



*Rhododendron 'Uluru' next to the Fernery*

December

## ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN SYDNEY

Scented white flowers and bold flowers from the tropics dominate this months tour. Scan the QR to learn more about our plants and garden on a Daily Guided walk.





## 2. *Castanospermum australe* - Black Bean

This rainforest tree grows near rivers in NSW and Queensland producing distinctive orange and yellow flowers followed by woody boat-shaped seed pods. The seeds are toxic and dispersed by water, but Aboriginal people detoxify them to use as a food source. Genetic studies show that the unusual species distribution pattern in NSW is compatible with tracks that Aboriginal peoples used for travel and trade, related to their songlines, thus verifying Aboriginal knowledge that their peoples distributed the seeds. Family: Fabaceae



## 3. *Corymbia ficifolia* cvs. - Flowering Gums

These small flowering gums are spectacular in summer when they are covered in dense clusters of bright red, orange or pink flowers that appear above the canopy. The flowers are followed by distinctive large woody urn-shaped capsules. The species comes from Western Australia but these cultivars have been grafted onto root stock that is more suited to the conditions in south eastern Australia. They make good garden specimens as they only grow to about 5 metres high. Family: Myrtaceae



## 4. *Posoqueria longiflora* - Needle Flower

This tropical rainforest plant is from Brazil and neighbouring countries in South America. The white flowers arise in cascades drawn out from the base into a very long and narrow tube opening to five recurved petals. The fragrance of the scented flowers is stronger at night. These features suggest the flowers are pollinated by Hawkmoths which are active at night and have a very long proboscis that can reach nectar at the end of the long tube. Family: Rubiaceae



## 5. *Magnolia grandiflora* - Bull Bay Magnolia

These magnificent evergreen trees are from an ancient flowering plant lineage, thought to have evolved during the Cretaceous period around 95 million years ago and were first pollinated by beetles. The carpels, or female part of the flower, are hardened for protection against gnawing beetle mandibles and they mimic stamens to trick beetles looking for pollen from the male floral parts. To prevent self-pollination, the female parts are receptive before the stamens become active to release their pollen. Family: Magnoliaceae



## 6. *Chonemorpha fragrans* - Climbing Frangipani

A vigorous, twining climber that grows in montane rainforests from Indonesia to India, with large oval shaped leaves and sweetly scented white to cream tubular flowers. The flowers bear some resemblance to those of the Frangipani tree, which belongs to the same family. This woody vine can grow up to 20 metres long so needs to be supported. Like most Frangipanis in Sydney, they lose their leaves as temperatures drop in winter. Family: Apocynaceae



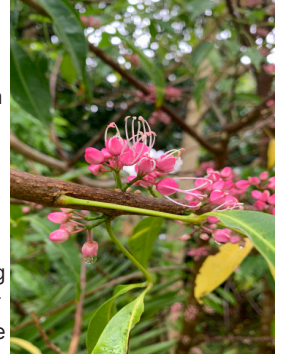
## 7. *Nymphaea* varieties - Waterlilies

Water lilies are also from an ancient plant lineage that diverged very early in the evolution of flowering plants. They are rhizomatous aquatic herbs that occur in tropical and temperate climates. Their beautiful flowers and floating leaves make them a popular ornamental plant and many cultivars are available in a range of dazzling colours. In Asia some species are used as traditional vegetables and several species have been used to purify water. Family: Nymphaeaceae (*Nymphaea 'Odorata Sulphurea'* above)



## 8. *Melicope rubra* - Little Evodia

This small tree is native to Northern Australia where it grows in lowland and highland forest from the Atherton Tableland to Cape York and into Papua New Guinea. The glossy, compound leaves have three leaflets that are aromatic when crushed. In summer clusters of pink flowers are borne along the branches and are followed by fleshy green to yellow citrus-looking fruit. This tree not only provides nectar for birds but the leaves are food for the larvae of the magnificent Ulysses butterfly. Family: Rubiaceae



# 1. PLANT OF THE MONTH

## *Alcantarea imperialis* varieties Imperial Bromeliad

This rosette or tank forming bromeliad is native to the rocky slopes of the Serra dos Órgãos mountain range in eastern Brazil where they often grow on vertical cliff faces. In this extreme environment they provide habitat for other plant and animal species. They only flower once after 8 – 20 years, producing hundreds of flowers on a tall candelabra-like inflorescence. Plants die after the seed pods mature in up to 6 months. Family: Bromeliaceae

