

That Plant Makes Me Think of ...

One of the joys of running a nursery is hearing customers respond to plants. They tell of their experiences, brought back suddenly by sights and smells. Plants are enmeshed in the stories of our lives, carried in memory, and able to take us back to other times and people. This article shares a few such stories and, hopefully, will trigger some memories for you.

‘We visited the Perry Sand Hills at Wentworth. The Sunraysia roadsides were littered with paddy melons. We and our cousins established forts and marked out territories. A fierce battle with paddy melons as ammunition was the highlight of the day. If I see a paddy melon, it takes me back to being ten years old, wounded yet triumphant, storming the enemy fortress.’ ‘I was a tree climber and I still admire a tree that can be climbed, but creates a challenge.’

‘I spent hours under the pine trees at primary school, using the pine needles to sweep out rooms between the roots, to create mattresses and seats and to form lines to indicate the walls. The scent of pines takes me back. If I close my eyes I can almost hear skipping rhymes.’

‘I think that Jacaranda trees are so romantic. My friends married beneath a Jacaranda tree on a carpet of purple blossoms.’

‘Roses are romantic – I had pink, perfumed roses in my bridal bouquet’.

‘Whenever I smell lilac, I think of my first kiss. It was behind a lilac bush at the back of the local hall. I was 13. His name was Stephen.’

‘My children always brought home a little posy of Tecoma when they came home from their grandmother’s house. We planted a Tecoma in our garden in memory of this sweet tradition.’ ‘We planted a lavender hedge after we came back from living in France – we felt that we were bringing a little bit of Provence back to our garden.’

‘Dad had a vegie garden out the back. We kids were able to pull up a carrot, grab some strawberries or eat raw peas whenever we felt like it. I’ve always had a vegie garden and my kids loved to eat from it too.’

‘My doll was called ‘Little Abelia’ – after the beautiful abelia in our garden. I have grown an abelia in every place I have lived. Luckily she wasn’t called ‘Daphne’, which is so hard to grow.’

‘I can’t stand the pussy willow tree. We used to walk to the dentist and once we reached the pussy willow at the gate, I knew we were there. Our dentist was a real sadist.’

‘I love weeping willows. They created beautiful shade beside Lake Cullulleraine, where we spent so many summer days sailing with friends.’

‘I looked at lots of different houses but I bought the one that had a Cyprus, just like the one I played in at my uncle’s farm when I was young.’



Preparing for an engagement party at home – will the scent of pines mean romance and celebration from now on?

‘The Mallee pine means Christmas to me. It was years before I realised that everyone didn’t have a Mallee pine for a Christmas tree.’

‘I want to give you some cuttings. They are of the salvia that you suck the nectar from, you know, the one that grows in every grandmother’s garden.’

‘Do you have a plant with James in its name?’

‘I bought a ‘Margaret Davis’ camellia – couldn’t believe my luck at finding one of my mum’s favourite flowers called her name.’

‘I remember that plant – ceonothis, now called Blue Pacific. My sisters and I made mud pies in the garden beside the fishpond. To wash our hands, we gathered handfuls of ceonothis flowers and rubbed them to make a sort of soap, rinsing it off in the pond. Next morning the fish were all dead and Dad asked if anyone knew what had happened. No-one knew, at least, no-one was saying.’

Plants have their place in memories. We can select plants for our gardens to promote such connections. Will my granddaughter remember running her two year old fingers along our border of lamb’s ears, whispering ‘Soft, soft,?’ I hope so, along with the warm and loving feeling of being with her grandparents.

Change of hours - our hours at Garden Gate Nursery from July 19th to August 20th will be Friday and Sunday, 10 – 4 changing back to our normal hours of Thurs to Sat, 10 – 4 after that.

Happy gardening, Christine Windle, Garden Gate of Inverleigh Nursery, 0403 267 286

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