

APS EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



July 2020

NEXT EHG MEETING:

7.30 pm, Wednesday 1 July 2020

MEMBERS' NIGHT

It's time to share: tell us about your current favourite plant, a gardening problem or tip, photos of a trip – or something else!

This meeting will be held by Zoom

Send an email to our President, Graham Fry, stating your topic, in time for him to prepare the evening's program.

Invitations and instructions for using Zoom will be sent by email.

WELCOME to the July 2020 edition of the APS East Hills Group Newsletter.

In this issue we read about some of the challenges of gardening, meet a charming Hibiscus and a pretty and prickly Hakea.

Stay well, stay warm, keep learning about Australian native plants! I hope to see you at the Zoom meeting on Wednesday.

Jan Douglas
Interim Editor
janhd@iinet.net.au / 9533 2187

<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>



**FROM OUR JUNE MEETING
APS EAST HILLS GROUP MEETING – JUNE 2020**

Our June 2020 meeting was cancelled because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

PHILLIP ISLAND HIBISCUS – *Hibiscus insularis*

Liz Cameron

Graham and I have been enjoying the prolific flowering of a Phillip Island Hibiscus in our garden. The pale green to cream flowers gradually deepen to pink followed by a wine shade as they age (see photos below) and the flowers develop one at a time, so there is a pleasing variety of colours amongst the bright green leaves. Copious nectar is produced and we've seen Noisy Miners and our resident Red Wattlebird visiting the bush daily. The flowers are probably bird-pollinated but seeds can also be produced from self-pollination, and vegetative reproduction may occur through stem-layering.



Hibiscus insularis in the Crawford / Douglas garden showing variation in flower colour. Photos: Jan Douglas

The Phillip Island Hibiscus is usually propagated from cuttings; our two plants were propagated by Karlo from cuttings he struck using Ezi-Root solution as the root hormone. Wild seedlings are reputed to take 20-30 years to mature and flower, but plants grown from cuttings mature quickly and may flower within a few years. The hibiscus that Graham bought at the EHG meeting in September 2016 produced about 10 blooms in 2019, and the second bush (bought at the March 2018 meeting) flowered for the first time this May and currently has 30-40 flowers at different stages. Photos of this plant are below.



Hibiscus insularis in the Fry / Cameron garden. Photos: Graham Fry

This hibiscus is a large shrub or small tree growing to 2.5 m, with dense branches creating an attractive compact shape. The small lobed leaves have a shiny upper surface, and are 3–5 cm

long and 2–4 cm wide. Flowers are solitary, and when they open, only the stigma is mature; a day later the stamens mature and the flowers become capable of self-pollination. This time delay in female and male stages increases the opportunity for cross-pollination but despite this, the wild population exhibits very little genetic diversity.

Hibiscus insularis is native to Phillip Island, a small islet 6 km south of Norfolk Island. The original vegetation was almost totally destroyed by pigs, goats and rabbits and the island became severely eroded; pigs and goats were removed early last century but the last rabbits were exterminated only in 1988. It seems a miracle that this plant has survived on Phillip Island but only as three small clumps with very little genetic diversity; it is listed as Critically Endangered under the EPBC (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation) Act. Fortunately however it has been successfully propagated and planted in many gardens on the mainland.

Public gardens where this hibiscus has been planted include Norfolk Island, Booderee National Park (South Coast), the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney [and Mt Annan – *Editor*], Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens and Dunedin Botanic Garden, where one flowered in a glasshouse in March this year. Port Macquarie and Mareeba in north Queensland are other localities where this hibiscus has been grown. In Sydney, the Phillip Island Hibiscus has been propagated by RBG Growing Friends; Jerry Coleby-Williams (ABC Gardening Australia presenter) purchased tube stock from there in 2003. He reported that the RBG Growing Friends used 15cm cuttings of firm, semi-ripe wood which were propagated on a heated bench under mist during summer. Near Brisbane, Colleen and Geoff Keena of the APS Hibiscus and Related Genera Study Group, have taken cuttings in late spring.

From 21 cuttings planted in 2004, Jerry has grown a flourishing hedge in his Brisbane garden. The hedge produces a single mass blooming in winter-spring whereas Jerry remarked that 'in warm temperate Sydney, it produces a modest number of flowers recurrently from October until May'. Jerry prunes his hedge lightly after flowering and it has been suggested that the tips of the branches can be pinched out to encourage bushiness. The Phillip Island Hibiscus likes a well-drained soil in full sun to part shade and will tolerate coastal conditions and wind. Writing in a 2008 newsletter of the APS Hibiscus and Related Genera Study Group, the Keenas reported that their plants were mulched with sugar cane mulch but didn't receive any fertiliser. They noted that Jerry feeds his plants once a year in autumn with a pelletised, blended organic fertiliser, and gives them a monthly foliar feed with liquid seaweed. Graham has not used any fertiliser on our two plants; he comments that the one flowering so well now is in full sun, whilst the cutting he planted first and which produced only a modest number of flowers, is in a shadier position.

For more information:

Hibiscus insularis – Phillip Island Hibiscus

http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=30614

Hedge on the Edge – Is This The Ultimate Hibiscus?

<https://jerry-coleby-williams.net/2014/08/23/the-ultimate-hibiscus/>

Hibiscus and Related Genera Study Group October/November 2008 Newsletter No. 16

<http://anpsa.org.au/hibiscusSG/hibiscus16.pdf>

Flowers thriving in restored glasshouse – Otago Daily News 6 March 2020

<https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/home-garden/flowers-thriving-restored-glasshouse>

PHILLIP ISLAND HIBISCUS – A FLOWER STUDY

Jan Douglas



A few points to look at:

- flowers have two layers of bracts or similar below the petals (e.g. see photo 3)
- flower colour changes with age
- petals reflex as flowers age
- no pollen visible in young flowers
- stigma is velvety only in young flowers
- petals fall from the calyx in one piece (last two photos).

DISCOVERIES IN THE GARDEN

Dorothy Luther

I wrote this article back in December 2018, but it probably retains some relevance, and may provide some interest and amusement.

My back garden has been sadly neglected for the past two years and had degenerated into a micro jungle of *Brunoniella*, *Commelina cyanea* (Scurvy Weed) and *Ehrharta erecta* (Panic Veldtgrass), with an occasional Onion Weed or Oxalis peeking above the plant line. It was not a cheerful place to be, so I kept ignoring it.

Chris King had been staying with me, with all her pot plants, earlier in the year. When she moved into her apartment, with most of her pot plants, the emptiness inspired me to start again on my garden. I got a gardener to remove a lot of the jungle and put down lovely golden wood chip mulch. He also created a path around the edge of the garden beds, which has since disappeared under the vegetation. I had at least kept some of the *Brunoniella* down by occasional mowing, so I had a patch in the middle which I usually referred to as 'lawn'.

Then I started weeding the no-man's land between the mulched part of the garden (behind a low brick wall) and the path. To my surprise, I found quite a lot of little treasures growing!

Viola hederacea (Native Violet) was planted by the 'Backyard Blitz' people in December 2009. It had continued to struggle on as an understorey plant. Since I removed most of the *Brunoniella*, it has flourished and spread happily. *Tetragonia tetragonioides* (Warrigal Greens) also crept painfully out of the morass and is starting to grow. It has been there on and off for some years but I hadn't sighted it recently, so I was delighted to see it still growing.

I also found *Viola betonicifolia* (Showy Violet) – it may have escaped from one of Chris' pots. I've never been able to get it to grow before, in spite of numerous attempts. So a large clump was a happy surprise indeed.

Bulbine bulbosa (Native Leek) was another find. I got some from a member of the APS City St George Group (that long ago!) and it grew a flourishing bank of yellow for a year. Then it disappeared. Can it really have been lying dormant all this time? It has come up in more or less the same place (see photo), but surely....



Another native lily I got from Marrickville Community Nursery some years ago has been sulking in a corner of the garden ever since. It has suddenly produced the tiniest little pale mauve flowers and acquired an entourage of Australian Basket Grass (*Oplismenus aemulus*).

There are a few mystery plants too. One, a potential tree, was identified in time as a Camphor Laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*) and duly chopped out. I have yet to poison the root. A couple of other shrubs have so far defied the knowledge of my Bushcare friends. I may have planted them so I'm not ripping them out until I'm sure. They haven't flowered yet, since I noticed them. There is also a herbaceous plant or two that I may have planted. One of them (a grass) matches

the description of *Aneilema acuminatum* in Robinson*, but exactly how a rare plant from the sub-tropical rainforests of the Royal National Park found its way into my garden, I won't even speculate! I'll have to wait and see if they flower, and remember to bring samples to the next meeting.

The moral of the story? Remember that even native plants need water, light and air to prosper.

Postscript

I forgot my own advice, but amazingly most of the finds are still there. And still partly buried under *Brunoniella*. Sighh !! But now that I definitely don't have any work in Term 2 at Uni, I have no excuse.

* Field Guide to the Native Plants of Sydney by Les Robinson.

[From our experience, the supposed *Brunoniella* is, alas, probably the Mexican *Ruellia* – Editor.]

HAKEA TERETIFOLIA – A PRETTY PRICKLY CUSTOMER

Boyd Webster

In August 2012 I purchased a 10cm tube-stock specimen of *Hakea teretifolia* from the Randwick Council nursery. In my front garden it has grown into a spindly prickly shrub 2 metres high. In April this year I was planning to remove it, when several white flowers appeared; rather indistinct from a distance, but attractive in close-up. (Photo 1)

I gave it a prune, rather than a 'dig-out', and noted that two of the pruned branches bore the nut-like woody fruits, characteristic of the *Hakea* genus. Photo 2 shows the dagger-like shape of the *H. teretifolia* fruit which gives rise to its common name of the Dagger Hakea.

Hakea teretifolia is stated to be found in coastal NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, but I have never noticed it in walks around the Randwick coast line or in the Royal National Park.

The web site link <https://www.oznativeplants.com/plantdetail/Dagger-Hakea/Hakea/teretifolia/zz.html> has a photograph of *Hakea teretifolia* taken at Kurnell with a much more impressive inflorescence. In my macro photo, the terete, (round or circular in cross-section), of the needle-like leaf is obvious, hence the plant's botanical name.



Photo 1 Flowers and terete leaves of *Hakea teretifolia* Photo 2: Dagger-shaped fruit of *H teretifolia*

COMING EVENTS

Because of the Covid-19 outbreak, there are few face-to-face meetings to report. However, some meetings are being held on-line, using Zoom. For details, see the APS NSW e-newsletter which you should be receiving by email, and look out for an email from our President inviting you to our monthly EHG meeting for July (details on page 1 – you are going to present, aren't you?). A visit to Peter and Margaret Olde's magnificent garden, 'Silky Oaks', is on the cards for October – more details will be included in future newsletters.



EAST HILLS GROUP CONTACTS

President	Graham Fry	9580 6621	fryg45@gmail.com
Secretary	Liz Cameron	9580 6621	elsmere02@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Vacant		
Website Editor	Karlo Taliana	9786 8299	karlo.taliana@optusnet.com.au

<http://austplants.com.au/East-Hills>

