



Wildflower Society of WA Northern Suburbs Branch

Newsletter - November 2013

Next Meeting :- November 26th

7-30pm, Henderson Environmental Centre, Groat St. North Beach

AGM &

Greg Keighery

Coppercups and their Relatives

Coming Events :-

7 December Christmas Party at Henderson Centre

4.30pm with Perth Branch

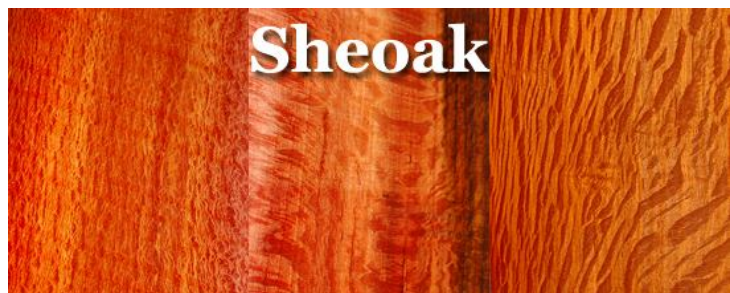
Last Month's Guest Speaker

Antoni Milewski

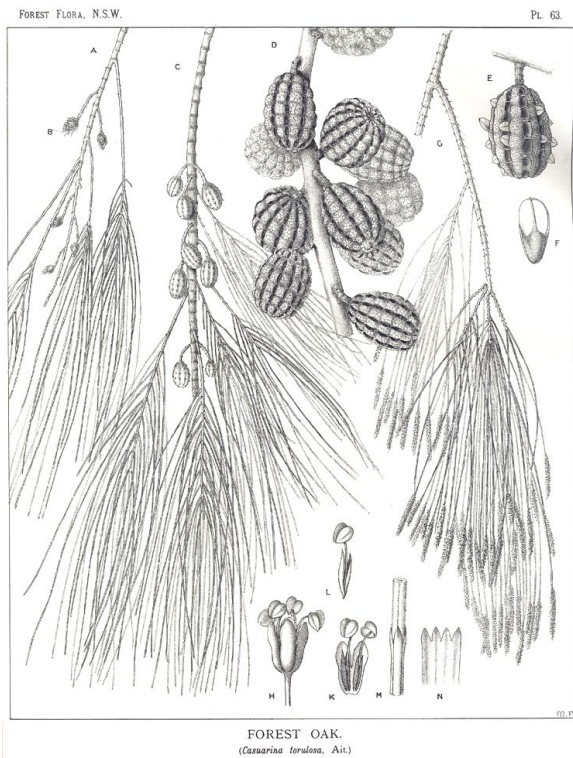
Casuarina: Botanical Novelty Hiding in Plain Sight

Antoni Milewski's interests lie in the discovery of rare, unusual and unknown aspects of the natural biological world, which he presents on his website 'Exploring the Bio-edge' (<http://www.explorebioedge.com/>). In September, he came along to talk about casuarinas, giving us all some new insights into these familiar plants.

The audience was asked to imagine that a blind scientist, visiting from overseas, was being introduced for the first time to the casuarina. With a bit of encouragement, we came up with five casuarina descriptors, which were gradually refined so that we agreed that we were talking about a fast growing, wind-pollinated, woody plant with horse-tail-like foliage and which was, in most cases, *dioecious* (male and female plants).



Then Antoni introduced a fact, previously unknown to ‘the blind scientist’. *Casuarina equisetifolia* – found in northern and eastern Australia – is regarded as the best firewood in the world. Local species of casuarinas are also known to be dense with a close grain and are much prized by woodworkers. They are sometimes seen as a little drab, with very small flowers, no leaves to speak of, and attracting little attention from insects and birds. But Antoni posed the question, ‘how can a shrub or tree with these attributes grow such dense wood, and quickly too’



Antoni’s investigation has shown that the ‘horse-tail’ foliage is not a cladode but is one of the leafiest structures known. This is not a widely recognized feature but Antoni drew a cross-section diagram which showed up to 16 ridges on each internode of every ‘scale leaf’, with each ridge being a leaf which has ‘glued’ to the node. The formal scientific definition of this ridge structure is *phyllichnium*, but Antoni has also coined a further word, *polyplicode*, which defines a stem with a battery of leaves in series and parallel to each other and he told us that there is nothing else quite like this in the plant world.

Northern Suburbs
Free guided nature walks.
 Each Month
 Run approx 1 hour.
 Start at 8am.

1st Saturday Landsdale Conservation Park.

Meet in Landsdale Rd approx 100 metres east of Evandale Rd, Darch.

Contact Phylis 93499105

2nd Saturday Koondoola Regional Bushland.

Meet in Koondoola Ave Opposite Burbridge Ave.

Contact Phylis 93499105

3rd Saturday Lake Gwelup Reserve.

Meet Scout Hall car park near tennis Courts, Huntriss Rd, Gwelup.

Contact Christine 94472983

4th Saturday Star Swamp Bushland

Meet at the Henderson Centre at the end of Groat St, North Beach.

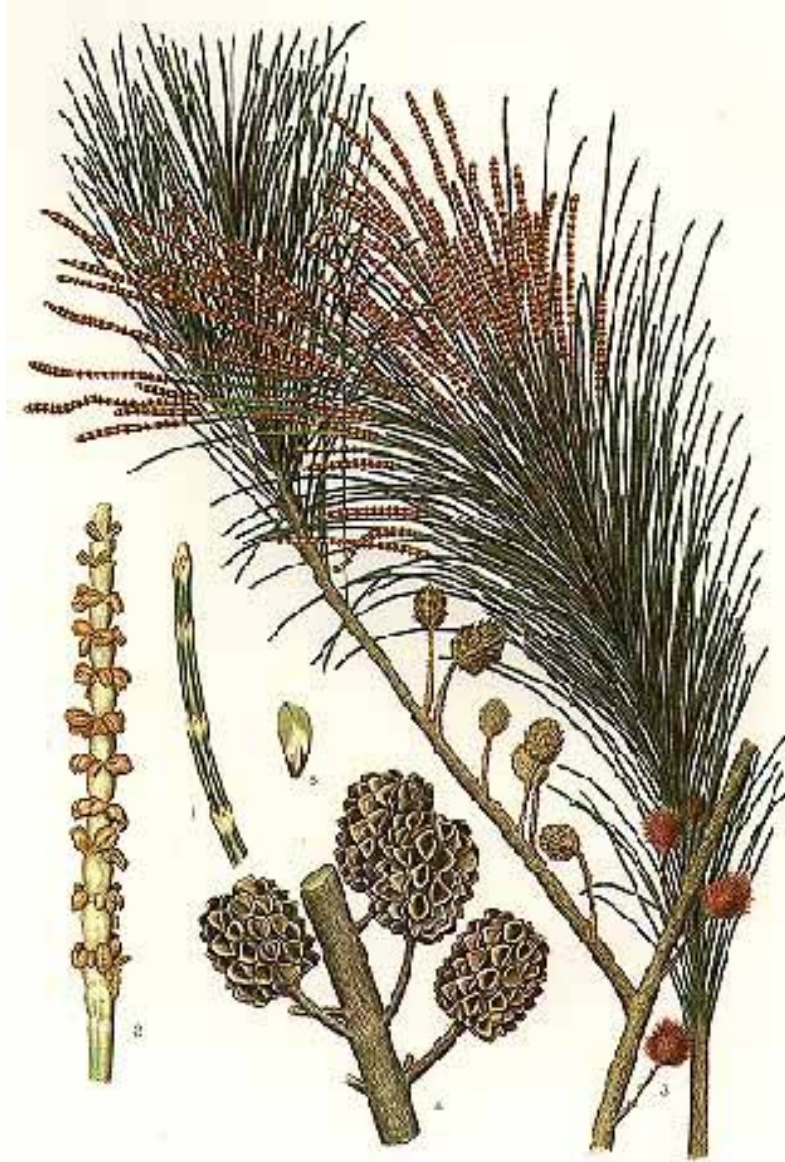
Contact Christine 94472983

5th Saturday Trigg Bushland

Meet in the car park between St Mary’s School and Millington Reserve (off Elliot rd)

Karrinyup. contact no 94489192

In conjunction with a very complex below ground structure, which uses a variety of means to extract nutrients including exto- and endo- mycorrhizal symbioses and nitrogen-fixing and matting roots, casuarinas have a very efficient photosynthetic process, not yet fully understood, which enable the 'leaf structure' to promote fast wood growth. Perhaps because the plant does not need to produce spectacular flowers, nectar and other attractants, photosynthetic material is stored as wood.



There is not a lot of work being done on casuarinas in more mainstream academic circles, but Antoni introduced us to aspects of the species that many of us had not come across before. Much is yet to be learnt, but Antoni left the audience with a new image of our casuarinas, as much more than somewhat drab, wind-pollinated plants attracting little insect and bird activity. Living mostly in soils poor in phosphorous and other nutrients, casuarinas seem to have adapted in unique ways. Antoni's conclusion is that the life purpose of a casuarina is to grow fast, produce good dense firewood, then burn down to provide nutrients for the next generation.

Wanted

A few New Faces for the Branch Committee
We need some new ideas and a bit of younger, energetic blood.

Don't be shy, nominate yourself at the AGM.

Hazel's Australian Plants Award Afternoon Tea



A contingent of friends and many relatives were present at Perry House on 27th October to congratulate Hazel for receiving her Australian Plants Award. Hazel is the third generation of her family to be honoured by the Society for Growing Australian Plants and one of the next generation, granddaughter Jessica was present to read out a congratulatory letter from Sue, who was at a conference in Queensland. Many wet serviettes later, everybody enjoyed a nice afternoon tea and a walk through the native gardens around the environment centre lead by Greg Keighery.



It's jewel beetle season, so next time you're out in the bush, keep your eyes open for these brightly coloured little insects.





Don't Forget that this year's Christmas get together

with Perth Branch will be held at the Henderson Centre on Saturday 7th December, starting at 4-30pm. Bring your own meat for the barbecue, a bowl of salad or something if you can, some drinks will be provided.



Photo courtesy of Sue Dempster

Thanks to all those who helped out at the November Plant Sale. There are still plenty of unusual and hard to find species in the nursery waiting for you to come and buy them.

It is the time of the year when cuttings are striking rapidly and need gardens to go to.

Most of our plants are small to medium shrubs
So not too big for pots, patios, rockeries or retirement units!!



Western Australian Native Plants
for your gardens and planter pots
available from the



Wildflower Society of WA Northern Suburbs Nursery

at the LANDSDALE FARM SCHOOL



Cnr. Evandale / Landsdale Roads,
Darch
open every Saturday, 9am - 1pm

Choose from a huge range of local and other WA
interesting colourful and unique species

Trigger plants Calytrix Hakea Grevillea
Thryptomene Scholtzia Thomasia
Hypocalymma Eremophila Dampiera
Hibbertia Scaevola Verticordia

Strappy Plants including Conostylis Dianella
Laxmania Orthrosanthos and Sedges.

and many many more.

Come along for advice on how to grow
plants for your minimal maintenance
to froggy boggy gardens



2010 International Year of Biodiversity

