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DRYANDRAS – THEY ARE NOT ALL PRICKLY SHRUBS!

by Margaret Pironi

DRYANDRAS are usually described as “prickly shrubs”. However, not all of the many different kinds of dryandras are prickly, but it must be admitted some are horrendously so, with sharp points on the lobes of their leaves. Their growth habit varies from prostrate and spreading to densely mounded shrubs to small trees. At any time of year there will be some species flowering.

Dryandras, in the Proteaceae family (which also includes the genera *Banksia*, *Grevillea*, *Isopogon*, *Petrophile* and many South African ones) are confined to the south west of Western Australia. Some are quite rare and restricted to one or two small areas. An exception to this rule, *D. arborea* is found at a distance from the others, near Koolyanobbing and in the Die Hardy Ranges and near Mt Jackson. It is a small tree which grows on ironstone ridges and flowers all year round.

Stands of dryandras on roadside verges give the south west scenery much of its unique character. Driving along almost any road with good roadside vegetation, you are likely to find, often on the tops of hills in gravel, almost pure stands of one or several dryandra species. Where dense colonies appear after fire or other disturbance, it often indicates that the species is one

that has seed capsules that open during the hottest part of the year, around February. Most can be collected at any time of year.

There are some 92 species and 34 subspecies and varieties of dryandra currently described. Some of these have their largest populations on private property, such as one property in particular near Badgingarra, where a great deal of the natural vegetation has been lovingly preserved. This is possibly the richest area in dryandra species after the Stirling Range National Park, which has a number of endemic

species that are in danger of extinction from too-frequent fires and dieback fungus diseases.

Dryandras, like banksias to which they are closely related, have inflorescences containing from about 20 to 200 or more individual flowers, according to the species. Flower colours range from yellow, some also with pink forms, to gold, red and brown. The surrounding bracts (which in some species are longer than the flowers) are an outstanding feature having a resemblance to South African proteas rather than banksias. As with most genera in the Proteaceae family they are pollinated by birds and marsupials as well as insects.

Another of the characteristics of these intriguing plants is the beauty and variety of the foliage. Those that tend to hide their flowers are still an excellent attribute in the garden, and are probably the most beautiful for form and foliage. Some of these are *D. drummondii*, *D. nivea*, *D. cataglypta*, *D. octotriginta*, *D. shanklandiorum* and the various subspecies of *D. ferruginea*. The blue-grey colour of the leaves of the latter two make a beautiful contrast with other shrubs in the garden – or the bush.

There are about 24 dryandras which have underground branches. The buds form at the



Dryandra bipinnatifida
(M. Pironi)

EDITORIAL

PENNY HUSSEY returns from her overseas sojourn and resumes her *Land for Wildlife* duties in October. During the last few months whilst acting in Penny's position I have been very heartened by the response of landowners in seeking to participate in the *Land for Wildlife* program. Clearly, *Land for Wildlife* is filling an important niche within the land management/conservation role on privately owned land and thus helping to ensure the sustainability of Australia's biodiversity. In June six new *Land for Wildlife* officers started, and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their enthusiasm and

dedication to *Land for Wildlife* program. Since late May 1998 1,559 hectares of land has been added to the *Land for Wildlife* 'estate' and 34 landowners have requested an assessment of their properties.

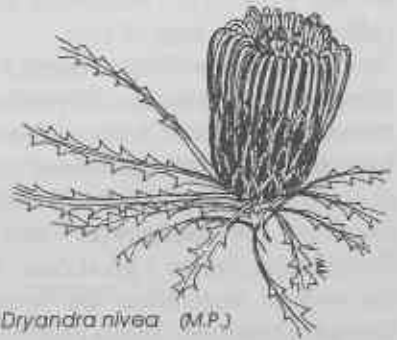
In this spring edition of *Western Wildlife* we look at the diversity of form found within the genus *Dryandra*. Over 90 species are known, but they are restricted to southern WA. We also have several articles on birds, namely the elusive bush stone-curlew and some housing renovations for osprey at

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ends of the stems, beneath the soil, and pop up around the perimeter of the plants when the flowers are ready to open for pollination. All of these plants have attractive, upright leaves and make excellent groundcovers. The leaves usually have more or less triangular lobes on each side of the mid-rib, however those of *D. bipinnatifida* are forked and look quite fern-like and many people do not recognise this plant as a dryandra. The flowers of this particular species occur in late spring, but do not last long and are seldom seen (I suspect that the somewhat-fleshy bracts are eaten by animals, as the flower-heads have been known to disappear overnight!). *D. bipinnatifida* is widespread, from Eneabba to Perup and Boyup Brook and around Dunsborough in various forest or heathland habitats.

D. nobilis subsp. *fragrans*, almost totally confined to the aforementioned farm at Badgingarra, has a delightful perfume and is an excellent cut flower. On the other hand, *D. epimicta* (its name means 'on the nose') which occurs only in a reserve in the Kulin area, has a thoroughly obnoxious, foul smell which attracts blowflies as pollinators.

My interest in this genus began when I decided to grow some dryandras for my mother, then



Dryandra nivea (M.P.)

residing in NSW, to use in dried-flower arrangements. They are very suitable for this purpose and several species are being grown commercially for the cut flower market. More could be tried, especially some of those with attractive foliage. The most commonly grown, and one of the hardiest and fastest growing is *D. formosa* with its glowing golden flowers with coppery buds. *D. stuposa*, from the Narrogin region, has similar flowers on tall, bushy shrubs with blue-grey leaves. Though its flowering time is in summer, odd flowers may be found all year round. Another popular vase flower is the urchin dryandra, *D. praemorsa* var. *splendens* of which the pink-flowered forms are most sought after. It grows in the Darling Range usually associated with granite rocks, and the pink-flowering plants occur randomly with normal yellow ones. *D. quadrifolia*, from the Ravensthorpe area and

Fitzgerald River National Park, also shares this characteristic. Both of these species have prickly oak-shaped leaves.

Most dryandras are easily grown from seed. Success has been achieved with cuttings from newly-sprouting underground-branched species such as the couch honeypot, *D. lindleyana*.

It is gratifying to know that our floral heritage is being appreciated and protected by the reserving of bushland remnants on farms as well as in reserves and National Parks.

Margaret Pieroni is a member of the Botanical Artists' Group and an expert on the genera Dryandra and Verticordia.