

## SPECIAL PLANTS: December 2021-January 2022 WITTUNGA TRAIL

Flowers in this selection range from the small, simple flowers (often arranged in rather flat 'platforms') preferred by butterflies, to the impressive flowerheads of banksia and leucospermum. Others are only promising to flower, but leaf, bark and fruit can also be very attractive features in a native garden.



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- 1 Butterfly Garden**                      Developing a butterfly garden is said to promote peace of mind.  
Plants of different colours, heights and flowering times provide food and shelter for both butterflies and caterpillars. Such a garden will also attract bees, beetles and other pollinators. The butterfly-attracting plants here include *Olearia ramulosa* (twiggy daisybush), yellow-flowered goodenias, the blue-flowered *Hardenbergia* as well as sedges (*Ficinia nodosa* and *Carex tereticaulis*), with brownish-orange to brown flowers. At this site, the adults also have access to nearby water.
- 2 *Berzelia lanuginosa***                      Common button bush, common berzelia                      Western Cape of South Africa  
Button bush very aptly describes the creamy white to yellow flowerheads on these small specimens. After flowering, it develops attractive green to reddish seed heads which stay on the shrub for a year or two. In its natural range in South Africa, it grows on sandy flats and slopes in permanently moist sites (seepages).
- 3 *Sutherlandia frutescens***                      Bladder senna                      South Africa  
A member of the pea family with soft grey-green foliage, this shrub has bright-red flowers in spring, followed by large, swollen, hairless, papery pods. Pods are green with red patches in summer and dry to silvery translucence during the following months. It self-seeds readily, but individuals live for a few years only. The plant is reputed to have a range of medicinal uses, which are the subject of on-going scientific studies.
- 4 *Eucalyptus brockwayi***                      Dundas mahogany                      Endemic to a small area near Norseman WA  
Once a popular choice for planting in drier agricultural areas of WA this small tree from the goldfields is one of the few eucalypts without a lignotuber. Its smooth, creamy-white to tan trunk, tinged with salmon-pink, supports a canopy of glossy green leaves on young red stems. Unusual features are the lack of oil glands in the leaves, and a crowded arrangement of linear juvenile leaves unlike any other eucalypt.
- 5 *Hakea petiolaris* & *H. multilineaata***                      Sea urchin hakea, grass-leaved hakea                      Western Australia  
Hakeas, from the family Proteaceae, are endemic to Australia, with the greatest diversity in WA. The two hakeas here have contrasting leaf forms. The pale-grey leaves of *H. petiolaris* (sea urchin hakea) are broad, with branching yellow veins, whereas the mid-green leaves of *H. multilineaata* are long and narrow with parallel (grass-like) veins. Tight spherical clusters of small pale cream to pink flowers of sea urchin hakea grow along stems or in branch forks, where you can see persistent woody fruits from previous years. The bright-pink flowers of *H. multilineaata*, in contrast, grow in long, cylindrical racemes in the leaf axils.
- 6 *Hakea drupacea***                      Sweet-scented hakea                      South-west WA  
This stand of small trees with fine, cylindrical leaves, is another example of the diversity of leaf form in hakeas. When the buds open, its sweetly-scented white flowers will appear in profuse clusters which attract insects and nectar-eating birds. The woody fruits are egg-shaped and shiny brown. It has become a serious weed in South Africa since its introduction in the 19th century.
- 7 *Grevillea robusta***                      Silky oak, Australian silver oak                      Eastern coastal Australia  
As you round the bend, look for the group of five flowering trees with their golden flowers. Silky oak is the largest species in the genus *Grevillea*. Its common name is misleading as it is not closely related to the true oaks (*Quercus* spp.). Before the advent of aluminium frames, the timber was widely used for external window joinery. Nowadays it is often used as root-stock for grafting difficult-to-grow grevilleas.
- 8 *Banksia repens***                      Creeping banksia                      Southern coastal WA  
This prostrate shrub has large, leathery, upright leaves arising from horizontal, underground stems (rhizomes) covered in a fine velvety 'fur'. The flower spikes in various shades of orange and tan, often with a pink tinge, also push through the soil from October to November. As they age, the fruiting spikes fade to a greyish colour, storing seeds which are released by fire. It is lignotuberous and also resprouts after fire.
- 9 *Aulax cancellata***                      Bronze haze, featherbush                      South Africa  
Bronze haze is grown for its fine, needle-like foliage in shades of light green to deep bronze. This little group consists of male plants with their clusters of yellow flowers in terminal racemes. Seeds develop in fire-resistant 'cones' on female plants, and are normally released after fire. The plant is suitable for water-saving landscaping and surprisingly, judging by these leggy specimens, for low hedges and screening.
- 10 *Leucospermum cordifolium***                      Common or nodding pincushion                      Western Cape South Africa  
Further along is another drought-tolerant species from the family Proteaceae with a spectacular display of orange-red flowerheads. The 'pins', tipped with yellow pollen, are the styles of individual flowers in the head. The pollen masses must be removed for flowers to become receptive to pollen from another plant.
- 11 Cloud pruning**  
On your way back to the carpark, look for the glossy-leaved shrubs on the left pruned in the Japanese style *niwaki* which translates as 'garden tree'. *Niwaki* is said to depict the distilled essence of the tree or shrub.