

At UQ Gatton we believe that a strong retail demand for grafted waxflower plants can be established and we are undertaking a trial marketing of three cultivars of grafted plants in association with a Brisbane nursery during Spring 2000. Three cultivars, Purple Pride, Wanneroo, and Lady Stephanie, will be available this year. Small-scale trials of a selection of newer waxflower types is also under way and it is likely that some of these will be introduced to the retail trade in 2001.

Tasmanian Plants for Cut Flower, Foliage, and Food Plants[®]

Kris Schaffer

94 Morphetts Road, NEIKA TAS 7054

This is a very broad topic to cover in 20 minutes! I am, therefore, going to confine myself to the actual products that are at present being cultivated or bush harvested in Tasmania. The propagation of most species has been on a small scale with some species, such as *Pimelea nivea* (bushmans bootlace), for the cut flower export market proving to be difficult. The quality of the stock plant material is critical with plants of not more than 5 years old providing the greatest strike rate. The plants grown under optimum conditions present us with material that has a much greater chance of success.

Telopea truncata (Tasmanian waratah) has been harvested under license but some small plantations are under cultivation on the west coast of Tasmania, at a place called Waratah. Some years ago a lot of research was conducted into this magnificent flower. The colour forms from locations around the state have been collected. These are being grown along with mainland species that may be more attractive to overseas markets.

This brings me to the bush harvest in conjunction with the cultivation of *Drimys lanceolata* (syn. *Tasmannia lanceolata*) (mountain or native pepper). The industry is well underway with quality products being freely available in our local supermarkets and speciality stores. Like *T. truncata*, the cultivation of these plants is proving to be a challenge to growers and propagators. *Tasmannia lanceolata* seems to be susceptible to fungal problems and bushes that have grown well for 5 years or more can succumb. Some forms are proving to be hardier, such as, the small-leafed alpine form. This is a most attractive plant, having all the same culinary properties as the larger leafed form, but providing an ideal container plant. Softwood cuttings are taken in May – July from selected sexed plants. The rootstock of the alpine form may be able to be grafted onto the large leaf form but I have not tried this as yet.

Seedlings of *T. lanceolata* result in much stronger plants. Bush harvesting will continue however as the time factor of 4 years to germinate, and longer before berry production and therefore the determination of female plants, is a major drawback.

Richea dracophylla (dragon's heath) is a cut-foliage plant being trialed and proving reliable, given a protected cool root system with good drainage and ample water. All material to my knowledge is bush harvested. Seed is collected from the flowering spikes in late spring, the seed is extremely fine. Seed is sown fresh or cool stored. Germination rate is high.

Cenarrhenes nitida (native plum) is an endemic from the family Proteaceae. Another plant with bushfood potential, as well as already having proven to be a successful cut foliage plant. Easily grown from cuttings taken in winter, this plant is much easier to cultivate. The only disadvantage with this plant is the disgusting odour given off with the initial wounding of the material.

The all time favourite of Tasmanian plants is *Lomatia tinctoria* or guitar plant, so named because of the spent capsules seem to look like a guitar, is also from the Proteaceae family. This species has been used as a cut foliage plant for some time, the foliage has a fern-like appearance and a vase life of up to 6 weeks. The leathery foliage forms vary from extremely fine to a broad leaf. Cuttings are taken from soft- to semihardwood, produce good callus and a strong root system. Seeds sown in September germinate readily but care must be taken post-pricking out as plants suffer from transplant stress. The cream, sometimes pink flowers, are in terminal sprays and are highly fragrant but this plant is almost always picked for its green foliage with red/bronze new growth.

Prionotes cerinthoides (climbing heath) is a fantastic container plant but at the moment only in the realms of collectors status. Propagation is by cuttings taken in winter, as is the case with the majority of the plants in this paper. Strong new growth from stock plants can be achieved given ample water and nutrients.

Agastachys odorata (white waratah) is an endemic shrub to 3 m tall. It is not a waratah as we know them, but the meaning of the word is “to be seen from afar” and it certainly fulfils that criteria. To date the cut flower trade only uses the foliage. I have not trialed the postharvest management of the flower spikes yet.

Anopterus glandulosus (native laurel) is yet another unique Tasmanian rainforest plant used extensively for cut foliage but only bush harvested at this stage. Like the previously mentioned endemics this plant is well suited to container culture. The bell-shaped flowers in terminal clusters are normally flushed with pink. Pure iceberg whites and deep pink flower forms have also been trialed. This was one of the first plants we successfully propagated by tissue culture, other than ferns.

There is potential I believe for the use of Tasmanian berries for floral display work. The propagation methods for these many and varied species are as diverse as the plants themselves. To inspire those able to provide a cool temperate environment:

Gaultheria hispida (snowberry) is easy to germinate from seed. Cuttings have proven difficult. The edible calyx is quite tasty.

Billardiera longiflora (climbing blueberry) has blue/purple berries when ripe that have an earthy flavour. In a good season up to 1 kg per plant can be produced. The berries are useful for jams and chutneys. Seed needs to be sown fresh, older seed (up to 10 years old) requires hot water treatment to break dormancy. Germination is 100%. Extra large berry forms are available and berry colour varies in shades of blue, white, and red.

Leptocophylla juniperina (pink mountain berry) previously *Cyathodes juniperina*. Holds its berries once picked and makes a showy display but is quite prickly. This species, along with many endemic berry producers, are bushfoods or have the potential for garnishes. At this stage, detailed knowledge on food plants is limited to specialist growers such as myself.

This short paper was given to inspire interest in Tasmanian plants with potential for horticultural development. Many of these plants have been known for some time, being first discovered by Ronald Gunn and Joseph Milligan and introduced into cultivation at Kew Gardens as early as 1823.