

SPECIAL PLANTS: OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2021 WITTUNGA TRAIL

Some of the less conspicuous plants in the Garden are highlighted in this selection, but there will be many other plants to attract your attention along the way. Look for the new interpretative signs along the main paths as well. They explore the common Gondwanan origins and relationships between South African and Australian heaths, which are a feature of Wittunga.



See over page for map

- 1 *Alyogyne* 'West Coast Gem'** Cultivar
This attractive fast-growing, long-flowering cultivar of the native hibiscus grows to a medium sized shrub. Pruning in late spring avoids leggy growth and promotes further flowering. The nectar-rich purple flowers attract honey-eaters and insects. West Coast Gem needs good drainage and a sunny to partly shaded position. Feed with native plant fertiliser for strong growth.
- 2 *Melianthus major*** Honey flower South Africa
The large compound leaves of this bushy, sprawling plant have leaflets with saw-tooth margins. Its dark-red flowers are displayed along a tall flowering stem which often droops toward the tip. The flowers produce copious amounts of a very sweet-scented, honey-like nectar. Bruised leaves, on the other hand, smell a bit like musty peanut butter (but take care, as all parts of the plant are poisonous). It can be a spectacular focal point in a garden, but spreads by suckering and is regarded as a weed in Victoria and South Australia.
- 3 *Helichrysum dasyanthemum***
Eye-catching in summer for its striking, bright-yellow flowerheads, this low (0.3 to 1 m), multi-stemmed member of the daisy family is attractive all year for its soft silver-grey foliage. The tiny, individual flowers are densely clustered in heads which are themselves arranged in a compact display. In common with many other daisies, the flowers attract beneficial pollinating insects, including bees and butterflies.
- 4 Weeds: An interpretative sign**
One of the new signs along the 'Gondwana Trail', this one explains some of the challenges for gardeners. Many South African plants have been introduced into Australia as ornamentals. Examples include arum lilies, gazanias, bridal creeper and agapanthus. They have thrived in our gardens and often spread into the wider environment outcompeting the native vegetation, so care is needed when selecting plants for your garden. Look out for signs of any weediness such as self-seeding or vegetative spread.
- 5 *Conospermum triplinervium*** Tree smokebush WA
This small specimen of tree smokebush may grow to a tall, open shrub to 4.5 m which flowers in spring and summer with masses of woolly flowers. From a distance, the soft white flowers against the green foliage give the impression of a smoky haze, hence the common name. This and other species of smokebush are grown for the cut flower industry. It requires very well-drained soil and summer watering.
- 6 *Isopogon trilobum*** Drumsticks, barrel coneflower WA
Diagonally opposite are three small shrubs native to the heathlands of the southern coastal area of WA. Terminal heads of creamy-yellow flowers appear from late winter to early summer and develop into fruiting 'cones' which resemble little drumsticks. Look for the distinctive 3-lobed leaves, best seen in the young foliage. The genus *Isopogon* is only found in the southern temperate areas of Australia.
- 7 *Acacia denticulosa*** Sandpaper wattle WA
Further south, on the path leading to the tall eucalypt, is a row of three young specimens of *A. denticulosa*. It is named for the toothed margins of the phyllodes, and also for the very rough surface due to glandular, conical outgrowths scattered over the rather sticky young stems and foliage. When in full flower, mature shrubs up to 4m high are often covered with finger-length spikes of golden yellow flowers.
- 8 *Leucadendron eucalyptifolium*** Tall conebrush, gum leaf conebrush South Africa
Tall conebrush is a decorative, fast-growing fynbos shrub that turns bright yellow in winter-spring, when the flower heads appear. Its foliage and flower heads are long-lasting and can be used in floristry. The female cones are also decorative when dried. This species is named for its leaves, which some must have believed resemble those of the genus *Eucalyptus*, our Australian gum trees.
- 9 *Dovyalis caffra*** Kei apple South Africa
Kei apple is a large shrub or small tree with drooping branchlets, bright-green foliage and thorns up to 70 mm long. The many tiny, creamy-green flowers on this female tree may develop into apricot-coloured fruit, either eaten fresh or used to make jams and jellies. The flowers are an excellent source of food for honey bees and native bees in Australia, but the plant has become a bushland weed in western Sydney.
- 10 *Protea decurrens*** Linear-leaf sugarbush South Africa
In contrast to the often, showy proteas elsewhere in these Terrace Beds, the flowers of *Protea decurrens* are much less obvious. Look carefully among the leaves to discover the many dense, clusters of flowers enclosed in the overlapping bracts typical of the proteas. This low-growing protea is under threat in the areas of the Cape Region in which it naturally grows. Invasive plants from Australia such as hakeas and acacias are among the many threats to this unusual plant.