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

Australian Plants

Registered for posting as a periodical—
Category A

MARCH, 1972 Vol. 6, No. 50
Volume 6 will comprise issues 45-52
Recommended Price: 30c

Colour photography by L. Sourry

THELYMITRA VENOSA—"Veined Sun Orchid"

An orchid of the alpine bogs of the eastern highlands but occasionally on coastal heathlands of Tasmania, S.A., N.S.W. and Victoria.

AUSTRALIAN TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS FROM SEED—See page 250

WILDFLOWERS FOR GROUND COVER AND ROCKERIES

GROWING WILDFLOWERS

This periodical is devoted to the preservation and cultivation of the Australia flora. This issue has been compiled by members of the Canberra Region, indexed below.

As Volume 6 nears completion this page, in association with a list of contents of the issue will give references to previous articles on the same subject.

LANDSCAPING—MULCHING, GARDEN SURFACE DRESSING

An essential part of landscaping is the dressing of the ground area for a pleasing effect and a background for the floral and foliage display. For best culture of the mostly surface rooted natives, the top soil should be covered to keep it cool, moist and viable. This can be done with a covering of stones, pebbles, gravel or a mulch of leaves, wood chips, etc., as described in previous issues 12:2, 18; 13:13, 15; 33:211; 35:313; 41:212. Areas can also be covered by plants.

NATIVE GROUND COVERS—The article opposite provides results of experiences at the Canberra Botanic Gardens and although this is a project on a grand scale, the plants used may be used equally well in the home garden.

Previous issues have considered this aspect and a review may be timely. The article opposite has divided the situations into four categories. For each of these categories (in addition to the plants described in this issue) the gardener will want to select plants from the following growth forms.

SUCKERING PLANTS—In some situations it is necessary to be wary of some vigorous species—12:14, 16; *Phyla* (*Lippia*), *Lotus, Commelina, Viola.* Species that are vigorous—Magnificent displays by plants belonging to the family *Goodeniaceae* are described in issue no. 42.

Other safe suckering ground covers are described in 12:14, 16; 37:13.

GROUND HUGGING PLANTS—Vigour depends on exposure, moisture, viability.

Creepers—Some are a problem because of their tendency to climb shrubs and trees and for this reason the article opposite divides them into situations (a) and (b). They are often not a real problem for a home gardener who has the interest to train and prune. Some may be vigorous to pest proportions in good situations, such as *Kennedya rubicunda,* but in a more hardy situation where other plants have difficulty in surviving, it has proved an ideal plant. 12:15, 16, 21; 33:199, 226, 228; 36:36; 40:182; 45:13.

Succulents—19:217; 22:84; 23:111.

Small Low Spreading Plants—See also Rockery Plants below. 12:13; 23:98, 101. 102; 46:56, 67; 47:150.

Plants with a Large Spread—Many low growing plants have forms that hug the ground. The most widely used plants for this purpose are *Grevillea.*

Low Growing Plants—Some height is often desired, how much depending on culture, pruning and exposure. These are usually described and recommended for rock gardens, see below but two genera of plants widely used are: Grevillea—Low growing and prostrate—issue no. 29 is principal reference 45.4. Acacia—Wattles—23:104, 29:32, 35:317.

Rockery Plants—While all plants recommended for rockeries are not suitable as ground covers, they are low growing. Sun, exposure and moisture are usually more important. In association with some rocks or gravel mulch they will serve as colourful ground cover in patches. The following references supplement issue no. 23 which is principally devoted to the subject—19:217; 25:218; 29:6, 7, 10, 13; 32:156; 33:205; 37:13; 42:213, 243; 43:308; 44:381. Special plants—9:31; 23:106; 23:109; 29:29; 33:205.

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NATIVE GROUND COVERS

by J. W. Wrigley, Curator, Botanic Gardens, Canberra

Insufficient thought is usually given to the selection of ground covers when setting out a landscape. Let us look at the factors which should be considered in this selection.

(1) What spread is required?

Many times we have seen species used which are too vigorous for a situation and which have completely swamped the surrounding shrubs. Repeated pruning may overcome this excessive growth but it is easier to make the right choice in the first place. Sometimes the reverse is true and the ground is not sufficiently covered. This may be caused by either incorrect spacing or poor selection of species.

(2) Are there trees in the area?

If trees or shrubs are present, then care must be taken to select plants which won't climb into them, unless, of course this overgrown effect is required. However, they may afford shelter from frost for certain borderline species in colder districts. This gives the landscaper a wider choice.

(3) What height is most desirable?

From a purely aesthetic point of view it adds interest to large expanses of ground covers to vary the height. The landscaper should not consider a ground cover to be essentially a prostrate plant. It may be 4 or 5 ft. tall but still hug the ground over a wide basal area and serve the purpose of a ground cover. From a more functional aspect it may be desirable to use a taller species to hide an unsightly structure such as a septic tank or even to divert wind from a certain area.

(4) What is the aspect?

This is an obvious question but one that is sometimes forgotten. Some plants thrive in the full western sun others prefer the shade of a southerly aspect.

(5) Is frost a problem?

Those of us resident on the tablelands of N.S.W. realise the importance of this question and considerable experience is being gained at Canberra Botanic Gardens in this regard. If the situation is exposed to severe frosts then the selection of species is limited. If in this article, a species is recorded as frost hardy then it has withstood grass temperatures down to 20°F.

(6) Is the drainage good?

With the everpresent danger of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (root rot) attacking plants in poorly drained situations, this factor should be considered. If the drainage is poor then either efforts should be made to improve it or plant selection should be limited to those species which have shown some resistance to the disease.

(7) Is regular watering possible?

In this article it is proposed to consider a variety of sites and select suitable native species for these. In so doing, the above seven factors will also be considered and it will be left to the landscaper to make his choice.

(a) SLOPING BANKS WITHOUT TREES OR SHRUBS

All species mentioned in this section should not be used when trees or shrubs are in the area as they tend to become tangled in the branches rather than stay on the ground.