



**DISCOVER MORE**  
botanicgardens.org.au

Find us on social media:



@BotanicSydney

# Must See

May 2025



*Cosmos bipinnatus* – Wildflower Meadow

This month's plants feature colourful bark, trunks and leaves as well as unusual flowers.

## Join a guided walk

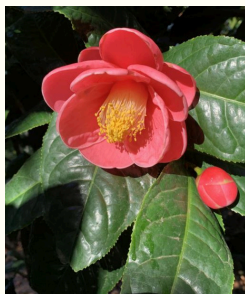
Scan the QR code to join a daily guided walk.



**BOTANIC  
GARDENS  
OF SYDNEY**



**1** *Camellia amplexicaulis*  
Hải đường



This exquisite Camellia from North Vietnam is extinct in the wild. The species is still cultivated in Vietnamese gardens where it's called Hải đường, and its flowers are used to celebrate the Tết festival. Look for striking crimson new foliage which matures into large glossy green leaves that clasp the stem. Round pink buds open to rosy cup-shaped flowers surrounding a cluster of yellow stamens.

**Family: Theaceae**

**3** *Euphorbia ammak* 'Variegata'  
Variegated Candle Spurge, Ghost Euphorbia



This is a variegated form of a species, listed as vulnerable, native to Saudi Arabia and Yemen, that grows in deserts and dry shrubland. Spectacular yellow, four-sided 'winged' stems, grow up to 10 m with wavy edges, bearing sharp brown spines. In summer, tiny, yellowish-green flowers bloom at stem tips, followed by smooth fruit. Stems exude a milky sap which irritates the skin and eyes, toxic if ingested.

**Family: Euphorbiaceae**

**4** *Quercus variabilis*  
Chinese Cork Oak



Feel the thick, furrowed, corky bark of this handsome deciduous oak. Native to China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, this species is both beautiful and useful. The corky bark is harvested to make roofs, floats, and wine corks. Look at the leaves - green above but covered in silvery downy hairs below - and featuring toothed margins. Dead wood is used to cultivate *Ganoderma lucidum*, known in China as 'the mushroom of immortality'.

**Family: Fagaceae**

**5** *Corymbia watsoniana*  
Large-fruited Yellowjacket



An interesting medium-sized tree to 15 m, endemic to Queensland, growing in dry sclerophyll forest around the Barakula State Forest. Feel the trunk's flaky yellow, persistent bark which forms a beautiful, tessellated pattern of overlapping fragments, inspiring its common name Yellowjacket. In autumn, plump buds open to creamy staminate flowers, followed by large urn-shaped fruit (capsules).

**Family: Myrtaceae**

**6** *Elaeocarpus bancroftii*  
Johnstone River Almond



In autumn, clusters of white, bell-shaped flowers with fringed petals hang amongst the leaves of this rainforest tree from north-eastern Queensland. Bluish-green fruit follow, each containing an edible almond-shaped seed, with a delicious nutty flavour, encased in a hard, outer shell (endocarp). Southern Cassowaries are the chief seed dispersers, swallowing the fruit whole and depositing the seed in their scats.

**Family: Elaeocarpaceae**



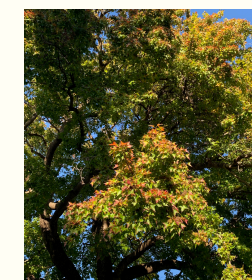
**7** *Strelitzia reginae* 'Mandela's Gold'  
Bird of Paradise



The spectacular bird-like flowers consist of yellow and blue petals that emerge from a beak-shaped spathe. Two blue petals are joined, forming an arrow-like nectary. As birds perch to drink nectar, the petals open, dusting their feet with pollen! Native to South Africa, Strelitzia was named by Sir Joseph Banks. He named it for Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, queen consort of 'mad' King George III and a keen amateur botanist.

**Family: Strelitziaceae**

**8** *Liquidambar formosana*  
Formosan Sweet Gum



Rarely cultivated in Sydney, this large, deciduous tree from China, Korea and Taiwan has three-lobed leaves that turn gold to red in cooler months. The grey, fissured bark exudes aromatic resin with medicinal properties, hence its botanical name, from the Latin *liquidus* (liquid) and Arabic *anbar* (ambergris). Female flowers form dense clusters followed by spiky spherical, 'burred' fruit.

**Family: Altingiaceae**

**Plant of the Month**

**2** *Ginkgo biloba*  
yin xing, Maidenhair Tree

We know it's autumn when *Ginkgo biloba's* beautiful fan-shaped leaves turn butter yellow. Arguably the world's most distinctive and venerated tree, the Gingko has a unique place in plant evolution. Often called a 'living fossil', it's the only survivor of an ancient order (Ginkgoales) of seed-bearing plants that have existed for 270 million years. Cultivated for thousands of years in China, the tree is renowned for its longevity - thousand-year-old specimens are documented. A remarkable tree - a source of edible 'nuts', herbal medicines, and inspiration.

**Family: Ginkgoaceae**