

Getting to Know Our Parrot-peas ... *Gail Slykhuis.*

Photography... *Marg McDonald*

Distinguishing Parrot-peas, Dillwynia species, from other members of the pea family

There are 4 species of Parrot-peas in our region and during ANGAIR's spring nature rambles we often have much discussion as to which species are which.

- The flower has a distinctive posterior petal known as a standard that is much broader than it is long.
- The leaves appear to be cylindrical with a noticeable groove along the upper surface.



Smooth Parrot-pea displaying common characteristics of *Dillwynia*



Grey Parrot-pea

Grey Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia cinerascens*

The first of the parrot-peas to flower in late winter early spring, this widespread pea grows to approximately 1 metre high. The linear leaves are grey-green, 3 to 30mm in length, appearing crowded on the stem. The leaf tips curve back slightly. The presence of soft hairs, closely pressed to the stem, add to the overall greyness of this plant as well as providing a useful identification feature. The orange and yellow flowers are found in clusters at the end of the stems and in the leaf axils, the posterior petal being noticeably broader than it is long.

Showy Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia sericea* subsp. 1

As the common name suggests this is generally the brightest of our parrot-peas flowering in spring, reaching approximately 90cm in height. The specific name *sericea* suggests the presence of silky long hairs. These may be present on the linear leaves but will be noticeable on the stems where they are particularly dense. A hand lens will enable you to see these hairs and provide identification clarification. The showy flowers are arranged in pairs, creating a dense spike varying in colour from the more common yellow or orange to red and apricot. Unfortunately flower colour is not a reliable tool when identifying the Showy Parrot-pea



Showy Parrot-pea



Red Parrot-pea

Red Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia hispida*

Growing to 60cm this is the smallest of our Parrot-pea plants with the beautiful red flowers appearing towards the middle of spring. The specific name *hispida* refers to the stiff hairs covering the small leaves. These leaves are between 3-13mm in length. Although the stiff leaf hairs are useful for identification, the most obvious identification feature for the Red Parrot-pea is the flowers that are borne in clusters on wiry flower stems at the end of the branches. These flower stems may be up to 4cm in length. The posterior petal (standard) is also obvious.

Smooth Parrot-pea, *Dillwynia glaberrima*

Flowering from mid spring into early summer, this graceful shrub can grow to a height of 1m. The specific name *glaberrima* refers to the smooth, hairless nature of the leaves, stems and outer floral parts. The smooth leaf surface and the curving leaf tip are useful identification features. Once again the use of a hand lens will be most rewarding. The yellow and red flowers are found in clusters towards the ends of stems or in the upper leaf axils, usually on flower stems up to 2cm in length.



Smooth Parrot-pea

References

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