jarrah it went after the 'possum. And the furry little animal ran out on a limb, and for a moment sat in fear, for the snake came on behind. Then the 'possum saw, reaching in a friendly way from a white gum tree nearby, a limb on to which it was possible for him to jump. And when the snake reached the end of the limb where the 'possum had sat, lo, no 'possum was there; and because the snake could not jump, it could only turn round and round and nurse its disappointment.

All this is true, because Joy's father told it to Joy, and Joy has drawn a jarrah and a wandoo (which is a white gum) showing how the limb of the wandoo reaches out friendly-like toward the jarrah; and she has marked the gap "where possy jumped." Joy's teacher has, happily, passed the story on to me. "Of course," says Joy, "there was a cosy hole in the wandoo." Of course!

**Correspondence.**

A Marracoonda pupil has asked me several questions about growing poinsettias. I should like all pupils who have questions to ask about gardening to write direct to the writer of the gardening notes which appear each month in the Magazine.

---

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWERS.

### No. XIII.: THE EMU BERRY OR WILD PLUM.

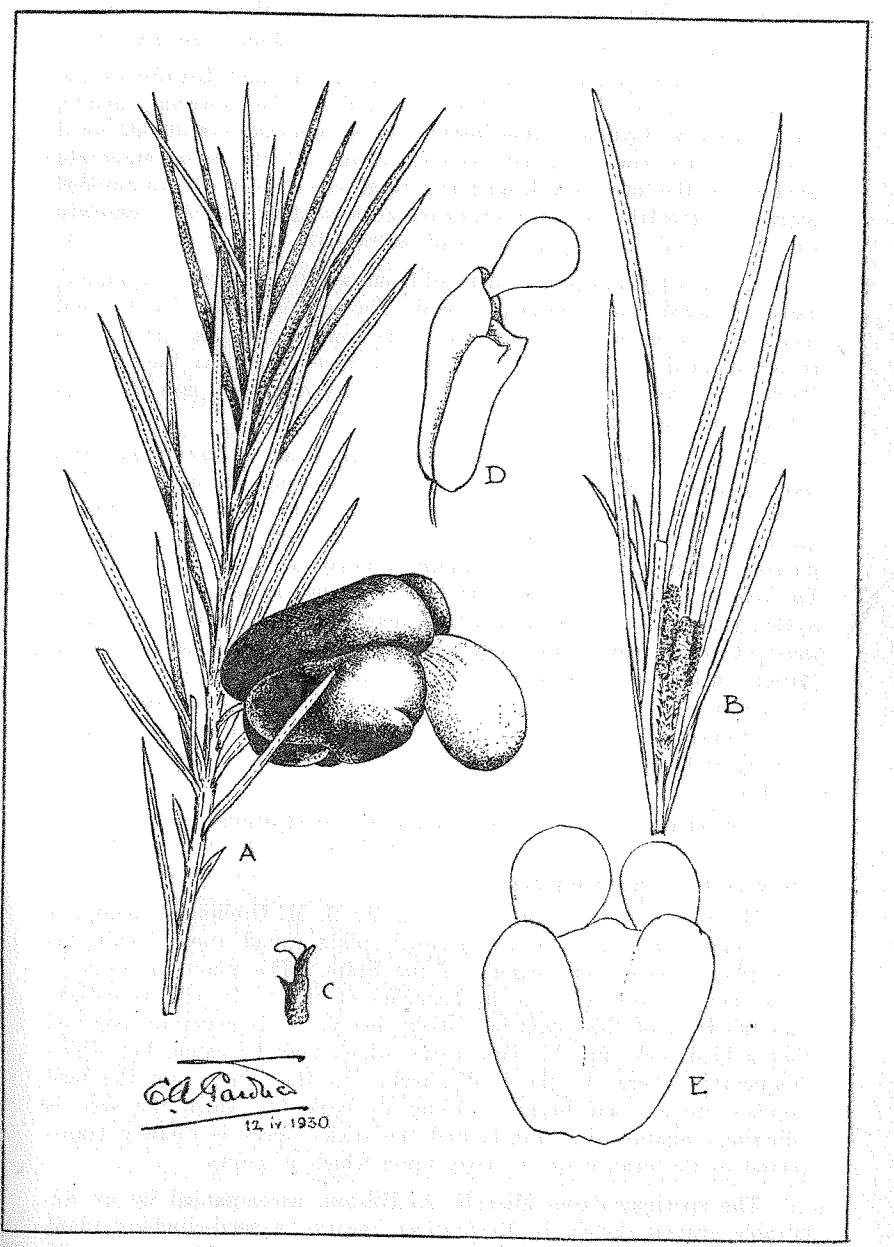
(By C. A. GARDNER and G. R. W. MEADLEY.)

At this season of the year those who live in the Karri country and in certain parts of the southern Jarrah forest will be familiar with the small creeping shrub which bears fruit with the stone outside. Some settlers will have cause to remember it as a pest almost impossible to eradicate; others will retain unpleasant memories of the consequences of eating too much of this fruit. Its luscious appearance and deep violet colour, with a plum-like bloom which, as in the case of the plum, rubs off at the slightest touch, make it very tempting. The flavour is insipid and somewhat resinous and, although a few may be eaten without ill effect, any quantity of these "plums" may cause sickness. Such is the Wild Plum or Emu Berry. Its so-called "fruit" is not really a fruit; and the conifer itself is not even a shrub.

The plant is really an undershrub—one of the lowly representatives of the woody plants, and certainly one of the most humble representatives of its family—a degenerate descendant of a noble ancestry, whose sisters in other parts of the world yield timbers of great commercial value. It is, however, of considerable scientific interest on account of its geographical position.

Our Wild Plum is a member of a large group of plants the *Gymnospermae*, which comprise the pines, junipers, spruces, and giant redwoods. It belongs to the genus *Podocarpus*, which produces some of the world's most valuable timber trees, and which is most plentiful in Africa, Southern Asia, and tropical America. Of the four known






THE WILD PLUM, or EMU BERRY.
A. Showing habit.
B. Male cones.
C. } Young "fruits."
D. }
E. Double "fruit."

Australian species, three are found in the Eastern States. Our own species is strictly confined to the South-West, the most northerly representatives being found at Kelmscott and Mount Helena.

The Gymnospermae were at one time a dominant feature of the earth's vegetation; but, with the evolution of the flowering plants, the species of Gymnosperms became more and more reduced, until now they are comparatively scarce, except in the cool temperate regions of the northern hemisphere, and some of the mountainous regions of the tropics. The extensive forests of the former zone are still the world's principal source of softwoods

The name Gymnosperm is derived from two Greek words: "gymnos," meaning naked, and "sperma," a seed. The seed is naked, for it is not included in a seedbox or ovary, as in the flowering plants. The group is represented in Western Australia by three families: the "Zamia Palm" (*Cycadaceae*), the Cypress pines (*Cupressaceae*), and the Wild Plum (*Podocarpaceae*).

Being a Gymnosperm, the Wild Plum is not a flowering plant, that is, it does not produce true flowers in our sense of the term. The male plant produces small cones which are very similar to those of the pine. The scales of the cone possess on their under surface two microsporangia (anthers), containing microspores (pollen grains), The female plant produces a "fruit" which consists of a fleshy portion —the juicy "berry" formed from fused scales (megasporophylls), most of which are sterile; but one or two fertile ones bear external "seeds" which are naked, club-shaped, and of a pale green colour. As a rule only one megasporophyll is fertile; but where two fertile ones occur, a "double plum" is produced. The individual megasporophylls may be distinguished externally by the lobing of the "berry."

For particulars see the accompanying illustrations.