

“Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open heart.”

– Robin Wall Kimmerer



www.castlemaineseedlibrary.org.au

Cover image - Frances Cincotta

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Hakea decurrens
Bushy Needlewood

The Indigenous Seed Project acknowledges the local Dja Dja Wurrung people as the first inhabitants of the land we live upon. We recognise their continuing connection to this land, rivers and creeks and to their rich ancient culture. We acknowledge that at the time of European arrival the totality of the lands that are now known as Victoria were occupied by sovereign Indigenous nations who owned, cared for and enjoyed their land in accordance with their laws, customs and traditions. We acknowledge, with full respect, the strength and power of all Traditional Owners, Elder, Ancestors, and young leaders who fight to protect and look after Country, Community, Language and Lore in the face of ongoing colonial interruptions and cultural genocide. To Learn more please visit djadjawurrung.com.au The Indigenous Seed Project supports a Treaty for Victoria.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Frances Cincotta for her all-round local plant wisdom - having access to lived knowledge is such a privilege. Thank you also for your excellent proofreading skills and constant support for the project.

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I would also like to thank Eliza-Jane Gilchrist for her constant support and help during the creation of this project - having a right-hand woman like Eliza was invaluable. Thanks to the lovely group of volunteers who assisted in picking Chocolate Lily seed. Big thanks to The Castlemaine Seed Library Working Group; Dayna, Annelise and Susan - the collective capacity you women have is incredible. The Castlemaine Library for supporting, assisting with logistics and offering a space to accommodate the project in its completed state. Thanks to our regular Seed Library volunteers who helped package and label the seeds. This project is supported by the Mount Alexander Shire Council's Community Grants Program.

Jo Matthews, Indigenous Seed Project Coordinator

Terminology

Indigenous

Refers to a plant species that occurs naturally in a region but not exclusively. For example, River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) is indigenous to our shire but it is also indigenous to many other parts of Australia.

Endemic

Refers to a plant species that grows only in a specific designated area. In Mount Alexander Shire we only have one plant species that is endemic – the Southern Shepherd's Purse (*Ballantinia antipoda*), a highly threatened species that occurs only on Mt. Alexander. It is also correct to say that Southern Shepherd's Purse is indigenous to Victoria, or indigenous to Australia, or indigenous to Shire of Mount Alexander.

River Red Gum, which occurs naturally in every state and territory of Australia except for Tasmania, is endemic to Australia, meaning it does not occur naturally in any other country.

Provenance

Refers to the area that the seed was originally collected from. Across Mount Alexander Shire conditions for plants vary from place to place with changes in soil type, altitude, aspect, annual rainfall, frost severity, etc. so where the seed is sourced from influences how well the plants grown from that seed will thrive when they are planted out. For example the summit of Mt Alexander is 430m higher than Castlemaine, receives 2 inches more rain annually, and is granitic in geology whereas Castlemaine is sedimentary so plants grown from seed collected on the mountain would not do so well in Castlemaine and vice versa.

Hello and thank-you for taking some Indigenous seeds to germinate!

The Indigenous Seed Project emerged from the desire to raise awareness of the local flora in Leanganook (Mount Alexander).

The project will create the opportunity for anyone to experience propagating indigenous seeds and to also learn about the ecological and cultural significance of the plant they are growing. The accompanying booklets will also provide valuable information about how to use the plant in a garden context and information on growing conditions for each plant.

With only 15% of the local Box Iron Bark forests remaining, it's more important than ever that we get to know these plants and include them in our gardens. This will help extend habitats for the local fauna and make your garden more resilient to future climate changes by using plants that have adapted to local conditions.

I hope you will sit with this little book, read its content and create a connection to the plant/s you have chosen to grow. Perhaps next time you are in the bush you will be able to recognise, name and appreciate these plants deepening your connection to the local environment.

- Jo Matthews, Indigenous Seed Project Coordinator

Bushy Needlewood

Hakea decurrens

Family: Proteaceae

Description:

A tough evergreen shrub with needle-like leaves, attractive red stems on new growth and delicate pinkish white flowers that smell like honey. The woody bird-shaped fruits are retained on the plant, splitting when dry to release seeds.

Growing conditions:

Very tolerant of frost, wind and drought, but low tolerance to waterlogging. As with all members of the Proteaceae family it is sensitive to high levels of phosphorous, so be careful with fertilisers. Will happily grow in full-sun or semi shade.

Cultivation and maintenance:

A generally trouble-free plant that can thrive on difficult sites. The sparse canopy can be pruned to increase density. Handle with care, due to sharp leaves.

Garden value:

This quirky shrub cuts a striking feature in a grassland garden or perennial border, due to its red stems, wiry form and woody capsules. It can be planted to direct pedestrians and pets away from sensitive areas. The flowers are particularly fragrant in the mornings and are attractive to local birds and butterflies. A brilliant plant to provide refuge and nest sites for small birds such as Red-browed Finch.



Hakea decurrens growing
in local bush. Photo
- Jo Matthews



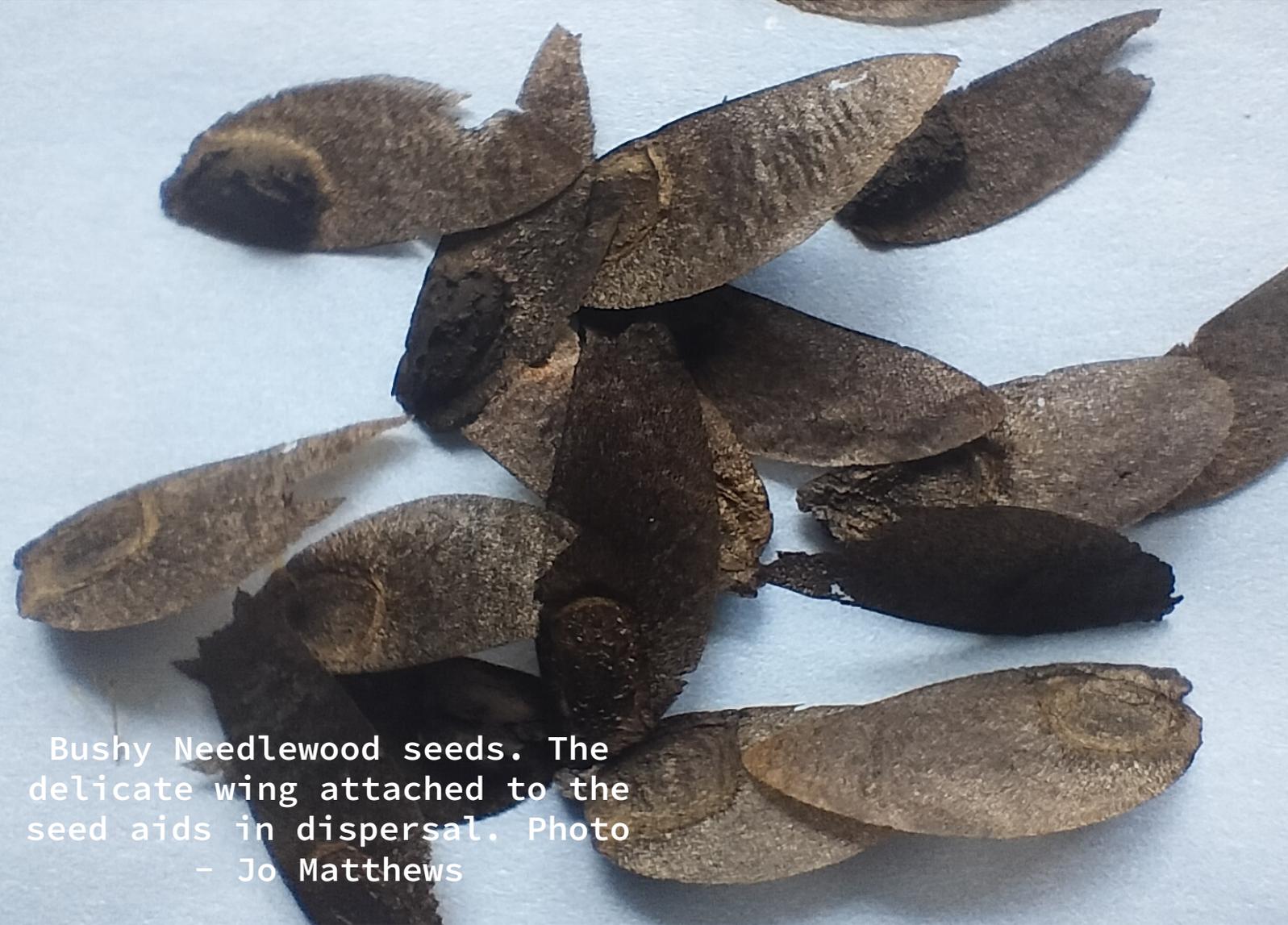
A Red-browed Finch nest constructed from Wallaby Grass nestled in Bushy Needlewood .
Photo- Jo Matthews

Ecology:

Widespread and common in local forest, usually on clayey or rocky soils of hilly areas. Flowers from May to August and is likely important for small honey-eaters that visit from higher country in the cold months and insect-eating birds. Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos will descend on a patch every year to crack the woody fruits for seed, giving the shrub a vigorous pruning as they go. Mature shrubs will have many years worth of woody fruits retained on its stems and branches.

Seed collection and Propagation:

Wearing gloves, and using a pair of pliers, twist woody fruits off the plant. Put them in a paper bag and leave for a week or two. By then the fruit will have begun to split - you can help this along with a knife to release the two seeds. In October sow the seed directly onto the top of tubes filled with quality native potting mix and cover to a depth of 1cm with seed-raising mix. You can put two seeds in each tube and if both germinate thin it down to one seedling per tube (the closest one to the middle is best to keep). Water in seeds and place in semi-shade. Keep moist. Plant seedling out May to August.



Bushy Needlewood seeds. The delicate wing attached to the seed aids in dispersal. Photo - Jo Matthews