

# Plant of the Month: Correa

by Noni Young

If you are looking for some colour and interest in the garden during autumn and winter then many of the Australian natives are a good choice. The vibrant colours of the flowering gums and the softer shades and intricate flowers of the Banksia and Grevillea are a few examples.

One very versatile group of natives for the garden are the Correas. There are 12 species of Correa and countless cultivars that have been produced by the nursery trade. They are small to medium sized shrubs, are frost hardy and will grow well in full sun and shade. They flower in autumn through winter and the flowers are an elongated bell shape that hang daintily from the evergreen branches. Flower colours include red, pink, orange and green. The fine, evergreen foliage sits well against other natives or exotic plants which makes them an excellent option to fill a space in any garden. They can be trimmed annually to maintain shape and size and the taller species can look great as a hedge. Correas are great bird attracting plants.

The most commonly known species is *Correa reflexa* (common name Native Fuchsia) which is a rounded shrub growing to between 1 and 1.5 m tall. The flowers are red with a green tip. *Correa reflexa* is an indigenous species in the Whitehorse area. Because it is indigenous to the area it will grow in the local soil profile with little fuss, will have limited issues with pests and disease and require very little maintenance.

*Correa decumbens* is a prostrate form that spreads along the ground. The dense foliage suppresses weed growth and it makes an excellent ground cover.

*Correa bauerlenii* (Chef's Hat Correa) has soft foliage with a slight lime green tinge and fine dark stems. As the common name suggests the flowers are shaped like a chef's hat and are light green in colour.

*Correa alba* (Coast Correa) has greyer foliage and the flowers are white or pale pink. It is a larger shrub that can be hedged nicely. There is also a prostrate version available.

*Correa pulchella* is a smaller plant that grows to 0.5 m but can spread up to 1-2 m. The flowers are orange to pink.

*Correa* 'Dusky Bells' is a hybrid of *C. reflexa* and *C. pulchella*. It is a low, spreading shrub with deep pink flowers and is an excellent addition to any garden.



*Correa* 'Dusky Bells'

If you want some colour in the garden over the cooler months, or you have a space that needs to be filled, or you simply would like to see more bird life in the garden, then check out the Correa family at your local nursery.

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