

WAXING LYRICAL



By Digby Grows

Is the Geraldton Wax really from Geraldton?

The Geraldton wax (*Chamaelucium uncinatum*) does occur naturally in parts of Geraldton. It also grows naturally, in its many forms, in areas down the west coast between Kalbarri and Wembley in Perth.

In the Geraldton area they are growing naturally in the Chapman River Reserve; Rangeway; and Allanooka Springs—about an hour's drive from Geraldton, southeast of Walkaway.

The Geraldton natural form likes its soil to be acidic or neutral while quite a lot of Geraldton's soil, particularly in the Central Business District area near the coast, is alkaline due to the influences of the coast. So, waxes from the Geraldton area are a mismatch with the soil type in Geraldton's city centre!

Happily, the Geraldton Wax still contributes to a vibrant Geraldton CBD. As part of the Million Trees project, waxes that originate from other parts of the west coast that like these alkaline conditions are now being propagated for growing in the city centre.

In Spring 2013 thirty alkaline-adapted seedlings, propagated through the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, were planted on the HMAS *Sydney* II Memorial site as the beginnings of a Geraldton Wax Walk. Most of these seedlings were propagated from the wild alkaline population at Stockyard Gully, Green Head, with a small number of pink waxes originating from the Hutt River.

Digby Grows (B (Hort Sci) Hons) is the Senior Plant Breeder at the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA) in Western Australia which manages Kings Park and Botanic Garden, and Bold Park. A former Geraldton resident, Digby has built up waxflower expertise over many years of specialised research.

Geraldton Wax

Botanical name: *Chamaelucium uncinatum*

Western Australian native species occurring from Kalbarri through to Perth

Cultivated as a garden ornamental since the early days of European settlement in Australia; now grown in many countries

Australia's number one export cut flower (including hybrids) with millions of flower stems sold every year



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Where the waxes grow

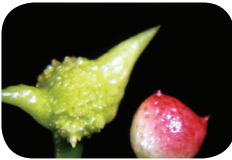
The further you travel down the west coast, the smaller the flower size.

The Geraldton Wax in its many forms varies in flower size (9mm to 28mm), flower colour (white, pink, mauve and magenta), flowering time (June to November) and plant size (20cm to 5m).



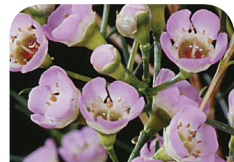
Pics: Digby Growns

The **Kalbarri** classic has longer thicker leaves and large flowers, usually with pale, almost white, petals and dark centres. **Flowers early to mid spring.**



Pics: Digby Growns

The **Hutt River** population, near the town of Northampton, is unusual in that it grows naturally in a sandstone, rather than sand, environment. Buds [left] have prominent horns compared to its Geraldton cousin, leaves are much thicker and longer, and flowers large. **Flowers mid spring.**



Pics: Digby Growns

The **Geraldton** form is the most popular of the waxes. Cultivars sold in nurseries often originate from the Geraldton form with its large colourful flowers, early flowering and robust nature. These include the popular 'Purple Pride', 'CWA Pink' and the white-flowered 'Alba'. **Flowers late winter into spring.**

The Geraldton flower (right-side) is pictured alongside the smaller, cupped **Jurien Bay** flower. Jurien Bay is around two hours south of Geraldton on the coast. **Flowers September.**

The Southern populations such as those near **Lancelin**, and **Wembley** in Perth, flower from late **September through to November.**

Million Trees

Million Trees is the flagship 2029 and Beyond project. 2029 and Beyond is about collaborative, innovative planning with the community towards a desired future for the Greater Geraldton region. A sustainable environment and planting more trees was identified as the top priority. For more information visit:

<http://2029andbeyond.com.au/>



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