

WINNER! 2012 Most Popular Gardening Publication

ISSUE 30 – QUARTERLY

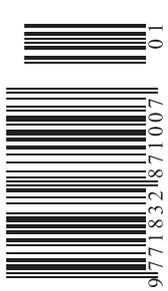
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# subTropical Gardening

AFRICAN VIOLETS  
ALLURE OF ALOES  
SMALL GARDEN PLANTS  
VALENTINE LOVERS  
VALUE OF TREES

**local advice for  
local gardeners**

ISSN 1832-8717



**EDIBLES**  
– pomegranates



**NATIVES**  
– basket ferns



**TROPICALS**  
– variegated plants



**GARDENS & PARKS**  
– Ipswich + Gatton

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FEBRUARY 2013

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### COVER

Native Currant Bush (*Carissa spinarum*)

© Paul Plant

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# Welcome...

## Lifestyle – the way we live and garden!



It was a pleasant surprise last November when this magazine won the **2012 Most Popular Gardening Publication**. The Queensland Council of Garden Clubs which includes all the gardeners, clubs and societies across the state of Queensland voted. This magazine won over books, other magazines, websites and newspaper articles. On behalf of the entire team of STG, thank you.

Early 2013 has not been what was expected in the northern warm climates of Australia. Summer wet season has come very late with many gardeners worried about lack of rainfall. However, in late January along came cyclones, storms and floods.

Late summer is a great time for gardening. Plants establish quickly ensuring they are prepared for the coming cooler winter months. Now is the time to head into your local garden centre to buy plants and related products to boost their growth. Check out events that may be occurring locally, nationally and internationally.

Finally, don't forget to join us in the STG Community at our website [www.stgmagazine.com.au/community](http://www.stgmagazine.com.au/community).

*subTropical Gardening* – a lifetime of local advice.

Happy reading!

Paul Plant – Editor

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Brisbane,  
28<sup>th</sup> NOV 2012  
Old Council of  
Garden Clubs Inc.



Canberra,  
12<sup>th</sup> NOV 2011  
Australian Institute  
of Horticulture Inc.



Disclaimer...

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In today's world of smaller house blocks and larger dwellings, there is not much space left for a garden. In these circumstances gardeners often look for the well known, predictable plants, many of which if not most, are non-native in origin. The result can be a rather restricted species list and a tendency towards 'sameness'. Native plant enthusiast and horticulturist **Joan Dillon** takes a look at some fabulous natives for small gardens. Images John Dillon.

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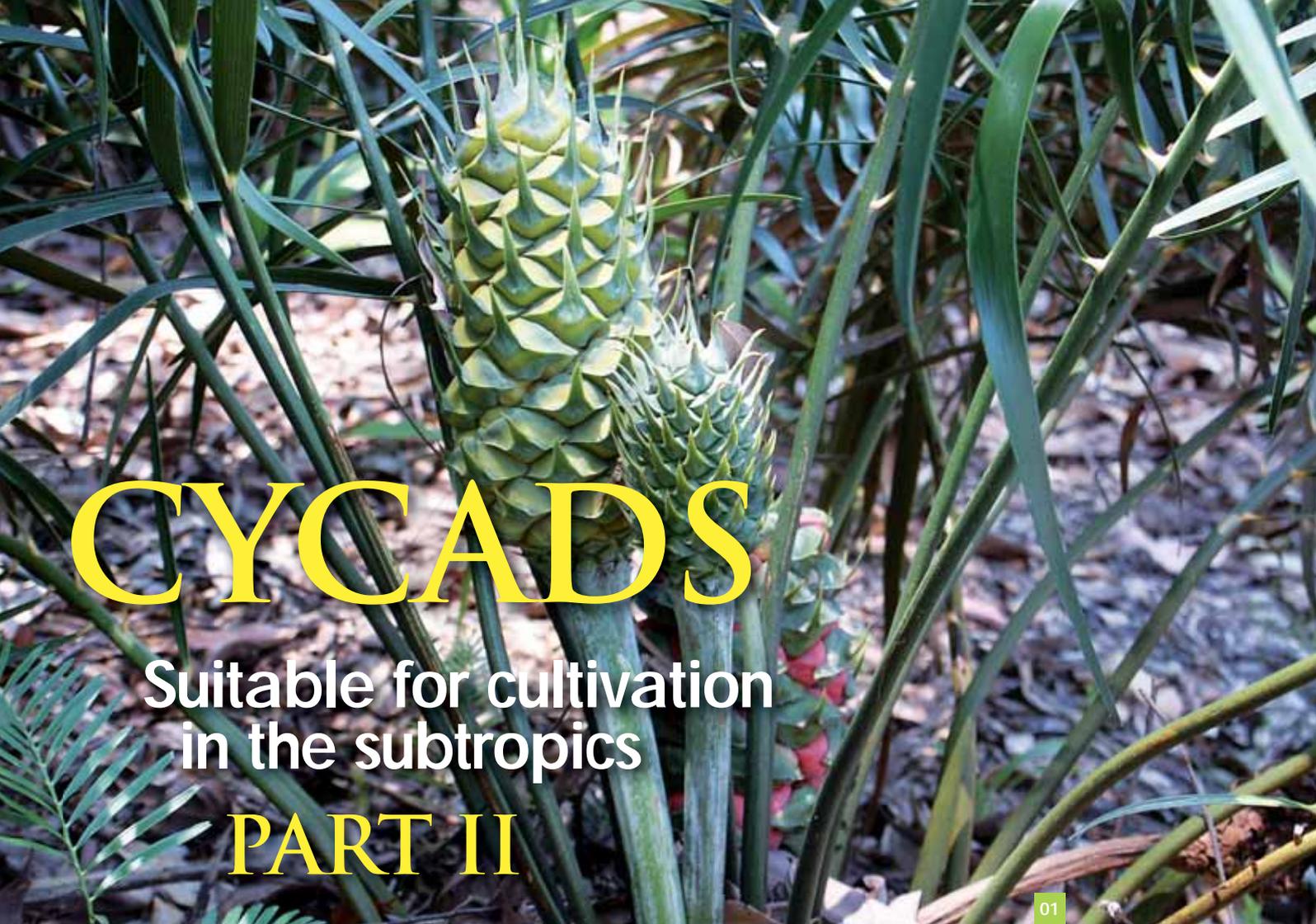
Left | Small gardens can still create water features with the use of small water plants. 01 | *Wahlenbergia* sp.

**T**o prevent 'sameness' there is a remarkably large number of colourful natives well suited to small gardens in warm climates. Many of these can be grown in the ground while others are better planted in pots or larger above ground containers made from steel, timber or other available materials.

Soil type is very important as many warm climate beauties have their origins in coastal areas and do require excellent drainage. However, not all are fussy and several have proved surprisingly tolerant of clay based soil on a sloping site. Gypsum and organic matter can help. Decorative organic mulch rather than cane or hay is preferable for small areas and pine bark which comes in at least two grades works well. Air does need to reach the soil and the microflora needs all the encouragement they can get. Inorganic mulches do not do much for either.

If growing in pots, use a good quality potting mix, preferably formulated for natives and if using bins, a free draining soil mix is essential. Experience has shown that some of these apparently sandy mixes are hydrophobic and will repel water if allowed to dry out. It is a big job to re-wet them so a layer of coarse sand plus leaf litter (or other preferred mulch) on the surface should prevent this from happening. Leaf litter from under lillypillies is both attractive and effective.

Where space is at a premium, shrubs usually require pruning. Regular tip pruning will create neat and tidy specimens. Suitable hardy shrubs are Thyme Honey Myrtle (*Melaleuca thymifolia*), Midyim Berry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*), *Leptospermum* 'Pink Cascade' an old favourite with a spreading habit and *Hovea acutifolia* which lasts only three years but is worth it for the blue pea flowers in spring. From the rainforest try Little Penda (*Xanthostemon verticillatus*). »



# CYCADS

Suitable for cultivation  
in the subtropics

## PART II

01

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Following on from Issue 29, **Heather Knowles** continues with her article on the diversity of native cycads suitable for gardens and landscapes.

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**M**ACROZAMIA  
Endemic to Australia, there are currently 41 species in the genus *Macrozamia*.

Three are native to Western Australia, one to the Northern Territory, eighteen to New South Wales and nineteen to Queensland. The name comes from the Greek *makros* meaning large and the genus *Zamia*.

These cycads are dioecious – there are separate male and female plants. Plants have thick fleshy stems, sometimes subterranean, which are capable of holding up to 150 leaves on the larger growing mature plants.

On the Australian east coast, *Macrozamia* habitats stretch from the Rockhampton region in Queensland to the north, to Bega in southern New South Wales. Most species are suitable for cultivation in the subtropics, either inground or in pots. Many are ideal specimens for northern Australia or protected gardens in colder climates.

Good drainage, mulching, watering during dry spells and fertiliser suitable for native plants will keep your *Macrozamia* plant happy, healthy and looking good.

Due to habitat destruction, several species of *Macrozamia* are listed as endangered or otherwise threatened under relevant State Nature Conservation legislation. It is illegal to collect these plants from the wild. When buying such species always look for a CITES tag. »

# CHAYA

01

By Arno King

**C**haya is one of the hardiest vegetables you can grow – the ideal vegetable for the 'brown thumb' or busy gardener. It loves heat and humidity, can tolerate extreme drought, is pest free, and lives for many decades. It is also a decorative shrub. It certainly deserves to be grown in all warm climate gardens.

Chaya (*Cnidocolus chayamansa*) is native from the southern tip of Texas, United States of America, down to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, where it grows in seasonal climates which may have long dry

winters and hot wet summers. In the wild the leaves of this plant are covered in stinging hairs like stinging nettles. It is also very poisonous. Not the kind of plant you would want in the vegetable garden.

Over many centuries, the native people have selected plants with stingless leaves and these are now grown in cultivation. All parts of the plant contain cyanide and are poisonous. However once cooked for 3 minutes, the cyanide is deactivated. Many other popular vegetables are also poisonous unless correctly prepared – for example potatoes, rhubarb and cassava.

## PREPARING CHAYA LEAVES

Like many popular vegetables, Chaya can be poisonous unless prepared correctly.

Boil, fry or stew the leaves with other ingredients for **at least 3 minutes**.

The cyanide in the leaf is released as a harmless gas and does not affect the dish in any way. Briefly stir frying the leaves or eating them raw is not advisable – although many people do so.

The leaves of Chaya are widely eaten as a spinach or green. They are delicious and retain their size and texture following cooking. Are very nutritious, being especially high in protein, calcium, iron and vitamins A and C.

To my knowledge, only one cultivar is grown in Australia. I believe it is the cultivar 'Macho'. It is an attractive shrub with maple like leaves, which grows naturally to 1.2-2.5m high by 1.2-2m wide. »

# SUBTROPICALIA

## C

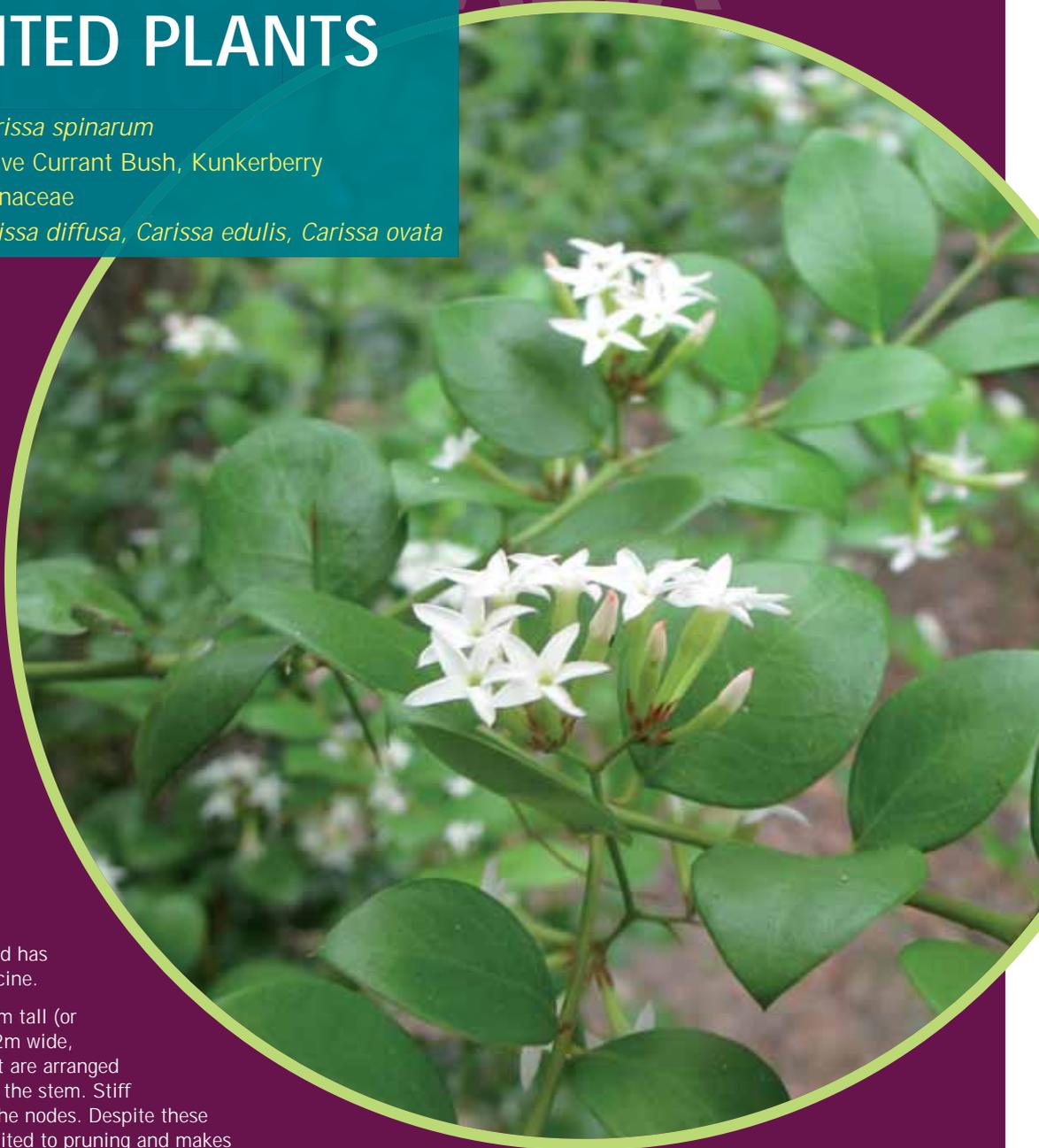
### SCENTED PLANTS

**Botanical** *Carissa spinarum*

**Common** Native Currant Bush, Kunkerberry

**Family** Apocynaceae

**Synonym** *Carissa diffusa*, *Carissa edulis*, *Carissa ovata*



This native plant has a broad distribution across numerous regions including Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent, China, South East Asia and the Pacific Islands. Within Australia, it is native to Queensland, Western Australia and north-eastern New South Wales.

It is predominantly used as an ornamental plant in Australia, but overseas it is grown for its edible fruit and has been used in folklore medicine.

This spiny small shrub 1-2m tall (or semi-climber to 4m) by 1-2m wide, has small glossy leaves that are arranged opposite one another along the stem. Stiff spines typically appear at the nodes. Despite these spines, this plant is well suited to pruning and makes the ideal barrier hedge. In the wild, the plant forms a dense thicket of sprawling branches.

Pure white flowers 5mm across are five petalled, star shaped and highly scented. These appear during summer, depending on seasonal rainfall. They are followed by sweet black fruit.

This plant is a valuable host plant for the caterpillars of the Common Crow and Australian Crow butterflies. The plant also provides valuable habitat for small birds.

#### BEST GROWING CONDITIONS

- Part shade
- Adaptable to a wide range of soils
- Moderately drought resistant once established
- Benefits from added fertiliser and watering
- Organically enriched soil and mulching encourages growth

#### LANDSCAPE USE

- Privacy barrier hedge
- Habitat revegetation
- Scented garden
- Bushfood