



TREES

ACACIA

Fabaceae family

Common name: Wattle

Do you want to hear the good news or the bad news? Well, the bad news is that the pollen from the flowers of some acacias can trigger allergies, sending those who are prone to attacks of hay fever into fits of snuffing and sneezing when our flowers emerge. And when it comes to our use as garden specimens there's more bad news, for some of us are relatively short-lived, with our demise frequently caused by insects, by borers that get under our bark and



munch their way into our hearts.

The good news begins with the fact that one of us, *Acacia pycnantha*, has the honour of being Australia's floral emblem, and in addition to our natural beauty, many of us have practical uses too. The seeds of some species, in addition to providing food for birds, have culinary uses in the modern era as they had when aboriginal people were the continent's only human inhabitants. Some produce very dense, durable and attractive timber too, and our scented flowers drench the landscape with their distinctive perfume.



Despite the large number of species available, more than 1,200 in all, most of which are Australian native species, only a few of us have become the gardener's companions, but those that are here and that range from large trees and shrubs to ground hugging prostrate species, are loved unconditionally.

We're all tough and resilient evergreen species that thrive in poor quality soils, providing there's adequate drainage so that we're never left with our roots drowning in mud or water. We'll grow in full sun or light shade, and are extremely drought tolerant once well established, and we brush off any fleeting concerns about the arrival of winter frosts as readily as a mangy mutt ignores the fleas that are its uninvited passengers.

Acacia fimbriata. I can proudly affirm that I'm one of the gardener's favourite acacias, and with the dwarf variety of my species, which is commonly known as Brisbane Wattle, growing to a height of little more than 2 metres I'm not exactly a midget. I had a prominent place in the garden for many years, and was judiciously trimmed to create an umbrella shape so that more delicate plants could revel in the shade that I provided, but life wasn't meant to be easy. I was attacked by borers and threatened by both floods and droughts, but it was a violent storm that finally brought me to my knees, and as



I toppled to the ground, with my roots rudely ripped from the soil, my injuries proved fatal.

I had survived for some 30 years, making me unusually old for one of my species. The gardener, after shedding a few tears at my demise, promptly replaced me with a new plant and, being relatively fast growing, it won't be long before this new specimen once

Opposite page: *Acacia macradenia*
Clockwise from top left: *Acacia macradenia*, *Acacia fimbriata*,
Acacia macradenia, *Acacia holosericea*.



Acacia podalyrifolia. I'm one of the most readily recognised of all acacias and am commonly known as Queensland Silver Wattle or Mount Morgan Wattle.

I'm a fast growing species that can ultimately reach a height and width of around 6 metres, and when, in winter and early spring, I burst into bloom and cover my blue-grey foliage with a spectacular display of golden yellow ball-shaped flowers and my perfume permeates every nook and cranny of the garden, the gardener falls in love, once again, with the most outstanding member of our genus.

Like the majority of acacias I'm a short-lived tree that generally survives for merely 10-12 years before succumbing to the attacks of boring insects, but the gardener collects my seeds every year to create new trees and ensure that the Queensland Silver Wattle remains one of her enduring garden companions. And I and each of my offspring offer her a helping hand by flinging our seeds far and wide, and the gardener has no qualms about allowing new plants to thrive wherever they happen to put down their roots.

Not everyone is so happy to see me however, for although I'm a native of south-eastern Queensland I'm regarded as an environmental weed in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia, and my species has become naturalised in South Africa where it has become so invasive that it's been banned from sale.

I'm one of few acacias that will accept regular pruning, a practice that can remove many of my seeds and thus reduce the risk that I'll colonise areas where I'm far from welcome.

Fortunately the majority of acacias are well-behaved, and with new plants of many species easily propagated from seeds that have been soaked in hot water for 24 hours, we're confident that we'll be keeping the gardener company for many years to come.



Above: *Acacia podalyrifolia*

again provides the shade that's required by its neighbours that are less tolerant of sunlight and summer heat. In winter the pale yellow flowers of *A. fimbriata* almost overwhelm its tiny green leaves, and with its floral perfume filling the air, the lovely Brisbane Wattle lets the gardener know that it's ready for another shot at life.

Acacia holosericea. It takes less intelligence than that of a fossilised amoeba to comprehend the reason behind my common name of Velvet Wattle. My large deeply veined blue-grey leaves have the soft and seductive texture of velvet, and although my cylindrical yellow flowers, which appear in winter, are not as abundant as the flowers of some other species, I am, nevertheless, a plant that's much admired, primarily for my foliage, and the gardener strokes me gently and with affection each time she wanders by.

I'm a native of tropical and northern inland regions of Australia and grow to a height of around 3 metres and sprawl to a similar width, and with my

flowers followed by tangles of narrow and twisted green seed pods, I have more than one admirable physical characteristic.

Acacia macradenia. I'm a species that's found, in the wild, in inland areas of Central Queensland, but I've found a welcoming environment in the author's garden. I'm appropriately known as Zigzag Wattle, a reference to the zigzagging stems of my weeping branches. I'm a spindly small tree that attains a height and width of around 4 metres, and despite the gardener's continual attempts to prune me to create a plant with a less rambling form, I'm a fast growing species and routinely foil her attempts at a manicure with vigorous new growth. I may be an ungainly and unkempt character that steadfastly refuses to conform to the gardener's demands and that rebelliously sprawls across pathways and adjacent garden beds, but all is forgiven and forgotten when, during winter, I cover myself with masses of golden yellow ball-shaped flowers that fill the air with their alluring perfume.



ALLOXYLON

Proteaceae family

Alloxylon flammeum syn. *Oreocallis wickhamii*

Common name: Tree Waratah, Red Silky Oak

The story of my existence in the garden is one of life and death, but it's a tale that ultimately has a happy ending. My predecessor, the first of my species to be planted here, was happy too and thrived for many years, but when prolonged and savage droughts became regular events the poor fella's health took a turn for the worse. Then, when a severe storm battered the landscape, the tree, in a weakened state and with its roots in soil that, after days of torrential rain, was the consistency of a stodgy pea soup, was toppled by a vicious gale and its life came to an end. I arrived a short time later as a replacement and I've survived and flourished, thanks to the dedicated care and attention that I received during my early days as I settled into my new home.

I'm a little nervous when droughts sap the moisture from the soil and from my leaves, but the gardener, determined

to ensure that Death won't slink silently and surreptitiously onto the scene, provides me with all the water I need to guarantee my survival. And in my location in the rainforest section of the garden I'm protected from storms like that which claimed the life of my predecessor, and I'm provided with dappled shade, courtesy of the lofty trees that are my neighbours.

I'm an evergreen species, and in my natural habitat in the rainforests of northern Queensland I'll reach a height of 25 metres and a width of around 10 metres, but I'm generally far smaller when I'm growing in an alternative environment. Although I prefer to grow in dappled shade I'll tolerate a sunlit location with minimal complaints and, once well-established, I'll barely shiver if I feel the lightest touch of frost, but I require well-draining fertile, humus rich, slightly acidic soil that's covered with a thick carpet of organic mulch to retain the soil's moisture if I'm to look my best and produce the flame red flowers for which I'm justifiably admired.

My large clusters of flame red flowers are born at the ends of my

slender branches and provide a dramatic contrast to my vivid green foliage, and if Mother Nature spares me from her most violent tantrums, I'm sure to bring the gardener many years of pleasure and companionship.



BACKHOUSIA

Myrtaceae family

Backhousia citriodora

Common name: Lemon-scented Myrtle, Sweet Verbena

I'm always full of my own self-importance, and I've got every right to be, for my dense foliage provides the shade that's always welcome in a sub-tropical garden and my clusters of small cream-coloured flowers are very attractive, but it's the delicious lemon fragrance produced by my foliage that's my most valued feature. When used in cooking my leaves add a strong lemon flavouring that's indistinguishable from that of citrus, and it's not only a few oddballs and new age hippies who have discovered my secret.

My species is grown commercially for the oil that's produced from its leaves and that's used in a wide range of items, from cosmetics and pharmaceutical products to tea and foods. And the world simply can't get enough of me.

Despite my status as a culinary celebrity I'm still a down-to-earth Aussie with my natural habitat being in the coastal forests of Queensland. I'm an evergreen species that can reach a height of around 8 metres and a width of 3 metres, and despite being a tree of sub-tropical and tropical regions I'll thrive in much colder climates if protected from frost. Well-draining fertile soil that contains plenty of humus and that's covered with a thick layer of organic mulch suits me to perfection, and although my preference is for a location with light shade I'll tolerate full sun if there's no better option. And once well established I'll survive any drought that comes my way.

Above: *Alloxylon flammeum*



BARKLYA

Fabaceae family

Barklya syringifolia

Common name: Crown of Gold,
Golden Glory Tree, Gold Blossom Tree

I turn a deaf ear to the gardener when she's in a whinging mood, for I've heard her complaints on more than a few occasions. She derides me for being the most slow-growing and stubborn of plants within the garden, and she's at her most vocal in spring when she assumes that I'll produce masses of golden flowers, but I frequently disappoint her.

I'll admit that, during my first years of life, I grew only minimally faster than a palm tree in the icy wilderness of Antarctica, and I was more than 10 years old before I decided that it was

It was Ferdinand von Mueller, the government botanist for the colony of Victoria who, in the 1850s, had the honour of being the first European to make the acquaintance of one of my species. But it wasn't until Joseph Maiden, a prominent New South Wales botanist, strode onto the scene that Europeans had any hint of the secret I concealed. In 1888 Maiden became the first person to distil the oil from the leaves of a Lemon Myrtle Tree and to grasp the reality that my species had great commercial potential, but more than 100 years passed before anyone took one of Australia's most important trees seriously. Lemon Myrtle extract was used commercially during World War II to flavour lemonade when lemons were unavailable, and was utilised by early settlers as a food additive and an insect repellent, but it wasn't until the 1990s that large scale commercial production of Lemon Myrtle oil began.

An estimated 1,000 tonnes of leaves, which contain the highest level of citral of any plant species, are harvested annually in Australia, and with Lemon Myrtle oil having anti-microbial, anti-fungal and antiseptic properties I've got plenty of reasons to feel proud of myself. And when the gardener snips off a few



of my leaves to make a refreshing lemon tea and to flavour fish I'm pleased to be of service in a simply delicious way.



Top: *Acacia podalyrifolia*
Bottom: *Barklya syringifolia*

time to produce my first blooms, and flowering has become a very erratic practice. Some years I flower and some I don't, and the gardener lets me know that she's not too happy about the situation when I've refused to do what's expected of me yet again.

I eventually decided that it was time



to demonstrate what I could do and rewarded her patience with masses of racemes of my glorious golden flowers. Fortunately I win her affections in other ways, for I'm an evergreen species and my bright green heart-shaped foliage is not only extremely attractive but also provides welcome shade for the lower growing plants that are my neighbours.

I intend to be a valued member of the garden community for many years to come, and I demonstrated my resilience when a falling tree smashed me, and although I toppled to the ground I eluded Death that hovered over my shattered carcass. The gardener, with tears in her eyes, cut

away my broken branches, leaving only the base of my fallen trunk intact. It was propped up at an odd angle, but with some of my roots still buried in the soil there was hope of survival, and after a few weeks I produced my first tiny leaf, and the gardener wept tears of joy as I slowly returned to life.

I'm the only species within the genus *Barklya* and can be found, in the wild, in the forests of south-eastern Queensland. If life treats me well I'll reach a height of 8-10 metres and a width of some 6 metres, although in cultivation I need to be a ripe old age to attain such imposing stature. I appreciate moist fertile soil with plenty of humus and, if given a choice, I'd opt to grow in a frost-free location with light shade, but I'll grudgingly tolerate full sun if there's no alternative on offer.

On the few occasions when I've flowered the gardener has gathered my seeds to propagate additional plants, and although my offspring have also stubbornly refused to flower on a regular basis, I'm determined to initiate some changes, and to reward the gardener for saving my life I intend to produce masses of flowers for year after year.

I'm proud of the fact that my species

is the floral emblem of the central Queensland city of Gladstone, and if I finally get my act together perhaps the gardener will appreciate my beauty as much as the citizens of Gladstone obviously do.



BAUHINIA

Fabaceae family

Bauhinia blakeana

Common name: Hong Kong Orchid Tree

Bauhinia variegata

Common name: Orchid Tree, Butterfly Tree

Bauhinia blakeana. Life hasn't always been easy for me. I arrived in the author's garden as a young and spindly sapling and enthusiastically put down my roots, grew an abundance of leaves, and rewarded the gardener with a cluster of my glorious flowers as thanks for inviting me to share her life. Unfortunately she wasn't the only one who welcomed my presence. It was a period of severe drought, and a family of kangaroos, with their natural food in the surrounding bushland being

Top left: *Barklya syringifolia*

Left: *Barklya syringifolia*

Above: *Bauhinia blakeana*



in short supply, arrived for a banquet and, in no time at all, I was reduced to nothing more than a single twig. With a protective wire cage surrounding my miserable remains and with regular watering I survived and eventually returned to good health, and although I have the gardener to thank for my recovery, it's Lady Luck who has ensured the long-term survival of my species.

She's been on my side since the day in 1880 when a French missionary discovered my ancient ancestor, the

first known member of my species, growing near a ruined building in the countryside surrounding the city of Hong Kong. He took some cuttings, and the long and amazing story of my life began.

Modern science has revealed that my original ancestor was a natural hybrid born from *Bauhinia variegata* and *B. purpurea*, but being a sterile species it never set any seeds, meaning that new plants could only be obtained from cuttings. No other plants have ever been found in the wild, so that leads to

the indisputable and astounding fact that every existing tree on the planet is a direct descendant of the single plant that Lady Luck created in Hong Kong.

My species name honours Sir Henry Blake who became the governor of Hong Kong shortly after the discovery of my illustrious ancestor. And in 1997, when sovereignty of the British territory of Hong Kong was handed back to China, it was the flower of *B. blakeana* that became the island's floral emblem that's proudly displayed on the state's coat of arms, on its flag and on its coins.

With deep pink to red flowers during summer I'm as beautiful as my colloquial name of Hong Kong Orchid Tree suggests, and growing to a height of around 8 metres and spreading to a width of 4 metres I'm every bit as imposing a specimen as my ancient ancestor must have been.

I share the garden with *Bauhinia variegata*, a species that's as common as muck, but I'm no snob, and I harbour no envy over its more prominent place in the landscape. What I do envy however is its ability to produce seeds and to self-sow readily, which means that this lovely tree, in both its pink and white flowering forms, is growing here, there and almost everywhere in the garden.

It's often known as a Butterfly Tree, a reference to its leaves that resemble the wings of a butterfly, and also as an Orchid Tree. It's a deciduous species, but when its flowers appear in winter and spring it hides any hint of embarrassment at its nakedness with floral beauty that rivals that of any orchid.

There's little chance that anyone will fail to notice *B. variegata* that grows to a height of around 6 metres and a width of around 4 metres, and just to ensure that it's never ignored it flings its large flat seeds across the landscape. The gardener generously allows some seedlings to survive, but rips out others

Top left: *Bauhinia blakeana*

Bottom left: *Bauhinia variegata*



BOLUSANTHUS

Fabaceae family

Bolusanthus speciosus

Common name: African Tree Wisteria

that emerge in unwanted places, in lawns, in the rockery, and in the gaps between paving stones, before they've had more than a brief glimpse of life.

In tropical regions we're both evergreens, but are deciduous or semi-deciduous trees in cooler regions. We both prefer life in a frost-free location with well-draining soil and full sun,

and once established we're determined enough to survive any drought that comes our way.



Top left and above: *Bauhinia variegata*

Top right: *Bolusanthus speciosus*

Anyone who hopes to glimpse me in my finest garb has to be quick off the mark, for my long racemes of deep purple flowers are here one day and almost gone the next. I'm a deciduous species, standing naked throughout what passes for winter in this subtropical garden, and when there's a hint that summer's approaching I do my best to put on a colourful floral display as a new burst of foliage reveals that, after my dormancy, I'm still alive and doing blooming well once again.

Although I can grow to a height of around 8 metres I try desperately to restrain myself, for the gardener, blissfully unaware of how high I might grow, planted me directly beneath a power line. I'm terrified that, if I reach too high into the sky, death will come my way, not by being zapped with electricity, but by some sadistic pruning - like being hacked off at the knees with a chainsaw, but so far, so good.

Here I'm admired only for my flowers and for my statuesque form as a multi-stemmed tree with deeply grooved grey / brown bark, but in my homeland of

southern Africa I'm valued for more than just my physical appearance. The termite resistant timber produced from my trunk is prized for the creation of furniture and is also used for fence posts. My roots are an ingredient of traditional medicine to ease stomach pains, and my bark is used to treat abdominal cramps.

I'm a relatively fast growing tree that's content to grow in full sun or light shade and that appreciates well-draining fertile soil. Once well-established I'm extremely drought tolerant, and when I've grown to become more than a sapling I can withstand the icy touch of frost as I'm generally stark naked when the coldest of winter weather arrives.

After flowering, my branches are draped with clusters of brown papery seed pods that fall at my feet where an occasional seedling sprouts. In my natural habitat my seeds are devoured by monkeys and giraffes and germinate in a dollop of their faeces, but when the gardener wants to propagate more of my species these wild creatures are nowhere to be seen, and her only option, when she's eager to obtain more plants of my species, is to soak the seeds overnight in hot water prior to sowing them.



BUCKINGHAMIA

Proteaceae family

Buckinghamia celsissima

Common name: Ivory Curl Tree

I'm a very laid-back character, and for much of the year there's as much activity going on among my dense dark green foliage as you'd find at an annual gathering of barnacles.

After many years in the author's garden I'm well on the way to reaching a height of around 8 metres and a width of 4 metres, which is much less than I often reach in the forests of north-eastern Queensland that are the natural habitat of my species. I provide swathes of shade to ensure that the community of lower growing plants that cluster at my feet are cool and comfortable, but I'm often lonely and in desperate need



of companionship.

The gardener regularly wanders past and gives me a cheerful greeting. "G'day mate. You're keeping well I see," she says as she looks me up and down, but she remains unaware that although I appear to be in the best of health, I'm as happy as a sleep walking dwarf with a rabid mutt tugging at his pyjamas.

Fortunately life takes a turn for the better in spring and summer when my long racemes of cream coloured flowers appear and chase the blues away. And as their sweet perfume wafts through the air hordes of visitors arrive to keep me company, and as swarms of butterflies flutter among my nectar-laden blooms and birds drop by to sip the sweet treat that I offer I'm proud to be of service to the garden's wild residents.

The complex name of the 19th

century aristocrat Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville has faded into oblivion, but the title of this man who was the 3rd Duke of Buckingham as well as a soldier and a politician has been immortalised in the name of my genus.

I'm an evergreen species, and providing I'm out of the reach of anything other than a very light touch of frost I'll happily grow in far cooler climates than that of my natural habitat. I prefer slightly acidic well-draining soil, and although I like a location in full sun I'll accept a position in light shade if that's all I'm offered. And once well established I'll tolerate the most

Above: *Buckinghamia celsissima*



severe of droughts with no complaints at all. And being easy to propagate from either seeds or cuttings, the gardener has ensured that others of my species are scattered throughout the garden to provide the seasonal pleasures that are my gift to the world.



Top left: *Buckinghamia celsissima*

Above and right: *Cassia fistula*

CASSIA

Fabaceae family

Cassia fistula

Common name: Golden Rain, Golden Shower

I'm irritable, even angry at times, and it's my inferiority complex that makes me that way. For much of the year I'm drab and unattractive and, being deciduous, not a hint of leafy garb covers my skeletal frame during the coolest months of the year. And while the gardener fawns over more glamorous plants, she barely gives me a second glance during the dormant phase of my lifecycle. Fortunately I'm

yanked from the brink of the dark precipice of depression in spring when bright green foliage begins to cover my formerly naked skeleton as I begin my slow evolution into a natural beauty.

I'm not a picture of perfection for too long however, for my leaves become tattered and eventually disappear as battalions of ravenous caterpillars devour them, but although the gardener mutters words of sympathy for my plight, she takes no action to protect me. She leaves that up to Mother Nature, for once the caterpillars have feasted, they wrap themselves in silken cocoons to await their miraculous transformation into butterflies. And while they doze

I don a new cloak of foliage and in no time at all, as my long racemes of golden yellow flowers appear, all eyes are turned in my direction.

And just when I'm looking my best, along come longicorn beetles that ringbark some of my most slender and vulnerable stems that eventually die as a consequence of the assault. But I don't complain too vociferously, for everything has a place and a purpose in this sprawling organic garden. The caterpillars provide essential food for birds, and those that survive to become butterflies lay their eggs on my leaves and those of other species of cassias and the cycle of life repeats itself again and again.

My species is native to India and adjacent regions of south-eastern Asia where I'm regarded as far more than simply an attractive tree. My flowers are the floral emblem of the Indian state of Kerala and also of Thailand where I'm the national tree. In Laos my flowers adorn temples as offerings to local deities during Lao New Year festivities and are hung in houses in the belief that they will bring happiness and good luck. And in India my flowers are occasionally eaten, my leaves are used as a supplementary food for livestock, and my trunks produce a highly prized timber.

I'm a fast growing tree that can attain a height of around 10 metres and a width of 4 metres. I'll thrive in any soil providing it has good drainage, I'll tolerate a light frost, and although I prefer a location in full sun, I'll also grow in a lightly shaded area.

When my springtime flowers have died, long cylindrical seed pods gradually develop, and an abundance of seeds means that the gardener has no excuse not to propagate more of my species to produce pleasure at my floral display and to provide food for some of the garden's diverse community of wildlife.



CASTANOSPERNUM

Fabaceae family

Castanospermum australe

Common name: Black Bean Tree,
Moreton Bay Chestnut

of the black lagoon for my species thrives on forest-cloaked riverbanks in eastern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales, and it's from such a location that the gardener, many

I'm as Australian as a bunyip, but fortunately I'm far easier to spot in the wild than the legendary creature

Top: Seed pods of *Castanospermum australe*

Bottom: *Castanospermum australe*



years ago, collected some seeds and, having germinated from one of those seeds, I became the first tree to take up residence in the author's garden, and I intend to remain her loyal companion until death us do part.

I've grown to become a huge and majestic specimen, but my role is not only to look good but also, as a respected and dominant member of the garden community, to be very hospitable to my neighbours that have

become close acquaintances. And I take my responsibilities very seriously indeed.

Philodendrons wrap their aerial roots around my trunk and scramble up towards the sky, and I allow allamandas to lean gently against me and clamber up among my branches that are permanently cloaked with dark green glossy leaves.

In spring, I invite birds, possums and sugar gliders to feed on the copious nectar that's produced by my vivid red and yellow flowers, and the fact that the local wildlife and the gardener appreciate my existence is all the thanks I need for doing what comes naturally.

As an evergreen tree that can reach a height of around 20 metres and a width of approximately 6 metres, although generally far less in cultivation, I welcome birds that roost and occasionally nest in my branching arms, and I provide shade for smaller less vigorous plants.

I myself will thrive in full sun as well as in dappled or dense shade in a frost-free location where my roots can get down into fertile soil that has good drainage, although, as a rainforest species, I don't mind dabbling my feet in wet soil for a few days. And as a

mature plant I'll tolerate droughts and the heat of mid summer with few hints of distress, other than a scattering of yellowing leaves.

At the conclusion of my flowering season the gardener switches from admiration to observation mode, and when my large woody seed pods fall among the surrounding vegetation she's on the hunt for each and every one of them to ensure that none germinate and put their roots down where they're not wanted.

My seeds, which look similar to chestnuts, are poisonous, but they can be eaten safely if prepared correctly using a laborious process that involves roasting the seeds, removing the toxins they contain by washing cut segments in running water, and then grinding them into flour. Aboriginal people once utilised this method and valued my seeds as bush tucker but they're never on the menu here. Every seed the gardener collects is sown in the confines of a pot where my offspring can develop into healthy youngsters that will eventually be planted either in the garden or in the surrounding bushland.



DELONIX

Fabaceae family

Delonix regia

Common name: Poinciana, Flame Tree

I was brought to the garden many years ago as a seed, and with the gardener fully aware of the monster that I would eventually become I was banished, when large enough to leave the pot in which I had spent my first year of life, to the chook yard where I'd be unable to get into any trouble at all. I eventually offered the hens my shade and branches on which they could roost, and in return they provided me with fertiliser, kept the weeds around my trunk under control, and enthusiastically gobbled up any insect pests that might have caused me a little

Top and left: *Castanospermum australe*



would tear their hair out in frustration at our slovenly ways. As deciduous trees we toss our masses of tiny leaves and long flat woody seed pods across the landscape but the gardener's not fazed for what she doesn't clean up simply adds to the layer of organic mulch that cloaks every garden bed and that will decay over time. She tolerates the behaviour of those of us that are growing where the neat and tidy edges of the garden meet the dishevelled bushland and where there's no need to clean up our winter debris. And she has invited the rare yellow flowered poinciana, *Delonix regia* var. *flavida* to become a member of our community too.

grief.

With my ability to grow quickly and to reach a height of 10 metres or more and a considerably greater width in only a few years I'm not the most appropriate plant to invite into a small garden. But the gardener was proud of my achievements in the chook yard and, after propagating new plants from my seeds, she decided to allow my offspring to dominate sections of the garden where there's ample room for their sprawling branches and where their meandering roots, which feed near the surface of the soil, that hunt for

the moisture within drainage pipes, and that have the strength to crack concrete paths and foundations, had no chance of causing any trouble.

Now that they've all grown up and are really big blokes other plants revel in the shade that they provide, and while the gardener appreciates their virtues and is awestruck by the beauty that all of us reveal when, as summer approaches, we deck ourselves out with a cloak of vibrant red flowers, she's well aware that we're genuine slob.

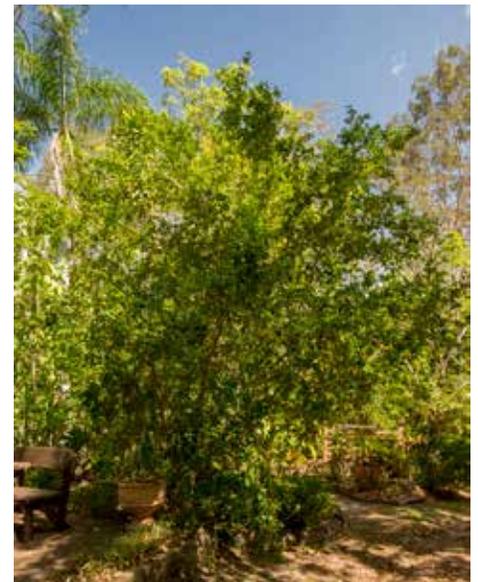
Anyone who insists that their garden remains spick and span in every respect

She can't resist the challenge of growing new trees from our abundant seeds, which need to be soaked in hot water for 24 hours to encourage germination. Some young trees are destined to become gifts for friends while other will find a home here and, planted in a frost-free location in full sun with well draining preferably sandy soil, they'll survive the worst of droughts and quickly become the new Popeyes of the botanical world – big and strong, but a little bit lacking in decorum.

Our species, which originated in

Top and bottom left: *Delonix regia*

Top right: *Delonix regia* var. *flavida*



Madagascar, is almost extinct in the wild, but will survive for millennia to come, thanks to the spectacular beauty of our floral displays.



EUGENIA

Myrtaceae family

Eugenia uniflora

Common name: Brazilian Cherry

I can't disguise the fact that I'm a Jekyll and Hyde character. In the guise of Doctor Jekyll I'm a good guy. Mister Popularity himself, that's me. Bees flock to my masses of small fluffy white flowers, birds and nocturnal possums clamber among my foliage to feed on

my ripe red fruit, and bearded dragon lizards scoff my fruit that falls at their feet like manna from heaven. Despite the fact that they contain a high level of vitamin C, my 'cherries', with their rather bland flavour, are not everyone's cup of tea, but I remain popular with the gardener as I toss my shade across the picnic table where she relaxes every afternoon with a well-earned cuppa.

With glossy leaves that turn from the red of winter months to emerald green, I'm attractive all year round, but despite my best efforts not everyone sees me as the garden's star attraction for I'm eventually and inevitably transformed into the dreaded Mister Hyde.

My seeds germinate wherever my

fruit falls or wherever birds have carried them, and routinely sprout among the damp leaves of bromeliads that shelter at my feet, in moist soil between rocks, among congested ferns, and in any other cool and shaded spot. I've become an unwelcome and invasive species in many countries around the world, including some regions of Australia, and if it wasn't for the gardener's vigilance I'd have colonised the garden long ago.

I'm an evergreen species that can reach a height of around 8 metres and a width of approximately 4 metres, and being the ultimate survivor I'll grow in almost any soil that has reasonably good drainage, and will thrive in either full

Top left: *Eugenia uniflora*

Top right: Fruit of *Eugenia uniflora*

Above: *Eugenia uniflora*



author's garden, it's my good looks and my ability to attract wildlife that ensure that the gardener agrees with my opinion that I'm one of the most desirable of trees.



HARPULLIA

Sapindaceae family

Harpullia pendula

Common name: Tulipwood

I'm certainly no sloth when it comes to getting into action, and being a fast growing species I was not very old by the time I'd developed a wide canopy of glossy green foliage to provide welcome shade for other less imposing plants. I've learnt to be patient however, to wait for admirers to realise my silent virtues and I have to admit that my foliage is my most outstanding physical characteristic, for although my pale greenish yellow summer flowers are quite attractive, they're so small that they're barely noticed by anyone other than those with such a keen eye for detail that they'd spot a solitary flea on a buffalo's hairy hide, but the vivid orange seed capsules that eventually form bring me a brief moment of prominence.

Many members of my genus thrive, in the wild, in a vast region that extends from India to Australia where they grow on the margins of rainforests, and I'm one of the Aussie mob that's at home in a region that stretches from northern New South Wales to northern Queensland.

I'm an evergreen species that, in my natural habitat, can grow to a height of around 20 metres, but I usually reach little more than 6 metres in cultivation.

Fastidious is certainly not an adjective that's relevant to me, for I'll thrive in any soil that has reasonably good drainage and that's in any location from full sun to the darkest of shade.

sun or dappled shade. I'll tolerate a light touch of frost too, and can cope with drought without any hint of distress.

I'm native to many countries of South America where I'm appreciated for the good side of my split personality, for my leaves are not only used to make a refreshing tea, but also as ingredients in herbal medicines that counter stomach ailments.



GREVILLEA

Proteaceae family

Grevillea robusta

Common name: Silky Oak

When the sun illuminates the pond that lies beneath my lofty canopy I stare into its mirror surface and the stately tree that gazes back at me answers my query. "Mirror, mirror, tranquil pool, who's the loveliest of us all?" The only honest answer is me, *Grevillea robusta*.

I don't intend to deny that I'm vain, and in spring, although I'm an evergreen species, I toss off my old attire of drab green foliage and immediately replace it with new and vibrant leaves to ensure that I'll look my best to greet the hordes of admirers that arrive to spend some time in my company. I lure them with the offer of a banquet, and flocks of honeyeaters and Rainbow Lorikeets flutter among my golden orange flowers

to feast on the copious nectar that they provide. As summer approaches, my glorious blooms are replaced by seeds that attract other birds that are well aware that the best things in life are free, and the garden comes alive with squawking and chattering as my fans squabble in their efforts to satisfy their appetites.

I'm an Australian native species with my natural habitat being in the coastal forests and bushland and the hinterland ranges of southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, and like many dinkum Aussie species I'm as tough as they come.

Once well-established I'll tolerate the most severe of droughts and also the light touch of frost, and I'll thrive with minimal attention in any well-drained soil that's in a location with either full sun or light shade.

I'll grow quite rapidly to become a single-trunked tree with a height of around 10 metres and a width of 5 metres, far less than I can reach in my natural habitat, and my ripened seeds will enthusiastically germinate if they find damp soil when they fall to the ground, and the gardener allows my offspring to take up residence wherever there's room for newcomers.

When my species was abundant in the wild trees were slaughtered for their beautiful timber but here, in the

Top left: *Eugenia uniflora*

Top right: Fruit of *Eugenia uniflora*

Above: *Eugenia uniflora*



my habit of tossing debris across the garden. The lightest of breezes send my minute green leaves fluttering down through the air, falling gently like snowflakes onto everything below my sprawling branches. During spring my bell-shaped mauve flowers add to the carpet of foliage strewn across the ground, twigs and branches come tumbling down during summer storms, and seed pods eventually litter the ground too, but there's rarely a murmur of complaint from the gardener.

As the oldest of the many jacarandas that grace the garden I have a special place in her affections, for I was lovingly raised from a seed donated by a neighbour who passed away many years ago, and I'm a continual visual reminder of the frailty of human life and of friendship.

As one of the largest trees in the garden I've attracted a wide circle



And once well-established I'll survive a light frost, searing heat and long periods of drought and rarely wince or look even a tad miserable.

And with new plants easily grown from my prolific seeds, the gardener, in appreciation of my good behaviour and easy-going ways, has created a veritable army of my offspring that stand to polite attention in their perpetually green uniforms.



Top left: *Harpullia pendula*
 Above: Seeds of *Harpullia pendula*
 Right: *Jacaranda* 'White Christmas'



JACARANDA
Bignoniaceae family
Jacaranda mimosifolia

Common name: Jacaranda, Bluebell Tree

I'm not embarrassed by the fact that I'm a bit of a slob, for I'm a deciduous species and I've got a good excuse for

of friends. Orchids and bromeliads nestle in the fork of my sturdy trunk, epiphytic ferns grip my grey bark, and a hoyu hugs me with its gentle twining embrace. I've found a corner of paradise here and, with ample room to spread my branches out across the garden, I provide dappled summer shade for less imposing plants that prostrate



MACADAMIA

Proteaceae family

Macadamia integrifolia

Common name: Queensland Nut Tree,
Bauple Nut Tree, Macadamia

Once upon a time the gardener bought a bag of macadamia nuts that were still in their shells. She cracked them open, scooped the delicious white flesh, and tossed the husks onto an area that would one day become her garden. Like all good stories this tale has a happy ending, for one nut escaped. And I was the one that got away, the one that remained undamaged, that germinated and that eventually became the large and impressive tree that I am today.

I'm an evergreen Australian native species that's often referred to as a Bauple Nut tree due to the fact that the forests surrounding the sleepy

themselves at my feet.

I'm a native of South America where I often reach a height of 15 metres or so but I'm not that huge yet, and may never grow to more than 8 metres in cultivation, despite the fact that the gardener has provided me with the perfect location in which to spend my life. Well draining soil in a sunny spot is what I require to grow well, and although young jacaranda trees cannot tolerate frost and require regular watering to survive, for old blokes like me the icy hand of winter and a prolonged drought pose no threat at all.

Others of my species are easily propagated from seed, but *Jacaranda* 'White Christmas,' one of my neighbours in the author's garden and that has unusual white flowers, can only be reproduced from cuttings.

In my homeland, ingredients derived from my species are used in traditional medicines, and with scientific studies having revealed that extracts of jacaranda may have antimicrobial properties that could prove valuable in medicinal products, we may one day be appreciated for more than our stunning visual characteristics.



Queensland town of Bauple are part of my native habitat that stretches down into northern New South Wales. My more familiar name of macadamia honours John Macadam, a 19th century Australian scientist and politician who would undoubtedly be proud of the world wide fame that I've achieved.

I'm a tree with dense dark green prickly foliage and can reach a height of around 12 metres. In spring the air is filled with the sweet perfume provided by my racemes of cream coloured flowers, but it's the nuts I produce that are my crowning glory and that have made me the most popular and most widely grown of all Australian bush tucker plants.

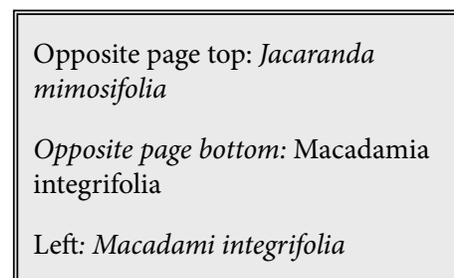
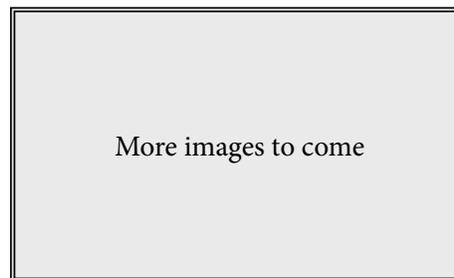
In 1888, the first commercial macadamia orchard was established near Lismore in New South Wales, and although Australians were slow to appreciate what I had to offer, other countries had no hesitation in adopting my species. In 2015 South Africa, became the leading producer of macadamia nuts and harvested more than 48,000 tonnes of nuts, and Australia farmers, despite clambering onto the bandwagon later than many other countries, finally got their act together and now produce around 40,000 tonnes annually, a mere 25 per cent of the total global production of some 160,000 tonnes.

It's no easy task to crack the hard shells of my nuts, with macaws being one of the few living creatures, other than humans, that can break open the nut's shell and extract the edible seed. But with none of these glorious South American parrots on the scene the gardener has no competition and can claim all the nuts for herself, and with two trees in the garden we keep her well supplied with our delicious treats.

Fallen nuts routinely escape the gardener's eyes and seedlings rebelliously sprout in the damp and shaded soil that's mulched with my discarded leaves, but they're unceremoniously ripped up and destroyed, for while two trees are good

company, three would definitely be a crowd.

My nuts are undeniably delicious as far as humans are concerned, but they can be toxic to dogs, with the severity of toxicity dependant on the quantity consumed and the size of the animal.





MELIA

Meliaceae family

Melia azedarach var. *australasica*

Common name: White Cedar

It was many years ago when I arrived in the garden uninvited, in the vegetable garden in fact, and the gardener, curious as to my identity and unaware of what the humble seedling that had sprouted among the beans and carrots would become, allowed me to grow. I'd germinated from a seed that had been transported to the garden by a bird, and as I rapidly developed, my identity was revealed.

I'm an Australian native species, but despite my common name I'm not a true cedar tree. *Azedarach*, the name of my species, is an ancient Persian word meaning 'noble tree', and a fully grown specimen, which can be 30 metres in height and have a canopy 6 metres or more in diameter, has a truly aristocratic appearance. And although I have yet to attain such impressive proportions I can justifiably boast that

I'm still a most imposing character.

I'm one of Australia's few winter-deciduous native trees, and in autumn my canopy of bright yellow foliage ensures that I stand out like a burst of sunshine before winter ultimately strips me to my naked skeletal form.

In spring my new bright green foliage emerges and my appearance is enhanced with the arrival of small mauve to white star-shaped flowers that emit a subtle perfume that, to those with a hint of imagination, is said to be reminiscent of chocolate. My flowers are followed by berries that are yellow when ripe, but these, like my leaves and my greyish-brown bark, contain toxins that are harmful to humans. Ingesting a few of my poisonous berries can prove fatal, but possums and birds that gorge themselves on my fruit miraculously suffer no ill affects.

In the distant past aboriginal people utilised the toxins in my bark to kill fish and treated skin diseases with the flesh of my berries. In more recent years science has revealed my well-hidden

secrets that have seen me valued for more than my honey-coloured timber. Some of my components have been shown to possess compounds with insect repellent properties that are effective against a wide range of pest species and ingredients obtained from my species have been incorporated in medicinal products that are used to treat a range of ailments, including inflamed skin, head lice, and menstrual problems.

It's not all good news however, for

Top left: *Melia azedarach* var. *australasica*

Top right: *Melia azedarach* var. *australasica*

Bottom right: Seeds of *Melia azedarach* var. *australasica*



I'm a dedicated adventurer and with my ability to adapt to a wide range of soils and climatic conditions and with my seeds distributed by wildlife that feed on my fruit I'll make myself at home almost anywhere. Any soil with good drainage, whether it's in full sun or light shade, will do, and once well-established I'll ignore the perceived threats posed by both droughts and frost. I've become one of the garden's most accomplished colonisers and, having also adapted to life well beyond my natural habitat, I've become an invasive species not only in some regions of Australia but also in other countries.

Whether draped in green foliage, laden with ripe golden berries, or in my gaudy autumn attire, I'm hard to ignore. I'm welcome in the author's garden for the shade that I provide in summer months but I'm not alone here, for when it comes to a population explosion I use all the tricks that Mother Nature offers to ensure I have plenty of company and my offspring are never far away.



MELICOPE

Rutaceae family

Melicope elleryana syn. *Euodia elleryana*

Melicope rubra syn. *Evodiella muelleri*

Common name: Corkwood

The genus *Melicope* contains around 230 species of trees and shrubs, 15 of

which are native to Australia, and I, *Melicope elleryana*, am one of the most widely cultivated of them all.

My natural habitat is not only in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands but also in the rainforests of an area that stretches from northern New South Wales to northern Queensland.

I'm a relatively fast growing evergreen tree that can grow to a height of around 20 metres and perhaps, given time, I'll reach such gargantuan proportions in the author's garden, but until then I'll have to continue to rely on something other than size to ensure that I'm more conspicuous than a white dove in a flock of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

For much of the year I'm just another tree among many and no one gives me a second glance, but in spring and summer there are murmurings that I'm a rather weird character, but I'm not offended for I know that I'm a very important member of the diverse community of plants that thrive in the author's garden. It's the rather eccentric location of my small pink flowers that make me a bit of a botanical oddity for they are produced in clusters that sprout directly from my trunk and my branches. But it's my flowers that allow me to stand out from the crowd and that attract hordes of appreciative seasonal visitors, and it's not only birds with a passion for nectar that appreciate



Top left and right: *Melicope elleryana*

Centre right: Seed pods of *Melicope rubra*

Bottom right: *Melicope rubra*



my charms.

I'm a species that's popular with butterflies too, particularly the spectacular Ulysses Butterfly that lays its eggs on my bright green leaves that provide a feast for the swarm of caterpillars that eventually wriggle into life. And when my flowers have died, they're replaced with small globular seed capsules that contain tiny black seeds that provide another serving of bush tucker for hungry birds.

Despite my origins as a tropical and sub-tropical species I'll happily grow in cooler climates providing Jack Frost never pays a visit. I'll thrive in well-draining soil that's in either full sun or light shade, and once well established I'll tolerate some periods of dry weather, although I'll have less to complain about if the soil is kept damp. And although I'm colloquially known as Corkwood, a reference to the texture of my trunk, I'm also referred to as Pink Evodia and Doughwood.

My close relative *Melicope rubra*, which is known as Little Evodia and Corkwood, is also an evergreen Australian rainforest species but hails from far northern Queensland, the Atherton Tablelands, and Papua New Guinea. It's a smaller tree that grows to a height of around 6 metres and that has similar cultivation requirements. Its

vivid pink flowers also sprout from its branches, and both its unusual blooms and its seeds lure birds that enjoy a free feast. It's a tree that's a host for the Ulysses Butterfly and its caterpillars too. And with both species being easily grown from seed, the gardener has an abundance of saplings ready and waiting to join us.



All above images: *Melicope rubra*

PELTOPHORUM

Fabaceae family

Peltophorum pterocarpum

Common name: Yellow Poinciana, Yellow Flame Tree

I came to the author's garden many years ago as a seed, and thanks to the miracle of nature I've evolved into the giant that's the centre of attention in the rainforest section of the garden.

I'm old and wise now and well aware that I've got a good life here.



I'm a relatively fast-growing deciduous species and the shade that I provide in summer months has made me indispensable, but I'm always on my best behaviour to ensure that the gardener continues to love me.

I'm very accommodating of her demands, and I welcome the confusion of plants that she invites to shelter beneath my sprawling branches. Orchids take up residence on my branches, bromeliads settle comfortably into the crook of my elbow, and elk horn ferns tenaciously grasp my trunk

to provide the decoration that's only surpassed in spring and summer when my sprawling canopy is draped with golden yellow flowers.

During winter, when the gentlest of breezes sends a flurry of my small green leaves falling like snowflakes, none of my tenants complain, and the battalions of other plants that prostrate themselves at my feet appreciate the sunlight that finally reaches them.

I'm a native of tropical regions of south-eastern Asia and northern Australia so I appreciate a warm frost-

free climate and soil with good drainage and, once well-established, I'll survive the most intense heat and periods of drought with no hint of distress.

I'll grow in full sun or light shade, but I'd never be comfortable in a small suburban backyard for I need plenty of room to spread my branches out, and my large shallow roots have a habit of damaging concrete and paving. And with my falling leaves and flat woody seed pods I have to admit that I can make a nuisance of myself.

Several of my offspring, propagated from my seeds, thrive in the author's garden and are well on their way to becoming gigantic trees, just like me. My species, in its natural habitat, can reach a height of around 25 metres and a width of some 15 metres, and although none of us might attain such gargantuan proportions in cultivation, we're undoubtedly trees of majestic size, and as spring returns we once again shelter the gardener's more lowly companions with our wide umbrellas of foliage.



PLUMERIA

Apocynaceae family

Plumeria obtusa

Plumeria pudica

Plumeria rubra

Common name: Frangipani

Some might call us large shrubs, while others insist that we frangipanis are small trees. Shrub or tree, it's a perennial question, but whatever the answer may be there's never any debate about the fact that we're all worth growing for our flowers alone.

I'll admit that those of us that are deciduous species are, when devoid of foliage and in our stark skeletal form during winter months, as attractive and appealing as a fossilised haggis. We're a group of ugly ducklings during that dormant phase of our lives, but from spring through to autumn we're

Left: *Peltophorum pterocarpum*



transformed into plants of stunning beauty when Mother Nature dresses us with large dark green leaves and perfumed flowers, and no one could possibly see us as anything other than highly desirable. Our common name of frangipani is believed to be a tribute to the Italian Marquis Frangipani who, in the 16th

century, created a perfume that was widely used on gloves. Or perhaps we owe our colloquial name to the French word 'frangipancier' that describes a coagulated milk product that resembles our milky white sap but that is hopefully more palatable than the toxic substance that our stems exude when cut or damaged.

Our genus contains 11 species that are native to tropical regions of the Americas but we've travelled far and wide and have been adopted into

Clockwise from top left: *Plumeria rubra* 'Bali Whirl', *P. pudica* 'Everlasting Love', *P. rubra* unnamed cultivar, *P. rubra* 'Darwin Sunset', *P. rubra* 'Rosy Dawn'.



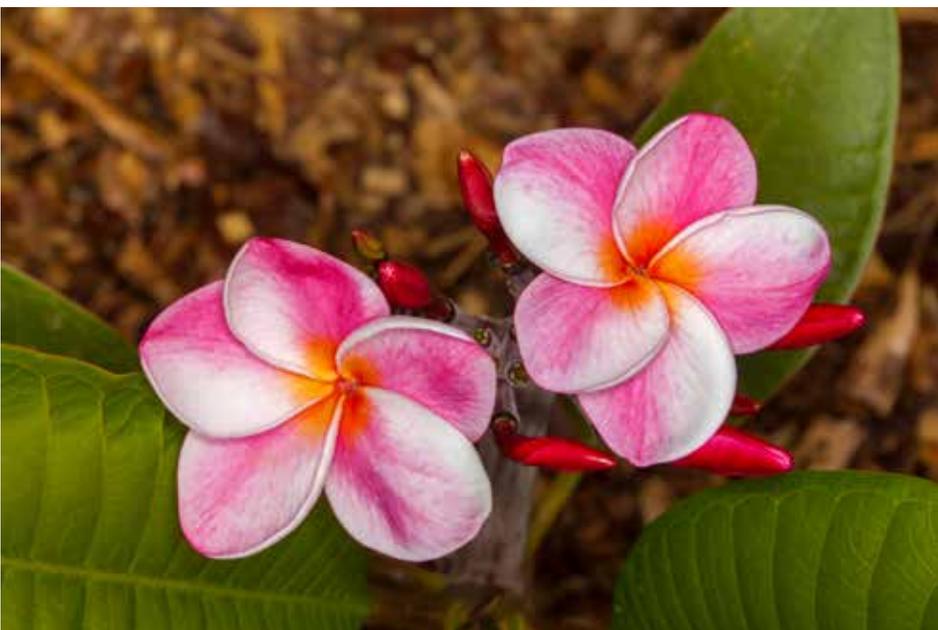
many varied cultures. The Polynesian people of the Pacific islands where we feel quite at home have integrated our flowers into their cultural traditions, with a flower worn in a woman's hair indicating her status. When worn over the right ear it reveals that's she unattached and looking for a partner, but when worn over the left ear it signifies that she already has a mate.

Our flowers are born in clusters at the end of our thick and fleshy stems, and while each of our species has its own unique characteristics, all have similar cultivation requirements.

Most of us thrive on neglect, but we need bright sunlight, warm temperatures, and a frost-free location. Well draining soil is essential too as we won't tolerate excessively wet ground, and we'll withstand long periods of dry weather with few complaints once we've become well-established.

The white flowered *Plumeria obtusa*, which grows to a height of around 4 metres and is often referred to as Singapore Frangipani, is an evergreen species, but if the temperature becomes too cold it will promptly shed its leaves. *Plumeria pudica* is also an evergreen species and is readily identified by its distinctive spoon-shaped leaves. It's less drought tolerant than other species, grows to a height of around 4 metres, and has white flowers that emit only a faint fragrance.

The deciduous *Plumeria rubra*,



Top left: *Plumeria rubra*

Top right: *Plumeria obtusa*

Left: *Plumeria rubra* 'Elsie'



which has perfumed flowers that are white with a yellow throat, is the most commonly grown species and is the floral emblem of Nicaragua. It can attain a height of 6 metres, and cultivars with flowers in a wide range of colours and combinations of colours, from vivid yellow and pink to orange and deep red, and some with double flowers are available.

Several thrive in the author's garden, but it's 'Bali Whirl' with its widely separated yellow and white

petals, 'Darwin Sunset' with its vivid red flowers that have vibrant yellow centres, 'Elsie' with its dazzling pink and white striped flowers, and 'Rosy Dawn,' with flowers that contain all the colours of a gaudy sunrise, that produce the most glorious of blooms.

Plants of every species require only minimal pruning, which is best done during winter months when deciduous species are taking it easy, and the gardener, never one to waste anything, uses every fragment of stem



to create new plants. We're so easy to grow from cuttings that, when storms batter us and toss fragments of our stems to the ground we simply take root where we fall, and the gardener, always appreciative of our beautiful flowers and their seductive perfume, rarely interferes with Mother Nature's designs for the garden.



SPATHODEA

Bignoniaceae family

Spathodea campanulata

Common name: African Tulip Tree

I'm not one to pay any heed to the complaints of anyone around me. I get on with my daily life and simply do what comes naturally, but in the eyes of the gardener I'm a troublemaker and I get into more than my share of mischief. "Why did I ever plant that damned thing?" she occasionally asks herself, but the answer is simple. She couldn't resist the thought of having my stunning flowers in her garden. But it's my flowers that are the basis of her complaints, for although she admires my large tulip-shaped orange blooms when they first appear in spring, it's when they fall to the ground that the

Top left: *Plumeria pudica*
'Everlasting Love'

Top right: *Spathodea campanulata*



trouble begins, for they're extremely slippery under foot, particularly when dampened by a shower of rain or morning dew. And when she once again takes a nosedive it won't be words of delight that are emitted as she hits the ground.

I'm an evergreen species, and although I'll grow to a height of 25 metres in my natural habitat in western Africa, I'm generally a considerably smaller tree when grown in cultivation. I'm as happy as a pig in mud in any soil that has good drainage and that's in a location that's in either full sun or light shade, and although I won't tolerate

frost, once I've become well-established I'll take the worst of droughts in my stride with no hint of stress at all.

With some of my roots growing near the surface of the soil I'm a tree that can easily lift and crack concrete and paving, but in the author's garden the only structure within my reach is a rather rickety fence, and although my invasive roots can't get me into any trouble here, I've got other ways to make myself a nuisance.

When my flowers have died they're replaced with large seed pods, each of which contains hundreds of papery seeds. Even the gentlest of breezes

spreads them across the landscape where they enthusiastically germinate in any damp fragment of soil, but the gardener remains vigilante to ensure that not a single seedling survives.

I'm embarrassed to admit that I'm not welcome everywhere, with my species listed in the Global Invasive Species Database as one of the world's 100 most invasive plants. I've thrived so well in Queensland that I've joined the ranks of declared pest species with it being illegal to distribute any of my species. I'm unwelcome in other areas of Australia and the world too, and while some people may hate me the gardener loves me, although she always ensures that I know my place and that I remain the only one of my species in the garden.



STENOCARPUS

Proteaceae family

Stenocarpus sinuatus

Common name: Queensland Firewheel Tree

I'm an Australian native species that's found, in the wild, in the forests of an area that stretches from northern New South Wales to northern Queensland, and I take my role in the author's garden very seriously.

I'm one of several trees that, a few years ago, were tasked with creating a rainforest environment and although, in such a group, I rarely stand out as an individual, I'm a gregarious character and more than happy to be one of the crowd that creates the shade in which many smaller species thrive.

As an evergreen tree that's exactly what I was born to do, and although I was initially rather slow to grow and achieve any substantial height, I'm now a tree of considerable stature and command my rightful place as one of the gardener's loyal companions.

Top left: *Spathodea campanulata*

Top right: *Spathodea campanulata* with seed pods.



In my natural habitat I'll reach a height of around 30 metres and a width of 8 metres but I'm unlikely to become such a colossus in cultivation, even when I have the perfect environment in which to live my life. A frost-free location with well-draining fertile soil that's in either full sun or light shade is what I demand, and although I appreciate a warm climate, I'll also thrive in a cooler environment than that of my natural habitat, and once well-established I'm surprisingly drought tolerant.

In summer, my strange wheel-shaped flower buds open to become equally strange flame red blooms that are a dazzling contrast to my dark green foliage. And being easily propagated from my seeds, I'm confident that more of my species, with the assistance of either Mother Nature or the gardener herself, will soon join me in the garden that I call my home.



TIPUANA

Fabaceae family

Tipuana tipu

Common name: Pride of Bolivia, Rosewood



When I arrived in the garden many years ago the label attached to my thin and fragile trunk stated that I was a slow growing small tree, and I almost chuckled to myself at that absurd description. It didn't take long for the gardener to realise that she'd been conned, for I grew rapidly, incredibly rapidly, and in no time at all she realised that I was destined to become one of the giants of the garden. She was pleased that she'd planted me well away from her house, but she was very uneasy about my proximity to an overhead power line. And she was right to be concerned, for in the following years the wildest of storms effortlessly ripped

Top left: *Stenocarpus sinuatus*

Top right: *Stenocarpus sinuatus* flower buds.



branches from my trunk and tossed them onto the power line, bringing it to the ground.

The gardener was rudely awakened to my true nature and to the risks I posed, and I assumed, when men arrived to clear the debris and approached me wielding their growling chainsaws, that my days were numbered. But my loyal and enduring friend, the gardener, fought on my side, and persuaded the enemy that a trim rather a major amputation at ground level was all that was required. And I lived to tell the tale.

Today I'm a 10 metre high monster with a vast and sprawling canopy of green foliage. I'm big, I'm tough, I'm a true survivor, and nothing can stop my path to complete domination of my corner of the garden. Neither the searing heat of summer nor prolonged and aggressive droughts cause me to flinch, and even when under attack from the most ferocious of storms I merely bend my branches and accede to the whims of the worst weather that Mother Nature can conjure up. A branch or two may snap and fall, but with my vast system of invasive roots I've got a firm grip on the land and thus on life.

I'm a deciduous species, but in spring and early summer, when my small green leaves drape themselves across my once skeletal form, I add hordes of small yellow flowers to my attire.

My winged seed pods, which are known as samaras, eventually appear, and aided by every gentle breeze, glide silently and stealthily across the landscape and, after rain, my offspring emerge here, there and almost everywhere.

They'll thrive in well-draining soil in a location with either full sun or light shade, and once well-established will tolerate a touch of frost and the most savage of droughts. But few survive the ferocity of the gardener as, for a fragment of time, she regrets her pleas for the removal of my death sentence.

Both images: *Tipuana tipu*



down to size if I attempted to imitate my wild ancestors and become a gargantuan tree that would outgrow its welcome.

My species can easily be propagated from seeds and cuttings, but the gardener appreciates diversity, and although I share the garden with others of my species, all are varieties with slightly different physical characteristics.

There's the dwarf form that reaches a height and width of merely 2 metres and taller varieties with green and gold variegated leaves and cream coloured flowers. But they're only little tackers that have a lot of growing to do to rival me in size and splendour.



Left: *Xanthostemon chrysacanthus*

But while she can easily rip up every seedling, I'm invincible. I'm now too large and too valued for the shade I provide to be in any danger of getting the chop.

In some areas of Queensland I'm as welcome as a swarm of wasps in a nudist colony, thanks to the ease with which my species has populated the landscape, and I've been classified as an environmental weed. And what an insult that is to a species such as I, a South American native, the only member of my genus, and the goliath of the author's garden.



XANTHOSTEMON

Myrtaceae family

Xanthostemon chrysacanthus

Common name: Golden Penda

My species name is derived from two ancient Greek words, 'chrysos' meaning golden and 'anthos' meaning flower, and golden yellow flowers are exactly what I produce. And when, at any time

of the year though most frequently in summer and autumn, large clusters of my unusual blooms with their long and prominent stamens appear among my dense glossy green foliage I'm bursting with pride at how attractive a tree I've become.

I'm an evergreen rainforest tree that's a native of north-eastern Queensland so I appreciate a warm frost-free environment, and although I'll survive and flourish in cooler climates than that of my natural habitat I'll be a little reluctant to put on a floral display.

A sunny or lightly shaded location with fertile moist soil that has good drainage is all I require to thrive, and although I'll tolerate periods of dry weather, I'll show my displeasure with yellowing and wilting leaves if I'm left without water for too long.

I can grow to a height of around 12 metres and a width of approximately 8 metres but am generally much smaller in cultivation. And while the gardener's happy to leave me alone to do my own thing, I'm confident that she'd cut me

