

SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

May 2022



This month's list begins and ends with two of the eucalypt and acacia species with minniritchi bark. #1 is small stand of *Eucalyptus minniritchi* on the northern end of the Goodman Plaza, and #10 (an adult *Acacia cyperophylla*) is on the northern boundary of the Mallee Section. Other species of interest include an oak (*Quercus* sp.) and 2 others named for some resemblance to the true oaks.

See over page for map

*An Australian native

Central Australia

- *1 *Eucalyptus minniritchi*** This multi-stemmed mallee grows on rocky hills in open mallee shrubland with a 'spinifex' understorey. The name minniritchi is of Aboriginal origin and refers to the persistent curls of distinctive, reddish longitudinally-peeling bark revealing greenish to yellowish-brown bark beneath. The pale-yellow flowers, set in a canopy of rounded, bluish-grey leaves, attract nectar-feeding insects and birds. On your way to #2 look for the circular bed of young *Acacia cyperophylla* with minniritchi bark, just before the main path to the gate
- 2 *Bergera koenigii*** Curry bush China, Eastern India, Sri Lanka, Tropical Asia
The leaves emit a strong curry-like scent, and are used in curries, stews and chutneys in south Indian and Sri Lankan cooking. Essential oils from the leaves provide the taste, aroma, and medicinal properties. Small white flowers are arranged in large clusters containing 60-90 flowers. Now fruiting, its shiny, ovoid fruits turn from green to black or bluish-black as they mature, and contain 1 or 2 poisonous seeds.
- *3 *Stenocarpus sinuatus*** Firewheel tree Atherton tableland, south to Coffs Harbour
A medium tree in the Adelaide climate, this member of the family Proteaceae grows up to 40 m in its natural habitat. The scarlet, wheel-shaped umbels of flowers, arranged like the ribs of an umbrella, appear in the "Wheel flower" series of prints by the South Australian artist Margaret Preston. The fruits are long and boat-shaped. Easily grown from fresh seed or cuttings, the timber has a beautiful red grain for woodwork.
- *4 *Chorilaena quercifolia* (dwarf form)** Karri oak Cultivar
Here an attractive hedge with oak-shaped, velvety leaves it grows as an understorey shrub in the tall karri forests of southwest WA. In cultivation it tolerates most soils and conditions and will flower in either sun or shade, producing green flowers which attract nectar feeding birds. Karri oak belongs the citrus family.
- 5 *Pseudocydonia sinensis*** Chinese quince Southern and eastern China
An attractive tree all year, but autumn leaves in reds and yellows complement the large, yellow pear-shaped fruit. Another pleasing feature is the flaking bark, mottled olive green, brown and grey. The fragrant pink single-flowers appear in spring. The hard, astringent fruit is used in traditional Chinese medicine and also for jam. It differs from the true quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) by having serrated leaves and fruit without fuzz.
- 6 *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'** Blue atlas cedar Cultivar
Still with the pyramidal shape of a young tree, this cool-climate cedar, from the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and the Rif Mountains of Tunisia, will eventually mature into a majestic, broad, flat-topped tree. The blue-grey (glauca) form arose naturally and has been cultivated since about 1860. Atlas cedars are monocious, producing both male and female cones. The male cones lower on the tree are easily seen, but look for any ovoid female cones higher up. It is an important timber tree with fragrant, durable wood used for carpentry, construction and furniture. Cedarwood essential oil is used as medicine and in fragrances.
- 7 *Quercus pubescens*** Downy or pubescent oak S. Europe, Caucasus, W. Asia
This medium-sized deciduous oak grows to 20 m. It is tolerant of low humidity and dry summers and is favoured for truffle production. The deeply-lobed, leathery leaves are commonly considered typical of an oak. Both leaf surfaces are covered with minute downy hairs, particularly in bud and during early leaf expansion. In their native range the leaves remain green until early winter before turning a russet colour and falling. The acorns provide food for small mammals, birds and livestock, including pigs.
- *8 *Casuarina glauca*** Swamp oak Coastal, from central Qld to southern NSW
Casuarina is derived from the Malay for cassowary, whose tail feathers were thought to resemble the pine-like foliage. In contrast to the leaves of downy oak above, swamp oak has only a crown of tiny scales around each node along the slender, green, photosynthetic stems. The common name 'oak' is for its wood which reminded early settlers of English oak. Root nodules contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria, and the roots can also sucker, producing new plants along the root line. An excellent timber for crafts, fuel and furniture.
- 9 *Maclura pomifera*** Osage orange, bow-wood, tennis ball tree Central and southern USA
The pale-green fruit is actually a fused cluster of small fruits derived from a ball of many flowers. The flesh is inedible, but the seeds are eaten by squirrels. The Osage and Comanche Nations of North America used the wood for making bows. Look for the overlapping duck feather pattern of the bark. Once widely-used for tool handles and stock-proof hedging in the USA, a row of these trees was planted along the boundary of a slate quarry near Willunga in 1864 by a Cornish quarryman who came to SA via Pennsylvania.
- *10 *Acacia cyperophylla*** Creepline minniritchi All mainland states but mainly WA, NT, SA, Qld
Creepline minniritchi is an even more striking example of the distinctive minniritchi bark which splits horizontally as well as vertically to allow the characteristic rusty-red curls seen here. Like most Australian acacias, this one has modified leaf stalks (phyllodes) instead of leaves, and is well adapted to the dry conditions in arid areas of inland Australia where it often grows along seasonally dry water courses.