



SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

15185 Murphy Avenue
San Martin, CA 95046
(408) 779-3303

Correa 'Carmine Bells'

Amongst the considerable array of effective, evergreen, ground coverers which will tolerate much of the wide spectrum of California's soils and microclimates, is Correa 'Carmine Bells' - a relatively recent introduction from Australia, which has quickly achieved a reputation as a successful, interesting and ornamental shrub.

The genus Correa is a member of the family Rutaceae and is endemic to Australia. It is currently recognised as consisting of eleven species which are spread throughout that continent. When these are grown in proximity to one another in cultivation they hybridise readily, and this propensity has given rise to a considerable range of intermediate forms, many of which are highly decorative. The genus is quite distinct in its characters and is unlikely to be confused with any other.

The vernacular name for these plants is the 'Australian Fuchsia' and this name aptly describes the narrowly tubular, hanging flowers which are, in most species, usually about one to one and a half inches long.

In 1974 the Foundation received an extensive shipment of plants from Rodger Elliot of the Australian Tube Plants Company, Montrose, near Melbourne; and amongst these was a bundle of seedlings simply labelled as Correa sp. On examination these plants were determined to be of hybrid origin, despite having obviously close affinities with C. pulchella. Eventually one of these plants was selected and in 1978 it was given the cultivar name 'Carmine Bells'.

This particular selection is a low growing, decumbent, evergreen, mounding shrub which can be expected to reach a height of three or even four feet and spread to a diameter of six feet. It has a dense growing habit and is consequently very effective in smothering weeds from an early stage; it could be expected to reach its full spread in three growing seasons under conditions of conventional summer irrigation. It spreads by extending its lax growing branches but will, at its centre, produce virtually erect stems. In young container grown plants the erect habit is much more dominant and pleasingly shaped plants will be produced in a one-gallon container.

The leaves of this plant are one to one and a half inches

long and threequarters of an inch wide, and when they are fully expanded are dark green on their upper surface and a light green below. The stems, in the young state at least, are densely covered with red to tan hairs (depending on the season) and this provides a good colour contrast. In the early stages of development the leaves are a pale olive green which also provides a colour variation

The flowers of this plant are pendulous and are produced singly in the axils of the leaves. Flowering occurs over a long season, which usually lasts from September to April and the flowers are attractive to Hummingbirds at a time when they have little food supply. At the height of the season flower production is prolific and a well established plant can be smothered in blossoms. The individual flowers have a tubular, four-lobed corolla which opens into a slight flare at its mouth; the colour of the flower is identified as Tyrian rose but this would be more simply described as a deep pink, the inside of the tube is a pale pink. The colour of the flowers is further enhanced by the exserted stamens which have yellow anthers on white filaments and extend about a quarter of an inch beyond the recurved corolla tips, thus emphasising the similarity to a Fuchsia.

The Correas in general are drought tolerant shrubs and will withstand high temperatures and a reasonably low water availability, but nevertheless are not particularly successful in extremes of heat or drought. 'Carmine Bells' is tolerant of a wide variety of soil types although it succeeds best in well drained conditions; it is also extremely tolerant of irrigation practices and will establish quickly and grow vigorously under conditions of conventional summer irrigation. The rate of establishment and growth can be directly related to irrigation practice. It is thus one of those useful plants for the landscaper which can be used in those marginal areas where the vagaries of the breeze may prevent an even distribution of irrigation water.

Because of their provenance none of the Correas can be expected to withstand very low temperatures, but this plant has been shown to withstand considerable cold without damage. Under normal winter conditions (i.e. when growth rates decline in the autumn and the tissues harden) the plant will tolerate temperatures down to 15°F with only the development of a purplish maroon cast to the foliage

Ground cover; evergreen; flowering; (low water use); hummingbird plant.