

The Fort Bushland

September 2007 Notes - by John Lahey

At our last working bee we were informed by Rachel that she was arranging for a Council workgroup to clear the weeds and weed trees from the steep bank below the Passionist Fathers' property. So in addition to our normal weed clearing, we marked the native trees in this area so that they would not be removed by the Council work gang. The weeded area is now getting close to the top of the Eddystone Road extension.

The council has continued their work cleaning up the area beside Fort Road and at the top of Eddystone Road. A thick layer of mulch has been spread under the trees beside Fort Road to control weed growth. At the top of Eddystone Road the old fence has been removed, the bank has been leveled off and covered with a thick layer of mulch. Both areas now look much tidier.

Petaurus: Sugar Glider or Squirrel Glider

Ric Natrass visited the site a few weeks ago and confirmed that the *Flindersia schottiana* tree was being visited by Gliders. He observed the lack of hollow trees in the reserve and recommended the installation of nesting boxes to overcome this deficiency and to encourage our native fauna. The Council Habitat Group has chosen the following boxes for installation in a pilot project:

- 1 x Eastern Boobook nestbox
- 4 x Rear entry Glider nestboxes
- 1 x King Parrot nestbox
- 2 x Feather Tail Glider nestboxes
- 4 x Possum nestboxes
- 4 x Parrot/lorikeet nestboxes

An order has been placed for these boxes.



This month I made four new additions to our list of native plants growing in the Fort Bushland.



Parsonsia leichhardtii (Black silkpod)

This twining vine grows to about 5 metres and while the main trunk is thick and corky the growing stems are quite slender. It produces bunches of small creamy-yellow flowers which are followed by slender seed pods to 10 cm in length.



***Citrus australis* (Native Lime)**

In my hunt for the elusive male *Alchornea ilicifolia* I found this mature Native Lime. It is a small tree about 7 metres tall with a dense crown of glossy dark green leaves and a sharp thorn at the base of most leaves. Right now it is covered in flowers and the noise from the visiting European honeybees is quite loud. It is a noted bush tucker



plant producing round rough-skinned fruit (limes) up to 6 cm in diameter. It appears to be setting fruit as illustrated in the photo on the right.



***Carissa ovata*
(Currant Bush)**

This is a medium to large shrub or small tree with glossy dark green leaves and a pair of spines growing at right angles to the paired leaves. It produces fragrant white flowers followed by small black edible fruit. I found this plant almost 12 months ago but it remained leafless until this month when it suddenly produced very healthy looking new shoots that enabled me to identify it. I assume from this that it is very drought tolerant.

***Auranticarpa rhombifolia*
(Holly-leaved
Pittosporum)**

This is a small to medium sized tree which is probably better known by its former name of *Pittosporum rhombifolium*. It produces masses of small bright orange fruit on the ends of the branches. It is widely used in horticulture as a garden tree and for street plantings.

The following plants have flowered this month.



***Myrsine variabilis* (Muttonwood)**

This attractive small tree has very glossy dark-green leaves clustered towards the ends of the branches. It was previously classified as *Rapanea variabilis*. About a month ago I noticed that all the branches were smothered in flower buds. I waited and waited for the buds to open to photograph the flowers until I suddenly realised that all the flowerbuds were falling off. It was then that I discovered that the flowers had actually opened and were falling off because they hadn't been pollinated. From my subsequent research I discovered that it is thought that these flowers are pollinated by thrips, maybe just a single species of thrips. I am now waiting to see if the tree has set any fruit at all this year. It is possible that because the bushland is so degraded, there are no longer any of the necessary thrips to effect pollination of the flowers.

Tabernaemontana pandacaqui (Banana Bush)
 This small shrub grows to about 3 metres and is very common and widespread in the reserve. Many of the plants are now covered in white sweetly scented flowers. The fruit is relatively large and shaped like a small orange banana. These plants are most attractive and I'm surprised that they are not more widely used as garden plants. There is a photo of the fruit in my March 2007 Notes.



Jacksonia scoparia (Dogwood)
 This exceptionally hardy shrub grows to about 4 metres in very well drained positions in full sun. Its branches and branchlets are strongly angled and the leaves are generally reduced to scales although it occasionally produces a few leaves at the



base of the branches. There are several plants growing on the road cutting at the top of Cliveden Avenue and a number on the steep rocky hillside beside the Brisbane River



Cupaniopsis parvifolia (Small-leaved Tuckeroo)
 This tree was once considered to be a variety of *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* but is now recognised as a distinct species. While its leaves and flowers are very similar to *C. anacardioides* they are considerably smaller but the tree itself is generally taller and less spreading. It is reasonably common in the reserve and some trees like the one in the Northeast corner are absolutely smothered in bloom. The flowers are very popular with the native stingless bees (*Trigona carbonaria*).



Pittosporum revolutum (Rough-fruited Pittosporum or Hairy Pittosporum)

This shrub grows to about 3 metres and plants can be found scattered through the reserve. Most seem to have struggled with the drought but it is quite hardy as the plant growing on the very edge of the road at the dog's leg in Cliveden Avenue can attest. The small fragrant yellow flowers are followed by quite large very rough fruit which turn yellow when ripe and then split to reveal a mass of sticky red seeds. While I was preparing the photo on the right for these notes I suddenly realised that there was something wrong with the flowers. The flowers don't have any pollen; in fact they don't



have any male parts at all. When I searched the bushland I found five plants with flowers and a number that haven't flowered this year. All the flowers on three of the plants lacked male parts while all the flowers on two of the plants appeared perfect with both male and female parts as in the photo on the left (note the resident crab spider waiting to catch a visiting insect). Further study is required to discover if (a) individual plants produce the same type of flowers each year and (b) whether there is any difference in the quantity and quality of fruit produced by the two types of plants. What I do know is that the plant on the very edge of Cliveden Avenue, that has flowers with only female parts, did produce a quantity of fruit last year which were full of viable seed. I planted the seed for propagation and had a very successful germination rate although a lot did subsequently damp off.

Hovea acutifolia (Pointed-leaf Hovea)

This slender shrub grows on the fringes of the dry rainforest where the tree canopy is more open, admitting more light to the forest floor. It grows to about 4 metres, although the plants I found in the reserve were only about a metre high. The stems and lower leaf surfaces are covered with fine rusty coloured hairs. The pea shaped flowers are followed by small pods about 15 mm long.

This is a very showy plant but regrettably I could only find a handful of specimens in the reserve. This is a plant that I think would be highly desirable to propagate and replant in appropriate locations when the Ochna has been eradicated.



Maytenus bilocularis (Orangebark)

This is a large shrub to small tree and derives its common name from the orange inner bark which can be seen if the outer bark is scraped off. It produces masses of small greenish yellow flowers in small clusters along the thinner branches and branchlets. I've been surprised that even very small plants less than a metre high have flowers. With its glossy dark green leaves it is a very attractive plant even when not in bloom. I'm surprised it is not used more frequently as a garden plant.



Morinda canthoides (Veiny Morinda)

This thin woody vine has scrambled over a number of smaller trees. It has very stiff leaves with prominent veins. It has produced masses of sweetly scented white flowers in small bunches from the leaf axils. The flowers are white when they open but darken to a creamy-yellow as they age. The fruit is globular, orange in colour to about 10mm diameter.



Lomandra multiflora (Many-flowered mat-rush)

This is one of a number of different species of *Lomandra* that can be found in the reserve. The thin stiff leaves grow in small tufts and the plant is relatively inconspicuous when not in flower. These plants are dioecious and the photo on the right is of a male plant. The female flowers look fairly similar but the inflorescence is generally unbranched and the individual flowers don't have the long stalk of the male flowers.





***Capparis sarmentosa* (Scrambling Caper)**

This scrambling climber is relatively common in the reserve but is often not easy to spot. It grows to about 7 metres in height with a stem diameter of up to 10 mm. It utilises pairs of small but very sharp recurved spines that grow at every leaf node to cling most effectively to supporting plants. Only a few plants are in bud right now but I found one plant that has spread out over several square metres which is smothered in buds and opening flowers. The flowers are relatively short-lived but this plant looks quite spectacular. It produces small orange fruit which are said to be edible.

***Alstonia constricta* (Quinine Bush)**

This is a large shrub to small tree up to 12 metres in height. However all the plants I've found in the reserve are no taller than about 3 to 4 metres. There are a number of plants in the open eucalypt forest below Fort Road and another group in the middle of the reserve. The latter group are steadily recovering from being completely smothered by Cat's Claw creeper. The flowers are white to cream in colour and have a scent that I find unpleasant. There seems to be considerable variation in the leaves of these plants with some almost hairless while others are densely and softly hairy.



***Arytera foveolata* (Pitted Coogera)**

Following the flush of pale tawny-green new foliage, these trees have produced a small number of flowers. The flowers are mostly clustered at the very tops of the trees and consequently very difficult to see as they are small and inconspicuous.





***Alchornea ilicifolia* (Native Holly)**

This is a fairly common understory shrub in the bushland but does grow to about 5 metres high. The leaves are angled with a sharp spine on each angle. The plant resembles European holly, hence the common name and the specific epithet. These plants are extremely hardy and seem to have survived the drought quite well so far. Like so many of the plants in the reserve this species is dioecious with separate plants carrying the male and female flowers. The photograph on the left below shows the female flowers with a developing fruit. The fruit turn brown when ripe.



The photograph on the right shows the male flowers which of course carry the pollen. As a casual and unscientific observation, I'd have to say that the ratio of female to male plants is very high, possibly as high as 10 to 1. It took about an hour of searching to find a male plant in bloom, while I passed dozens of female plants. Although I must say that a few plants were not in flower or carrying any fruit, so it is quite likely that these were male plants.



Weed news:-

The Ochna has flowered spectacularly this season and I am expecting a bumper crop of fruit. Ahhhh!

I've noticed some Cat's Claw creepers in flower at other locations but I haven't seen any of the bright yellow flowers in the Fort Bushland yet. I'd like to see if we can prevent any seeds being produced this season from Cat's Claw creepers on the northern side of the erosion gully. If you spot any flowering plants in this area please note the location so that we can cut the vines before they set seed.

The Asparagus Fern (*Asparagus africanus*) has also been covered in white flowers and is likely to set masses of fruit. The area just below Fort Road bank is badly infested by this weed. It would ultimately save a lot of work if the Asparagus stems could be cut off near the ground to destroy the aerial part of the plant and prevent the seed being produced. Any volunteers?

The next working bee will be held on Sunday 7 October at 8 am.