

A Self-Guided Walk

August-September 2024

WITTUNGA

Several species in this month's list are beginning, or promising, to flower, including a hakea (#4) which appears to flower here only rarely. Early visitors can also find another hakea (*Hakea cristata*, Family Proteaceae) in full flower on the left on your way around to the melaleuca at station 5.



See over page for map

*An Australian native

- 1 *Anisodonteia capensis*** Annie's cape, African mallow, dwarf pink hibiscus South Africa
Annie's cape is a species found on well-drained, upper hill slopes in the South African fynbos, a region of remarkable species diversity. Sometimes likened to a small hibiscus, these shrubs have palmately-veined, lobed leaves with uneven (aniso-) teeth (-donteia) and flower almost continuously over the year, attracting bees and butterflies. The leaves and stems are covered in fine hairs, which reduce water loss.
- 2 *Buddleja salviifolia*** Butterfly bush, mountain sage South Africa
One of seven South African species, butterfly bush is widespread in forest margins, on rocky hillsides and along stream banks. It is also widely grown in gardens for its sweetly-scented, white to lilac flowers which attract bees, butterflies and birds. Local African peoples used a decoction of roots for a cough remedy, and the leaves for a herbal tea and an eye lotion. It can be found growing on both sides of the path here.
- *3 *Banksia praemorsa*** Cut-leaf banksia Endemic to a small area on the south coast of WA
Cut-leaf banksia is an Australian species from the family Proteaceae, sharing its origins in Gondwana with the South African proteas. The cylindrical flowerheads, containing hundreds of flowers, are often wine-red, or sometimes yellow as seen here. It does not resprout after fire, relying on its seeds, held in flammable 'cones' of woody follicles until released into a seedbed of nutrient-rich ash. Yellow-tailed black cockatoos, which can easily extract seeds from the woody fruits with their powerful beaks need not wait for the fire.
- *4 *Hakea trifurcata*** Two-leaf hakea South-west WA
This unusual hakea has two distinct leaf forms on the same branches, rather prickly, needle-like, 3-pronged leaves and, after reproductive maturity, broad leaves which mimic the shape and colour of its woody fruits. It relies entirely on recruitment from seed after fire, so a seed bank in the canopy or litter is all-important. There is some experimental evidence that black cockatoos lose interest and take less seed when faced with the prospect of only an occasional reward from amongst the mix of fruits and misleading mimics.
- *5 *Melaleuca calycina ssp. dempta (now M. dempta)* (unlabelled)** Southwest WA
On the path opposite a multi-trunked red gum is a large, sprawling paperbark with many flower buds, at or near the branch tips, which will open to reveal delicate white flowers with numerous stamens in 5 bundles. Perhaps the most attractive feature, year-round, is the arrangement of the densely-packed leaves - each pair of opposite leaves at 90 degrees to the pair above and below. 'Star-shaped' woody seed-capsules from earlier flowering events, can be found amongst the leaves.
- *6 *Acacia cultriformis*** Knife-blade or dog-tooth wattle SE Qld and northern NSW
A few paces off the path near a stand of trees is a showy wattle with more or less triangular phyllodes crowded along the branchlets, the stems an attractive red at least when young. An Australian native grown for its foliage and golden flowerheads, it is widely cultivated and has become naturalised in parts of Asia, Africa, North America, NZ and South America.
- *7 *Banksia blechnifolia*** Fern-leaf banksia Western Australia
Named for its similarity to fronds of a species of *Blechnum*, this ornamental species is a low, spreading shrub which flowers mainly in spring. Its upright, showy flowerheads arise from prostrate stems at ground level. The developing flowerheads change colour and texture from the early, velvety-covering of rusty orange-brown 'fur' to a smooth cream spike, becoming dusky pink or red in bud, and finally back to cream as the flowers open. It also retains seed on the plant in its familiar woody 'banksia cones'
- *8 *Allocasuarina muelleriana*** Slaty she-oak Vic, SA
Slaty she-oak is an example of a drought-tolerant Australian native with much-reduced leaves. Species in this genus have only a whorl of pale teeth around each node along the green stems; only the stems are photosynthetic. The attractive, coppery ends of the branchlets identify this young specimen as a male.
- *9 *Thryptomene ericaea*** Mat heath myrtle Mainly Kangaroo Island
At this junction is another species with tiny leaves (ca 6 x 1 mm), in this case fully-functional. Heath myrtle is endemic to SA, growing in the understorey of mallee vegetation on KI. A cultivar 'Centenary Starburst' was chosen as SA's floral emblem for the Centenary of Federation (1901-2001). The tiny flowers often occur in a long-lasting massed display making them popular in the cut flower industry. Whether by accident or design the wattle growing immediately behind is Australia's national floral emblem (*Acacia pycnantha*).
- 10 *Protea grandiceps*** Red or peach protea Fynbos region, Cape province of South Africa
In from the path, with a large blue gum in the background, is a slow-growing protea with several large heads of flowers surrounded by bearded, peach-coloured bracts. The leaves are large, blue-green, with a fine waxy bloom and attractive red margins. Like *Banksia praemorsa* above, it relies on seeds held in woody fruits for survival after fires. It is widespread in the Cape, but populations are becoming fragmented due to overharvesting and fire. It is best protected on peaks and rocky slopes where fire is less frequent.

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