks offered on Saturday and Sunday plus several shorter options for those wishing to undertake a more leisurely amble. On Monday there was an opportunity to meet at Marion Bay for a stroll along the shoreline and salt marsh. It was, as noted in the descriptor: 'a major contrast to the scenery and vegetation seen on the previous days.'

What a difference a few million dollars and a few decades make! A little parking area at the end of a gravel track has been transformed into a huge sealed car and bus parking lot terminating a good sealed road. A rough foot track has become a wide gravelled track with substantial steel bridges in a couple of strategic locations.

However, the scenery and the flora have not changed and both are stunning.



Epacris tartuiginosa (foreground),
Melaleuca squarrosa, *M. squamea* in distance.

After an interesting briefing by the HG leaders and collecting our species lists we set off along the track, which passes through coastal heathland a hundred metres or so from the rugged coastline.

The flora here is very different to that in most other parts of Tasmania. I was struck by the prevalence of *Pimelea nivea*, common and widespread in the state but the most noticeable shrub along the first part of the track. An ozothamnus which no-one could identify was later found to be *Ozothamnus reflexus* and an acacia which was hardly recognisable as *Acacia verticillata* was in fact that species although a very different variety with very wide phyllodes.



Ozothamnus reflexus



Ozothamnus reflexus

A kilometre or so along the track, when we had ticked off many of the species on the list and added quite a few more, I noticed an odd looking native gorse (*Daviesia* sp.) quite different to the usual *D. ulicifolia*. I was just speculating that it might be *D. sejugata* when a party of walkers overtook us and stopped to chat. By an amazing coincidence, one of the group was Greg Jordan, author of the Dicot Key and one of the most expert botanists in Tasmania. He confirmed the

identity of the *Daviesia sejugata*, which I had not seen before, and it will no doubt be added to the species list. Sometimes real life is very convenient.

The rest of the walk yielded many more species and much colour and as we neared Crescent Bay we found a few species not apparent earlier including *Ozothamnus scutellifolius* with its diminutive circular leaves appressed to its woolly stem. While some people rested on a bench above the beach the rest of us walked down to it and had lunch on the sand.

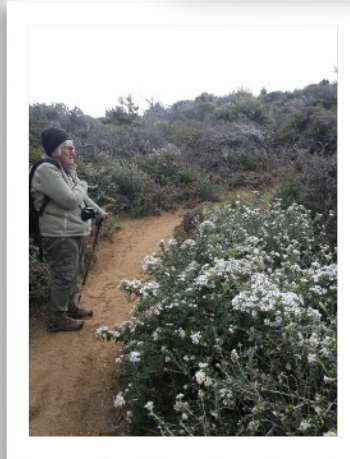
On the return journey several people climbed Mt Brown for the extra views. As we passed the halfway point we met the group who were doing the short-walks option and exchanged greeting and information with them.

A great day in a wonderful location!

Members meeting on the track >



Coronidium scorpioides ^



^ Prue with *Olearia phlogopappa*
Leptospermum scoparium >



< *Eucalyptus tenuiramis*, v *Caladenia* sp.



November 2 & 4, Cambridge St. Reserve Working Bees + Saturday 4, Propagation, Nursery

CSR Working bees continued as did the propagation at the nursery at Windsor Park where a small band of members added to the steadily growing number of plants for the autumn sale.

Sharon reported that it was a pleasant afternoon - not too noisy, easy to find working space in the stables or outside. She said 'it was very casual, with me working beside Dave Lewis for part of the afternoon on some cuttings. It was to be his last involvement with our group. We all enjoyed some happy banter over a cuppa after we had cleaned and packed up.'

Sadly this was Dave's last session with us before his untimely death. He will be remembered as an interested and supportive member of our group.

Friday 8 - 10 November, Set-up for Late Spring Horticultural Show Display, Evandale

A few members with many, many flowers arranged the usual colourful, much admired display of native plants as part of the Launceston Horticultural Show 9 - 10 November. This time a small central section was devoted to Tasmanian endemic species.



< The red callistemons and strong pink colours stood out.



^ *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (yellow buttons) and *Telopea truncata* were attention seekers in the Tasmanian endemic section.



^ *Dianella tasmanica*
v *Diuris sulphurea*



^ *Ricinocarpos pinifolius*
v *Calochilus platytilus*



v *Drosera auriculata*



With several Australian Plant Society - Northern Group members I returned to Bridport and the Granite Point Conservation Area to see what wildflowers were on show. Within minutes of leaving the cars we were pointing and clicking at the wondrous variety of wildflowers on show.

Not far up the track I leaned in to check out a flower only to halt as I spotted a very healthy looking tiger snake. I managed to photograph it before it retreated into better cover.

The area is still recovering from a burnoff so when we reached the edge of the depleted forest Roy suggested we venture down a sidetrack towards a damper unburnt area. This proved a productive dalliance with several plants on show including a few beard orchids (*Calochilus* sp.).

On the way back to the cars we detoured again towards the frog pond but the area has become rather overgrown making access to the pond more trouble than we thought it worth for what we may find. We therefore retreated and returned to the cars.

Throughout the whole excursion we managed to find quite a few wildflowers in bloom and having had our fill we repaired to Dale Luck's "shack" to explore his garden and relax over lunch. Another delightful day of discovery. See more of David's superb photos online on APST facebook



Saturday 18 November, Garden Visits

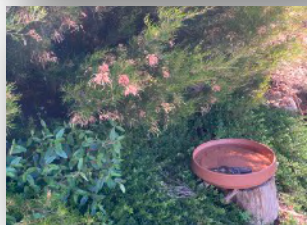


The day started at Margaret and Bruce's 25 year old garden on a steep block in Riverside. The garden is a mixture of native and edible plants. It features established plants and recently created or refreshed garden beds.



Notable plants in flower were *Xanthorrhoea australis* (grass tree), *Myoporum floribundum* (slender Myoporum), *Stylidium graminifolium* (trigger plant), a contented wollemi pine, plus naturally established plants including an *Exocarpos* sp. (native cherry) and potato orchids.

Thank you Margaret for the information and photos.



< The next garden was in Trevallyn where *Xerochrysum bracteata* (below) coloured the view along with the bright cheery faces of *Leptospermum* - cheery faces also of members, delighting in a day of garden visits. v



Eucalyptus leucoxydon var. *rosea*, dwarf form



To complete this inspiring garden day, members travelled to Julie Johnson at Legana where, as Sharon pointed out, 'it was nice to see small eucalypts in a suburban garden'.

< The highlight here was *Eucalyptus woodwardii*.

It was setting seed so Sharon hopes to be able to propagate this special WA species.

November General Meeting

Correspondence, the Treasurer's thorough report, details of the Christmas dinner and the Photo competition were quickly covered before the meeting heard from Ian Thomas presenting his views on the importance of defibrillators, especially when members are on excursions often in quite isolated areas. It was agreed that we obtain a defibrillator for use on excursions, propagation and other functions. Ian will investigate obtaining it with the support of the West Tamar Council. Also approved at this last meeting for the year was the new role of Publicity Officer.

Plant of Month: *Gaultheria hispida*

Leaha Dent

Leaha chose *Gaultheria hispida* because she is watching it slowly grow in her garden. It is an attractive plant that prefers cool moist alpine areas and is noted for its snowy white fruit. Its



Wikipedia



leaves are tipped with a copper tinge, hence the common name of copperleaf snowberry. The flowers appear over spring, through summer with its eye-catching fruit in autumn.

The berries are edible and can be eaten raw. Leaha suggests when cooked they also make an ideal accompaniment for icecream and other desserts.



Leaha's plant

Speaker: Mark Wapstra, 'Ephemeral Plants'

In his ninth presentation to the Northern Group, and in the follow-up excursion the next day, it became obvious that if you need to know anything about Tasmanian plants, you don't go Google or Wikipedia, you just have to press the Mark Wapstra button and it will all come out. Families, genera, and species names of just about any plant you will come across in this state, Mark knows the details. With ephemeral plants, it seems like he has seen almost all of them and with his huge memory bank can tell the distinguishing features, no matter how obscure or small - often close to microscopic features. All of this was obvious from his presentation, but even more so at the Trevallyn Reserve where he was finding small ephemerals that most couldn't even distinguish - he had once found 25 species in a very small area. (Roy P.)

Mark's presentation: 'The fast and the furious: the fleeting existence of our ephemeral herbs' highlighted those mostly tiny plants that are a vital part of the ecosystem.

Ephemeral herbs are short lived. The Greek ephemeros, means 'lasting for only a day'. Mark loves the plants but notes that the timing to find plants is crucial. Because of their very nature i.e. short-lived, inconspicuous, spasmodic in their appearance, often tiny, and with some species dependent on factors such as sunshine to open, the listing of what is present in an area, without a lengthy investigation, is not possible. Also, as an environmental consultant he has only a limited time-frame for each job - hence ephemerals are the bane of his existence.

He described visiting an area in the north east on November 1st over several years, reliably finding 10 - 15 different annuals but the next year not one was found. Perhaps had he gone a week earlier (or later) he might have found them or as he said, '...maybe this year?'

There are about 1,980 native plant species but the number of ephemerals is not known. Mark described examples of ephemerals from each of the following groups: pteridophytes, monocotyledons, dicotyledons and basal angiosperms. The first ephemerals Mark described were annual, very small.



Schizaea fistulosa



Cheilanthes distans



Phylloglossum drummondii



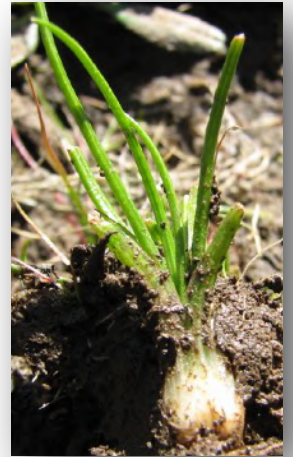
Schizaea fistulosa, *S. bifida*, and *S. asperula* are species that are difficult to spot and appear as a few scattered plants. They grow in sandy gravelly soils from sea level to the highlands and are from 5 - 10 centimetres tall, although *S. asperula* is taller.

Cheilanthes distans is about 5cm tall and grows in the Douglas-Apsley National Park where it is checked on each year. It has been there in recent years for a few short weeks but this year for example it did not appear. Mark noted that it grows on dolerite of which there are tens of thousands of hectares across Tasmania and yet it is known only in three sites. This is probably because it is short-lived and seasonal.

Phylloglossum drummondii from Couta Rocks is also around 5cm but has eluded Mark who has visited the spot five times. He has also been to a site on King Island and not once has he managed to see it in the wild. This, despite it appearing in multitudes after a fire. He thinks they may be more widespread but you need to be there at just the right time.

> *Isoetes drummondii*, a grass-like herb is hard to distinguish because it is 'hidden' in a green carpet. As it is usually in huge numbers it is not on threatened lists but it is at risk: its fleeting existence means that a poor season, habitat disturbance or clearing could cause problems.

This specimen was photographed at Tom Gibson Res. >



< *Botrychium lunaria*. Mark saw this once at Surrey Hills. It was 10 cm tall, hiding in the grass. It has a small parsley like leaf and it is found in a number of sites around the state. However, because it is so rarely seen, people are excited when it gets posted on Facebook.

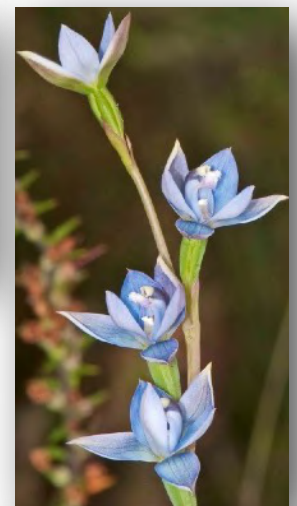
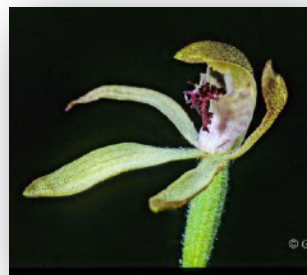


< At Lake Leake when the water retreats there is mud and if you look closely it is carpeted in green tiny (3cms) plants of *Pillularia novae hollandiae*. Mark said that there would be millions of plants there but they occur in maybe only a dozen sites around Tasmania. He reiterated that you 'have to be really lucky to see these things.' E.g. he has since returned fifteen times to the Lake Leake site and has not seen it again. It is called pillwort because it has little pills about 1.5cm across.

Mark next described a few orchids such as *Caladenia transitoria* found on the Huon Track.

Photo: George Appleby >

As its name suggests it is truly ephemeral, having one or two flowers, with each lasting for a day or maybe a day and a half. It is widespread in Tasmania but overlooked because of its transitory nature.



Some sun orchids need the sun to varying degrees e.g. *Thelymitra atronitida* (right) needs the maximum sun brightness so it only opens between 11-12 o'clock. Others will flower with just a hint of sun.

This causes real difficulty for botanists who not only can't survey when it is raining, but they also need to contend with finding plants when the percentage of sunlight matters!

Mark also noted changes from global warming e.g. *Chiloglottis reflexa*, autumn bird orchid, is now continuing to flower all year round.

An interesting monocotyledon mentioned was *Isolepis stellata* found at Rubicon Sanctuary. It is a listed species which he has recorded just once. He thinks it is overlooked in boggy tracks in the midlands or the northeast because firstly to see it, you have to be on hands and knees - the classic Mark pose. >

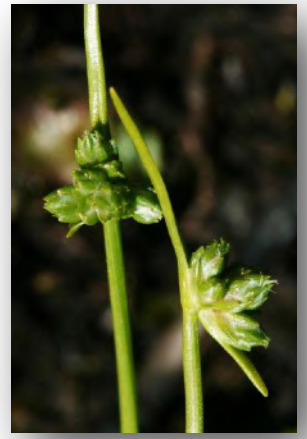




In addition, you need to be there when it is growing, after it has produced seed.

Only when the seed has matured can the species be identified. >

< *Isolepis stellata*
Photo: Phil Collier



To conclude, Mark described some of his favourite dicotyledons. They included *Stylidium despectum*, *Stylidium perpusillum* and *Stylidium beaugleholei*, prolific at freshwater lagoons after the water has retreated.

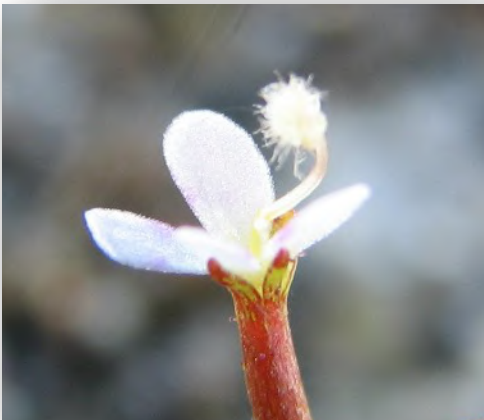


< *Stylidium* specimens from King Island were growing at left. Mark estimated 20 different annuals were present in this area which to most eyes looks uninteresting.

< Sea of stylidiums. These are unnoticed until closely inspected at ground level - best with a hand lens.

*Stylidium*s, trigger plants, start as males before the insect lands and is hit by the trigger with the pollen. Then the flower shrivels the male parts, and the female parts subsequently expand.

Insects move between plants, collecting from the male and depositing on the female plants.



< *Stylidium beaugleholei*

Stylidium perpusillum >



More interesting ephemerals were *Hyalosperma demissum* (below left) and *Triptilodiscus pygmaeus* (below right). These are just two of the tiny daisies that occur around the state.



< Mark found this species at Avoca - its size can be gauged from the rabbit poo beside it.

The nearest known sites were Swansea or the midlands.

Here there were over a hundred plants so he looked for more, finding some in surrounding spots - one he had been to many times before. His conclusion is that these plants are likely present in many areas but unless you are at the right place at the right time you do not see them.

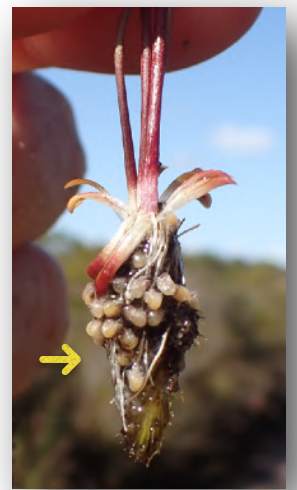




The final group was the fascinating bladderworts - tiny carnivorous plants widely regarded as having one of the most advanced systems in a carnivorous plant. They do not simply digest an insect that sits on them, their system is much more advanced. The ones in the water have tiny bladders (right) that draw in and digest miniscule things that are moving through the mud.

< *Utricularia tenella*,

However, as with most of the ephemerals, that Mark described, the utricularias are no different because although there may be millions of them in the right year, at the right time of the year, if it is the wrong time of year, or in the wrong year, there will be none to be seen.



Our heads were full, our eyes were open to the many species that can be found at ankle level where they are often overlooked. Perhaps we will not be adopting the 'classic Mark pose,' but certainly we are better informed on those previously ignored species and it's time for the hand lens to be in use.

The meeting ended with lots to talk over another delicious supper supplied by Leaha Dent and Anna McGrane.

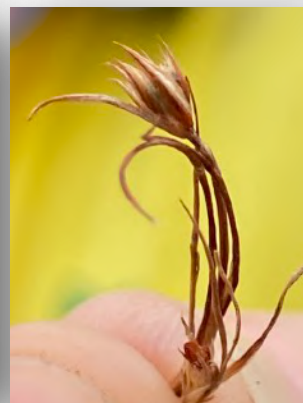
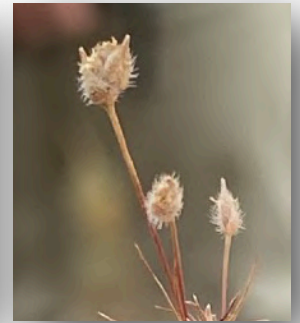
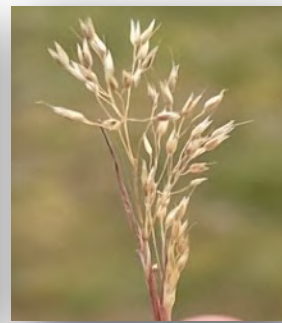
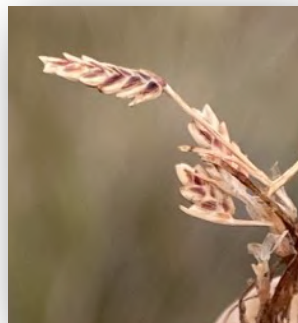


Wednesday 22 November, Excursion to Trevallyn Nature Recreation Area, Aquatic Point Rd.

In the minutes before all members had arrived in just a few, rather bare square metres of track, Mark had found around 15 species.

As he drew attention to each specimen and members looked through hand or camera lens this is what they saw >

It was a most positive start.





Mark has a phenomenal knowledge of Tasmanian plants and is generous in sharing his knowledge. This time he reminded members of those mostly tiny plants that, although a vital part of the ecosystem, are overlooked, overshadowed by their bigger, more obvious relatives.

Last week in November, Excursions to collect seed for Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre (TSCC)

Note from Roy Skabo offering excursions

Several of our NG members have joined (and really enjoyed) seed-collecting excursions conducted by the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre (TSCC) over the past three years or so.

They provide an opportunity to visit new areas in the company of expert botanists and to do something to help this worthwhile organisation which is located at the Royal Tas Botanical Garden (RTBG).

Ed's note: TSCC was established in 2005 and has become the cornerstone of the Gardens' conservation strategy. The TSCC currently holds 2,010 collections of 1,177 taxa and 49 million viable seeds. APSTAS is mentioned in the RTBG annual report. It can be read at <https://gardens.rtbg.tas.gov.au/about-us/annual-reports/>

Monday 27, November.

Several members drove to Fingal Tier to meet James Wood with the aim of bagging *Tetratheca pilosa* so that seed could be captured when the pods burst open. With GPS tracking these would then be collected on a later trip. Also James had hoped to find *Argyrotegium poliochlorum*, a tiny threatened daisy, known to be in the area. Previously in February 2023, seeds from *Stackhousia monogyna* had been successfully collected from the area which is rich in a wide range of species. (See Jan-Mar Newsletter for more detail.)

Unfortunately this was not a successful trip and *T. pilosa* was not bagged (not enough seed) but members did appreciate the flora in this beautiful, little-visited area.

Tuesday 28, November

Report: Kay P.

At the Nunamara store just two of us met James Wood and David Marrison from the RTBG. We followed the Mount Barrow Discovery Trail to a small plateau located toward the southern side of Mt Barrow.

It was a long but successful day. James was satisfied with the collection of 31 small bags of *Eucalyptus gunnii* seeds - each bag from a different, separated tree thus ensuring genetic diversity.



We did not find more *Acacia axillaris* which had been another goal for the day.

In addition to the satisfaction of helping in a worthy project, there came more rewards with swathes of *Epacris*, mostly *E. lanuginosa* (left) but also *E. gunnii*. Also dotted around were e.g. *Euphrasia*, *Westringia*, and *Chiloglottis* species. I also spotted a *Caladenia*.

However, the most noteworthy treat was the extensive mass of waratahs on display as we drove through approx. two kilometres of the trail. It was a day to remember!

>



Thursday 30, November

Paradise Plains was the destination this day. The TSCC people were exploring the area for future seed collection trips. Roy S. joined them as he had visited the area earlier in the year.

The Reserves Conservation Committee has been firmly established for a year and in that time has made remarkable progress. It is a most significant development for the Northern Group - another step/activity, a practical affirmation of the role that APST can play within the community. To those dedicated and persistent members who attend meetings, working bees, involve the community, liaise with the Council, the NRM and other groups, who letterbox areas to inform and encourage others, and conduct guided flower walks at Cambridge St Reserve and Carr Villa your efforts are saluted.



This report details the work of this active group:

Conservation Activities in October - December

Roy S.

The focus of our conservation activities continues to be Cambridge St. Reserve (CSR) as we enter our second year of rehabilitation work in this lovely bit of native remnant bushland. We have now had 24 working bees there (two per month) since December last year with an average volunteer attendance of about a dozen. This adds up to close to 600 person-hours of work, worth about \$18,000 (at \$30 per hour)!

Obviously the City of Launceston cannot devote this sort of money to just one of its many reserves. This means that without volunteers this sort of work would not get done and the reserve would become more and more degraded.



It is very gratifying to see the improvement in the appearance of CSR since last December. Most of the woody weeds have been removed, with any seed-bearing material bagged and disposed of. Many of the herbaceous weeds have been reduced in numbers.



Photos from Friends of the CSR
October Newsletter



We have planted native grasses in one area which had been dominated by a carpet of exotic grass. The grass seedlings are doing well and we expect to do more plantings of grasses, herbs and shrubs after seed collecting over the coming months.

Of course there is a seedbank of weed seeds which will eventually be exhausted if we do not allow any further seed production in the reserve and there will always be incursions from surrounding properties. So, maintenance weeding will always be needed, although at a much reduced level.

At our last working bee we had an unexpected visit by four staff from the CoL which gave us the chance to show them what we have been doing and to discuss with them our plans for the future.

To celebrate our first year of operations we held a flower walk for members of the public. We had conducted a letter-box drop in the area around the reserve and received publicity through Tamar NRM's website. The walk was well attended and we have several potential new volunteers, one of whom has already attended two working bees.

A similar walk was held in Carr Villa Flora Reserve (CVFR) in November in the hope that we could attract some interest in forming a Friends of CVFR . Once again we had considerable interest from members of the public and we will follow up on this interest early next year. CVFR is in desperate need of attention from such a group.

Our committee has worked well together and we have had excellent help from Tamar NRM which supplies and maintains all the tools we use and disposes of all the weeds we bag. CoL has also been supportive and we hope these partnerships will continue to strengthen.

Finally, a word about our volunteers. Many of them have turned up every month and some, twice each month, which is a fantastic level of commitment; others come when they can. Whatever their contribution it is valuable and appreciated.

Sadly, one of our most consistent volunteers, Dave Lewis, died late this year. Several of our members attended his memorial service at Trevallyn Nature Recreation Area. We will miss him.

Saturday 2 December, Propagation, Windsor Park Nursery

Prior to this propagation session Janet generously invited members to visit her garden to select cuttings and share a drink before locating to the nursery for the usual tasks. Not many found the extra time to visit but it was an excellent way to get cutting material to add to the nursery supplies as well as personal collections, and to enjoy the delights to be found in Janet and Colin's garden. Some of these were *Eremophila nivea*, *Dodonaea sinuolata*, *Scaevola aemula*, *Thomasia macrocarpa* plus callistemons and grevilleas.

Monday 11 December, Excursion to Snow Hill

Photos and information: Fiona Tilsley

A small but enthusiastic group led by Roy met at Kalangadoo and ventured in our vehicles, past the logging, to a picnic spot a short walk from the trig point, 967m.



The walk was interesting.

Not all the predicted species were in flower (e.g. no waratah flowers) but we found other unexpected delights...



Viola hederacea
Chiloglottis sp.



Viola bentonicifolia
Thelymitra hiemalis



Leptocophylla juniperina?
Drymophila cyanocarpa



Delights for special mention were *Drymophila cyanocarpa* (native Solomon's seal), and the very rare *Thelymitra hiemalis* (winter sun orchid), the GPS position of which Jeff Campbell noted carefully.

Some of us stopped to collect the famous venison pies (at Helen's suggestion), from Kalangadoo on our way home!

Thanks Roy, for a great day.

< *Wahlenbergia* sp.

Stylidium graminifolium >



Note from Roy: This is an interesting place because it has a greater number of eucalyptus species in a small area than any other area in Tassie.



Friday 8 December,

Christmas Dinner, Landale Street Hall





Which table vase has only Tas. natives from Rosemary's garden?



There was much cheer, chat, food and laughter.

The photo competition ran smoothly (but more participants are needed in '24).

...and Santa ensured a fitting end to a bounteous year.



The newsletters are getting longer, reflecting the energy of this amazing group. They provide an important record of the activities that I have had the privilege to collate. However, it is not a solitary task as many members provide photos, articles and answers to my innumerable questions. Thank you for your support and kind comments over the year.

Kay Pallett: Editor

Melaleuca lateritia, robin red breast bush.

