

FLOWERS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

No. XXVI.—The Winter Bell.

(*Blancoa canescens*, Lindl.)

(By C. A. GARDNER, Government Botanist.)

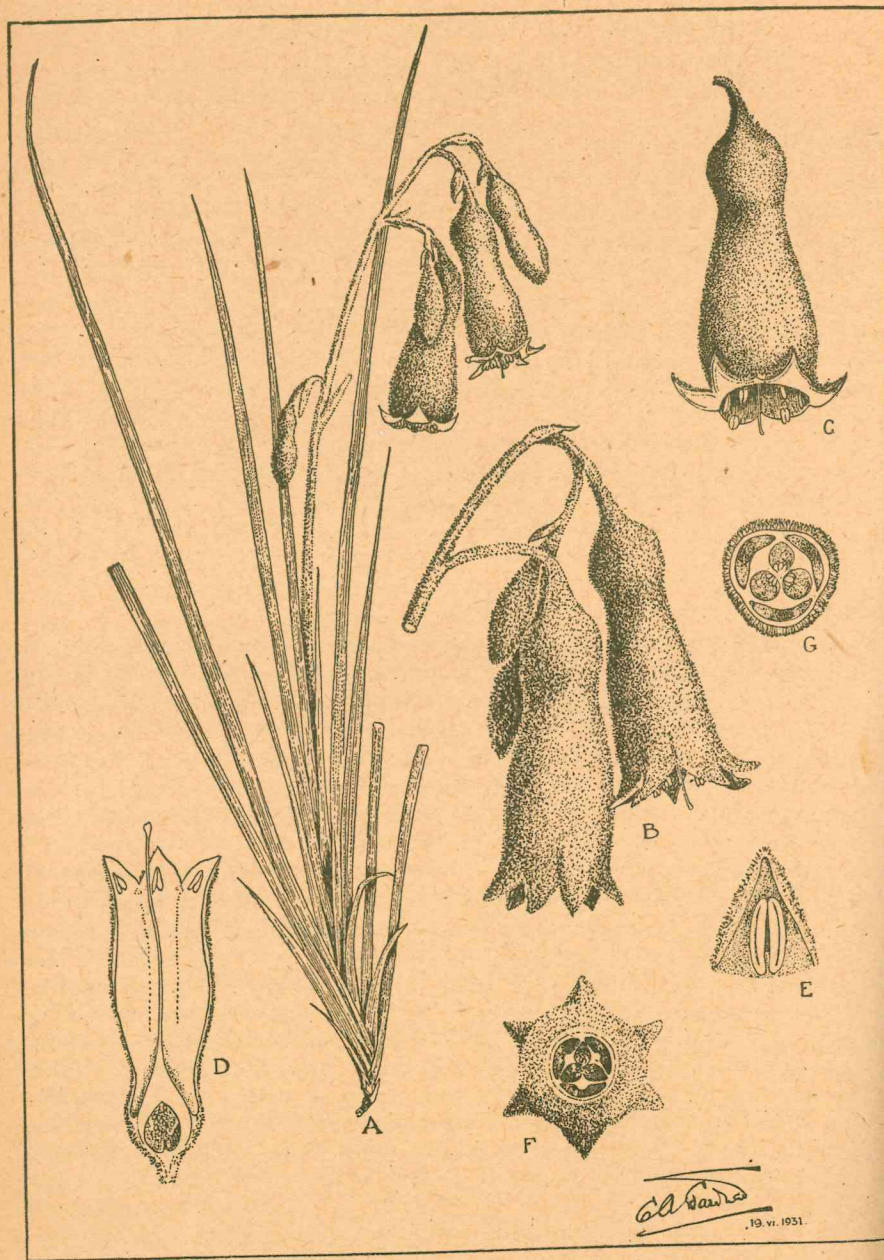
Although not of a striking colour, this plant attracts considerable attention because of the elegant shape of its bell-like flowers and the delicate red shades of its hairy covering, especially of the flower-buds.

The Winter Bell is not a very well-known species. As far as I am aware, it only occurs in scattered spots along the sandy coastal plain between the Arrow-smith River and Armadale. The largest patch consists of some hundreds of acres on the sand heath which surrounds Mount Lesueur, near the Hill River. Much smaller patches occur near Maida Vale and Gosnells. The Maida Vale area is situated close to the school of that name at the base of the Kalamunnda Hill; but the plants are now rapidly diminishing through the ravages of animals and the depredations of people who pull the plants up in collecting the flowers. This is unfortunate because, when the Maida Vale and Gosnells areas have disappeared, there will be no available plants nearer than ninety miles from Perth. The plant appears to be difficult to cultivate by transplanting, and it produces relatively few germinable seeds.

The species is the sole representative of the genus *Blancoa*, named after the botanist Blanco. There is a palm that once bore this name, which has since been changed. According to the rule governing the names of plants, the Winter Bell should bear another name, because the same name cannot be given to two different plants of the same genus. Some day we shall therefore see *Blancoa* with another name bestowed upon it, but that is not yet. The name *canescens* refers to the hoary covering of the flowers and stems. The plant is closely related to the Kangaroo Paw, differing principally in the regular bell-shaped flowers. It is even more closely related to the species of *Conostylis*, plants which you may know because of the yellow woolly flowers of many.

Blancoa grows in tufted clumps of usually six inches or more in diameter. The leaves grow in smaller tufts, and are two-ranked as in the *Gladiolus*, there being several such tufts within each clump. The lowest leaves are scale-like, but these enlarge upwards into the true leaves which are somewhat grass-like in appearance, finely nerved, but finely woolly-hairy. In colour they are a pale green. The flower-stem or scape arises from the centre of each tuft, and is slightly shorter than the longest leaves. Each stem bears a raceme, or two or three racemes of two or three flowers each. The flowers are quite pendulous and swing freely in the breeze. Each flower has a small woolly bract (modified leaf) at the base of the pedicel, and there is usually a larger bract at the base of each raceme or cluster of flowers.

The length of the flower varies from one and a quarter to one and a half inches. It is tubular, and is constricted above the ovary; then it gradually widens into a narrow bell, but is slightly constricted again towards the tip. The six lobes of the flower are at first spreading, but after one or two days become straight, continuing the direction of the tube. The lobes are short and triangular, and the tube of the flower is slightly folded between them. Although covered outside with the dense wool of red or deep orange from which it derives its name, the inside of the flower is perfectly smooth, and a rich yellow in colour. The six



THE WINTER BELL (*Blancoa canescens*, Lindley).

Explanation of Plate.

- A, Habit (reduced). B, Part of inflorescence. C, Single flower (natural size). D, Section of flower. E, Perianth-lobe with anther. F, Section of ovary and plan of perianth from the base. G, Section of upper part of ovary.

Maida Vale, W.A., June, 1932.

Icon origin.

stamens are situated at the base of each lobe on very short filaments, with short ovate-oblong anthers which only protrude when the flower is freshly opened and the lobes spread. The 3-celled ovary is half free from the base of the flower, and tapers to a conical apex. The style which surmounts the ovary is long and slender—just longer than the flower—and has three minute stigmas which are difficult to see without a lens.

The seed-vessel is a capsule which opens in 3 valves at the top, liberating the oblong streaked seeds.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY PUPILS.

ANNE'S PARTY.

(By NANCY SCOTT, of Moulyinning, Std III.)

Anne was sitting by the fire after tea on mail day reading "Our Rural Magazine." It had come rolled up in her lessons and although she felt very sleepy, she didn't want to go to bed until she had finished reading "Animal Life at Cherry Tree Farm."

It was so interesting you felt you were listening to all the animals talking. "Off to bed," said mother as the clock struck eight. "You will be dreaming of Cherry Tree Farm if you read any more."

Luckily Anne had just finished, so she put it away, and went off to bed. She was so tired she fell asleep at once. It only seemed a minute before something woke her up. Whatever could it be? The house was dark and still, so she knew everyone was in bed. Anne listened hard, and then she heard a gentle tap at the door. She felt a bit frightened at first, but another gentle tap came and she heard a voice say, "Open the door, please Anne, we are your friends." Anne got out of bed and put on her coat; then she opened the back door.

She could hardly believe her eyes when she saw standing before her, Mr Joseph Kangaroo, Mistress Jane, the cat, Mrs Polly Parrot, Terrier Tim, Peter Rabbit, Matilda Magpie, and little Lenny Lizard.

She was too surprised to speak, but Joseph Kangaroo gave a bow and said, "Please excuse us for coming at this time of night, but you see it's the only time we dare come. Are you a correspondence pupil, and do you get 'Our Rural Magazine'?"

"Yes," replied Anne, "I was reading it just before I went to bed."

"Well, we have heard there are some funny stories about us in it," went on Joseph, "and we wondered if you would be kind enough to read them to us."

"Yes, I will with pleasure. Come inside," said Anne, holding the door open, and in they all came.

It was such a bright moonlight night there was no need to light the kitchen lamp, and as there was some fire still burning in the grate they felt quite cosy as they drew their chairs round the fireplace.

Anne went to the food-safe where she found a lovely bone for Terrier Tim. Mistress Jane soon licked up a saucer of milk, while Polly Parrot cracked nuts as fast as ever she could. Luckily Anne found some lettuce in the food-safe, and Joseph Kangaroo and Peter Rabbit shared it together, while Matilda Magpie and Lenny Lizard had a race to see who could eat the most crumbs. When everyone had finished Anne got the Magazine and read one of the stories about Cherry Tree Farm. How they all laughed. Anne thought they would never stop.