



## Mediterranean Gardening Margaret River

W E S T E R N A U S T R A L I A

### September 2017

What a lovely time of the year this is. Who would want to be anywhere else but near home in our gardens making new discoveries daily. Of course with the treasure comes weeds but what a small price to pay and it keeps us fit.

Since our trip to Balingup at the end of May we have been to several local properties.

#### July 10

**Patsy and Laurie Bedford's** expansive garden at Glenellie, on the outskirts of Margaret River. The weather had been wild and it was a really wet day so no one was more surprised than I to see so many people arrive. I think everyone had cabin fever. Luckily there was a big verandah so we all had shelter but the rain did abate and most people managed to find their way around the many paths, back and forth over bridges on the creek. Patsy left out a big collage of the property as they developed it and it was certainly difficult to imagine the bare paddock they arrived at to commence their garden. Now big sweeps of tough plants line the creek banks under huge Marri, *Corymbia calophylla* and peppermints, *Agonis flexuosa* which provide a wonderful shady microclimate for the many eclectic exotics Patsy has. *Geranium maderense* jostled with fuschias and colourful bromeliads. A variety of ferns provided ripples of lighter greens and a bamboo arch created a tunnel over one bridge to a path lined with agapanthus in enough dappled sunlight to flower prolifically every summer. Patsy and Laurie have an expansive productive vegetable garden which until recently has been Laurie's domain. Now with his recent illness Patsy has risen to the challenge and loving her new project that there might be some conflict if she has to hand it back.

We had a great share table of plants as usual and plenty of flowers and foliage on display to introduce people to new plants as well as see old reliable favourites. Thanks to everyone who makes the effort to go out despite the weather to find something to share.



## **August 14**

### **Ellensbrook walk**

Despite the wild weather about 8 people arrived to walk to the Meekadarabee Falls. Ellensbrook House (NT ) is closed for repairs and I have to say the overhaul seems excruciatingly slow for such a modest dwelling . The boardwalk to the falls was all repaired after the 2011 fires but sadly a lot of weeds have taken off through the bush. We still saw much to admire and especially the native ferns near the falls. The Ellens Brook was a torrent and we followed its course in the big loop around the grounds of the house admiring the old European trees still surviving such as the enormous Coral tree, *Erythrina sykesii*, a tree of tropical origins, which is synonymous with old country homes in Australia. It is a stunning tree but probably unfashionable at present as too big for the average homesite. Despite coming from the tropics this tree has adapted very well to

other climates and certainly brings us a wonderful flash of bright colour in our dullest months. Of course, it loves water so down here by the brook it has thrived. We also saw the old mulberry and fig trees which feed more birds than people but picnickers can help themselves in season. There was also a large Moreton Bay Fig, *Ficus macrophylla*, that old Australian favourite from the east coast which again regularly appears on old properties where it has the space to spread and become wonderfully gnarled. A favourite of all children.

We headed down to the coast to be blown away and admire our coastal species which seem to survive whatever the weather throws at them. Within such a short distance the vegetation changes from tall forest trees to heath land coastal scrub.

We saw yellow *Hibbertia cuneiformis* under the taller native trees. We saw *Diplolaena dampieri* just coming into flower, a few orchid leaves but no flowers. The wattles were coming out but the plant everyone kept commenting on was the wonderful pale limey green Karri Hazel, *Trymalium floribundum* which was in full flower. Insignificant though the creamy flowers are, they hang in loose panicles and their scent is quite pervasive. I always relate it to winter in our south west bush. I read that it is considered one of our most important understorey species as it can survive quite well in our long warm summers under the shade of the taller trees. Something for you to look for next time you see it. The word 'trymalia' means the eye of the needle and this refers to three slits in the fruit when it opens.

### **September 11**

Member Carol Gaby hosted us in Margaret River where she gardens part time. She has worked around some existing plantings although some have had no appeal and just had to go. Some lovely deciduous trees are at the front providing beautiful autumn tones and Carol has underplanted this area with a variety, aiming to create a moist groundcover for the summer. Her latest acquisition is some pretty pink loropetalum on a mound under some *Acer negundo*.

On the house deck railings were wisterias and *Akebia quinata* (the chocolate vine) both just budding up. At a lower level was a bed of young roses and perennials and the garden fence has *Rosa 'Pierre de Ronsard'*, a great favourite of Carol's. There were raised beds of herbs and fruit trees, and at the back, moving constantly up a gentle slope were lots of natives, thriving in the tough ground which cleverly Carol had many holes bored so she could pick and choose where to plant without breaking her back. Those holes which are surplus could be filled with compost material for the future. Rabbits are keen on this garden and many plants have guards to prevent ring-barking. We didn't discuss losses. We all know it happens and rabbits certainly don't help.

Carol invited suggestions from members and was kept busy trying to take note of all the helpful advice and useful id of her plants.

*Camellia 'Marge Millar'* spilling down a wall facing windows of the house would be so pretty in season.

Our local *Westringia fruticosa* in two different forms which Carol wasn't sure of was used to make two hedges. One was pale grey and the other much greener, possibly 'Wynyabbie Gem' or its dwarf form 'Jervis Gem'. Both looked as though they were unpopular with the rabbits as they were so healthy.

We had some lovely Spring flowers for display. The one that drew most comment was a pure white *Pieris japonica* 'Snow Queen'. This is a slow growing shrub which seems to do extremely well in our part of the country.

Our thanks to Carol and as usual to the members who so generously contribute to the bountiful table we have become used to.

