

## A self-guided walk May 2025 Adelaide Botanic Garden

Several of the plants in this months list come from arid to semi-arid areas of the world, including the Nullarbor and Great Victoria Desert in Australia, the Chihuahuan Desert of northern Mexico, and parts of Madagascar. The walk begins among flora from arid South Australia and ends outside the Palm House which now houses threatened species from SW Madagascar.



See over page for map

\*An Australian native

- \*1 *Eucalyptus pimpleana*** Pimpin mallee Great Victoria Desert of SA and WA  
Just behind the bluebushes at the northern end of the Goodman Plaza ('The Rangelands') is a small mallee with smooth, mottled bark, dull green (juvenile) to blue-grey (adult) leaves and clusters of 7-19 elongated buds with horned caps. The buds open to reveal yellow flowers (July-Nov), which will eventually form cylindrical to barrel-shaped faintly-ribbed capsules. Up to 2m high, it makes an ideal addition to any arid garden. Both the formal and common names reflect the aboriginal name ('pimpin') for the species.
- \*2 *Santalum acuminatum*** Quandong, native peach All mainland states  
On the corner of the curved path, the Nullarbor form of native peach is in flower. The tiny flowers, usually overlooked, consist of a shallow, nectar-rich disc set amongst the anthers and fleshy, deep-red perianth parts. The familiar shiny red fruits are still to come. The mature fruits are drupes, like the common peach, but with only a thin layer of flesh, rich in vitamin C, encasing the stone. Quandongs are hemi-parasites, at least when young, with feeder roots tapping the roots of host plants for water and mineral nutrients.
- 3 *Leucophyllum frutescens*** Texas sage, barometer-bush, cenizo Texas, northern Mexico  
Between the stairs and the gate is an evergreen shrub from the figwort family (Scrophulariaceae). It has soft, silvery foliage and funnel-shaped, mauve flowers with a landing platform reminiscent of our insect-pollinated eremophilas from the same family. The official 'State Native Shrub of Texas', it is drought-tolerant, disease and pest-free and attracts birds and insect pollinators. With luck, the promised rains in late April will prolong flowering and perhaps reinforce the commonly held belief that Texas barometer bush can predict rain.
- \*4 *Grevillea 'Peaches and Cream'*** A cultivar propagated in Queensland and released in 2013  
*Grevillea 'Peaches and Cream'* is an attractive shrub belonging to the 'Robyn Gordon' family of cultivars, initially a cross between the white form of *Grevillea banksii* and *Grevillea bipinnatifida*. The bright green leaves are deeply-divided (pinnatifid) and take on a bronze sheen in winter. Flowers are initially yellow, developing shades of pink and orange as they age. Flowering for most of the year, it is a good resource for birds and insects and is a popular choice for suburban gardens, doing best in well-drained soil and full sun.
- \*5 *Macrozamia miquellii*** Australian pineapple, burrawang South-east Qld and northern NSW  
On the corner of the path opposite a large bunya 'pine' is a cycad from the dry sclerophyll (hard-leaved) forests of eastern Australia. *Macrozamia* is an Australian genus of about 40 species which, in contrast to some African cycads, are low-growing because much of the caudex (trunk) of many macrozamia is below ground. The large orange-red seeds identify this plant as a female. The seeds are mainly dispersed by large animals, such as emus and cassowaries which ingest the whole seeds and void them elsewhere, rather than the smaller possums and wallabies which tend to eat only the edible, fleshy outer part of the seedcoat, leaving the highly toxic embryo in its hard inner coat on site.
- \*6 *Melaleuca styphelioides* (unlabelled)** Prickly-leaved, or prickly paperbark Eastern Australia  
On either side of the path is a melaleuca with white or light brown spongy bark which peels off in large strips, the smaller tree giving a better view of the leaves. It grows along stream banks and other moist situations, mostly in coastal areas of NSW and Queensland, but will tolerate a range of conditions from swampy to hot and dry. It also regenerates well after bushfires. Flowers appear in summer in cream or white cylindrical "bottlebrush" spikes, perhaps adding to its appeal as a street tree in Melbourne and Sydney.
- 7 *Euphorbia tirucalli*** Pencil tree, spurge Madagascar  
Just east of the Wisteria arbour is a tall, rather scruffy succulent with cylindrical fleshy stems and yellowish succulent twigs. *Euphorbia tirucalli* likely originated in Madagascar and spread from there throughout arid Africa, south Asia and elsewhere, partly because of its use as a traditional remedy for many conditions, and its commercial potential. Biofuels can be produced from the latex, which may also be a source of industrial rubber. Note, however, the caustic milky sap on skin or eyes can cause severe irritation or even blindness.
- 8 *Dracaena marginata*** Red-edged or tree dracaena, Madagascar dragon tree Madagascar  
At this site is a stand of tall, elegant trunks, each topped by a whorl of narrow, arching glossy-green leaves with red margins. Now *Dracaena reflexa* var. *angustifolia*, it is a popular, easy-care house plant valued partly for its ability to remove harmful volatiles, like formaldehyde, from energy efficient houses with modern furnishings. It is a relative of the famous dragon's blood tree (*D. draco*) native to the Canary Islands.
- 9 *Cylindropuntia tunicata*** Sheathed cholla, abrojo SW Texas, Northern Mexico  
On the internal path in the cactus beds west of the Palm House stairs is a shrubby cactus with cylindrical stem segments covered in dense clusters of long, sharp spines. Along with the prickly pears (*Opuntia* spp.) which have flat stem segments, they belong to the sub-family Opuntioideae of the family Cactaceae. The opuntoids are separated from the rest of the family by the presence of **glochids**, tiny, barbed deciduous and very irritating spines often around the base of the fixed spines. Difficult to see on the sheathed cholla but they are clearly visible as a rusty 'fur' on the pads of an opuntia (9a) at the western end of the bed.