

## TRIGGERPLANT TREASURES



*Stylidium merrallii*. Photo: K. Kenneally

Once presumed extinct for more than 100 years, *Stylidium merrallii* (Merrall's Triggerplant) was rediscovered in 1976 in the Wongan Hills area but wasn't officially identified until 1992. Early this March a healthy new population was discovered near a granite outcrop on a *LFWer's* property in the Doodlakine area.

Triggerplants have a sensitive trigger action that is used as a unique method of pollination. Insects sipping nectar from the throats of young flowers disturb a 'trigger' which releases a strap-like column that carries anthers loaded with pollen. Previously hidden beneath the petals, its sudden release causes a swinging blow which showers pollen over the insect's back. It takes about 20 mins for the trigger to reset for the next visitor. Anthers on older flowers develop a hairy cushion or brush between them, this brushes up pollen from any insects that had previously visited younger flowers, thus completing the pollination cycle.

The shape of triggerplant flowers throughout the wheatbelt usually resemble a small butterfly and are of various colours, the most common being bright pink with white throats. Each also has a secretive minute petal called a labellum, which is an added fascination and aid to identification.

To date there are 16 different triggerplants in the Shire of Merredin and it is a great pleasure to add *Stylidium merrallii* (Declared Rare Flora - status: Vulnerable), to that list.

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