

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

There are so many rainforest trees that many people find it difficult to accurately identify individual species based on leaves alone. This is true of the trees in the laurel family (Lauraceae). This edition contains a piece on identifying the local species based on leaf characteristics. Also included, is a note on a new record of a small rainforest tree found at Minnamurra Rainforest.



This edition includes a new mystery weed, a piece on the Giant Pepper Vine of the local rainforests and wetland plant No. 8.

Once again, the Illawarra Flame Trees *Brachychiton acerifolius* are flowering well in the region. Blotches of red appeared along the escarpment and in the rainforest remnants around Kiama early in the month. The common name flame tree is well deserved, as the bright red colour of thousands of flowers really does look like a tree in flame; this is heightened by the fact that the trees are usually leafless at this time. The genus *Brachychiton* is derived from *brachys* for short and *chiton*, a coat of mail, in allusion to the bristly coating around the seeds in this genus. The species name *acerifolius* is in reference to the leaves that at times look like those in the deciduous maple tree genus *Acer*. The genus *Brachychiton* is now placed in the family Malvaceae, rather than Sterculiaceae, as reported in last month's newsletter. Photos of the good flowering of this species two years ago in late 2012 appeared in newsletter Number 9.

Photograph at left. The seed pod of *Brachychiton acerifolius* showing the hard pod, yellow seeds therein and the light brown coating around individual seeds.

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 is one week before the end of 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*.

Getting to know the local Laurels

Six species of tree in the laurel family (Lauraceae) occur naturally in the local region; there is also one naturalised species. The six species dealt with here all have similar looking leaves and can sometimes be difficult to tell apart. The leaves are green, lighter on the under-surface compared to the upper surface and have a distinctive yellow mid-vein. The species not covered here has very different leaves, namely White Bolly Gum *Neolitsea dealbata*, which only grows north of Mount Keira in Wollongong. This family contains the Bay Leaf Tree *Laurus nobilis*, often planted for use in cooking, that produces leaves similar to the species discussed here.



Cinnamomum oliveri

Cinnamomum oliveri

Oliver's Sassafras mainly grows in the escarpment forests, often scattered in occurrence; the largest population is in the Minnamurra Rainforest valley in Budderoo National Park. In that location, some large trees can be found near the walking track and saplings are abundant in the understorey. The species reaches its southern limit of distribution at Seven Mile Beach, where a small number of plants can be found in littoral rainforest.

Features of leaves: Narrow compared to other species; leaf tips drawn out into a long point; slightly glaucous (whitish) on underside; wavy edges to the leaf margins; slightly aromatic when crushed; new leaves pinkish to yellowish.



Cryptocarya glaucescens

Cryptocarya glaucescens

Native Laurel is by far the most common of the species featured here, and one of the most widespread rainforest trees in the region. The species reaches its best development in warm to cool moist rainforests, primarily along the escarpments. The species occurs as far south as the Bega area.

Features of leaves: Rather pliable; leathery leaves; upper surface quite glossy; lower surface glaucous; apex with a short point.



Cryptocarya microneura

Cryptocarya microneura

Murrogun is a common rainforest tree, found throughout the rainforest of the coast except at high altitudes. This species sometimes grows on rather dry sites, including as an understorey to eucalypts. It reaches its southern limit of distribution in the Bega area.

Features of leaves: Rather stiff; strongly discolourous; dark glossy green above; not glaucous on lower surface (at least locally).



Endiandra sieberi

Endiandra sieberi

Corkwood is a common tree of littoral rainforest, usually growing on sand dunes near the coast. It can also be found growing on the sandstone soils along the top of the escarpments. As the common name suggests, the bark is corky and quite characteristic, compared to the other species dealt with here. This species extends as far south as the rainforests in Murramarang national Park.

Features of leaves: glossy; discolourous; mid-vein prominent and yellowish; fine reticulation visible on lower surface; apex blunt to shortly pointed; new shoots pink.



Litsea reticulata

Litsea reticulata

Bolly Gum is a moderately common rainforest tree, primarily found growing in subtropical rainforest at low altitudes. The species occurs as far south as the rainforest remnants in the Milton area.

Features of leaves: dark green and glossy above; apex blunt, reticulate venation very pronounced on lower surface.



*Cinnamomum camphora**

*Cinnamomum camphora**

Camphor Laurel is commonly planted in parks, large gardens, farms and roadsides and can grow into a very large tree. The species is occasionally encountered as a naturalised plant, but it has not become the major weed tree problem it is in the northeast of the state.

Features of leaves: glossy green above; rather thin; glaucous below; three distinct pairs of secondary veins; strong camphor aroma when crushed.

The Giant Pepper Vine

The robust Giant Pepper Vine *Piper hederaceum* (syn. *Piper novae-hollandiae*) (Piperaceae) is a common liana in the local subtropical rainforest. Some very large specimens can be seen hanging from the huge fig trees *Ficus* spp. in the region. This species is related to the genus *Peperomia*, which was featured in Newsletter No 2. This family includes the genus *Macropiper*, a closely related genus to *Piper*, with some taxa going backwards and forwards between the two genera over the years.



Piper hooglandii (syn. *Macropiper hooglandii*) occurs on Lord Howe Island, while *Macropiper excelsum* subsp. *psittacorum* (syn. *Piper excelsum* var. *psittacorum*) can also be found on that island as well as on Norfolk Island. The species *Piper methysticum* of the western Pacific islands is used to make kava, the mildly intoxicating drink of the Polynesians.

Left. Leaves and flower spike of *Piper hederaceum*. The shiny leaves and robust vine of this species can often be seen hanging from the large fig trees in the lowland rainforest of the region, such as at the Minnamurra Rainforest in Budderoo National Park.

Mystery Weed

This weed was a puzzle at first when it appeared as a new weed in my garden.
Answer next edition.



New rainforest plant turns up at Minnamurra Rainforest

Despite many years of wandering around the escarpment forests, there is always something new turning up. A recent exploratory walk in the Minnamurra Rainforest valley found a single plant of Narrow-leaved Palm Lily *Cordyline stricta* (Asparagaceae). This species is reported to occur north from the southern Sydney area and as far as I am aware, there have not been any previous records of the species on the south coast.

Cordyline stricta has a natural distribution from the McPherson Range south (now) to Minnamurra Rainforest and is reported to be occasionally naturalised in Victoria. The species is easily recognised in our region as no other *Cordyline* or similar-looking species grows this far south.

Photographs taken at Minnamurra Rainforest, September 2014.



Wetland Plant No. 8 – *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*

The common saltmarsh plant Beaded Glasswort *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* (Chenopodiaceae) is found all along the coast. On some estuaries, this plant forms broad mono-specific patches in the lower saltmarsh where there is frequent inundation. Plants spread vegetatively by readily rooting at the nodes on the stems. This species is the favoured food plant of the larvae of the tiny Salt Pan Blue Butterfly *Theclinesthes sulphitius*, which can be seen flying around saltmarshes along the south coast and into Victoria.



More on *Pittosporum undulatum*

Further to the discussion of the invasive nature of the native tree *Pittosporum undulatum* late last year in *Budawangia* (Nos 17, 18, 19), Steve Douglas has written a paper on the subject in the latest edition of *Australian Plant Conservation* - see Volume 23(2), p. 14-15 (November 2014).