

## SPECIAL PLANTS AT WITTUNGA DECEMBER 2020 AND JANUARY 2021



While flowers are wonderful to observe on plants it is often worth taking a closer look at other features. Admire the colour and gnarly aspects of bark. Be surprised by the scent of many leaves and notice the varied leaf shapes. These features can be equally rewarding.

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- 1 *Eucalyptus nicholii***                      Narrow-leaved black peppermint                      NSW  
 This large rough barked tree is one of a group commonly called peppermints because of the characteristic smell of the crushed leaves. In the early 1900s a mixture of the dried leaves of three species of eucalypts, *E. citriodora*, a peppermint gum and an *Angophora*, was promoted as a eucalyptus tobacco. It was described as 'quite a smokable cigarette tobacco with a soft bush fragrance' and marketed with the slogan 'Take a whiff of the gum forests into your home'.
- 2 *Aloe plicatilis***                      Fan aloe                      Fynbos of Western Cape South Africa  
 The long grey-green leaves folded or pleated (plicated) in 2 opposite rows (like a fan) makes this species unique and ornamental. The only tree aloe in the Fynbos, this slow grower can reach 3 to 5m. It needs good drainage and has corky fire-resistant bark. The single tubular red flowers appearing, about 50mm long and somewhat fleshy, attract nectar eating birds. Flowering is from late winter and spring.
- 3 *Melaleuca elliptica***                      Granite honey myrtle                      Southern WA  
 Notice the beauty of the peeling bark on this plant. The leaves are attractive compact, oval, opposite each other. Its dense twiggy nature restricts access to larger birds and therefore it is an ideal plant for smaller birds to forage for food and to nest. withstands salty winds and makes a good screen against salt spray.
- 4 *Hakea drupacea***                      Sweet-scented hakea                      South-west WA  
 Known by many gardeners as sweet-scented hakea due to the overpowering sweet fragrance of the flowers. A serious invader of the floristically rich and unique mountain fynbos region in South Africa. Dense stands of these plants can alter the composition of natural plant and animal communities. They also lead to increased fire intensities that may kill plant species that regenerate vegetatively and seeds on or in the soil.
- 5 *Eucalyptus histophylla***                      Dundas mallee                      WA  
 Scientifically described in 1991 from a specimen collected by the famous botanist S.D. Hopper, (a former Director of both Kew Gardens and Kings Park), between Balladonia and Norseman in WA. *Histos* means upright and *phylla* means leaves—a reference to the erect leaves of the crown.
- 6 *Hakea trifurcata***                      Two-leaf hakea                      WA  
 Younger plants have needle-like leaves divided into three forks. When the plant matures and begins to produce fruit (seed-pods), it develops an additional leaf-form which is oblong, flattened and closely resembles the fruit. Botanists theorise that the flattened leaves act as camouflage to protect the 'leaf-like' fruits from seed-eating birds. This species is native to a fire-prone area. It does not develop a lignotuber and depends on reseedling after fire.
- 7 *Banksia caleyi***                      Caley's banksia                      Southern WA  
 The species is dense, rigid and prickly. The mature leaves are a dark glossy green, young leaves are covered with soft hairs, giving new growth an attractive velvet bronze appearance. Unlike other banksias the flowers spikes are pendant – hanging down rather than upright. The dark scarlet or yellow flowers are mainly hidden amongst the dense foliage.
- 8 *Eucalyptus caleyi***                      Caley's ironbark                      NSW QLD  
 Named after George Caley a botanical collector for Sir Joseph Banks from 1800–1810, this ironbark species is native to warm temperate and sub-tropical climates of eastern Australia. The species possess embedded vegetative buds that allow the plant to regenerate after fire damage to the crown. The flowers buds are arranged in groups of seven on a peduncle and the cream flowers are good source of nectar for bees.
- 9 *Xanthorrhoea australis***                      Austral or southern grass tree                      Southern NSW VIC SA TAS  
 The most widespread species of the fascinating *Xanthorrhoeas* is very slow growing and long lived. Needing good drainage, it is often found on rocky slopes. Note the numerous white or cream flowers clustering on the spear-like spike. Flowering is not always annual but flowers usually develop after fires.
- 10 *Prostanthera aspalathoides***                      Scarlet mint bush                      NSW VIC SA WA  
 This is a wholly Australian genus of approximately 90 species, most of which contain fragrant oils, mint-like scents noticed when a breeze, a bird or a human disturbs the foliage. Also known as "scarlet jewels" *Prostanthera aspalathoides* is commonly found in mallee shrublands. This species has leaves like the unrelated *Aspalathus linearis*, the South African plant from which rooibos (redbush) tea is produced.
- 11 *Agonis flexuosa***                      Willow myrtle, Swan River peppermint                      South-west WA  
 An attractive weeping species, commonly grown in parks and as a street tree in Perth. The epithet *flexuosa* refers to the shallow zigzag form of the branchlets which change the direction of growth at each node. The leaves, used as an antiseptic by indigenous peoples, release a distinct odour of peppermint when crushed.