

SPECIAL PLANTS:

June-July 2023

WITTUNGA TRAIL

This walk takes you to the Fynbos (F), and the Terrace Beds (A). where you can see many species from the three families most characteristic of the South African fynbos, the Proteaceae, Restionaceae and Ericaceae. Look for the well-established proteas and related genera in the Terrace beds and the restios in the Fynbos beds. The ericas are prominent in both areas.

See over page for map

*An Australian native



- 1 South African Proteaceae**
Between the Fynbos (F) and the playground is a bed with young plants from the Proteaceae, a mainly Southern Hemisphere family which includes proteas, leucadendrons (conebushes) and leucospermums (pincushions). Many visitors are surprised to learn of their South African origin, as they are often found in cut-flower arrangements amongst Australian natives from the same family. Our banksias, grevilleas and hakeas have similar flowers and equally spectacular flowerheads, eg the 'pincushions' of some hakeas.
- 2 *Phylica pubescens*** Cape featherhead South Africa
This attractive shrub from the family Rhamnaceae is densely covered with softly-hairy leaves, each hair seeming to gather the sunlight and make the plant glow. Popular in flower arrangements for its foliage, it is long-lasting as a fresh cut-flower and also dries very well. A winter-flowering species, it has tiny white flowers which can be difficult to see amongst the soft, feathery bracts at the tips of the branches.
- 3 The Restionaceae** (a southern hemisphere family) Cape reeds, restios South Africa
The restios in this section are from the Western Cape Province of South Africa. They have a tufted reed-like appearance and vary from about 20 cm to over 3 m high. Male and female plants are separate and pollination is by wind. Side by side here are large clumps of *Thamnocortus spicigerus*, widely used for thatching, and *Elegia fenestrata*, a much rarer species threatened by habitat loss. Here, they are more or less surrounded by ericas, particular favourites of Keith Ashby who gave Wittunga to our state in 1965.
- *4 *Leucophyta brownii* 'Compacta'** Cushion bush Cultivar
Near the entrance to the beach area there are new plantings including this small cultivar, selected from a hardy shrub which grows along the coast of southern Australia from WA to northern Tasmania. Cushion bush is grown mainly for its silvery-white foliage consisting of an intricate network of slender stems and scale-like leaves covered in soft white hairs. The species is named for Robert Brown, a botanist aboard the *Investigator* with Matthew Flinders on his coastal surveys of Australia at the turn of the 19th century.
- *5 *Eucalyptus caesia* 'Silver Princess'** Gungurra Cultivar
The tall, slender *Eucalyptus caesia* in the middle of the bed is flanked by two young trees (planted only this year) with the red stems and large, heart-shaped juvenile leaves typical of both subspecies of *E. caesia*. Probably a selection from *E. caesia* subsp. *magna*, a drooping form of the species, the older tree has been growing here for at least two years, and already has its grey-green, lance-shaped adult leaves. This little group is a good demonstration of the usual change in leaf shape as eucalypts mature.
- *6 *Hakea horrida*** South-west WA
This dense, exceptionally hard-leaved hakea is tolerant of both seasonally low rainfall and poor soils. In contrast to the silky feel of the Cape featherhead (#2) It could hardly be more different to the touch. The name is from the Latin horridus (prickly, rough, unkempt) - the last a good description of the growth pattern which looks like an ungainly jumble of 'balls' of prickly foliage. On the other hand, it does produce fragrant racemes of large white or cream flowers in the leaf axils between August and October
- 7 *Protea* 'Pink Ice'** Cultivar
Growing here between two conebushes (*Leucadendron brunioides* and *L. stellare*) this handsome, autumn-flowering protea, is very popular in the cut flower industry. On the left, about 25 m beyond the picnic bench under the willow myrtle, is another protea in flower. Blue sugarbush (*P. neriifolia*) is said to be one of the parents of a cross (*Protea neriifolia* x *susannae*) from which 'Pink Ice' was selected.
- 8 *Phylica buxifolia*** Box-leaf phylica South Africa
A large shrub or small tree, endemic to the western Cape, it grows on lower mountain slopes, often in rocky places near the sea, so can be an attractive, informal hedge or screen in a coastal garden. When in flower it is used as a filler in arrangements of the showier fynbos flowers. The velvety white sepals are the most conspicuous part of the flower. The petals are tiny, and hooded over the stamens.
- 9 *Colletia paradoxa*** Anchor plant NE Argentina, Uruguay, S. Brazil
Anchor plant is a South American member of the Rhamnaceae with flattened, triangular extensions of the stems, each armed with a sharp spine. The leaves are tiny and found only on the youngest growth. Its small white flowers are said to have a faint aroma of almonds. If you check, be careful of the spines.
- *10 *Eucalyptus microcarpa*** Grey box, green-leaved box Qld, NSW, Vic and SA
Grey box is native to the area, and was part of the landscape when the Ashby family bought the land and built their home here in the early 1900s. This rough-barked eucalypt is a useful honey tree, and was once an excellent source of fuelwood. There has been a proposal to recognise the remnant populations of the Adelaide Plains and western slopes of the Mt Lofty Ranges as an endemic 'Adelaide Variant' of the species, but the matter has not yet been settled.

To limit the spread of soil-borne diseases, please avoid walking on the garden beds