

### The Joy of Native Australian plants

The Australian Plant Society encourages “People from all walks of life with a passion to learn about, share, grow and conserve Australian native plants and their habitats”. (<https://austplants.com.au>),

Our South Eastern NSW group endorses these aims, and through meetings and garden visits, informs its members about the horticultural value of native plants, and acts as a social group for members. We learn from our interactions, and can implement these ideas into our own gardening practices.

Currently our activities as a group are restricted due to the covid-19 pandemic. However, whilst staying at home, many of us are spending more time playing and working in our gardens. There has been so much to do. Although enjoying the beauty of flowers is always a pleasure for the all the senses.

Some of our favourite flowering plants are **Grevilleas**.



**Grevillea 'Dorothy Gordon'** is a hybrid between *G. sessilis* and *G. paradoxa* and grows 1.5m x 1.5m.

This plant in dry, tough conditions is on its own roots and flowers well, with attractive purple and pink confluences over an extended period.

We have another young grafted plant, yet to flower, growing in moister, protected conditions



**Grevillea leptobotrys** is endemic to South West Western Australia where it gets hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. It predominately occurs in eucalypt woodland. Here on the South East coast of NSW we are able to grow it because it is a grafted plant. We have had limited success with plants on their own roots, with plants lasting a couple of years and gradually becoming less happy.



**Grevillea longistyla** is a great favourite, it seems to be always flowering in my garden. Flowers are quite large, always well displayed and constantly attract a range of honeyeaters. It is a species from south east Queensland and performs really well in our local area, growing into a shrub 3m x 3m approximately.

We are also keen on other plants in the diverse **Proteaceae Family**, such as **Isopogon** and **Petrophile**.

Having learned to recognise the difference between these two closely related genera from Catriona and Phil, two very knowledgeable members who happen to lead the Study Group on these genera, Phil also taught us how to graft plants on a recent visit.

***Petrophile pulchella***, (conesticks), is a common shrub found locally. It grows on shallow sandstone soils in open forest or heathlands near the coast, though in our garden it tends to be happy growing anywhere.

On one of our group excursions we saw these plants in the wild; no wonder they are called **pulchella** because they are so beautiful.

This plant is about 18 months old and powered along in the drought and was able to tolerate the rains as you can see.

- The drought saw the loss of plants, though indigenous plants seemed to be the happiest of all and continue to thrive.

The ongoing drought and the fires over spring and summer had a huge impact on our native flora and fauna.

Many people lost their homes and some people lost entire gardens. We all saw the devastation first hand in nearby grasslands and forests. Much of the flora is coming back luckily; for the survival of the human race depends on the work of our inter-related ecosystems. The onset of rains, whilst welcome to all and sundry, saw the loss of more dry loving and dry tolerant plants.

This plant is a ***Scaevola aemula***, **purple fan flower**. It came through drought, fires and rains. You can see some burnt leaves in the mulch though the plant itself is growing and flowering beautifully now that it has rained. It evens seeds itself– great for a cottage garden effect.

There has been a lot to process; our emotional, mental and physical health has taken a battering but I hope we can all still get down and dirty in the garden.

Enjoy the beauty and peace of plants.

