

SPECIAL PLANTS:**February - March 2023****WITTUNGA**

The list below covers some of the variety of fruits in the Garden, but along the way you can explore the Terraces for flowering ericas or proteas. Evidence of the windstorm last year can also be seen here in the feathery, epicormic growth on damaged eucalypts. The clean-up of fallen timber still goes on.

See over page for map

*An Australian native



- 1 *Nymania capensis*** Chinese lanterns, klapperbos South Africa
 Klapperbos is a slow growing shrub whose puffy, pale-pink fruits develop from single dull-red flowers borne in the leaf axils. These papery seed capsules are often blown under other bushes, sometimes known as nurse plants, where conditions for germination and early growth of the young seedling are more favourable. Once established it can tolerate the extremes of frost and heat in its dry, rocky or sandy habitats.
- 2 *Diospyros whyteana*** Bladder-nut, wild coffee Cape Town to E Cap and north to Ethiopia
 An attractive small evergreen tree from the Ebony family, bladder nut has 'fruits' which look and feel much like an inflated seed-bearing capsule. In this case, however, the true fruit is a berry, enclosed in a bladderly casing formed from the fused segments of the calyx. From the top end of the dotted path, one of the first two trees in this small stand is a female. Look carefully amongst the leaves for the little green 'pumpkins' which will turn scarlet with time and open to expose the fleshy, edible, but bitter, mature red berries. The fruit was harvested in the past for its seeds which were roasted and used as a coffee substitute.
- 3 *Podalyria sericea*** Silver sweet pea bush Cape Province, South Africa
 Silver sweet pea is a small rounded shrub to 1.5m with attractive shining silvery-hairy, elliptic leaves. Small, sweetly-scented pink flowers are followed by inflated seedpods (legumes) which split down both sides at maturity. It is short-lived but readily grows from abundant seed. It is listed as Vulnerable in its native range, but in parts of Australia it has spread from gardens and is regarded as an environmental weed.
- 4 *Leucadendron muirii*** Silver ball cone-bush South Africa
 Endemic to a small area of the Western Cape the female plants of this handsome cone-bush store their winged fruits in woody cones formed from the ovaries of many flowers, like the sheoaks at station 7. The fruits and seeds are protected from fires which kill the parent plant, and are released when the cone opens after the fire has passed. The fruits are dispersed by wind into a seed bed of nutrient-rich ash.
- 5 *Dovyalis caffra*** Kei apple, wild apricot South Africa
 Immediately behind the cone-bush, kei apple is a large shrub with drooping branchlets, bright-green foliage and thorns up to 70 mm long. Some of the many tiny, creamy-green flowers on this female tree late last year are now developing into young green berries which will ripen to an apricot-yellow like those on the ground beneath. The fruit is more similar to tomato (also a berry) than either an apple or an apricot. It can be eaten fresh or used to make jams and jellies. There is a male tree on the other side of the Terraces.
- *6 *Corymbia calophylla x ficifolia*** Red-flowering gum Hybrid
 One of the most outstanding flowering trees in Australia, its masses of conspicuous red or vermilion-orange flowers cover the canopy in summer. This cross between the very large (40-60 m) *Corymbia calophylla* (marri) and the much smaller *C. ficifolia* (red-flowering gum) is more suitable for gardens and street verges. The hybrid retains the large woody marri fruits, known as 'honkey nuts' in Western Australia where the seeds are a staple in the diet of the long-billed black cockatoo.
- *7 *Allocasuarina verticillata*** Drooping sheoak SE Australia
 Across the grass between two paths is a small stand of 3 male and one female sheoak. Flower spikes are forming at the tips of the long, green branchlets on the males. The females have 'cones' (developed from balls of tiny red flowers) in the canopy and many on the ground beneath. Each pair of bracts on the cones holds a winged fruit (samara) a major source of food for the glossy black cockatoo on Kangaroo Island
- *8 *Acacia pycnantha*** Golden wattle SE Australia, but widely naturalised elsewhere
 Golden wattle is our national floral emblem. Its familiar pom-poms of golden-yellow flowers are on display in spring, but this young specimen is now in fruit. The long, straight legumes split down both sides at maturity, or fall to ground, where the hard, black seeds with their protein-rich arils are collected by ants. Seedlings can often be found emerging from ant nests after fire, or disturbance by foraging echidnas.
- *9 *Hakea mitchellii*** Desert hakea From Eyre Peninsula across to western Victoria, Kangaroo Is.
 Across the path the small, rounded shrub with dense, rather prickly foliage is a young fruiting specimen of desert hakea. A mainly South Australian species, it extends into the Little Desert and Big Desert areas over the border. It is named for Major Mitchell, an early European explorer of western Victoria, who collected the type specimen. The Major Mitchell cockatoo, incidentally, is a relative of those large black cockatoos whose powerful beaks can shear the mature woody fruits of hakeas to extract the two winged seeds inside.
- *10 *Acacia denticulosa*** Sandpaper wattle South-west WA
 Along the path just west of the hakea is a footbridge which leads to the WA heath beds and a very unusual acacia, well-worth growing in a dry garden, just for its foliage. The ovate phyllodes, with very wavy margins, are covered in short glandular, conical outgrowths, giving them a rough and sticky feel. Like golden wattle, it has straight, brown legumes, but in flower it has cylindrical, rather than spherical, yellow flowerheads. There is only one cluster of legumes here, but low down so it may survive any strong winds.