BUDAWANGIA*

AN E-NEWSLETTER FOR ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN THE NATIVE PLANTS OF THE NSW SOUTH COAST

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Aims: To connect those interested in the native flora of the NSW South Coast, to share up to date information on the flora of the region and to broaden the appreciation of the region's native plants.

Editorial

The early rain in June was welcome after a very dry May (only 9 mm at Jamberoo for whole month). Having travelled to the tablelands a few times during the month, it is amazing how green the countryside is for winter. The rainforest is full of fruit this month, and many birds are making the most of this food feast. Heavily fruiting trees include White Cedar, Lilly Pilly and Common Acronychia.

By month's end, the introduced Coral Tree *Erythrina x sykesii* was in full flower, attracting the usual hoard of nectar-feeding birds, particularly the noisy Rainbow Lorikeets as well as flocks of the smaller Silvereyes.

This edition contains as article on two closely related *Banksia* species, one very widespread and one of quite restricted in distribution in the region. Wetland Plants number three appears along with the answer to the mystery weed from last month. Plant of the Month re-appears, this time discussing one of the few rainforest shrub species found in our region.

"To such an extent does nature delight and abound in variety that among her trees there is not one plant to be found which is exactly like another; and not only among the plants, but among the boughs, the leaves and the fruits, you will not find one which is exactly similar to another."

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519): prominent during the Italian Renaissance period, painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, cartographer, botanist, and writer.

I would be pleased to receive appropriate articles, however small, on interesting observations, new discoveries, plant name changes, etc., up to two A4 pages, including some photographs. Deadline for copy is one week before the end of the calendar month.

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* *Budawangia* is a monotypic, endemic genus restricted to the Budawang Range on the western edge of the South Coast region. The genus was named by Telford in 1992; the species *Budawangia gnidioides* (Ericaceae) was previously *Rupicola gnidioides*.

Banksia spinulosa and *Banksia cunninghamii*

The genus *Banksia* was named by the younger Linnaeus in 1782, after Joseph Banks who collected the first specimens at Botany Bay in 1770. There are at least 80 species and lower taxa of *Banksia* and all but one is endemic to Australia; most species occur in Western Australia. *B. spinulosa* has in the past been split into several subspecies, including subsp. *cunninghamii*; this name is recognised by the National Botanical Gardens in Canberra but not NSW, where it is given full specific rank. Leaving the taxonomists to sort out such things, the following notes allow differentiation between the above two taxa in our region.

Name	Habitat/Distribution	Habit	Leaves
Banksia spinulosa	Forest, woodland and heathland. *Very common and widespread* across the sandstone and shale country throughout the region.	Multi-stemmed shrub with spindly stems, usually to about two metres tall; *lignotuber present; veins usually obvious below leaves.*	*Leaves very narrow (1-2 mm), linear*, greenish to whitish below, finely toothed along margins.
Banksia cunninghamii	*A species of higher altitudes*, at least in our region. Found in the forests westwards from Fitzroy Falls and Barren Grounds.	*Single-stemmed shrub or small tree* with sturdy trunk to over four metres tall; *lignotuber not present; veins not usually obvious below leaves.*	*Leaves wider* than above, linear to *oblanceolate, whitish to brownish below*, marginal teeth often absent.

Underside of leaves and flower spike of *Banksia cunninghamii*; note leaf width and light underside.

Two large specimens of *Banksia cunninghamii* near Fitzroy Falls.

Banksia spinulosa showing low-growing multi-stemmed habit.

Inflorescence of *Banksia spinulosa*; note narrow leaves.

The name *cunninghamii* is named after colonial botanist Allan Cunningham; *spinulosa* means spiny, and refers to the sharp teeth on the margins of the leaves.

B. spinulosa was named in 1793 by J. E. Smith, based on a specimen from the Sydney area, probably gathered in 1792.

B. cunninghamii appears to have been first named in 1827, from a collection from Mount York in the Blue Mountains made in 1823 by botanist Franz Sieber. It was later renamed as the subspecies *B. spinulosa* subsp. *cunninghamii* in 1981 by Alex George. Subsequently, the full species was recognised in NSW.

Photograph at right. Comparison of leaves of *B. spinulosa* (right) and *B. cunninghamii* (left). Specimens gathered near Fitzroy Falls.

Mystery Weed Answered

The mystery weed in last month's edition is Holly *Ilex aquifolium* (Aquifoliaceae). The species is a European plant that in our region only occurs at higher altitudes such as around Robertson where it is a relatively common naturalised species. Some specimens grow into small trees several metres tall. The pointed leaf margins and red fruit (appearing in winter) are distinctive features of the plant. Australia has one indigenous species, *Ilex arnhemensis* of tropical northern Australia. Of the more than 400 species described in the genus, China has 204.

Wetland Plants No. 3 – The Knotweeds

The genus *Persicaria* (Polygonaceae) or Knotweeds are common plants of freshwater wetlands. About 10 species occur in the region, out of some 15 in Australia, and some are very common. The species were previously placed under the genus *Polygonum*. The species are small to moderately large herbs; the smallest local species is the scrambling *P. strigosa*, while *P. orientalis* can grow to over two metres tall. Plants typically grow around the edges of the water and in poorly drained places.

Four of the local species are illustrated below. The plants are generally rather weak herbs and some like *P. strigosa* scramble over other plants forming extensive patches on some wetlands. Possibly the most common species is *P. decipiens*, which also has a scrambling habit and produces pinkish flowers in spikes.

Spotted Knotweed *Persicaria strigosa*

Pale Knotweed *Persicaria lapathifolia*

Princes Feathers *Persicaria orientalis*

Water Pepper *Persicaria hydropiper*

Plant of the Month – *Tasmannia insipida*

Brush Pepperbush *Tasmannia insipida* (Winteraceae) is a shrub usually found growing in the understorey of moist rainforest. The species is most often encountered at higher altitudes, on the plateau around Robertson and the upper escarpments. It sometimes grows in moist gullies at lower altitudes. The black fruit can be seen in late autumn/early winter.

Pepperbush is so named because of the peppery taste of various parts of the plant.

The related species Mountain Pepper *Tasmania lanceolata,* growing in south-eastern Australia, is used in the kitchens of some of the best restaurants in the country. The dried fruit and the dried and powdered leaves are used for flavouring. It is reported that our local species *T. insipida* has no culinary value. Any takers to test a recipe?

Photograph right. The glossy leaves and ripe fruit of *Tasmannia insipida*; May 2014.

Mrs Rodway of Nowra

Following the piece in last month's edition about Dr Rodway of Nowra, Alan Stephenson (Nowra) passed on some information about Mrs Rodway. Alan reports – "Upon her death in 1977 at the age of 95, a tribute to Mrs N. Rodway OBE was printed in the South Coast Register, which listed her many and varied interests and services to several organisations. Among them were fifty-one years as president of the Red Cross branch, she was active in securing a hospital for Nowra and shoe also supported the Shoalhaven Ambulance Service. Other interests were the Girl Guides, CWA and not least her dedication to the Shoalhaven Orchid Society. It was fitting she be given the distinction of being the first like member. A most remarkable lady indeed and those who knew her say the district would not be able to replace one such as she."
As they say, behind every good man...

Coral Trees

Gary Leonard sent in an article published in 1952 about Minnamurra House at Kiama. The piece states "there was a drive...through an avenue of coral trees brought from Jamaica by Dr Menzies who had admired them there in the [18]30's. These seem to be the first coral trees brought to Australia". The Coral Tree we know today in the region is regarded as being of hybrid origin, and named *Erythrina x sykesii* by Barneby and Krukoff in 1974, after the New Zealand botanist Bill Sykes. The type specimen comes from a collection obtained from a cultivated plant in Brisbane Botanic Gardens. The parent species of the hybrid are thought to be *E. coralloides* of Mexico and *E. lysistemon* from South Africa, although this is not always accepted. There appears to be no indigenous species of *Erythrina* in Jamaica. A recent visit found several *Erythrina x sykesii* trees growing along the driveway at Minnamurra House; these are not the same trees as reported in the middle of the 1800s. So what were the species of 'coral tree' at Minnamurra House near Jamberoo? Were they even a species of *Erythrina*? A bit more investigation is needed - any botanical detectives out there?