

# N E W S L E T T E R



## PLANTS OF TASMANIA NURSERY AND GARDENS

NO.3 AUTUMN / WINTER 1998

65 HALL ST RIDGEWAY 7054

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

9am - 5pm (Winter 9am - 4pm) ph (03) 6239 1583 fax (03) 6239 1106

**Hi ! Happy winter gardening !** May your leisure days be filled with the **trills** of happy birds as they flit from bush to bush, whilst you sit **basking** in the sun (snow!) - with not a care in the world. (After all, you can always come and select some extra plants next weekend.)

Welcome to our **third** newsletter. (It should have been our fourth, but spring got out of hand last year - apologies to those that missed it. And spring. I trust you didn't miss spring.) Speaking of basking, I wish the wind would stop blowing. Where are those perfect autumnal days we all know and love. We've spent the last two weeks picking up pots ! Mind you, come to think of it, that's what we do most of the time up here - pick up pots. Put them down. Pick them up. Put them down. (*What sort of a life is this ?*) But it's what we put in them that counts ! **Beautiful plants**. And masses of them. We've got so many lovely plants ready for sale this year that we've had to open up a new area to display them.

### EXTRA SPACE

Our extended area, increases the space for viewing plants for sale by about 30%. During the process we are taking the opportunity to **spring clean** and undertake some rearrangement, so hopefully you wont be too confused when next you visit. (And hopefully we wont either!) As I write, we are still working on these changes, so bear with us, and please accost us if you can't find that special plant you're sure we have heaps of, but we've moved somewhere else.

Our shrub section is now out in the new area. We also have two new categories - **Alpines** and **Conifers**. We decided to move alpine plants out of the groundcovers section because of many peoples' keen interest in these plants and also because they often need a bit more care and attention. The conifers, as a group, also attract a lot of attention.

### CHANGE IN OPENING HOURS

Commencing from this winter we will be closing up shop earlier in the afternoon. The winter days can be long, cold, wet and darkening far too early in the evening, so for **June, July and August** we'll be open from **9am to 4pm**. We hope this change will not be of too much inconvenience.

### NEW MAN

Since our last newsletter we have taken on another competent staff member. **Mark Geeves** has the Advanced Certificate of Horticulture and is proving to be another proficient nursery-person. (To add to our existing proficient nursery persons!) He has moved from "L" plates to "P" plates with alacrity.



## NEW CATALOGUE

Will wonders never cease! The new catalogue is out already! Not a lot of changes; some new plants and some out of stock at the moment, but a big variety of sizes in many species this season. As before, the catalogue sells for \$1, or is available free with any plants purchases of over \$10. (To obtain one through the post please send four 45c stamps.)

## NEW PLANTS

Below are some of the new plants we now have in stock, and some which we have back, after an absence.

***Allocasuarina paludosa* Dwarf She-Oak** Our smallest Casuarina can be low and spreading, or upright to 1.5m, but looks terrific with it's fine foliage. I find it a useful contrast to other larger leaved plants. It occurs naturally in the NE of the state, often in quite wet ground, but is adaptable to most situations. Along with the exuberant and large foliaged *Allocasuarina crassa*, and the newly described *Allocasuarina duncanii*, it provides for an interesting batch of Tasmanian casuarinas. Not everyone's cup of tea, but I love 'em.

***Banksia marginata* Coastal Spread** The beautiful spreading small leaved banksia growing in the front garden, is finally up and running. Originally acquired from the late Neal Farell of Brown Mountain Nursery (Whose delightful nursery was in inspiration in commencing this business) it's proved to be a slow but reliable shrub, with it's spreading branches and "candle-like" upright flower spikes. Propagation of this shrub was proving difficult but we're having success now. Original locality - NE Tasmania.

***Clematis* "Garden Surprise"** This plant is a result of a naturally occurring cross in our gardens, between *Clematis aristata* the vine, and *Clematis gentianoides* the endemic dwarf plant of dry sites. Because of its genetics, its form may be variable, but it is generally a spreading groundcover, with the ability to scramble up a fence or lattice. The white, four petalled flowers in spring are a delight. Hardy in most sites.

***Derwentia derwentiana* Derwent Speedwell** An interesting plant from the Hebe/Veronica group of plants, *Derwentia* produces arching stems to 1.2m with pale lilac flowers in summer. These stems can be cut off after flowering, in summer or later, as new stems grow for the next season. A visiting nurseryman from Scotland lists this plant regularly in his catalogue, as being well suited for the perennial garden. *Derwentia* likes a bit of moisture, so does well in the average watered garden. It can be found next to creeks in the Hobart area as well as further afield.

We have ***Helichrysum acuminatum* Golden Everlasting** back in stock. It's a vibrantly colourful plant in flower, but is temperamental in cultivation. (Mind you, it's had a name change - perhaps it'll grow better - it's now *Bracteantha subundulata*, but in our nursery it'll remain under its old moniker until we run out of those labels. The everlasting daisy flowers are crispy golden/orange, and flower through summer. It's a plant of the high country- cold and moist - and our recommendation for the garden is a moist but not waterlogged site.

***Ozothamnus rodwayii* Rodway's Bush-Everlasting** We have a pale green form and a silvery foliaged form collected by Kris from Mt Barrow, out from Launceston. The bushes are low and compact with roundish leaves, and the silver one is quite a contrast. *Rodwayii* is endemic to Tasmania, and flowers in spring or summer with creamy-white flower heads.

What a little gem! ***Velleia paradoxa* Spur Velleia** We finally had a good germination of this rare dry-country plant. A clump of bright green leaves from the ground, gives rise to yellow, beautifully scented flowers on slender stems to 30cm, in summer. Well suited to the rockery, path-side, cottage garden or pot, or in drifts in a casual native garden. (And - the only other *Velleia* in Tas, *Velleia montana* is an even



"littler" gem, from the high country, and we should have some of those ready in late spring. Patience.)

There are many botanical delights from Tasmania's mountain heights and two of these have pioneered their way into our alpine selection. *Leucopogon montanus* (originally *Lissanthe montana*) the **Snow Beard Heath** is a compact blue-green leaved shrub to 60cm. When mature it features tiny white bell shaped flowers followed by red berries. It is, like so many of the alpine plants, a very slow grower.

Another beauty is *Orites milliganii* (which we'll turn around for a common name, **Milligan's Orites**). This is an endemic shrub, to 2-3m in its natural SW mountain habitat, not overly common, and certainly not in gardens. It has a large green "holly-like" leaf and cream flowers. It has proved to be a bit temperamental in pots, so we expect it will be equally so in the garden. Slow, but a desirable temptation.

***Olearia argophylla* Musk** Don't rush in, they're babies yet, but counting our chickens, it looks like late spring the first batch may be ready to leave home. Musk is that wonderful large green and grey leaved shrub of moister and shadier regions. Like Ferntree. It's our largest daisy bush - in earlier days the timber was cut and used for cabinet work and picture framing, often with Huon Pine - or so I've been told. They must have been giant Musks - I'd expect 5m in the garden. They prune well anyway. A musk for any large garden.

## TASMANIAN BUSH TUCKER

As many of you are aware there are some native plants in Tasmania which have **edible bits**. Fruits, shoots, berries, leaves, seeds, sap, flowers, pollen or tubers can be edible - even palatable.

Unfortunately our European colonising predecessors, by wiping out most of the original inhabitants, so destroyed most of the wealth of knowledge, gained over many thousands of years.

Some small portions of information were recorded by early white botanists in Tasmania, and some from archaeological remains, but most of the knowledge we can access, originates from Aboriginal people on the mainland. (Relevant for the Tasmanian species that also occur interstate.)

**Kris Schaffer** has a keen interest in the edible nature of our indigenous flora, and has prepared the following notes from her research. She is a member of the Australian Food Plant Study Group set up by The Society For Growing Australian Plants.

**WARNING** Please note that this information has been obtained from a number of references, and we pass it on in good faith, however we advise extreme caution. As well as many plants being edible, **some are poisonous**. (On some plants one can find both edible and poisonous bits.) At all times be cautious. It could be very unpleasant (or worse) if one started to experiment. Be extra cautious with children. Three points should be stressed.

- 1. Plant Identification** Don't guess. If you're not positive on the identification of your plant, or which bits are the edible bits, either find out from someone who knows, or forget it.
- 2. Conservation** Please observe State and Federal regulations designed for the protection of our native flora. (Especially if you're into wood chipping.) Remember also that for our native birds and animals, these edible bits (especially fruits and berries) may be part of their existence - so harvest lightly, or grow your own.
- 3. Partake Sparingly** Some foods have substances that may be harmful in excess. Plants in the wild can be very variable, so start with small amounts. (For example: Many people have heard of early Europeans using Sassafras to make a tea or tonic. However Sassafras contains safrole, a possible cancer causing agent, so its use now is not recommended.)

## EDIBLE BERRIES AND FRUIT

Many berries and fruit we may not find very palatable, depending on individual taste buds and being accustomed to a western diet. Making a small jar of jam, sauce or chutney can be an option.



Most of the berries and fruit ripen in late summer and autumn and can be available into winter. If you'd like to indulge with more than just a nibble we suggest you grow your own plants in the garden. Many of these plants are quite hardy but some need that extra special spot.

*Aristotelia peduncularis* **Heart Berry** Fat, fairly hollow berries, often heart shaped, and occurring in moist shady forests in summer / autumn. Berries can come in various colours - white, pink, red or purple-black. Can be bitter in taste. (We have these in stock - they like a cool, moist shady situation.)

*Billardiera longiflora* **Climbing Blue Berry** A vigorous vine with cream tubular flowers in spring (which help feed honey-eaters) followed in summer and autumn by shiny purple-blue capsicum shaped berries. Rarely also in white, and on the coast the scrambling vines commonly have dusky red berries. Like the heart berry - a largely hollow receptacle. These berries are ideal for jam or chutney. Fresh fruits have a floury texture. Save some of the seeds and return to your garden or bush. Jelly is also yummy. The climbing blue berry is quite easy to grow, producing berries after a few years.

*Billardiera scandens* **Apple Berry** A vine from northern Tasmania with a fleshy fruity berry which is still a pale green colour when ripe. It is recommended you spit out the seeds and rough skin. The flesh is quite sweet with a flavour described as being similar to stewed apples. The fruit ripens in autumn. We have just germinated this plant so hope to have plants ready by late spring or summer.

*Carpobrotus rossii* **Pigface** This prostrate coastal succulent plant has purple flowers and edible reddish fruits in summer. This is a great fruit, a bit like a salty fig. ( On the wild west coast of Tasmania when you are searching for a way out, it's a good excuse to stop and "pig" out.) Suck out the tiny seed and sweet pulp from the base of the flowering stem. The green leaves can also be eaten in a salad or cooked.

*Coprosma hirtella* **Coffee Berry** A bush to 1.5m with pale green rounded leaves. The reddish berries on female plants are edible when almost red-black. (A bush in my garden was almost demolished as our dog discovered the berries).

*Coprosma quadrifida* and *Coprosma nitida* **Currant Bushes** Prickly bushes up to 1.5m or more. The female plants can be laden with shiny orange berries in autumn. The silver eye finches will tell you when they are ripe. Nice in pies, cakes and tarts.

*Coprosma moorei* **Blue-Berried Coprosma** Ground hugging alpine plant with tiny succulent edible blue berries.

*Coprosma pumila* **Creeping Coprosma** An alpine plant from the central plateau. Female plants have tiny edible orange-red berries.

*Cyathodes sp.* These bushes can produce wonderful displays of berries which are edible but not very palatable. Garden grown bushes may produce berries of greater succulence.

*Dianella tasmanica* **Tasman Flax Lily** The blue berries from this hardy strap-leaved plant can be made into jam.

*Exocarpus cupressiformis* **Native Cherry** These handsome pine-like plants produce sweet, tiny red edible berries in summer, attached to the end of their green seeds. (This plant has not been the easiest to propagate, and we seldom have many in stock, however we hope to have a decent batch coming on in a couple of years.)

*Gaultheria hispida* **Snow Berry** This bush for shady moist sites, comes alive in summer to autumn with the whitest of white berry-like fruits. They're edible but not particularly palatable.



***Microcachrys tetragona* Creeping Strawberry Pine** Female plants of this prostrate alpine conifer bear tiny raspberry-like fruit in late summer and autumn. (My favourite of all the berries. Great with marinated quail - Tasmanian of course.) We have this conifer in stock, but don't plan the dinner party yet - they're not fast!

***Podocarpus lawrencei* Mountain Plum Pine** Another conifer, with small red berries on female plants, similar in appearance to *Exocarpus*.

***Rubus gunnianus* Alpine Raspberry** A prostrate suckering plant, which can be invasive in a moist spot, displays tiny red fruits in the summer, on female plants.

***Rubus parvifolius* Native Raspberry** A scrambling prickly plant (Like a benign blackberry) with small pinkish flowers followed by small pink to red fruits. High vitamin C content.

***Sambucus gaudichaudiana* White Elderberry** Small cream juicy edible berries. Unfortunately we're out of stock of this interesting plant.

***Solanum laciniatum* Kangaroo Apple** Our Tasmanian representative of this widespread Australian genus which contains many poisonous and many edible species. (Exotic relatives include the potato, tomato and deadly nightshade - a fascinating tribe!) The fruit of the kangaroo apple is **poisonous** when green, but edible when ripening to a yellow or orange colour; so treat with caution. And there's more - for many years this Australian species has been cultivated in Russia to extract substances for steroid and oral contraceptive use.

The ripe fruits are high in vitamin C, and make a great chutney. The Tasmanian Aboriginals placed partially ripe fruits in sand heaps to ripen away from birds.

***Tasmannia lanceolata* Native Pepper** Tasmania's shrub of the decade. Many restaurants round the state now include meals flavoured with the dried berries or leaves. The Pepperberry Restaurant in Launceston has been running for many years now. (One of our customers will now settle for nothing less on his food than our local pepper-berry.) And as a bonus, it's such a handsome plant in the garden. Female plants have the berries, males have the more showy flowers. The berries can be dried, (eg. fan forced oven) pickled, or frozen to keep. Many new products are springing up - pepper-berry liqueur, wine, damper and icecream!

The following references have been used in the collation of this information as well as personal experience.

Australian Bushfoods Magazine  
(we stock this publication - \$4.95)

Wild Food in Australia - AB & JW Cribb

Bush Tucker - Tim Low

The Bushfood Handbook - Vic Cherikoff & Jennifer Isaacs

Bush Foods - Jennifer Isaacs

In future newsletters we hope to continue this theme, delving into the edible nature of our local flora. We hope this whets your appetite and look forward to seeing you at the nursery.

Our regards for the season,  
**Will, Kris, Lindy and Mark.**