

THE ALBANY AREA

By Phill Mann, 6 Houston Cres., Bunbury, West Australia

The trip was a rushed one for my girlfriend and myself, one of 1200 kilometres to collect a few plants and specimens, and check any flowering before the season ended here. The destination was the Albany area of the south coast of the state, one of the richest areas for wildflowers and especially carnivorous plants.

We departed Friday afternoon and made the first stop on the Muir Highway between Manjimup and Mt. Barker. Here on the side of the road in the wet flats *Polypompholyx multifida*, *P. tennella* and *Utricularia hookerii* were scattered among the reeds. These plants were small in size and had nearly finished flowering.

With time getting late we made one more stop for the day along Milbrook Road, just north of Albany where *Drosera* sp. "Milbrook Rd" grows. Here we found *Drosera platystigma* growing in the thousands in a road side gully 20 metres long by 4 metres wide. The soil was an iron, stone and clay which is known as "gravel" here.

In white silica sand type soil in another location *Drosera dichrosepala* or as near as can be identified grew in among a thick area of grasses which in time would choke the *Drosera* out. About 10 years ago *Drosera platypoda* grew in this location but with the encroachment of nearby pasture grasses it has now gone.

The next day, Saturday, we started on the property where we had camped and where a small river ran through an area of natural bush. We found a multitude of *Drosera* and many climbers of types which had finished and dried off. On the sides of the track leading down to the river *Drosera dichrosepala* grew in profusion with many plants still in flower. Although conditions were very dry in this location the pygmy *Drosera* were very healthy and covered in sticky secretion, the leaves were dark red on the plants receiving full sun. Among these were scattered the large form of *Drosera scorpioides* as described in

"Flower Aust. Vol. 8". This pygmy *Drosera* is very striking in that its growth is very stout and colourful, (see photo page 71 of "Carnivorous Plants of the World," by K. & M. KONDO). A few of these plants were still flowering with the small white flowers borne on short hairy scapes.

Further up the slope where the soil became very poor in composition a few small scattered plants of *Drosera paleacea* var. *tricaulis* were growing but these plants were not as healthy as the others with very few leaves still in a sticky condition.

At the bottom of the slope I had previously found plenty of *Cephalotus follicularis* plants growing in the wet thickets, but as there had not been a fire through this area for about 10 years the swampy ground was covered in reeds, grass and native *Melaleuca* bushes so thick that I could only manage to push and fight my way about four to five metres from the track. The bushes were at least 1½ metres overhead and I could not see my feet. I decided to forgo this area for this trip as these areas are favourite breeding grounds for snakes.

Leaving this area we travelled about 15 kms and stopped to have a look in a roadside culvert as in these areas winter rains are collected and the pygmy *Drosera* thrive. There were only a few plants of *Drosera dichrosepala* that were nearly dead, and one very large, very black and very angry tiger snake, a dangerous venomous species that will often attack rather than turn away when disturbed. Fortunately I always carry my trusty shotgun for this reason when venturing into these areas, so it being a case of him or me I decided it would be him. After this scene it made us very jumpy every time we ventured from the road.

Turning from this road we travelled along the Hassell Highway and made a stop at a wet flat area of road verge. Here we found a strange coloured flowering form of a plant that has similar growth

characteristics as *Drosera occidentalis* and/or *Drosera pygmaea*. *Drosera pygmaea* only grows in the Eastern States of Australia and *Drosera occidentalis* is considered endangered according to the authorities here and confined to an area 400 kms north of this location. This plant is common along the South Coast and is possibly a new species. There were only a few dozen of these plants, and the couple that were flowering had a very pretty colour of apricot. The whole plant was 10 to 12 mm wide and 5 mm high. The single flower was borne on a scape 2 cm high with petals 6 mm wide. Since the plants are so small it is necessary to get down on your hands and knees when looking for them; this creates some very strange looks from passing motorists.

Travelling west back towards Albany we stopped in a parking bay on the side of the road where *Drosera occidentalis* type plants with white flowers and larger growths were very common, along with *Drosera myriantha* which were in full flower. Here the soil was a very damp sticky clay and it abounded in many healthy plants of *Drosera platypoda*. Most of them were of an orange to red colouration due to the full sun that they received. Close by under a thick area of bushes were a few plants of an unusual form of *Drosera stolonifera*. The stolons travelled along under the litter on the ground after coming to the surface from the bulb. They averaged 10 cm of runner before the plants appeared. The stem then rambled amongst the growth up to 15 cm in sections of four to five leaves. None of the plants had any sign of flowers.

On the iron stone ridges nearby *Drosera scorpioides* grew with *Drosera platystigma*. These plants of *Drosera scorpioides* had flowers of bright pink to mauve, a most striking colour.

On the western side of Albany within a railway reserve we found the white flowered *Drosera scorpioides* growing amongst reeds around swampy pools. These plants reached a height of 18 to 20 cm, but growing in the open, a metre away, they only grew to 6 to 8 cm. Their leaves

attained the bright red colouration, and flowers were pink.

The silica sand flats that bordered the other sides of the pools were small pygmy *Drosera* that will be a new species or a subspecies of *Drosera dichrosepala* as they varied so much from all descriptions recorded. *Drosera pulchella* were very prolific all around these areas; nearly all were in full flower.

Further along a section of this reserve had been burnt within the last three months and the slopes were barren of nearly all growth except large clumps of *Cephalotus follicularis*. The clumps were every metre or so and had pitchers up to 50 mm in length. The pitchers had not been there long but most were full of insects, mainly ants. All the clumps had 10 to a dozen flower spikes 10 cm high yet to flower. Having no cover from the full sun they were starting to turn blood red in colour. The ground of this slope they were growing in was similar to a sphagnum bog in that it consisted of about 90% masses and although no water was present on the surface, when trodden on a considerable amount oozed forth. The water present would be seepage from the hills behind this area. A few small plants of *Drosera hamiltonii* had survived the fire and were just starting to send out new leaves. (See page 71 for *D. hamiltonii* flower.)

Time to head off home and with one last stop on the Muir Highway again, where patches of *Drosera gigantea* shone a golden green colour in the afternoon sunlight. The plants were up to one metre high and so thick that I was unable to walk through them without destroying any of the plants. The *Drosera gigantea* grew around small lakes approx. 2 to 3 hectares in size. The depth of the water was only about 60 mm and covered completely with *Polypompholyx multifida* and *Utricularia hookerii* creating a carpet of pink and mauve. I collected some seed and took a few photos. On the water's edge *Polypompholyx tenella*, *Utricularia menziesii* and *Utricularia violacea* grew in small numbers. By now the sun was about to

set so we decided to call it a day and head straight for home to sort out all the plants and specimens.

All plants collected were done so under license from the Fisheries and Wildlife Department of Western Australia.

Chelsea Flower Show Report

For those not able to attend, the time spent preparing the stand and also manning it was rewarded with the Silver Flora medal. The centrepiece consisted of a circular pond supporting a tree. A large *N. bicalcarata* hung from the top of the tree, whose branches had water dripping from them. The base was surrounded by a variety of different *Nepenthes* species brought over for the show by a member from Brunei. One end of the stand was covered in small *Nepenthes*, whilst *Sarracenia* formed a backdrop at the other.

Those who saw the BBC programme "Growing for Gold" will have had a glimpse of the tree as well as the impressive sight of the large clump of *P. grandiflora*.

We hope to publish a photograph of the stand, providing the films come out, in the winter journal.

How and when do we start. The answer's simple, straight after the previous show.

The main problem is selecting and having sufficient quantity of plants with enough growth for the display.

They have to be selected, potted and established before the end of the summer and then around February given extra heat to start them into growth. The *sarracenia*s tend to flower by mid/end March giving them a reasonable number of pitchers in time for May.

There is a myriad of paperwork to be completed for the RHS as well as hundreds of small but equally important tasks to ensure success.

This year's Chelsea programme went like this:

FRIDAY 17th May. Pick up plants plus R. Cantley from airport, go direct to stand and pot up all *Nepenthes*.

Saturday 18th. Transport pond, tree, plants, peat, water (soft) and start laying out. Run out of peat so have to scrounge from another stand. Find not quite enough

plants so have to borrow from a well-known source in Somerset (thanks). By late Saturday night stand is starting to look good.

Sunday 19th. Sort out watering system on tree, cover in moss and attach plants. Finish landscaping stand.

Monday 20th. Last minute tidying up, clear up around stand and await judges, press and royalty. This year Princess Alexandra paid us a visit, interview for RHS and TVS. The BBC also paid us a visit and we got a mention on 'Growing for Gold' and BBC2 newswave.

Tuesday 21st. Medal (if you have got one) appears first thing in the morning, ours was a Silver Flora. Rest of the day devoted to answering questions on the society and why Venus fly traps 'pass on.'

Wednesday 22nd. The public. A lady in Surrey informs us she has a lawn full of *P. grandiflora*! Funds are raised by selling our guide and Venus fly trap cultivation leaflets (with seeds).

Thursday 23rd. The public.

Friday 24th. The last day. Protect stand from the public when plants are sold after 5 o'clock. Hire van to clear away plants, etc. Absolute chaos. By 8:30 p.m. van loaded and we are on our way. Home and bed about 1 a.m. It's been a long week but worth it. Thanks must go to:

1. All those who formed the committee for their time, transport and telephones.
2. The secretary's parents who helped make the pond and other parents and friends who did endless fetching and carrying.
3. Those members who helped set up the stand on Saturday and those who 'served time' during the week and those who helped tidy up on Friday. Plus, of course, you know who from Somerset for lending the plants to



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