

A self-guided walk

August 2024



At opposite ends of the plaza in front of the Goodman building are two species from the arid north of South Australia. The walk then leads, via the Kitchen Garden, to the 'Australian Forest' and several species from the wetter areas on the east coast. All but two in the list this month are natives.

See over page for map

*An Australian native

- *1 *Eucalyptus minniritchi*** Musgrave & Mann Ranges (SA), Petermann & MacDonnell Ranges (NT)
This small, spreading mallee is native to central Australia, particularly the ridges and slopes of rocky, arid ranges. It can often be found growing between boulders in open mallee scrubland, with a spiky understorey of hummock grasses like the *Triodia irritans* in the bed to the south-west. It is named for its distinctive red-brown 'minniritchi' bark, continuously peeling in thin, longitudinal curls which reveal reddish or green new bark beneath. *E. minniritchi* is drought-hardy, frost-tolerant and attracts nectar-feeding birds and butterflies to its pale-yellow flowers. The rounded grey-blue foliage is popular in cut flower arrangements.
- *2 *Acacia beckleri* subsp. *megaspherica*** Barrier Range wattle Flinders Ranges
Ferdinand von Mueller named the parent species for Hermann Beckler who collected the type specimen in his role as medical officer and botanist to the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition. A compact shrub to 2m, it is winter-flowering with globular, deep-yellow flowerheads which may be as much as 17 mm across. Early in the month you may still find some of the large 'golf balls' of 70-140 flower buds which open to form the flowerheads. Smooth reddish-purple branches add visual interest outside of the flowering period.
- *3 *Rubus parvifolius*** Native raspberry Australia, China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam
More or less in the middle of the Kitchen Garden, native raspberry is a small, often prostrate species from the rose family, but it can form a tangled, scrambling shrub up to a metre or more high. The young stems are pubescent (hairy) and armed with curved prickles. The leaves are pinnate, with 3 to 5 small leaflets. Widespread in SE Australia, they are sometimes mistaken for blackberry, but unlike blackberry they are not invasive, and produce edible, red, aggregate fruits from the many ovaries of their small pink/red flowers.
- *4 *Cordyline* spp.** Ti, palm lilies, cabbage palms SE Asia, Polynesia, PNG, NZ, NE Australia
Along the sawdust path here is a patch of tall palm lilies with strap-shaped leaves and drooping panicles of orange-red, deep-red or almost black berries. Eight of the 24 species in the genus are native to Australia. Here they are often grown as ornamentals, but in Polynesia and PNG they have mystical and spiritual significance and are commonly planted on grave sites, used in rituals and as territory markers. The fruit and leaves are edible but are more often used, variously, for traditional medicine, to line earth ovens, or to make animal traps and strong plaited cords.
- *5 *Brachychiton rupestris*** Queensland or narrow-leaf bottle tree Qld, NSW
Easily-recognised by its shape the bottle tree has a swollen trunk which can reach a diameter of over 2 metres. The water-rich fibrous tissue between the inner and outer bark provided local Aboriginal peoples with drinking water, at need, from holes carved in the trunk; the fibres were used for making ropes and nets.
- *6 *Senna acclinis*** Rainforest cassia, brush senna Coastal Qld and NSW
At this junction is a stand of brush senna, a spindly legume with pinnate leaves and black stems from the family Fabaceae. It has become endangered along the east coast from loss of habitat due to land clearing. The flowers lack nectar and are not visited by exotic bees. According to studies in NSW, the main pollinators appear to be native bees that 'buzz-pollinate' the flowers' using their flight muscles to vibrate the anthers to release the pollen. Judging by the dark-brown fruits (legumes) amongst the leaves, native bees may have been actively buzzing the yellow buttercup-like flowers of our sennas earlier in the year.
- 7 *Bismarckia nobilis*** Bismarck palm Madagascar
In the beds north of the creek, behind a garden seat facing the lawns, is a tall, stately palm with silver-grey, fan-shaped leaves nearly circular in outline. In Madagascar it grows in the fire-prone grasslands of the Central Highlands where it may reach a height of 25 m. Named for the first chancellor of the German Empire, Otto von Bismarck, it is now widely grown as an ornamental. Here in the ABG, a magnificent specimen was once the centrepiece of our Palm House until it threatened the roof and had to be removed.
- 8 *Megaskepasma erythroclamys*** Brazilian red cloak Venezuela, Suriname
Just east of the avenue of Moreton Bay figs, *Megaskepasma erythroclamys* is still in flower. An eye-catching member of the family Acanthaceae, Brazilian red cloak regularly provides a splash of colour throughout winter (June to August). The flowers are small and white and emerge from the tips of vibrant crimson bracts. To grow well in Adelaide it needs summer watering and plenty of shade.
- *9 *Castanospermum australe*** Moreton Bay chestnut New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Qld, NE NSW
Commonly known as Moreton Bay chestnut for its large fruit and chestnut-like seed, this species from the pea family is native to patches of rainforest along the east coast where it was a valuable source of food, fibre for nets and baskets, and wood for spear-throwers. In the canopy directly above the path are several large legumes each containing up to 5 large seeds which, unprocessed, are poisonous and can cause vomiting and diarrhoea. One method used to remove the toxins was to cut the seeds into small pieces, leach them in running water for several days before roasting and pounding them into flour for damper. Like the Brazilian red cloak above Moreton Bay chestnut is the only species in its genus.