

Greetings from Western Australia

Members may recall my contribution in the December 2019 newsletter about the Blooming Biodiversity Conference here in Western Australia. Each year we visit here due to my wife being from Perth and having children and grandchildren here. This year all our other planned trips were cancelled, as no doubt for most members, but we were able to get Passes to travel here where borders are very strictly controlled. Our two weeks quarantine felt like an imprisonment (in a hotel at our expense) – but finally we were released into a Covid-free environment on October 1.

The peak month for flora had passed but we lost no time in beginning explorations. The SW corner of Australia has a Mediterranean climate and although has shown some evidence of warming its basic weather cycles continue. It has fires every year but had nothing like the terrible fires in the Eastern States a year ago. Fires ignite growth from many dormant species, which excites people but many others take years to recover. It is rainfall that makes the most difference to the flora – and so years vary considerably. This year has been particularly good for orchids, though most bloom early Spring which I missed.

Our exploration included several reserves around Perth, a group about 150 miles SW, around Mandurah (on the coast) and a trip to Kalgoorlie in the Goldfields and south to Esperance with its wonderful beaches.

Amateur naturalists abound. The very vibrant Wild Flower Society of WA (wswa.org.au) has an open Facebook page with 18000 members. There are other Facebook pages for eg Orchids (very popular) and even one for “Weeds”! When I first started coming here a major frustration was the lack of the kind of Field Guide that is abundant in Europe. With 12000 species of flowering plants it was obviously difficult. But over the years more and more “resources” have become available, many of them about local areas or genera. I now have 50 or so books and guides, plus as many electronically – but there are still areas where many hours are needed to identify “finds”. Nevertheless exploring in the “bush” is most enjoyable as you never know what you will find, even in places visited many times before.

What about “growing”? Having “natives” in your garden is considered a big plus, if only for water saving. All plantings by Councils on roadsides (and there are many) are of native plants. In 2017 I cleared our small plot and started a planting of natives – both in the alkaline sand that goes for “soil” and in compost-controlled pots. The diversity of WA flora is due to many variations in generally very poor soils. So one has to be far more careful than in UK on what is planted out. And pots of course bring challenges in a hot climate specially when one is absent half the year. But my survival rate increases yearly. And we all lose plants, don't we? W Australia does not have alpiners per se, but it does have a multitude of small attractive plants.

A Happy and safe Christmas to all members

Andrew & Jenny Mayo

Click [here](#) for Andrew's Wild Flower pictures as Power Point Show or click [here](#) for PDF version

And Click [here](#) for his Garden flowers as Power Point Show and [here](#) for the PDF version