

April 1999

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. P O Box 220 Warrandyte 3113

What Price Witton's?

By Flora Anderson

Witton's, a 4.8 hectare reserve at Wonga Park adjacent to Mount Lofty, was acquired by the Shire of Lillydale in 1927. It seems that all it got in the way of proper management was 'a long history of discussion' on issues of misuse day and night, long term ownership and maintenance, vandalism, rubbish dumping and finally degradation of native vegetation and general-unsightliness of the Reserve.

A glimmer of hope occurred early in 1994 when a 'Friends' group was formed. The Shire adopted a concept plan and some revegetation work was carried out along the river bank. That a major opportunity exists to make Witton's Reserve a highly attractive recreation site, has long been recognized by the Department of Conservation

In July 1995, as part of the Local Government Amalgamation process, the reserve became part of the City of Manningham's remote eastern boundary. Fortunately, the City of Doncaster and Templestowe's Open Space Strategy (1991) had recommended the preparation of management plans for conservation areas and major recreation reserves and in November 1995 community views were sought at a public meeting in - another glimmer of hope.

Two years later the council released its Draft Open Space Strategy identifying Witton's as 'a major recreation node' with importance as a conservation area and wildlife corridor. Open Space Planners began work on a management plan, but in mid 1998 Council deferred consideration of the plan pending a decision on the future of Melbourne Water land south west of Witton's.

At this stage, angered by the lack of action on the Witton's plan and loss of native vegetation in Wonga Park due to illegal clearing on private property, I wrote to the Mayor and Councillors. The letter in reply told me of 'the great care City of Manningham takes in its environmental management responsibilities' and went on to inform me of the Environment Management System (EMS) based on principles of sustainability, currently being 'implemented'. This magic EMS would 'ensure that all council decisions take into account

relevant environmental, economic and social considerations.'

Exactly how meticulously Council attended to 'economic considerations' became clear last month when Council 'resolved that no action be taken on the Witton's Reserve management plan, and that no funds be committed to its implementation and furthermore, to offer the Reserve to Parks Victoria to manage as part of Warrandyte State Park.

Just three months before this bombshell, Kristen Jackson, Open Space Planner, had called another community meeting to discuss the draft plan and called for submissions from the public. At the meeting it was agreed the plan was excellent - more glimmers of hope, but stressed that top priority must be given to securing the Reserve against vandalism. Hopes were high. Council announced that a Parks Victoria grant was available to proceed with the car park and bollards to restrict vehicular traffic within the car park.

Council's shock decision to again defer the plan while they once more offer the Reserve to Parks Victoria who knocked it back the first time, has amazed Friends of Witton's as well as Kirinari Kayak Klub.

It seems that being a long way from the seat of power makes it easy for Council, embarking on a program of reduction of ongoing responsibilities, to conveniently see Witton's as a worthless millstone around their necks.

The proposed negotiations with the Minister for Conservation mean further delay. With work already started at Mt Lofty, it is important that Manningham's obligation to provide parking, visitor facilities, upgraded toilets and picnic area, go ahead immediately, since access to Mt Lofty is to be from Witton's.

It seems to me that this is an unfortunate time to be negotiating a transfer of ownership when staff and funding cuts imposed by the present Victorian Government could mean that it would be very difficult indeed to stretch an already reduced budget to cover appropriate management of Witton's Reserve. And so the long history of discussion goes on ... and on and on.

Weed Warning

Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), also known as Brazilian Water-milfoil or Thread-of-life, is considered to have the potential to be a major weed of wetlands ('*Waterplants of Australia*', *Sainty & Jacobs*). In New South Wales, where it causes major problems blocking creeks, drains and channels, it has been declared a noxious weed. Not so in Victoria, yet. Earlier this year Parrot's Feather was discovered growing in the Yarra River at Mount Lofty. We have no previous record of its occurrence in the Warrandyte district.

This South American introduction is an attractive, distinctive plant with whorls of soft greyish-green, feathery leaves around a central stem. It belongs to the milfoil family (Haloragaceae) and can be distinguished from the local native species by the colour and appearance of its emergent foliage. Male and female flowers occur on separate plants, fortunately however, male plants are not found in Australia. But this aggressive coloniser does not need seed to reproduce, new plants grow vigorously from stem fragments and form extensive colonies. The plant grows extremely rapidly and is tolerant of a wide temperature range (8C to 30C).



Parrot's Feather is used in the aquarium trade and, according to '*Noxious Weeds of Australia*' (*Parsons & Cuthbertson*), its increased spread is probably the result of people dumping aquarium plants in waterways.

The Mount Lofty occurrence consists of three isolated patches, one large and two small, extending from the river's edge. Melbourne Water have been informed and have provided funds for the control, by whatever method is practical, of this troublesome weed, including the erection of a temporary fence to confine the largest patch and prevent further spread. Because of the fragile nature of its stems, removal by hand must be carried out with extreme care. Future monitoring is important and will be carried out.

Urgent action is required to ensure that this plant does not become a major problem in the Yarra River and nearby wetlands.

A recent survey by canoe carried out by Park staff confirmed the Parrot's Feather is confined to Mount Lofty. However, if you think you may have seen Parrot's Feather in the area (also found in ponds and dams), or if you would like to be shown a living sample of the weed, please contact Warrandyte State Park. on 9844 2659.

North Limited

The largest hardwood woodchippers on the planet, sourcing approximately 2.6 million tonnes of hardwood and 200,000 tonnes of softwood from Tasmania. North is also behind the push to mine Uranium at Jabiluka in the Northern Territory, currently the site of a huge Aboriginal and green blockade. Interestingly, North's Chairman, Michael Deeley has been appointed Chairman of Parks Victoria, President of the Victorian Environment Protection Agency Board and is President of Greening Australia.

Source: *Chain Reaction* (national magazine of *Friends of the Earth*), Issue #77, Nov. 1998

NEW POSTERS

Two new posters were put together by Cathy Willis for the FOWSP display at the Warrandyte Festival and for use at future monthly markets. One is titled '**Wanted**' and asks '**Have you seen these orchids?**' It displays photographs of ten orchids which have not been seen in the Warrandyte area for at least ten years, or are extremely rare.

The second poster is called '**Hidden Treasures**' with photographs of a variety of wildflowers found in the bush around Warrandyte with the question '**How many of these are hiding in your backyard?**'

If you didn't get to see these excellent posters at the festival have a look at FOWSP's stall at the next market. Maybe some of the rare orchids are hiding in your backyard.

Worth Repeating

Development Focus on National Parks

By Claire Miller - environment reporter

Victoria's National Parks have been earmarked for commercial development in an internal State Government document that discusses the desirability of guided walking tours and "comfortable accommodation" in huts along trails.

The 1995 document - a confidential consultant's brief from Tourism Victoria and the then Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - specifically identifies the Alpine National Park as an "appropriate potential location for such development".

While the two routes identified for assessment in the brief were ultimately ruled out, the State Opposition says the document proves the Government has development plans for National Parks other than Wilsons Promontory, which critics say is increasingly being run as a resort.

The Opposition's environment spokeswoman, Ms Sherryl Garbutt, said the Government was keeping Victorians in the dark by refusing to release the report, its formal response and other documents relating to its plans for the State's National Parks. "Our suspicion is that they are still searching for places where they can put more huts in and approve commercialisation at the expense of conservation principles."

A Government spokesman, Mr James Martin, said yesterday that the Environment Minister at the time, Mr Mark Birrell, accepted the consult-

ant's recommendation that huts not be built along either of the two routes.

The consultant was Ken Latona, the director of Cradle Mountain Huts in Tasmania, the only string of private huts along a bushwalk in an Australian national park. In 1996, Mr Latona, an architect, designed lodges for the Tidal River campground at Wilsons Promontory.

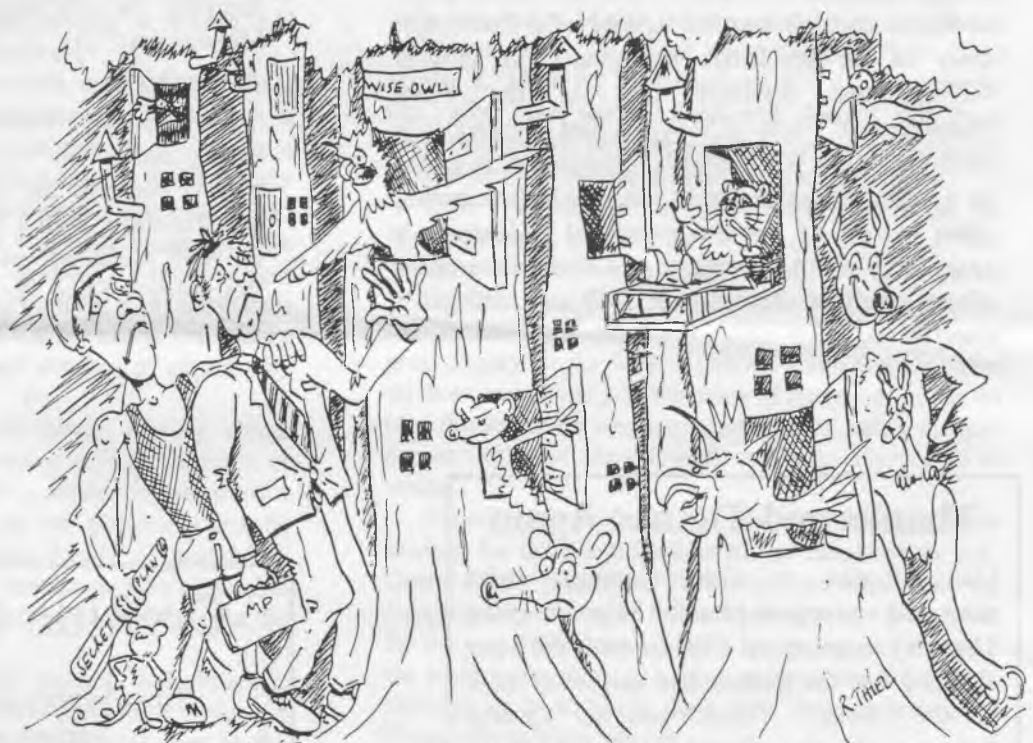
Mr Martin said the Government had no intention of revisiting the matter, but was unaware whether the Government had plans in mind for elsewhere in the Alpine National Park. In late 1997, 285 hectares was excised to allow a massive expansion of the Falls Creek ski resort.

Ms Garbutt, who today is seeking further documents in the Civil and Administrative Tribunal said the 1995 brief illustrated the department's pro-development philosophy in which the environment was a commercial product.

The brief says private operators seeking to fill the niche in eco-tourism "are developing tours which utilise Victoria's National Parks and public lands as the setting for their travel product".

It says Victoria is recognised as having a wealth of world-class natural attractions but its lack of accommodation on public land is a "key gap in Victoria's tourism infrastructure".

Source: *The Age* 15/2/99



YES MINISTER! BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, AS YOU CAN SEE WE HAVE PLENTY OF ACCOMMODATION INSIDE NATIONAL PARKS BUT ANYWHERE OUTSIDE THESE PARKS YOU PEOPLE HAVE THE MONOPOLY ON ACCOMMODATION.



Eyes have been the problem recently for the animals at Julie Pryor's wildlife shelter.

Those suffering were; a Tawny Frogmouth found on a light pole in Reynolds Road, a Ring-tail Possum and a Koala with conjunctivitis. All are on them mend thanks to the various creams that have been applied by Julie.

Over the past few months a number of animals have come in and had to be euthanased including a koala which had been released three weeks previously in apparently good condition. However, it was found about two kilometres from the release site in Templestowe in a very poor state having lost half its body weight. Just what happened to this particular koala is a mystery to Julie. In fact she would not have recognised it as the same koala, but it was one of five that have

now been micro-chipped.

One of the others to be tagged this way is our old friend Corey who was released last year at Stane Brae in Wonga Park. He caused some concern for a while as he remained in the same tree for four months, but having gained confidence has now moved on.

Other news over the summer and autumn period is that a total of eleven baby Ring-tail Possums were found - all have been passed on to other shelters.

Road kills continue: five Eastern Grey Kangaroos, one Echidna, one duck, two Noisy Miners, one Magpie and two foxes (we could do with more of those). All except one were killed on Jumping Creek Road.

Finally there were three UFO's - these unidentified flying objects were baby birds, too young to be positively identified and too young to live.

Sunday Family Activity

Burgan and Beyond

Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) is a controversial plant in Warrandyte. It was the subject of a front page story in our newsletter last year. The general feeling, and certainly that of the Flora Management Team (FMT), is that Burgan is a problem in the Warrandyte environment. It grows as a monoculture in dense thickets outcompeting other natives. If you are interested in learning a little more about this aggressive shrub then come along to this activity at one of Burgan's heartlands.

Date & Time: Sunday April 25th
10.30am to 1.00pm

Place: Black Flat Reserve. Drive to the end of Nelson Rd (first on the left along Jumping Ck Rd), turn left and follow the signs. Melways ref: 23K11

Activity: Removal of Burgan (including many seedlings to hand pull) tools will be provided. This will be followed by a walk to inspect some of the relics from the gold mining era. Finishing with a barbeque lunch provided by FOWSP. Colin Bromley, Field Services Officer at Warrandyte State Park will be on hand to help with the activity.

Thanks and Thanks Again

Many thanks to Don Cameron who answered our urgent plea for help. He spent Thursday morning up a ladder with the hose cleaning out the gutters and rainwater tank of the 'Folly'. Thank you to Lawrie Safstrom who also offered to help.

Thank you also to Colin Bromley, Field Services Officer, who has resurfaced the pathways around the polyhouse and improved the safety of the steps from the lower car park to the nursery.

Orchids For Sale

Native hybrids and Sarcocylus.
Various size pots
Contact Colin & Gwen Livingstone
9876 4058



Rangers Report

By Andy Nixon

Surely it is not three months since my last report ?
But of course it is and the months fly by.....

The new year is always a busy period for us all. In fact I would like to be bold enough to say that perhaps our lives are continually busy. This is especially so for the staff here at Warrandyte State Park in this the last quarter of the (financial) year. Rabbits, Capital programs, fuel reduction burning, budget reconciliations, action planning for 99/2000, propagation and revegetation, 'Good Neighbour' programs, neighbour initiatives, and of course staff on holiday after the summer fire period - all seem to happen towards the end of the financial year. So perhaps I need to apologise if we are not always available for a lengthy conversation. But let me tell you that it is enjoyable and we enjoy sharing time with you! We trust that you gain as much satisfaction from participating in the management of the park (particularly the Nursery and revegetation programs) as we do.

I think it was the December newsletter that I last reported in. Well its been the same faces around the workcentre this summer - no new staff (we all like it here so much). What was meant to be six fire crew ended up as three joining us for the summer. Originally we had all six but then other jobs and options whittled it down to three, so much thanks go to Justin, Tim and Troy for the extra effort they applied in keeping WSP's fire protection program going. (And of course the other three Warrandytian's who were fire crewing at Olinda and pop'ed over now and then to help out).

On the fire front it was quiet this summer. No fires in the park (five last year), and staff went to only one fire, in the Grampians, in early January. We have now completed the long planned for fuel reduction burn at Wildcat gully - Fourth Hill. This was done two weeks ago and a good result was achieved. Two other ecological burns look like having missed out - At 'The Common' for improvement to Tuan habitat, and a grassland burn for Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) rejuvenation at Mt Lofty. We will try again next year as a very small window of opportunity presented this season

Mt Lofty actions are now finally moving along. Rabbit control works have seen a marked decrease in numbers, fencing is starting this week. We received a number of calls of concern re the poisoning and its possible impact on our resident family of wedge tail eagles. We thank you for your concern and are pleased to say that the diligent efforts of staff and contractors see the birds in good stead.

The construction of the new walking trail system is underway. The route which moves through a variety of scenery and habitats does look somewhat raw at the

present time. We recognise that some better actions could be undertaken in such future works however given further revegetation works (and time) the track will be A1. If any Fowspian's would like to talk further with myself or Glen Jameson about the Mt Lofty program we would be happy to respond.

As many of the regular Thursday nursery attendees know, the propagation of the 6,500 plants for Mt Lofty has gone well. Thanks due to all of you and to our new nursery manager Teri O'Brien. Teri has been with us since late December, please make yourself known to him if you haven't yet had the chance. Other revegetation and weed eradication works have occurred along the Yarra banks with staff, volunteers, and contractors contributing. Too many locations and works to mention them all - but have you noticed Everard Drive !! Fantastic I reckon. So many woody weeds now gone from the embankment and neighbours houses. Thanks due to the 'Good Neighbour' program funding. Trust that we all can work in keeping such nasties from re-establishing.

Weed work is also one part of the Capital program at the new addition to the park of 'Scotchmans Hill'. Fencing, signage, access and boundary redefinition are all being worked on. Likewise the case at some other locations in the park (eg. Hutchinsons Av). We thank all neighbours who understand the long term requirements for these areas and are working with us. The Gold History walk at Gold Memorial - Fourth Hill is the third part of the Capital program this season and whilst slow to get going should now see walking track access and rehabilitation by the end of June. Preliminary plans have been completed for the interpretation of this walk.

And back to the rabbits again - some great work has been happening. Again with co-operation of neighbours and community. Particular congratulations go to the groups at Webb St, Bradleys Lane, and Gold Memorial Rd., who have worked hard with Glen J and other supporters on this pressing problem. Soon you will find it hard to find any *bunnys* in these areas at all.

Dave Van Bockel has been working hard on the 'Environmental profile' for WSP, (so we know best where to put our money in the future), David Farrar on Koala, Tuan, and fire management issues. Brian Phefley has produced new brochures, notice board panels, and a great display for the W'dyte festival. Colin Bromley does all those operations jobs that none of the rest of us can do (and thanks for the new steps and handrail below the hot-houses Col), and Marg Humphreys looks after us all of course.

Optus phone towers, the Natural Heritage Trust funding for the Kinglake/Warrandyte conservation link, Green Corps programs, footbridge reconstructions (at Jumping Creek), tourist information centres - (watch out for the new PV display), are all happening and all make the work interesting..... Glad to have you Fowspian's assisting us in so many ways with these undertakings. Please join us when you can.

Tower Hill?

By Mike Coupar

FOWSP members Mike Coupar and Phillipa Coull represented our position on the proposed mobile phone tower at a community consultation meeting with representatives from Optus and Vodaphone at the City of Manningham Offices, on the 1st of March. Councillor Patricia Young chaired the meeting, Community representatives included Rosemary Buxton of the Friends of Tindal's Wildflower Reserve, Louise Baker from the Warrandyte Awareness Group and Trevor Thornton from the local kindergarten.

Patricia Young explained that the carriers have the right to install towers in areas identified as 'black spots' and the two phone companies were at pains to point out that they work and consult with the community to identify the least intrusive sites.

A community representative pointed out the World Health Organisation position is; that these facilities should not be placed near schools or kindergartens until further long-term studies have been undertaken. She also said they should not be placed near houses and, as Warrandyte has a lot of open bushland, expressed the view that a site could be found in the bush away from residential areas, schools and kinders.

This is where, to my horror, Patricia Young admitted that she had suggested to Optus Vodaphone some 'scrubby bush' at the end of Betton Crescent could be a site for the tower. When I asked if she meant Fourth Hill, she agreed. I then spent my allocated three minutes by

explaining that Fourth Hill is part of the Warrandyte State Park and contains some highly significant flora, that it is public land and therefore in principle it should not be used by private companies.

Patricia Young then asked us if we could identify any other potential sites for the carriers to investigate. The cemetery was suggested, at which point I said it had the advantage that the occupants weren't in a position to complain! This triggered considerable laughter as discussions were getting a bit heated up to this point.

It was decided to arrange an on-site meeting to look at the Wildflower Reserve and Fourth Hill sites. I requested that Andrew Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge of the Park should be present with two of our FOWSP plant experts. The meeting took place at 5pm, Thursday 1st March. As it happened only Optus/Vodaphone's preferred site was visited at the corner of Tindal's and Warrandyte Roads, but the other options were discussed. When Betton Crescent was again mentioned as a potential site, our two representatives and Andrew Nixon informed the group as to the botanical, scenic and historical significance of Fourth Hill and how it would be degraded by installing a tower plus associated building and cabling.

The favoured site, (Melways ref 35A2) on a light pole at the northern boundary of Tindal's Wildflower Reserve, was closely examined with the option of using three metres of the road (which is unnecessarily wide) to construct the buildings. The approval needed to do this is being investigated before a further meeting can be arranged. Meanwhile, hopefully, Fourth Hill can breathe a little easier.

Long Tunnel Proposal

Around 500 people attended a meeting on Thursday March 4th to support the fight to save the Mullum Mullum Valley from being swallowed up by the extension to the Eastern Freeway.

Speakers included local naturalist Cecily Falkingham, botanist Dr Malcom Calder, Alistair Mailer representing the Australian Conservation Foundation and Dr Bill Bamford an environmental engineer.

Three resolutions were passed at the meeting.

These were:

- to recognise that the Mullum Mullum Valley must be preserved as a matter of priority.
- that the government should abandon the VicRoads reservation through the valley and adopt the long tunnel proposal.
- that all necessary action must be taken to protect and preserve the Mullum Mullum Valley.

Koonung Province MP Bruce Atkinson said that planning minister Robert Maclellan has appointed a consultant to undertake a promised tunnel optimisation study.



Festival Friends

Rostered volunteer helpers for the FOWSP festival stall were: Neal Tessier, Betty Oke, Antj Bauer, Lyn Wilson, Cathy Willis, Peter Curry, Pat Coupar, Mike Coupar, Marion Kiewiet, Mark Hassell, Janice Giles, Peter Sharp, Tony Honeybone, Kerry Fairley, Mariet Wolfgang, Dianne Williams, Lee Speedy, Geoff Speedy, Richard Barnes, Cass Roadknight, Neil Doran and Terry Kane. (Apologies for any misspelling and omissions). Thanks to all our supporters.

Renegade Removed

The misplaced Cootamundra Wattle at the eastern entrance to the freeway has been removed.

Teri's Talk

A brief visit by eleven 'Friends' to 'Bindarra' (Christmas Hills) heard Teri O'Brien talk about how he is eliminating Panic Veldt Grass by targeting diesel spraying. The area had been previously logged and heavily grazed by sheep and cattle, a lot of cool burns had knocked out the shrubland and left grassland. Neil Douglas was a prime mover in this covenant area where residents are not allowed to have cats, dogs or horses (except by prior rights).

Cameron's Climb

Don Cameron was recently seen up a ladder cleaning out the 'Folly' spouting to ensure only sweet pure unchlorinated and unfloridated water entered the water tank for drinking.

Enough is Enough

Elizabeth Sevier says "many thanks to the people who supplied paper for use under the mulch material in the 'coupe'. No more is required for the time being.

Baby Boom Continues

Kym Dowcra, a 'Friend' who shifted out of the area gave birth to another girl, Taylor Melissa, on 18th January this year.

Helping Hand

Kym Scrutton Bsc in Parks, Recreation and Heritage (Charles Sturt University) came and helped with 'pricking out' on Thursday 25th March.. He is looking for a job in the environment and natural resource management field. He has worked as a volunteer helping councils and a couple of Friends nursery groups.

March Market

Betty Oke informs me that helpers at the 'Friends' stall in March were: Neal Tessier, Antj Bauer, Joan MacMahon, Trudy Bretnall, Rob Nabben, Ian Hodgson and Richard Barnes.

Ross in the Ranges

Ross Coupar has been working on the 'summer fire crew' at Olinda.

Rubbish at the Cutting Edge

A visit to Manningham's display at the recent Warrandyte Festival revealed that these lucky residents are 'at the cutting edge of rubbish collection technology'! On display were the different types and sizes of bins for collecting recycleables, garden clippings and household waste. A jolly council representative said the new bins are being 'rolled out over the next six weeks.' It was very encouraging to be told that the bins are made in Melbourne and from recycled plastic. So if you don't like or need your small bin you can pop it in the large one to be recycled! Seriously, congratulations to Manningham for their efforts to reduce landfill and waste of resources.

Red Dot

If you find you have a red dot next to your name on the front of this newsletter it means that we have no record of payment of your 1999 subscription. If you have not renewed your membership to FOWSP and would like to, please send your payment to PO Box 220. Prompt payment would be appreciated as it means less paper work for us in the future. A renewal form can be found on the back of this newsletter.

If you feel that you no longer wish to be a member of Friends of Warrandyte State Park, a letter or phone call will help to set our records straight.

Thank you for your support.



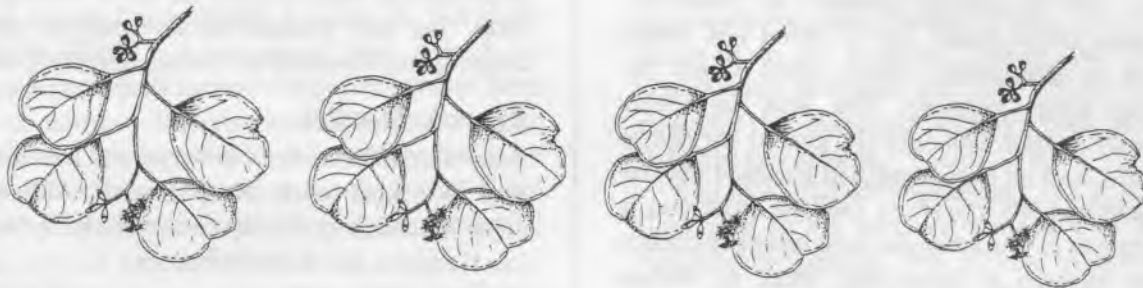
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