

A Self-Guided Walk: WITTUNGA December 2023-January 2024

This month's walk begins in the fynbos (F) and ends in the Terrace beds (A). Most species in the list are Australian natives, but if you explore the Terrace Beds you will find many species from South Africa including species of *Aulax*, *Leucadendron*, *Leucospermum* (eg #9), *Mimetes* and *Protea*.



See over page for map

*An Australian native

- 1 The Fynbos** Western and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa
 The fynbos is a fire-prone vegetation growing on nutrient-poor soils in the Mediterranean climate regions of South Africa. One of the most species-rich floras in the world, its dominant elements are from the families Restionaceae, Ericaceae and Proteaceae. Side by side at the marked location are large clumps of *Elegia* and *Thamnocortus* with a tufted reed-like appearance, from the family Restionaceae - here more or less surrounded by ericas. Look for the well-established proteas and related genera in the Terrace beds.
- *2 *Banksia praemorsa*** Cut-leaf banksia South-west WA
Banksia praemorsa 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 occasionally yellow as seen here. It does not have a lignotuber, relying on seed held in a flammable 'cone' of woody follicles, at maturity, until released by fire into a seedbed of nutrient-rich ash.
- *3 *Eucalyptus tetraptera*** Square-fruited or four-winged mallee Endemic to the south coast of WA
 The bed layout has expanded to the N and NE since the base map was surveyed, but if you follow the gravel path running generally SE from the banksia for about 35 m, on your right are two small mallees with large orange-red, four-winged buds and fruit. Their leathery leaves are said to be the thickest leaves of any eucalypt. On the south coast of WA, it is a straggly, drought- and frost-hardy mallee to 4m tall, with white, grey or silver-grey bark. **Watch out for the inch ant nest** near the smaller of the two mallees.
- *4 *Eucalyptus woodwardii*** Lemon-flowered gum WA
 This drought and frost tolerant species, from a small area east of Kalgoorlie, is grown as an ornamental in southern Australia for its grey, weeping foliage, and large, lemon-yellow flowers which attract insects and birds. The bark is smooth, shedding in long strips showing white, pink or green. The branchlets, and flower buds in groups of three to seven, have a white, waxy bloom. Note the beaked caps on the flower buds for comparison with the adjacent *Angophora*. The flowers in that genus do not have a budcap.
- *5 *Angophora hispida*** Dwarf apple, scrub apple NSW
 Endemic to eastern Australia, the nine species of *Angophora* are the only eucalypts with recognisable petals and sepals. In the other eucalypt genera, *Eucalyptus* and *Corymbia*, the petals and sepals are fused into a bud cap (operculum) which is pushed off by the anthers as the flower opens. The adult leaves of dwarf apple are a vivid rusty-red and softly-hairy when young, whereas older leaves are grey-green with bristly hairs. In warmer months the tree produces terminal clusters of large cream to white flowers.
- *6 *Grevillea robusta*** Silky oak Rainforests in SE Qld and north-east NSW
 Look for a small stand of trees with horizontal racemes of orange-yellow flowers. The largest species in the genus, silky oak is named for the silky feel of its finely-figured dressed timber used for wood-turning, guitars and cabinets. The timber is resistant to rot, and before the advent of aluminium frames it was widely used for external windows. Nowadays the species provides root-stocks for grafting difficult-to-grow grevilleas.
- *7 *Anigozanthos* species** Kangaroo paws South-western WA
 The tall kangaroo paws with strappy leaves growing in this area, (mainly forms of *A. flavidus*) belong to the genus *Anigozanthos* which has 11 species overall, varying in flower-stalk height and flower colour. The colour of the flowers is influenced by fine, coloured hairs covering the flowers and often part of the stalk. Many new forms and colours have also arisen from hybridisation programmes.
- *8 *Melaleuca uncinata*** Broombush WA, SA, western Victoria and south-west NSW
 Broombush is an erect shrub with many slender branches, usually growing as an understorey shrub on sandy soils in mallee or woodland. When in flower it has globular heads of cream flowers in the leaf axils, forming dense clusters of woody fruits along the stem. It often grows in dense stands and has had a long history of harvesting from the wild, or plantations, for the brush fencing common in suburban Adelaide. The roof of the Simpson Shadehouse in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens is thatched with broombush.
- 9 *Leucospermum* spp.** Pincushions South Africa
 Next to a Naming Walk sign for the genus is a large, robust specimen of rocket pincushion (*L. reflexum*). On either side are other leucospermums, including *L. cordifolium*, all with the characteristic pincushion flowerheads in various colours. The 'pins' are the styles of the many individual flowers, each tipped with a mass of pollen which must be removed before the flower becomes receptive to pollen from another plant.
- *10 *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* with lerp** SA bluegum, yellow gum SA, western Victoria, south-west NSW
 Recovering from a violent storm late last year, the bluegum in this corner (opposite a *Leucospermum muiirii*) is sprouting from below ground and from epicormic buds on the trunk. The regrowth has an infestation of psyllids, sap-sucking insects which secrete a sugary, white protective canopy called **lerp**, an important part of the diet of many small foliage-gleaning birds such as pardalotes. Honeyeaters and ladybirds also prey on the psyllids, usually keeping the infestation under control.