

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS.

No. 5. *Grevillea oncogyne*, Diels.

(C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist.)

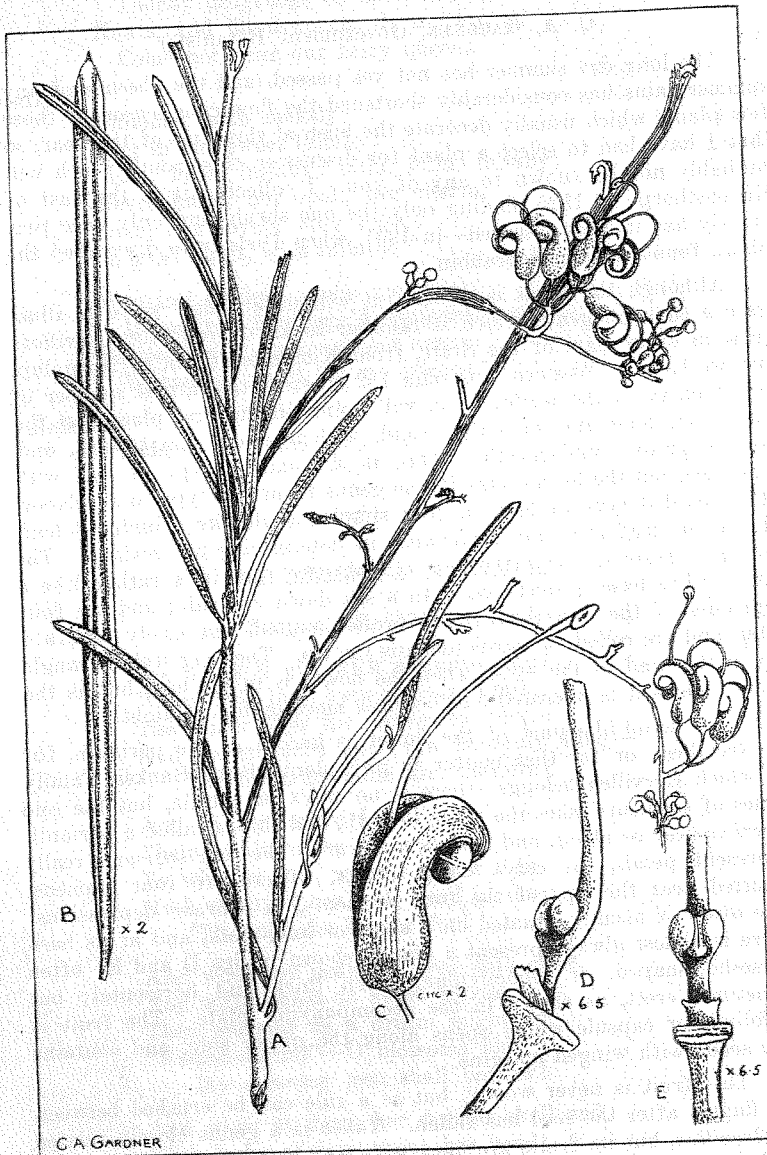
The long dry summer has not yet passed, and the absence of any summer rains has considerably shortened the flowering season of those few plants which usually decorate the bush at this time of the year, so that I have had to select a plant for discussion this month which will probably not be known to any of you. I collected it to the east of Ravensthorpe in 1925, finding only the one shrub, and only once previously has it been observed—in 1901, when Diels, who discovered the plant, found it near Boorabbin.

Although the plant is so rare, it will nevertheless serve to illustrate a common genus which is familiar to all of you; for *Grevilleas* grow in every part of the State, from Kimberley down to Normalup, and we have in Western Australia 132 species—the largest number of any country in the world. You will notice in the first place that the leaves are long and somewhat rigid, with a short, sharp point, and double groove underneath. This is a common type of leaf with *Grevillea*, but the leaves vary in the genus from this type to an elaborately divided type of leaf, or to a simple needle-like cylindrical leaf. Hence the leaf is of no importance in determining a *Grevillea*. The flower is more important. You will observe that it is rather like a scroll. The base is sack-like, with a slit down one side; and the four segments of the flower are more or less united, but easily separate later, and are rolled outwards towards the tip. The long style is caught up in the head of the scroll when the flower is in the bud, but as the flower opens it is liberated and becomes more or less straight.

This scroll-like part of the flower is known as the perianth, for in *Grevillea*—or for that matter in any plant of the *Banksia* family to which *Grevillea* belongs—there is no calyx or corolla, but the one series of segments takes the place of both, and this is called a perianth (*peri* = near or about, and *anthos*, a flower). The four segments really represent petals, the calyx being absent. There are four stamens, inserted near the tips of the four segments, in concave depressions. The ovary is usually situated on a short or long stalk, and at its base there is almost always present a gland (shown in figs D and E) often horseshoe-shaped, or semicircular; often thick and horizontal; but sometimes erect, as shown in the accompanying plate. The fruit is a follicle or capsule which opens along the upper side, and contains two seeds with winged margins.

This fruit is never woody, but as a rule can be crushed between the fingers after the seed has fallen. *Hakea* is a genus closely related to *Grevillea*, but its fruits are more solid and woody; and whereas the fruits of *Grevillea* fall from the plant within a few months after flowering, the fruits of *Hakea* remain attached to the plant for two or more—often several—years. If, therefore, you find this type of flower occurring on a shrub with last year's fruits on the branches below, you can be certain that the plant is a *Hakea* if the fruits are woody. If, on the other hand, there are no fruits, or the shell-like fruits are on the ground beneath, you have a *Grevillea*.

Another character of *Grevillea*, shared only in part by *Hakea*, is the dense racemes or poker-like inflorescences of coloured flowers, usually red, purple, orange, yellow, or white. Most *Hakeas* have bunchy clusters of flowers, but a few have the spike-like flowers, and most



*Grevillea, oncogyne, Diels.*

of them are white. Some *Grevilleas* possess the peculiar character which is illustrated in *G. oncogyne*, of having flattened stems which bear the clusters of flowers. Some of these are remarkably ribbon-like, and trail along the ground for some distance. In others they occur

on erect shrubs, and are shorter and more rigid. There are many departures from the flower illustrated, but not in shape or number of parts. The base of the flower may be broader and more irregular, or it may be narrow and tapering into the flower stalk. The flower may be hairless or hairy, silky or woolly, and the ovary may be smooth or woolly. The stigma which is shown as a broad lateral disc may be conical and erect; the gland may be absent, and the ovary stalkless. But always will you find the same general type of flower, and always the deciduous fruits and winged seeds.

#### Answers to Correspondents.

Marjorie Berrigan, St Joseph's Convent, Southern Cross.

I have received from Marjorie Berrigan three sandplain plants, but they were not numbered. All belong to the Myrtle family (*Myrtaceae*). The white one is *Verticordia Brownii*, a Morrison known as the Cauliflower Bush, because of its resemblance to a gigantic cauliflower. The flowers are densely arranged in a dome-like head covering the entire width of the plant. The pink Morrison is *Verticordia Pritzellii*, a species confined more or less to the Southern Cross district. The purple *Melaleuca* is one which is apparently undescribed. It is common in sandy gravelly soils, and may be spoken of as a tea-tree. It is pleasing to have these specimens, but they were not pressed, having arrived in a box in a thoroughly dried condition. It is now impossible to do anything with them, since any attempt to press them would result in the loss of the flowers.

#### AN EDUCATIONAL HOLIDAY.

##### Forty-five Girl Students Visit Perth.

The first educational tour for our correspondence pupils was organized in 1926, when twenty-five of the senior boys were brought to Perth at the time of the Royal Show. In March, 1928, a contingent of 60 girls visited the city. Many of our older pupils will remember reading of the very great success of that tour. Last year it was found that the boys could not be spared from farm duties. This year it was again the girls' turn, and they eagerly availed themselves of the opportunity of making another educational journey to the city.

On Tuesday, March 4th, a party of 45 girls from all over the State—from Mullewa in the North to Gnowangerup in the South and Merredin in the East—arrived in Perth, and were escorted to the Claremont Show Grounds. As in the previous girls' tour, camping accommodation was provided in the spacious rooms under the members' grandstand. The Parents and Citizens' Federation again came to our assistance and took charge of the domestic side of the camp. Miss Hooton, Secretary of the Federation, acted as Camp Mother, Mrs Maw had charge of the culinary operations, and Mrs Hanlin gave valuable assistance in many directions. Other voluntary workers visited the camp from day to day. A debt of gratitude is due to all who so generously gave their services to make the camp a real "home from home."