



Hop Goodenia

GOODENIA OVATA

Family:

Goodeniaceae. There are over 370 species endemic to Australia out of about 400 species world-wide.

Genus:

Goodenia: named after Rev Samuel Goodenough, 18th century treasurer of the Linnean Society. He was one of many prudish botanists of his day who criticized Linneaus for adopting a sexual basis for classifying plants. (1)

Description:

Small scrambling shrub to 2m high which sends out many branches from the base of the plant. It may get to about 2m in diameter.

Bright yellow 5 lobed flowers appear in spring and continue on into the summer. The flowers appear in a leafy terminal raceme.

Small white seeds (like a sesame seed) mature mostly in late December in our region. They are held in a tube which, as the seed matures, splits open at the end as it dries out. I loosely term the tube a "squid". As the squid opens, the seed gets shot out quickly so the seed collector has to be very observant.

Where it grows:

The hop goodenia grows mostly in woodlands in moist conditions. Most of these woodlands are subject to irregular wildfire (or controlled burns) which encourages this pioneer plant to dig its heels in for a few years until the canopy makes it a bit too dark for the hop goodenia to thrive. More shade loving plants then take its place.

In the upper Barwon Region, you'll find it growing along creeks, and on roadside bush settings (esp after burns) and also in disturbed areas. The assumption is the seed must be able to survive in the soil for years before a disturbance gives it the chance to germinate. The seed does not move in to an area on the wind. Goodenia ovata can also be found growing out on the Basalt Plains but usually only along drainage lines or down on the river flats.

Germination of smoke treated seed takes 4-8 weeks over summer. Seed collection can be tedious to say the least (and frustrating if you're one day late)!

Uses-Landcare and revegetation

There are very few indigenous plants in the height range of hop goodenia that are used in reveg projects. In fact, many of our local plants growing under 2 metres are mostly in the grass/sedge families, and of course, there is austral bracken...

So hop goodenia is a very important addition to all landcare/ revegetation projects. They provide a food source for butterflies, and an excellent low shelter for many bird species. If your plantation is missing this important ground hugging layer, the bird population could be unbalanced towards aggressive species like noisy miners and wattle birds.

Uses- Indigenous and scientific

The sticky leaves of hop goodenia have soporific qualities. For long journeys, aboriginal women would rub the leaves on their own fingers for their babies to suckle inducing peacefulness and sleep.

Hop goodenia may also have a future in the fight against diabetes. Scientists have isolated ursolic acid in hop goodenia, (a triterpene that exhibits hypoglycemic activity in rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes.) (2)

References

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Native Trees and Shrubs of SE Australia, Costermans, Weldon, 1981