

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS.

C. A. GARDNER,

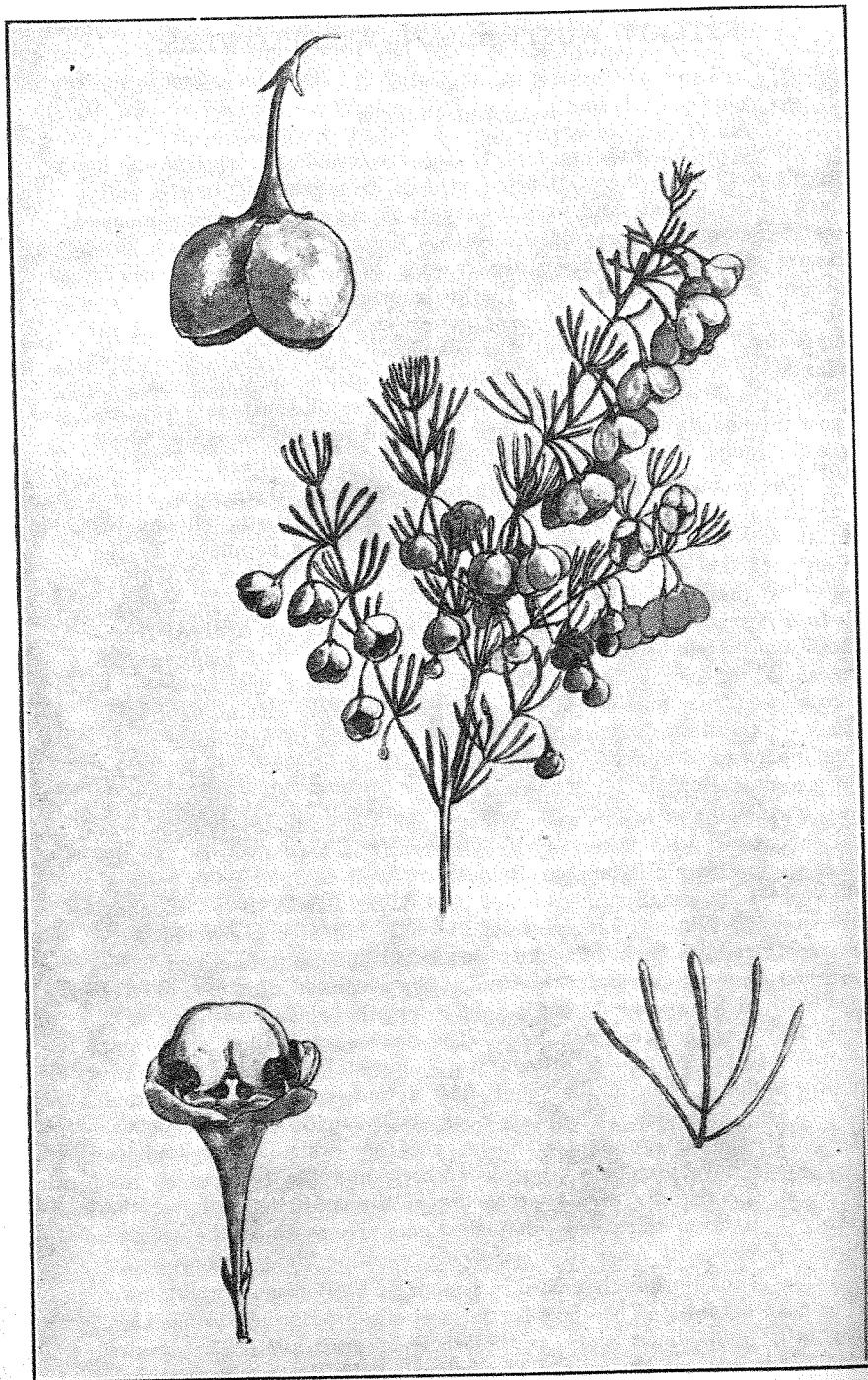
Government Botanist.

Western Australia is famous for the wonderful variety of its wildflowers. Our flora attracted visitors from Europe in the early days of settlement, and even to-day it is regarded as being among the richest of the floras of the earth. Many of you are, I am sure, interested in the flowers you see growing in the bush, and especially on our sandplains, and would like to know more about them. I have therefore undertaken to write a series of articles for "Our Rural Magazine," dealing first with the commoner flowers, then with rarer plants which are noted for their beauty or strangeness of form. In time, I hope that you will send me specimens of the plants you are most interested in, and I shall then write and tell you something about them through "Our Rural Magazine."

The scented *Boronia* is known to most of us. During the winter months of June and July, boys in the streets of Perth sell bunches of this delightfully scented plant, which is always popular with the people of the city. It does not grow near Perth, but has to journey over two hundred miles from its native swamps in the South-West before it reaches the city. In this journey it loses much of its freshness, and often becomes quite dark in colour, so that many people speak of it as the "black *Boronia*." The flowers are, however, a brownish-purple outside, and a rich green yellow within. The perfume of the flower cannot be compared with that of any other plant, and no other *Boronia* has quite the sweetness of scent possessed by our scented *Boronia*.

This plant grows between Albany and Collie, in low-lying places often covered with water in the winter. It is very plentiful on the Kalgan and King Rivers, at Bridgetown, and at intervening places. The shrub is usually only a few feet high, though it occasionally reaches a height of 7 or 8 feet. It has thin stems, covered with a smooth reddish bark. The leaves are small and heath-like, and when crushed have a characteristic scent. They consist of three or five leaflets which are narrow and bright green, the whole leaf being as a rule less than half an inch long. The flowers, which are small and bell-shaped, are borne on little brown flower-stalks which are thicker near the flower than at the stem. The flowers occur at the junction of the leaf and stem. There are four small sepals, and four petals. Inside the flower are eight stamens; the four which are just above the sepals have large black-purple anthers, and the four which are above the petals have very small yellow anthers. In the centre of the flower is a large thick cross-shaped stigma, from which the scented *Boronia* derives its name of *megastigma*, meaning "large stigma."

The genus *Boronia* is named in honour of F. Borone, a well-known European botanist. There are forty-six species of *Boronia* in Western Australia, and almost sixty in the whole of Australia. The species are all limited to Australia. The colouring of *Boronia megastigma* renders it quite distinct from all the other species, which are either blue, red, pink, yellow, or white.



Scented Boronia.
(*Boronia megastigma*, Nees.)

The rough sketch of the scented *Boronia* shows a sprig of the plant, with an enlarged solitary flower above showing the four petals and bracteoles on the stem. Below, on the left, you may see the large stigma, two large sepaline anthers, and one small petaline anther. On the lower right, an enlarged leaf is illustrated.

Answers to Correspondents.

The orchid found by Billy Wright, a pupil of the State School, Rose Hill, East Wagin, and sent in by his teacher, Miss Bilston, is *Thelymitra variegata*, the "spiral-leaved orchid." This is a comparatively rare species, and I am very pleased to have it from this locality. It is sometimes known as the "Tiger Orchid," but this name should be reserved for another member of the genus.

There are two orchids in the Wagin district which are very similar. The above is one of them. Both have spiral leaves, and purple-violet flowers. Since this correspondent takes an intelligent interest in the subject, she may be enabled by the following notes to distinguish the two species.

Thelymitra variegata.—Sheath of the leaf usually with hairs or down. Wings of the column connected behind the anther by a crest.

Thelymitra Macmillani.—Sheath of the leaf quite without any hairs or down. Wings of the column without any crest behind the anther.

One mistake made by Miss Bilston is that of referring to the column as the Tongue. The "tongue" or *labellum* is one of the petals, and is very evident in the Donkey and Spider orchids. In *Thelymitra* it is scarcely different (if at all) from the other petals and sepals. The parts of the column shown in the excellent drawing are correctly named.

We do not possess a specimen of *Thelymitra Macmillani*, and if this correspondent can find one it will be a most welcome addition to the Herbarium. It has been recorded from near Highbury, which is in the Wagin district.

BROOKTON BIRD-LIFE AND OTHER TOPICS.

By James Pollard.

There are many good naturalists among the pupils of the Correspondence Classes—better than I was when a boy. Let me impress upon them to go on observing, and recording their observations. By so doing they will contribute in no small degree to our knowledge of the native plants and animals of our State.

Grass Parrots.

After listing the numerous bird-visitors to Brookton district, one of my contributors, Don Ford, writes:—"I have often seen bee-eaters having a dip in our dam in summer. There are several mud-