

Plant of the week: *the Brachychiton acerifolius*

THE Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) is a large tree native to tropical regions on the east coast of Australia. It is famous for its bright red bell-shaped flowers that often cover the whole tree when it is leafless.

Along with other members of the *Brachychiton* genus, it is commonly referred to as a Kurrajong. This tree is tolerant of temperate climates and is increasingly cultivated around the world because of its beauty. It is a deciduous tree - shedding its leaves after the dry season. The spectacular flowering occurs in late spring. In areas where the winter is not particularly dry, this natural rhythm may become somewhat erratic and the tree may flower only partially.

The pod-like fruits are dark brown, wide, boat-shaped and about 10cm long. They contain masses of thin bristles that stick in the skin as well as yellow seeds. These are very nutritious and are eaten by Aborigines after toasting.



KURRAJONG: Native to Australia grown in temperate climates around the world

Questions and answers

A pretty relative of the arum

Q I am sending you pictures of a bush that seems to be growing spontaneously in my garden in Six-Fours. It has been regularly dying back in winter and growing even more vigorously in spring.



BIZARRE: An Arum relative

A This strange flower does not actually belong to some exotic plant but to a relative of the arums that grow spontaneously around the Mediterranean: the *Dracunculus vulgaris*. After it produces these impressive flowers, it drops its leaves in the summer.

An Epiphyllum taking too much space

Q YOU often receive letters about plants that are not growing but for us it is the opposite. Our orchid cactus (*Epiphyllum oxypetalum*) is growing too big for the space available and we only planted it two years ago. We would like to prune it without damaging it. Is this possible?



PRUNE: Safe to cut back

A The Epiphyllum bears large, strongly fragrant flowers that bloom just a few nights. It is an epiphyte cactus which grows well indoors. You can safely cut back the gangly shoots; that will allow the plant to become fuller.

Advice to new arrivals - be ready for change

GARDENERS who move to the region often encounter problems. The most common error is trying to recreate the same gardens they managed to establish elsewhere like the Russian who wanted to grow his homeland plants in a garden at Cap-Ferrat, or the Polish gardener who was completely lost without his rose garden.

Others think they have landed on the Mauritius but soon discover their plants are dead by mid-November. Even French gardeners make the same mistake.

The hanging garden in the Nice bus station is a good example: it was completely ravaged in the beginning of winter as its Parisian landscapist had under-estimated the cold wind which descends from the mountain and circulates in the Paillon strip.

Patience

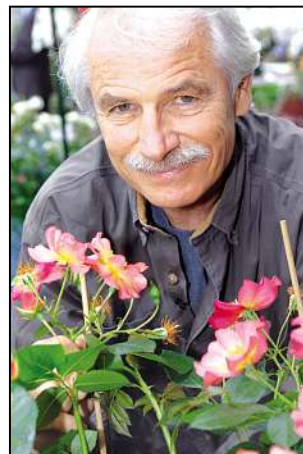
Another problem is trying out all the 'local' plants to see how they behave. In one particular case, the majority of Mediterranean plants listed in the Rey nursery catalogue were planted in one garden and a year later the owner was in a panic due to the rapid growth; the following year, two foot of the three foot-high growth had to be cut down. In other words, observe, reserve and be patient, the three major qualities for all gardeners in the world. It is also good to talk to locals to avoid mistakes and disappointments.

Rose named by snapper

RENOWNED French photographer and environmentalist, Yann Arthus-Bertrand has named a rose after himself.

He officially named it at the Journées de la Rose which took place at the royal abbey of Chaalis.

The Yann Arthus-Bertrand rose bush can be found in autumn at all garden centres selling Meilland roses or by correspondence from Meilland-Richardier.



DEDICATION: Mr Bertrand his rose

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