

## SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH

August 2023



If the Kitchen Garden is closed for a children's event you may have to take a longer route, but otherwise you can go through to sites 4, 5 and 6. On your way from site 9 to the Palm House, you might like to detour past the pale-green flowers of *Puya ferruginea* east of the Amazon Waterlily Pavilion, and look out for the flowering fruit salad plants near the avenue of Moreton Bay Figs.

See over page for map

\*An Australian native

- \*1 *Eucalyptus alatissima*** (syn. *E. kingsmillii* ssp. *alatissima*) Wing-fruited mallee SA,WA  
This attractive mallee, to 8 m tall, is endemic to the central parts of the Great Victoria Desert. It has been flowering here for months. Its decorative, pendulous buds, in groups of three, open to reveal deep-red stamens tipped with golden anthers. Both the floral cup and operculum (bud cap) have prominent wings (Greek: alatus), and a waxy bloom, the latter feature distinguishing *E. alatissima* from Kingsmills mallee.
- \*2 *Eucalyptus bicostata*** (Southern, Eurabbie, Victorian or Tasmanian) blue gum NSW, Vic, SA  
On the path further south (LHS) in its own bed is a tall multi-stemmed eucalypt, included here for its mix of juvenile and adult leaves. SA has only one old relict population of *E. bicostata*, elsewhere known as *E. globulus* ssp. *bicostata*. At the top of the tree you can see the more familiar lance- or sickle-shaped adult leaves emerging from a canopy of sessile (stalkless) opposite pairs of juvenile leaves. In most species, the transition is much earlier, but *E. globulus* saplings are noted for a far longer retention of juvenile leaves.
- 3 *Greyia sutherlandii*** Natal bottlebrush Drakensberg Ra., South Africa  
Natal bottlebrush, between the stairs and the towering yucca, is a straggly shrub or small tree to 7 m tall from the montane regions of South Africa, where its numerous, scarlet, bell-shaped flowers are a rich source of nectar for native birds, bees and other insects. The soft, pale-pink timber is of little economic value but is used to fashion small utensils. The genus is named for George Grey (1812-1898) a Governor of the Cape Colony, South Australia and New Zealand (twice) as well as 11<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of NZ.
- \*4 *Acacia stenophylla*** River cooba, shoe-string acacia Murray River Basin  
The slightly weeping form of river cooba is accentuated by the long (15–40+ cm) drooping narrow phyllodes (modified leaf stalks). It has atypical (non-splitting), rather woody legumes, strongly constricted between the seeds. The buoyant segments are dispersed by water. Prominent along waterways in arid and semi-arid regions, it tolerates saline, alkaline, or heavy clay soils and even waterlogging. Aboriginal groups made clubs and boomerangs from the wood, and ate the seeds after roasting the pods.
- \*5 *Eucalyptus leptophylla*** Narrow-leaved red mallee WA, SA, Vic, NSW  
Near the corner of the bed is a small mallee with four sprawling stems growing from a prominent lignotuber. Lignotubers, woody swellings in the root crown of most eucalypts, consist of a mass of quiescent buds, food reserves and water-conducting tissue, allowing regrowth of the canopy after fire. Along the young red stems are masses of tiny buds which promise a spectacular display of creamy-white flowers.
- 6 *Phlomis purpurea*** Purple Jerusalem sage, purple lampwick Spain, Portugal, Morocco  
On the path approaching the Sunken Garden the shrub with white stems and whorls of mauve flowers in the leaf axils is more compact and upright than its more common yellow-flowered namesake *Phlomis fruticosa*. Neither are salvias (sage), but all share the square stems and two-lipped flowers characteristic of the mint family (Lamiaceae). Well-suited to a dry sunny garden, it is long-flowering and drought resistant.
- 7 Dead House aloes**  
The colourful display of winter-flowering aloes around the Dead House, once a mortuary for a nearby asylum, consists of 4 species, 6 cultivars and 7 hybrids. The most striking are hybrids with trade names 'Capricorn' and 'Always Red'. The aptly-named ***Aloe 'Moonglow'*** on the SE corner has pale-yellow rather luminous flowers. Nearby is a young ***Aloe marlothii***, a species from South Africa which should develop a candelabrum of orange, yellow or bright red flowers when in full bloom.
- \*8 *Ficus coronata*** Sandpaper fig East coast: Central Queensland to Victoria (just SE of the glass sculpture, on a path to the bore infrastructure is an unusual fig, named both for the rough upper surface of its leaves, and the little crown of reddish bristles around the apex of the fig. Look for figs, with their tiny male and female flowers inside, growing directly from even the larger branches. The edible (and palatable) figs ripen to a purple-black when mature. Growing along river banks and gullies in rainforest and open forest, they provide food for butterfly larvae, birds and flying foxes.
- 9 *Roldana petasitis*** Velvet groundsel Mexico, Central America  
The sprawling evergreen shrub beneath the *Ficus elastica* opposite the Digger's shop has yellow daisy-like flowers (family Asteraceae) from winter to early spring, weak stems and large softly-hairy leaves. It makes a good filler shrub in sheltered areas of the garden, but has become naturalised in parts of south-eastern Australia and is regarded as an environmental weed in New South Wales.
- 10 *Tetradenia fruticosa*** Madagascar  
Just inside the south door of the Palm House is another species from the mint family with leaves the same shape and texture as *Phlomis* above, but much smaller flowers arranged in terminal panicles. One of three Madagascan species, *T. fruticosa* grows primarily in the desert or dry shrubland biome. A dioecious species, this one with its purple-black anthers appears to be a male. Extracts of *Tetradenia* leaves, have been shown to hamper the growth of a number of bacterial pathogens, including *Staphylococcus aureus*.