

Inverawe Native Gardens

Newsletter - December 2006

Dry Winter means Spring Blooms

With rainfall down by a third in the year to date at Inverawe, subsoil moisture is extremely low. We've spread a lot of mulch, with an underlay of newspaper, to suppress weeds and retain soil moisture.

One outcome of a dry winter is that native plants, adapted to drought, flower earlier in spring and flower more profusely.



Guitar Plant, *Lomatia tinctoria* has bloomed profusely this year

Heavy frosts and some snow in spring dealt a savage blow to conventional gardens, and more sadly, to Tasmania's soft fruit industry. Frosts were light at Inverawe – we're right on the waterfront – and our plants have been selected for frost hardiness.

New Attractions

Lots more plants have been added to our collection in recent weeks, including a Wollemi Pine, *Wollemia Nobilis*. He is called Nobby. He joins Garry, the Norfolk Island Pine, and Dave and Ursula, the two ancient Eucalyptus viminalis on the bottom land.

An area to the north of the main entrance where wind gusts brought down a very large tree is being landscaped by underplanting with shrubs. It's a dry area with poor soil, so we are selecting plants that are both tough and colourful. We're mulching as we go, adding hand rails, stairs and paths to make access easier. Gypsum is used under the mulch as a clay breaker and a light dusting of blood and bone on the mulch balances nitrogen levels.

Further south, on an east facing basalt slope, we are planting a range of Banksias alongside some South Esk Pines, under Sticky Wattles which act as nursery plants. A West Australian, *Banksia praemorsa*, is doing particularly well but has not yet been through a full annual cycle.

New Sighting

One of our visitors pointed out something we had missed - a Sun Orchid growing under tree cover. This is the first orchid we have seen on the property. Some visitors have said that it is a good year for local orchids, perhaps because of the unusual weather.

Another recent sighting was the Vanilla Lily, *Arthropodium milleflorum*, a grassy looking thing with tiny, vanilla scented pink flowers on a spike. We've also seen Native violets, fairly commonly distributed around wide areas of Australia but confined to one tiny patch at Inverawe. They propagate easily by division.

Paper Daisies Provide Year Round Colour

Paper Daisies (Everlastings) have changed their botanical name several times recently, which is a bit tedious but they are mostly sold as *Helichrysum*, which we think might have been about two names ago. We use the plants for year round colour. They self seed profusely and hybridise with each other readily, so the changing palette of colours is constantly intriguing. We also buy in commercial cultivars, available at all large nurseries.



Paper Daisy "Bright Bikini" a commercial cultivar.

The daisies will grow in wet or dry conditions but require at least a few hours full sun every day. Cut flowers keep well and have a pleasant "spicy" aroma. Many of our visitors buy pots of them and report good results.

The Bird Report

A visitor reported Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, a small cuckoo, a tad smaller than the common starling. It has a distinctive call, which we heard around the property for several days. That's the 81st species on our bird list. We've also seen some shore waders, just the three of them, too far away to identify but similar in size to some nearby Oyster Catchers. They're the first shore waders we've seen here.

Pleaching Pleases the Eye

Pleaching is an old English technique of laying rocks against a surface to form an inclined wall. The slope pictured below was once a tangled mess of Blackberry, household refuse, discarded building rubble and bits of fencing wire. We cut the track, surfaced it with gravel, stabilised the low side with timber edging and planted the slope with rainforest species that are kept moist with a micro drip feed system. Recently Margaret moved between five and ten tonnes of rock to form the pleached wall on the high side of the track. It is 45 metres long and a metre in height and is one of many walls Margaret has constructed.



A 45 metre long pleached wall containing tonnes of rock sets off this path.

The man fern, *Dicksonia antarctica*, pictured, is one of three giants that recently moved in, a gift from a friend who was remodelling his own garden. Man ferns are seriously heavy and moving them was a difficult operation. They were moved late winter, with a root ball and with all fronds removed. The fresh green fronds are spring growth, a sign that the ferns are completely happy in their new home. The Man Ferns are watched over by three elves, the work of talented local ceramicist, Lesley Perkins.

And Pleaching? Pleaching requires patience, an eye for detail, physical strength and a lot of rocks. We think it's worth the effort.

Poetry at Inverawe

Entries in the Inverawe Nature Poetry Competition will remain open until 31 March, 2007. Entry forms are available on our website, www.inverawe.com.au

The competition is in two divisions. The open section has a first prize of \$300 and two minor prizes of \$100 each. The student division is in four sections and in each section a first prize of \$50 and two encouragement awards of \$25 is on offer. Kingborough Council are providing the prize money for the student competition. For more information refer to our webpage or call on 03 6267 2020. Prize winning poems will be read at Inverawe on April 29, 2007.

What's That?



Hardenbergia comptoniana swarms over a trellis fence

Hardenbergia comptoniana is a spring flowering West Australian, closely related to the Tasmanian species, *Hardenbergia violacea*. *H violacea* is often sold as "Happy Wanderer". *Comptoniana* has brighter flowers and a longer truss length than *violacea* but is frost tender. Both species are easily grown from seed. Members of the pea family, the seed needs first to be soaked in hot water to crack the hard surface coat. At Inverawe the local slugs (and possums) seem to enjoy feasting on the seedlings when they are very young, making the process of raising them not as straightforward as it should be.

In Bloom Now!

Try...Grevilleas, Melaleucas, Tea Trees, Paper Daisies, Olearias, Westringias, Prostantheras, Kangaroo Paws, Sweet Bursaria, Bottle Brush, Dianella, Net Bush, Green Bush, Blanket Bush, Scaveola, Boobialla, Water Bush, Native Pig Face, Winter Pink, Drumsticks, Tick Bush, Dolly Bush, Red Kunzia, Native Hibiscus, Red Flowering Gum, Verticordia...Black Wattle is still in bloom...to name just a few. Plus, Hillock Bush, Snow in Summer and Showy Honey Myrtle are muscling up for their summer run. Haven't heard of some of these? You'll have to come and see for yourself!

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Open Tuesdays through Sundays, inclusive
1 September to end May,
from 9.30 am, last entry 5.30 pm.
Closed Christmas Day
Open Holiday Mondays.

Other times by arrangement.
Entry fee: \$8.00