



AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR
CONTAINERS STUDY GROUP

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Leaders' comments

Welcome to Australian Plants for Containers Newsletter 41, February 2023

This summer we have had some hot weather and plant deaths which have necessitated moving some of our pots. We began our pot collection with attractive glazed ceramic pots which we raised on feet for drainage. They look fine but when you try to move them you discover they are heavy, they do not have much of a lip to grasp and have to be moved off their feet then back on again. Therefore, over time, we have converted to plastic pots with either side holes or channels on the base for drainage. They are light, easy to grab and slide to their new location. We have given away all our large ceramic pots even though they look so lovely.

Another problem this summer has been our two large pots on the front steps near the front door. Lately we have had *Rhodanthe anthemoides* in them which flowered well and drooped gracefully in the spring. However, they are suffering greatly in the heat of summer as they are in full sun. Again, these pots are too large for us to move so the best option is to replace the plants. Perhaps some Acacias might be able to stand the conditions, hot and dry in summer. cold in the winter. We are still thinking about this problem. Please tell us about your pot plant dilemmas and your solutions.



Above left: *Rhodanthe anthemoides* in flower

Left: The front entrance with the two large pots in front.

Above: *Boronia keysii* in a large ceramic pot.

Bruce Cadoret, Ballarat, Victoria



Above left: *Acacia* 'Sterling Silver' October 21 in Ballarat, Victoria

Above right: from left to right: *Actinotus helianthi* Flannel Flower; *Eremophila calorhabdos*; *Acacia beckleri*; *Grevillea lanigera x lavandulacea* - I have been using Osmocote native premium potting mix for most of my pots while also using Neutrog Bush Tucker every 2-3 months. During the warm weather I have been watering my pots every day with the watering reduced when the weather cools. The Flannel Flower is a very recent addition and upon purchasing I thought it would be good to repot it immediately to give it a good chance. In Ballarat we have had heaps of rain until December 2022, since then rainfall has been unreliable, until very recently.

Eds: We were given a whitish pot by the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society in appreciation for a gathering held in our garden to celebrate their 15th anniversary at the end of October, 2022. Immediately my thoughts flew to Acacia binervia 'Sterling Silver' which was illustrated by Bruce above, such a beautiful plant with amazing silver foliage to match the pot. We obtained one and here it is in all its glory. Thanks for the inspiration, Bruce.



Ros Walcott: We planted this hardy mounding plant, 1.8m high x 3-4m wide, with amazing silvery leaves and yellow rod flowers in November 2022. These plants are tolerant of windy sites and almost any soil, as long as it is well drained.

Lawrie Smith, North Lakes, Queensland

Phaius australis syn *Phaius tankervilleae*

Swamp Orchid

Family: Orchidaceae Conservation status: Endangered

ORIGIN South East Queensland – coastal wallum, swamps and wetland edges; Bribie Island; Stradbroke Island; Moreton Island; Cooloola & Great Sandy areas; always found in shallow depressions with seasonal water; also found in north Queensland. Earliest recording was made by Allan Cunningham September, 1824, Bribie Island (now Webster Street and Williams Creek) at edge of a swamp in peaty sand, only one plant.

SIZE Terrestrial orchid growing from underground pseudo-bulbs; foliage grows to approx. 500mm above ground; emergent erect flower spikes to 1m above ground.

FOLIAGE Broad upright spathe type leaves to 100mm wide in a rosette; pale to mid green and slightly pleated;

FLOWERS Typical orchid flower (not unlike a *Cymbidium*) basically cream, but variously patterned with white, pink, yellow & orange; there is colour diversity between various specimens; flowers are clustered along the erect stem (like a gladioli) and can reach to 1.5 m high; Flowers emerge in early spring September & October and persist for several weeks.

COMMENT Grows naturally in moist sandy soils in semi-shaded conditions as an understory, rarely in full sun. Excellent flowers for use in arrangements; probably does best in container culture where moist conditions can be maintained.

Plants will persist in a large container for many years and produce many flower spikes as they age. Readily propagated from 300mm long sections of the flower stem laid in the top layer of moist coarse sand in shaded conditions.



The left photo was taken in 2016 and is the same plant as the October 2022 photo on the right – it has been repotted and taken to our new North Lakes home



Flowers of the *Phaius australis*.

Miriam Ford, Hurstbridge, Victoria

I have a few things growing in containers at present that have just recently come into full bloom and are looking stunning and splendid.

Middle and right: Given the recent 14th FJC Robers seminar on Fabulous Peas I think the hanging basket of *Kennedia coccinea* must have known about the celebrations of its genus and sisterhood. You can see how far and wide it had decided to travel, such a stunning flower and colours - brilliant.



Above: The other hanging basket of *Commersonia hermanniifolia* is on a stand which has also allowed it to spread and show off.





Above left: A closeup of the flowers of the *Commersonia hermanniifolia* .

Above right: The *Hibbertia stellaris* is another wonder. I decided to put this plant in a spare worm bin tray a few years back now and it has clearly decided this residence is just the ticket. It flowers its head off every year for ages. I have propagated from it several times now and am putting it into more of my native animal pots so you will see some of those in time.

Anne Campbell, Mount Barker, South Australia



Left: *Hibbertia stellaris* Label notes: Evergreen small shrub with narrow leaves and glowing orange flowers. Prefers moist, well-drained position in full sun; easily damaged by wind!! Best in container in SE Australia. Tolerates light frost. Under a pergola.

Right: *Dianella* 'Little Jess' (*Dianella caerulea*) PBR; from OzBreed. Flowered very well October 2022 compared to previous years. Planted in April 2020 in rectangular fibre glass containers with other native plants, in an outside courtyard.

Label notes: 40 cmH to 40 cmW; full sun to moderate/heavy shade. purple flowers from September to November. Suitable for a wide variety of soils (but avoid poor ones). Short compact canes will not fall over like the ones on the common form. Excellent heat and drought tolerance; good cold tolerance. NOTE: Discolours in winter in climates like Canberra.

Arthur Kelly, Camden NSW



Left: *Scaevola aemula* 'Purple Haze' thrives in a hanging basket. Last 1-2 years. Prune and fertilise when flowering becomes sparse.



Right: *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* orange form in a hanging basket. Healthy and long flowering. Cut back hard and fertilise when flowering diminishes.



Left: *Anigizanthos* 'Red Fury'. Lovely plant.



Right: *Scaevola aemula* - one of the white forms in a hanging basket. Prune and fertilise when flowering diminishes.

Liesbeth Uijtewaal, The Netherlands



Right: 'Wild Sunset' was grafted in Feb 2018 so, it was 2.5 y.o. in the photo. It is a beautiful compact growing plant. The pot is not all that visible, sorry about that. It sure IS in a pot!

Left: *Corymbia* 'Summer Red' was grafted in May 2016 so, 14 months before the photo was taken

Brenda Meehan, Brisbane, Qld



Above right: *Asplenium* ferns that have been out in the shadehouse and just brought in, probably 3 years to grow to that size.

Right: *Davallia* fern has been in a darkish corner for a year. It's a slow grower and can get withered leaves that I cut off



Above is the Bribie pine, *Callitris columnaris*, in that pot 3 years and inside two months.

Words: Ros Walcott, Canberra

Photos: Ben Walcott, Canberra

***Graptophyllum ilicifolium* x *G. excelsum* 'Holly Hedge'**



We planted this low bushy shrub, 1.5m high x 1m wide, with prickly foliage and brilliant red, glossy 'fuchsia' flowers in a pot in November 2019. This plant had its first flowers in November 2020 and bloomed for two months and has flowered regularly ever since. This year, 2023, it flowered later in January and February, delayed by the cold and rainy weather.. Usually it is a reliable Xmas plant with its cheerful red flowers on bright green foliage.

Hibiscus in Pots

We are growing six different hibiscus in pots this year and enjoying their blooms in January and February, 2023. Their foliage is worth noting even without the stunning flowers. These plants are 2-4m high, with large leaves, prickly stems, often red, and mostly green leaves with the outstanding exception of the beautiful grey lobed leaves of *Hibiscus* 'Barambah Creek'. The flowers vary from light pink to darker pink while *Hibiscus heterophyllum* 'Lutea' and *Hibiscus* 'Ian's Gold' are pure bright yellow with maroon centres. Most of the flowers open to large flat petals, but the mauve-pink flowers of *Hibiscus* 'Barambah Creek' have a blowsy, horizontal shape. The one different hibiscus is *Hibiscus geranioides* which is only 75cm high and wide, with smaller dark green lobed leaves and delicate pink cupped flowers. This hibiscus is native to tropical areas of Western Australia.



Hibiscus 'Barambah Creek' plant (left) and flower (right)

We planted this upright shrub, 2-3m high x 1.5-2m wide, with soft grey divided foliage and large mauve-pink flowers, in a pot in May 2022. This plant, native to Gayndah/Goomeri area of Queensland, needs a warm sunny position in well drained soil and is tolerant of only light frosts.



Hibiscus 'Aussie Delight' (above left)

We planted this hybrid hibiscus, *H. heterophyllus* x *H. divaricatus*, 2m high x 1.5m wide, a fast growing shrub with glossy green leaves, red-brown stems and scented light pink flowers, in March 2021. The stems are covered in irritating hairs.

Hibiscus heterophyllus 'Lutea' (above right)

We planted this open shrub, 4m high x 3m wide, with lobed leaves and large yellow flowers with maroon centres, in a pot, in March 2022. This plant needs well drained soils, is tolerant of light shade, and must be protected from frost.



Hibiscus heterophyllus pink

Also known as Native Rosella, this hibiscus is endemic to New South Wales and Queensland where it can grow to a shrub or small tree. We planted one in a pot in November 2019. Our plant had its beautiful (but prickly) leaves shredded by hail in January 2020, but they have regrown. The pink flowers are large and showy.



Hibiscus 'Ian's Gold'

We planted this hybrid hibiscus, dedicated to the memory of Ian Waldron, in a pot in October 2021. This plant forms a bushy shrub, 2m high x 1.5m wide, with many large single yellow flowers with a burgundy throat. The reddish stems are prickly. This plant needs a sunny well drained position and tolerates only light frosts, so must be protected in Canberra.

Hibiscus geranioides (below)



We planted this annual or biennial species, 0.75m high x 0.75m wide, with dark green, lobed leaves and delicate pink flowers with a darker throat, in a pot in October 2015. This charming plant flowers over many months. We removed our original plant in 2021, as it had grown too large for its position and was not blooming so freely, but the cutting Ben made is growing and flowering well. This plant is widespread in tropical areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. In common with most Hibiscus species, the individual flowers last only 1-2 days but new flowers continue to open over a long period.

Grevillea 'Bush Lemons'



We have tried twice to establish grafted specimens of *Grevillea* 'Bush Lemons' in our garden but have had to admit defeat. Our frosty conditions are too severe for this plant. One, planted in March 2013 died in September 2015 after flowering somewhat in December 2013. The other, planted in February 2018, was frosted off in the winter and died in September 2018. In February 2022, we obtained an advanced standard form of 'Bush Lemons' in a pot, and one year later it is performing well. The lemon toothbrush flowers last a long time and the deeply divided grey-green foliage is a bonus. This beautiful plant was developed at Changers Green Nursery in Gin Gin Queensland, but the exact parentage is not known.

Please send us your thoughts comments and ideas and when we get enough, we will produce another Newsletter.

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