

A self-guided walk

October 2024

ABG



The wisterias on either side of the Mediterranean Garden should still be in flower in October. These popular displays feature cultivars of two common species: *Wisteria floribunda* from Japan has the longest racemes, and stems twining clockwise, while the more vigorous *W. sinensis*, from China, twines anticlockwise.

See over page for map

*An Australian native

- *1 *Alectryon coriaceus*** Beach bird's eye Qld and northern NSW
Beach bird's eye is an evergreen shrub or small tree from the family Sapindaceae which grows on sand dunes, in littoral rainforest and on coastal swamp margins. Terminal clusters of 3-lobed capsules open to expose glossy black seeds partially encased by smooth, bright red, fleshy arils, attracting birds which digest the aril and disperse the seeds. The edible white, fleshy appendage surrounding the seed of lychees (*Litchi chinensis*), from the same family, is also an aril and a popular delicacy in SE Asia and elsewhere.
- *2 *Myoporum montanum*** Waterbush, boobialla Australia, New Guinea, Timor
Growing in the 'shadow' of a prolific yellow-flowered native frangipani, the tiny white, sweet-scented flowers of boobialla probably go mostly unnoticed. The species is extremely variable in size, growth habit and leaf form and, though widespread in Australia, in many places it is restricted to coastal regions or watercourses. Three forms are recognised in Australia, the type form from the Blue Mountains, a tropical form in northern Australia and beyond, and a desert form inland. The ripe fruits, in season, are light- to red-purple drupes.
- *3 *Doryanthes palmeri*** Giant spear lily North-east NSW and south-east QLD
Doryanthes palmeri is a hardy monocot with a basal rosette of large sword-shaped leaves forming a dense clump that can grow to 3m high and 4m wide. The flowering stalk (scape), up to 5 m long, droops under the weight of its fleshy, red or reddish orange flowers which are pollinated by birds attracted by their bright colour. Each rosette flowers once in its lifetime, but after flowering the plants produce more rosettes. Indigenous Australians roasted and ate the flower spikes, mashed the roots to a pulp to make cakes (also roasted or baked) and used the fibrous leaves for weaving.
- *4 *Melaleuca* spp.** Paperbarks, honey myrtles Malesia, PNG, New Caledonia Australia
There are up to 300 species of *Melaleuca*, most endemic to Australia, where they occur in a wide variety of habitats from swamps and bogs to open forest and shrubland. This large, unlabelled specimen (probably *M. styphelioides*) with its distinctive papery layers of thick, spongy bark is one of the paperbarks, its smaller shrubby relatives often called honey myrtles. Aboriginal peoples used the bark of melaleucas for wrapping food (for the coals), for making shelters, canoes, and baby slings, and the leaves for medicinal purposes.
- 5 *Solandra maxima*** Golden chalice vine Mexico to Colombia
The large, cup-shaped yellow flowers and buds in the canopy of the Moreton Bay fig at the northern end of Ficus Avenue belong to a semi-deciduous woody vine from the potato family. The flowers are highly perfumed at night. One of the toxic members of the family Solanaceae, it contains atropine, so if you handle any fallen flowers take care not to touch your eyes. The genus is named for Daniel Solander, a Swedish botanist who sailed with James Cook and Joseph Banks on the 1768 voyage of the Endeavour.
- *6 *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*** River red gum Mainland Australian
The large river red gum south of the mulberry arbour is one of the few original remnants surviving in the Gardens. Widespread across Australian inland river systems, its root system reduces bank erosion, can withstand flooding for long periods, and has sinker roots allowing it to tap the ground water during drought. White flowers occur in summer and seeds are released soon after fruit maturity. Red gums were important to the local Kurna people supplying shelter, wood for utensils and weapons, and food from insects and other animals living in and around the tree. They also obtained medicines from crushed leaves.
- *7 *Macadamia* 'Hidden Valley A4'** Dwarf macadamia Cultivar
The dwarf macadamia on the border of the Garden of Contemplation should soon be in full flower. It has many drooping racemes, each made up of 100 or more tiny flower buds which will open to reveal creamy-white flowers which can be pollinated by a variety of insects including bees. This commercial cultivar from Hidden Valley Plantations in Queensland, is also a popular choice for home gardens. A hybrid of rough-shelled *M. tetraphylla* from NE NSW and the smooth-shelled *M. integrifolia* from SE Qld, it produces high yields of large kernels, though of course only a small proportion of the many flowers will form mature fruit.
- *8 *Carpobrotus rossii*** Pigface Coastal southern Australia (Tas., Vic, SA, WA)
On the eastern side of the Palm House stairs is a pink-flowered succulent groundcover, from the family Aizoaceae, with thick, triangular leaves up to 100 mm long. The flowers are large and superficially daisy-like, but unlike the daisies which consist of many tiny flowers, these are single flowers with up to 200 mauve to purple 'petals' surrounding a pale mass of male and female parts in the centre. On the path west of the queen palm (see below) look for the *Senecio repens* (blue chalk sticks) at **8a**, a similar-looking succulent from the daisy family (Asteraceae) which, when in flower, looks less 'daisy-like' than the flowers of pigface.
- 9 *Arecastrum romanzoffianum*** Cocos or queen palm Eastern Brazil south to N. Argentina
During a temporary absence of the native Madagascan palm from the centre of the Palm House collection, which includes endangered species from the spiny forests of southern Madagascar, the nearest palms are the two queen palms, to east and west, flanking this elegant glasshouse imported from Bremen in 1875.