

## SPECIAL PLANTS OF THE MONTH December 2020-January 2021

The Amazon Water Lily Pavilion (station 3 in the list) has reopened after many months of work on refurbishment of the heritage pond. The lily has recently been reintroduced and is now regularly producing flowers. Its leaves are particularly large this year. Some orchids are also in flower in the northern corridor, amongst a collection of species from the pineapple family (Bromeliaceae)



See over page for map

\*An Australian native

- \*1 *Eucalyptus* spp., lerps and birds** Eucalypts endemic to the Northern Flinders Ranges  
Off the NE corner of the Goodman Building are two eucalypts which often occur together on high points in the North Flinders Ranges. The red branchlets of *E. flindersii* contrast with the white, waxy bloom of the neighbouring *E. goniocalyx* ssp. *exposa*. *E. flindersii* has a heavy infestation of psyllids, sap-sucking insects which secrete a sugary, white canopy called **lerp**, important in the diet of many small foliage-gleaning birds such as pardalotes. Honeyeaters and ladybirds are now beginning to prey on the psyllids.
- \*2 *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*** Mugga or red ironbark Northern Victoria to Southern Qld  
Ironbark with its thick, fibrous, deeply-fissured bark grows to 25m or more along the western side of the Great Dividing Range. This impressive 32-metre specimen is on the National Register of Big Trees. Pink, red or cream flowers in autumn to spring attract nectar-feeding birds, as well as bees which produce a high-quality honey. Its main use is for general landscaping especially as a street tree, but wood turners value it for its tough, persistent bark as well as the timber, and weavers use leaf extracts to dye wool orange.
- 3 Amazon Waterlily Pavilion** Northern corridor Tropical Americas  
The collection of species from the family Bromeliaceae in the north corridor shows just some of the diversity in a family made up of over 50 genera native to the Americas. They can be found in deserts and rainforests and from sea level to over 4000 m. In contrast to the spiny bromeliads in the beds outside the pavilion, these much smaller plants include epiphytes which absorb moisture from the air (*Tillandsia* species), and ground-dwelling tank bromeliads forming small, aquatic ecosystems in their tightly overlapping leaf bases.
- 4 *Puya alpestris*** Sapphire tower Chilean Andes  
*P. alpestris* is one of several species of bromeliad, which form dense rosettes of tough leaves with sharp, toothed margins on drier sites in South America. Its vivid orange anthers stand out against the deep-turquoise flowers on its tall, branched flower spike. Local parrots and honey bees can be seen vigorously feeding on the nectar, perhaps playing the pollinating role of the humming birds in its native range. Smaller species of *Dyckia* and *Aechmea* with rosettes of equally tough leaves, can be found in nearby beds.
- 5 Bamboo collection**  
Take the side path through the collection to see a variety of species, from pencil-thin to the more robust, in a more 'natural' setting. Reach above the graffiti to feel the smooth texture of the beautiful dark indigo and pale yellow species towards the south end of the path. If nothing else, these crude inscriptions serve to remind us that Chinese calligraphers have made exquisite scrolls from bamboo slips since ca.1400 BCE.
- \*6 *Callistemon brachyandrus*** Prickly bottlebrush Western NSW. Vic, S.A  
A shrub or small tree with stiff, sharp, narrow leaves up to 4cm long. Like many species from the family Myrtaceae, the leaves are dotted with oil glands. Pruning after the main flowering period will keep plants bushy and provide an abundance of flowers. The species can also be grown as an informal hedge. The red stamens have bright yellow anthers giving the appearance of an inflorescence dusted with gold.
- \*7 *Alyogyne huegelii*** Huegel's hibiscus, lilac hibiscus Southern coastal WA through to SA  
Like others in the hibiscus family its blooms last only 1-2 days, but it can produce hundreds of flowers in a season which extends beyond the end of summer. The hairy, palmate leaves are deeply 3 to 5-lobed. A hardy fast-growing shrub, it is useful as a feature plant, or for hedging, provided it has good drainage.
- 8 *Jacaranda mimosifolia*** Jacaranda NW Argentina and neighbouring areas  
Widely planted in many parts of the world for its attractive and long-lasting pale indigo flowers, jacaranda is a feature of many Adelaide streets, providing a spectacular display from late spring to early summer. The dense panicles of flowers, the delicate, feathery foliage and the tracery of elegant branches make jacaranda a particularly striking species.
- 9 *Harpephyllum caffrum*** Wild plum, kaffir plum Southern Africa  
Just west of the hydrant at the end of the row of jacarandas is a female wild plum in fruit. The ripe red fruit is eaten by birds, humans and other mammals in South Africa. Jams and jellies are made from the fruit and preparations of the bark are traditionally used to treat skin conditions, breaks and sprains. The dense crown of dark-green, glossy, pinnate leaves makes it popular as shady street tree in South Africa. Growing unrestricted here, it forms a shady dome of branches touching the ground on the perimeter on the canopy
- 10 The Sunken Garden**  
Look for the large, cream flower heads of *Buddleja saligna*, an evergreen from South Africa, to the left of the steps down to the Sunken Garden. Dating from the time of Harold Greaves, our 5th Director (1932-48), this garden is an example of formal interwar garden design. The central pond, built in 1939 to accommodate waterlilies (*Nymphaea* spp.), is surrounded by a considerable diversity of colour, texture and form.