

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS IN 11,000 COPIES

# Australian Plants

Registered at G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission  
by post as a periodical.

JUNE, 1969

Volume 5, No. 39  
Volume 5 will comprise issues 37-44

Price: 30c



*Colour photography by Frank Hurley*

*Blocks by courtesy of John Sands Pty. Ltd.*

**TELOPEA TRUNCATA — THE TASMANIAN WARATAH**

## TASMANIAN WARATAH

*Telopea truncata* (Labill.) R.Br. by A. M. Gray

The Tasmanian Waratah differs from the Mainland counterparts, but resembles both *T. mangaensis* and *T. oreades*. It is perhaps a little more compact than *T. oreades* and somewhat larger and more brilliant in colour than *T. mangaensis*.

The N.S.W. Waratah, *Telopea speciosissima* is a more spectacular flower, but in the Tasmanian rainforests and sub-alpine shrubberies nothing makes such a fine display as the Tasmanian Waratah. It grows to a large spreading shrub, with deep green entire leaves which may be ovate-lanceolate to obovate in shape and usually with a blunt apex. The young branches and unopened flowerheads are usually covered with soft brownish hairs.

A freely flowering specimen has no rival in our bushlands. Picked out from the deep green foliage the crimson or scarlet flowers standing stiffly upright on long stems make a magnificent sight. The flowers may be from 2"-4" across and with the densely packed individual flowers possessing long curved stigmas and secreting copious amounts of nectar. The Tasmanian waratah does not possess the bracts as in *T. speciosissima*. The flowers are followed by woody follicles which, after ripening, open to release numerous winged seeds.

The specific name "truncata", meaning cut off or shortened, alludes to the flowerhead (which is really a much compacted raceme) appearing as if it had originally been similar to the "cone" shaped head of *T. speciosissima*, but had been cut off about  $\frac{1}{2}$ "- $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the base of the raceme.

Although scarlet or crimson are the normal colours, rare plants displaying yellow or creamy flowers have been found. One with fine yellow flowers is growing in a beautiful garden, carefully tended by Miss E. Huxley at Longley, 12 miles south of Hobart. This shrub was found in the mountains behind her home by her father and brought back to a safe plot in the garden. Each year, at flowering time, visitors are treated to a wonderful display of bright yellow waratahs. The leaves differ quite a lot from the normal red flower type and the downy hairs are always greenish, without the brownish tinge.

Previous issues of "Australian Plants" have given clear directions on the propagation of the Waratahs so I need not go further. A warning however, that the seedlings are very prone to damping off, would be pertinent at this stage. Remember not to sow the seed too thickly; place the seed tray in a light and well ventilated position and do not over-water—a spray with fungicide will not go amiss.

The Tasmanian Waratah will do well in a position that offers adequate root moisture and a fairly clayey soil, though well drained! It is quite hardy with respect to frost, sun or winds and makes a spectacular and very worthwhile specimen for any suitable garden.

## CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

The principal theme of this issue is wildflowers of Tasmania together with Australian Orchids.

*Richea*. The Genus—by A. M. Gray, pp. 99 and B. R. Jackes, pp. 124.

109, "White" pp. 118.

*Eucalyptus*. Tasmanian species—Described and illustrated pp. 115—*E. stricklandii*, pp. 113.

*Agastachys*—"White Waratah" by A. M. Gray, pp. 108.

*Senecio brunonis* by A. M. Gray—pp. 103.

*Melia azedarach*, "The White Cedar"—Street Trees by H. Oakman—pp. 112.

### ORCHIDS

*Dendrobium bairdianum* & *D. bifalce* by Ian Walters—pp. 105.

*Pterostylis plumosa*—A new name by Leo Cady—pp. 138.

Orchids—Their cultivation by B. J. Dudman pp. 107 and by D. J. Jones—pp. 143.

## THE GENUS RICHEA

by A. M. Gray

Some of the most impressive plants of the Tasmanian forests and alpine scrubs and moors belong to the *Richea* genus, a member of the Epacridaceae. *Richea* comprises ten species, nine of which are confined to Tasmania; the other, *Richea continentis*, endemic to the highlands of Vic., N.S.W. and A.C.T. They are distributed from sea-level to the highest peaks throughout the Island, and range in size from small undershrubs to giant palm-like forest trees, with stems from 10' to 50' high and the leaves 1' to 4' in length, and not in the least resembling a "heath".

Botanically the *Richeas* are very interesting, due to the unusual formation of the flowers and to a degree the leaves. Whereas in a normal flower the petals, when present, separate, open and remain upon the receptacle for varying amounts of time (according to the species); in *Richea*, as in the *Eucalyptus* species, the petals do not open but remain joined together in the form of a "cap" or operculum, which is shed as the anthers mature and expand. In *Eucalyptus*, this cap, or operculum, is in all cases woody and does not have a petaloid texture, whereas in *Richea*, the operculum is at least petaloid in texture and colour until it is shed, in most cases, very early in the life of the flower.

The leaves of *Richea* species have broad sheathing bases, and are more or less closely appressed for varying extent of their length, then spreading, upright or reflexed and mostly confined to the ends of the branches. The venation, as in other Epacridaceous species, is parallel. After the leaves have fallen they leave raised scars on the stems, though not prominent in all species.

A very spectacular part of the Tasmanian flora is the huge *Richea pandanifolia* ('pandani'). Visitors travelling through our dense rainforests are surprised to see a plant, which in all respects resembles a tropical palm growing in sub-antarctic forests.

In summer, another of the species, *Richea scoparia*, blazes the alpine moors with a mass of colour, from white through scarlet and burgundy, and lacing the air with the aroma of burnt candy. Then there is the beautiful *Richea dracophylla*, with leaves and stems resembling a miniature of *Richea pandanifolia*, but with the flowers far more spectacular, in huge terminal 'spikes', closely arranged and resembling (before the 'petals' fall) a cluster of polished rice grains.

The following is a description of the genus, followed by a simple account of each species.

Unusual shrubs or medium sized trees, if as the latter, mostly unbranched and resembling certain palm species. Leaves hard and leathery in texture, base sheathing, the lower part imbricate, commonly crowded at the ends of the branches, reflexed, spreading or erect. Venation parallel, the margins with minute serrations, apex abrupt or tapering to a long point, hard or pungent.

Flowers in panicles or spikes, terminating the main branches or short laterals. Corolla not separating into lobes, but separating circumscissile at, or just above the base and falling early, the base persisting. Operculum conical, conical-truncate or ovoid. Calyx of five sepals, separating and persistent. Ovary five-celled, many seeds in each cell. Style embedded in a depression in the top of the ovary; stigma small. Stamens five, occasionally four, arising from the receptacle, persisting and prominent after the operculum has fallen. Anthers bilobed or entire, continuous with the filament or free at the lower portion. Some species possessing nectar secreting scales, nectar often copious.

Fruit a dehiscent 5-celled capsule, seeds numerous and very small. Nine species endemic in Tasmania, one in Victoria, N.S.W. and A.C.T.

The following descriptions of the species are simple and non-technical for the reasons of clarity and ease of identification in the field. Variations between the species are often small and detailed, the main diagnostic characteristics are described and should allow the careful observer to identify the plants.





Reproduced from paintings by Alison M. Ashby—Blocks by courtesy of the South Australian Museum.

### ***Richea continentis* B. L. Burtt**

### **"Candle Heath"**

A shrub usually 3 to 5 ft. or more in height, occasionally reduced to 12" in exposed situations; branches densely crowded, the bush compact. Leaves rigid, lanceolate, imbricate, sub-erect or recurved. Apex tapering to a pungent point. Base broad, sheathing, margins hyaline and minutely scaberrulous. Usually  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1" long but often 2" to 3" long on the younger branches, especially in shaded situations. The leaves persistent on the older stems.

Inflorescence an interrupted, paniculate spike, occurring at the ends of the branches. Bracts much shorter than the foliage leaves, very broad, the base with membranaceous wings. Apex tapering suddenly to a long, soft point; caducous, falling before the corolla is shed. Flowers 3-5 together on a short peduncle, the axis of the main inflorescence elongated between the flower clusters. The flowers subtended by 2 or 3 narrow bracts which fall early. Sepals small and broadly ovate. Corolla ovoid-conical, the apex blunt, creamy-white to pale pink. Stamens equal to or slightly longer than the style. Nectaries present.



































































































