



**AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR  
CONTAINERS STUDY GROUP**

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Group Leaders: Ros and Ben Walcott: [roswalcott5@gmail.com](mailto:roswalcott5@gmail.com) and [benwalcott5@gmail.com](mailto:benwalcott5@gmail.com)

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## Leaders' Comments:

Welcome to the September Newsletter. We hope that you are managing the various lockdowns etc associated with Covid. In Canberra, we are in a strict lockdown which hopefully will end in a few weeks. Many thanks to all those who have sent in contributions. It is great to hear about your experiences growing native plants in containers. The point of the Study Group is to learn from each other and particularly from our mistakes. It is great to hear about successes, but it is also useful to hear about what does not work. So keep the contributions coming so they are ready for the next Newsletter



## **Boronia keysii**

We planted this rare species of boronia in a pot in November 2019. This plant is from south-eastern Queensland, grows up to 2m tall, has aromatic foliage and pink, star-shaped flowers. This plant was lost to science for 62 years then rediscovered in 1971. This plant has many flowers ( see above) in spring, then scattered flowers all winter. We keep it under a transparent pergola so that it gets light but is protected from frosts.

## Ian Cox, Parramatta Hills, NSW

The photo on page 5 of the Newsletter #37 of the Blandfordia in a pot prompted me to send you the attached information sheet, which is dated April 2000. It was authored by Tamara (my late wife) and me and was handed out when Tamara gave a talk on this subject at one of the plant sales at Mt Annan Botanic Gardens organized by the Grevillea Study Group.

### ***Growing Blandfordias (Christmas Bells) In Pots***

Growing Blandfordias in pots is not difficult if the suggestions in this information sheet are followed. As they are slow-growing plants, patience is needed, but you will be well-rewarded in summer with the spectacular bell-shaped flowers on 50cm stems ranging in colour from all yellow (rare) to red with yellow tips.

Blandfordias are available in pots in sizes ranging from tubes to six-inch pots from some native plant nurseries. The larger sizes are probably better buys and will lessen the wait for flowers. Blandfordias can also be grown from seed. They will usually start to flower in the third or fourth year after germination. The Blandfordia sold in nurseries in the Sydney area is *Blandfordia grandiflora*, and as the name implies it has the largest flowers of the four species of this genus. This Blandfordia is popular as a cut flower, both locally and overseas.



A recommended potting mix is 50% coco peat and 50% coarse river sand. In the wild, Blandfordias grow near swamps and other places with a high water table. Because of this liking for water, the pots must not be allowed to dry out, especially during hot weather. Try to mimic the natural flow by letting the water run through the potting mix from the top, and be generous with water. Place the pot in a saucer so it can catch the surplus, but do not let this water become stagnant. Reduce watering in winter.

Blandfordias need feeding, so give them slow-release fertiliser. They also like liquid fertiliser in spring to prepare them for flowering. A good liquid fertiliser is the liquid obtained from a worm farm, heavily diluted to the colour of weak tea.

Blandfordias are deep-rooted plants, so choose a pot that is at least twice as deep as it is wide. When they have outgrown their pots, every two years or so, repot into a larger and deeper pot.

Place the pot in a sheltered place that receives morning sun. A north-easterly aspect is ideal. When the flower spikes appear and buds form, usually in November or December, the pot can be moved out of the hot sun into a shadier place where the flowers will last longer, and where they can be admired. When flowering is finished, return the pot to its usual position.

Flowers usually appear in summer, but occasionally they occur at other times. The authors of this sheet noticed that after the 1994 bushfires when their Blandfordias were exposed to smoke over many days, the plants flowered continuously the following year. Perhaps this was coincidence, but it could be a subject worthy of research.

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## Rowan Ward, Canberra

Here's a bit of a story about a transition from pot to yard. About three months ago I took my *Corymbia* Summer Red out of its large pot, where it'd been for around 3 years. I thought the roots would have filled the pot but was surprised to find they hadn't. So I could have left it in there for another couple of years at least. But I'd already dug and prepped a large hole for it in a prime semi sheltered position on the south east side of the yard, so I proceeded with planting it out. Now, 3 months later, it's showing some amazing new growth and a large number of flower buds (see photos - sorry - still very wet). I assume the transplanting interfered with its timing for flowering as the buds are only recent and they're yet to bloom. (If that's not the case, I might have to call it my *Corymbia* Autumn Red !)



I had procrastinated for a long time whether to plant it in the garden or not, knowing it wouldn't like Canberra's frosts. So now I'll play winter by ear. I think I'll leave it to its own devices for down to minus 3 degrees, but anything under that I'll give it some protection.

I've also attached a photo of it flowering a year or so ago when it was still in the pot.

I've since started a *Corymbia ficifolia* Lasseter's Reef in a pot, that I grew from seed (one of those seed packets - might have been from the Botanic Gardens). I've included a photo of that but it's still pretty boring, and only about 18 months old now. There's very little information about this form of *Corymbia ficifolia* that I can find. One is <https://theclimbingfig.com.au/products/corymbia-eucalyptus-ficifolia-lasseters-reef-seeds> but this source is confusing as it suggests it is a hybrid. But if that's the case, would it be able to grow from seed ? (If it is a hybrid, one possibility is it's a throw back to one of the parents. That might explain why I was only able to germinate 2 seeds from whole packet). So I'm waiting patiently for it to grow bigger and flower. Should be interesting. (If you're able to shed any further light on *Corymbia ficifolia* Lasseter's Reef, please do !)



Some other plants I've recently started in pots include *Lysiopetalum involucreatum*, *Gastrolobium latifolium* (hanging basket), *Calytrix depressa*, *Epacris petrophila* and *Eremophila debilis* (hanging basket). They're all quite young still but hopefully I'll have some more photos for your next newsletter.

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### Jan Hall, Victoria

This *Callitris* was moved to enable easier access to a part of the garden. Only problem was that the pot was well established and plant well rooted. The question now is whether it will survive this move or not? At the beginning of the year the lilies are beginning to display. Two that have brought much delight were the *Calostemma luteum* and *Calostemma purpureum*. Both in containers and well worth their space in any garden.



*Callitris* in pot to be planted (above)



*Calostemma luteum* (above left and right)



*Calostemma purpureum* (right)

## Sandra McKenzie

Please find attached 3 photos of my *Eremophila cuneifolia* growing very well in the same pot for approx 7 years.

Problem is 95% of flowers this year had no corolla but flowered well with a calyx.

Growing along side of it is *Darwinia macrostegia*, *Scaevola aemula*, and *Pimelia physodes*.



Is there anyone out there who could give me some idea what the cause is and how do I rectify it. The plant is watered regularly and is given a dose of Bush Tucker twice a year with an occasional feed of Power Feed (when I remember) It is in full sun facing north. I don't have any other *Eremophilas* with this problem. I sent the same photos to Lyndal Thorburn and she is none the wiser but will make some enquiries. I do hope someone can help.



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## Charles Ferrugia, Sydney, NSW



This is a seedling that germinated in a pot of discarded garden soil. It germinated in the peak of the drought and was left for nature to look after until I realised it was an *eremophila* seedling. It is still in the original pot.

*Eremophila subflocosa* ssp. *glandulosa* (left)

**Arthur Kelly, NSW**

Some natives I have in hanging baskets and in pots on the ground :



*Viola hederacea*



*Brachyscome multifida*



*Rhodanthe anthemoides*  
'Paper Girl'



*Brachyscome angustifolia*



*Scaevola aemula* 'White'



*Boronia* 'Lipstick'



*Brachyscome angustifolia*



*Swainsonia formosa*



*Correa* 'Ring a Ding'



Scaevola aemula purple (left and middle)



Eucalyptus gunnii



Syzygium 'Aussie Boomer'



Syzygium 'Hinterland Gold'



Chamelaucium ucinatum  
'Purple Pride'



Dendrobium speciosa



Dendrobium kingianum



Eucalyptus pulverulenta

## Barbara Melville, NSW

*Rhodanthe chlorocephala* seeds were planted into this water-well pot with native potting mix about four years ago. A magnificent show was the result for three years. Between seasons this mini garden did not look too good however the spring show made up for that. You could always hide the pot somewhere till the seeds re-shot. Placing the pot amongst other plants in the garden also adds to the look.



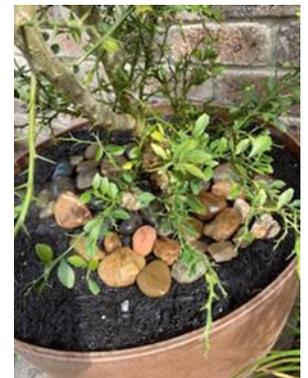
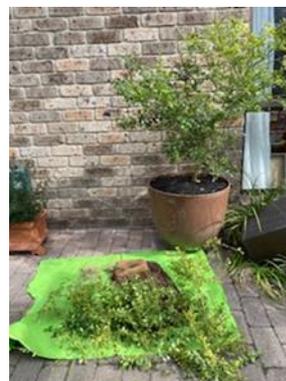
Now this same water-well pot is home to a *Banksia integrifolia* since March this year. With advice from people on the Banksia Lovers page of Facebook it is growing really well. Advice included using native potting mix with lots of perlite mixed in. Whilst I haven't been too heavy handed with the secateurs it was suggested I could prune it back by about a third to maintain its neat shape. This Banksia may need more drastic pruning in the future. I still live in hope of flowers!

Happy potting!

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## Fran Middleton, Canberra

### Potting up my Finger Lime



Finger limes occur naturally as rainforest understorey in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales but here in Canberra's climate I've found the ideal spot is against a north-facing brick wall where I've grown my grafted *Citrus australasica* 'Pink Ice' since 2016. It is rarely without flowers and tiny, developing fruit but time gets away and annual crops of delicious fruit every April had lulled me into taking it for granted.

Now, yellowing, hungry-looking foliage and a dramatic drop in the level of the potting mix put re-potting on the 'to do' list for the last day of winter. Finger limes need to be treated just like any of the Genus Citrus (and I've found they certainly require fertilising as such) so I chose potting mix for citrus this time, rather than my usual native mix. The new large water-well pot required 3 x 25 litre bags of potting mix. Doing the sums, this might seem like some fairly expensive fruit at harvest time but the pleasure of home-grown fruit that is not easy to buy around here makes it worthwhile, I think.

The most tricky part of re-potting was covering up to avoid being scratched by the vicious and closely-spaced thorns which cover the shrub. My elbow-length gauntlets have gone missing so I improvised with layers of clothes and rubber bands! After loosening around the edges of the root ball with an old knife, it came out of the pot easily. It was a bit of a shock to see such a small, dry and matted root ball supporting what had been quite vigorous foliage growth. I pruned off the bottom section of the root ball and to try to keep the balance about right, also removed about a quarter of the foliage, which meant sacrificing some tiny buds and fruit. I carefully avoided harming a well-camouflaged Praying Mantis eyeing me warily from deep within the thorns. I gave the plant a good drenching with Seasol and made a start at a 'mulch' of whatever stones I could find while making-do in lockdown. Now, hopefully I'll see an improvement in foliage colour as the days warm up and the roots explore the new potting mix. If all goes well, I'll be enjoying a delicious harvest in a few months. Oh, and no blood was shed in this tricky, thorny task.



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**Words: Ros Walcott, Canberra**

**Photos: Ben Walcott, Canberra**

### **Kangaroo Paws in Pots**

We have had very mixed results with Kangaroo Paws, both in pots and in the ground. Our frosty winters, clay soil and unreliable rainfall are not conducive to vigorous growth in this iconic and beautiful genus. Even in pots, where we can control the frost and provide sharp drainage, we have not managed to keep plants happy for more than a year or two. Our conclusion is to accept these plants as annuals or biannuals and replace them as needed.



#### **Anigozanthos 'Bush Crystal'**

We planted two of these plants, height 80cm x width 50cm, with iridescent crimson flowers. Full sun, light frost tolerant.



Our best performing roo paws in pots have been Angus Stewart's Bush series. We planted four large containers with 'Bush Crystal', 'Bush Dance', 'Bush Dawn', 'Bush Diamond', 'Bush Fling', 'Bush Pearl' and 'Bush Zest' in December 2019. Some of these have disappeared after one flowering season, but others have given us two years of long-lasting flowers. 'Bush Dance' is a particularly beautiful plant with furry red stems and red and green flowers.

We had some earlier success with *Anigozanthos flavidus* 'Yellow Gem', *Anigozanthos* 'Green Dragon', *Anigozanthos* 'Lilac Queen' and notably, *Anigozanthos rufus*. We planted one *Anigozanthos rufus* in a pot in November 2012 and another five in October 2014. This plant has strappy leaves, deep red branching flowers to 1m high, and performed well until winter '14. Only one survived this winter and young ravens kept attacking them in December 2014. These plants did not reshoot in 2015.



**Anigozanthos 'Bush Diamond'** (photos above)

We planted this Kangaroo Paw, celebrated as the first 'white' kangaroo paw, a compact plant, 60cm high, with a hint of pink, in April 2012. For the first couple of years this was a fantastic plant, long flowering and vigorous, but it was frosted off in winter 2014 and removed in September 2015. We planted another in a trough in 2020 — so far, so good.



**Anigozanthos 'Bush Pearl'** (photos above)

We planted three of these plants, height 0.5m, in November 2008, which initially bloomed for months. We divided them several times before eventually removing them in December 2013, as they were not doing well. We have now planted two in a trough in December 2019 and these are performing well so far.



**Anigozanthos ‘Bush Zest’** (flower photo above left)

We have planted two of these hybrids, *Anigozanthos humilis* x *flavidus* in April 2021. These dwarf kangaroo paws, 40 cm high x 45 cm wide, have bright lemon-yellow flowers and stems and a bushy growth habit.

**Anigozanthos flavidus ‘Yellow Gem’** ( photos above, middle and right)

We planted two of these clump forming perennials, with long thick green leaves and branched flower stems to 2m high, covered in hairy, tubular yellow flowers, in December 2019.



**Anigozanthos ‘Bush Dance’** (photos above and right)

We planted two of these plants, height 60cm x width 45cm, with bright red and green flowers on red stems, in December 2019. These plants performed magnificently for a year then died. We should treat them as an annual in Canberra and enjoy their extraordinary flowers.





**Anigozanthos 'Bush Fling'** (photos above)

This plant is a shorter, more compact form of kangaroo paw with multiple luminous orange blooms in spring on branched stems. This plant is reported to have excellent disease tolerance and to grow well in a container with well drained soil in a sunny position, however our two have disappeared after one year.

We use a variety of pots, but similar potting mixes. We use a locally made native potting mix (Martins), which contains low phosphorus fertilizer and a wetting agent, to which we add a generous amount of sand. According to Angus Stewart, Anigozanthos plants love high phosphorus fertilizers and should be fed regularly. We do give them a handful of low phosphorus slow release once in the spring and once in the autumn but have not tried other fertilizers. We water regularly, sometimes every day during the summer but usually less often.

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**Anigozanthos manglesii**, or Red and Green Kangaroo Paw, is the floral emblem of Western Australia. This plant is one of the most spectacular of the Kangaroo Paws, with its green flowers, bright red bases and red furry stems. This plant grows along the southern part of the west coast of Western Australia. Photographed in a pot at the ANBG on September 20, 2020.

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

Ros Walcott: [roswalcott5@gmail.com](mailto:roswalcott5@gmail.com)

Ben Walcott: [benwalcott5@gmail.com](mailto:benwalcott5@gmail.com)