

Where the Wildflowers Are
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Where the Wildflowers Are

First there is
just the cracked earth.

There is red bulldust, fine as talc
... finding its way into *everything*.

Then there is a dark circle
the size of a 10 cent piece

... and *another* and *another*,

and with it ... *salty air*

as the land turns
to blood-mud.

Western Australia ...
just add water

and *this trailing edge*
of *this ancient continent*

leached and bleached
so often parched
becomes ...
The Wildflower State ...

this natural garden
of 12,000 species.

For this is
Where the Wildflowers Are ...

The blooming falls
soft as a veil —
harlequin organza
drifting southwards
from the Kimberley mid year.

When the Kimberley
has a big wet season,
the country's jumping ...

mistletoe *bright* as lipstick

hibertia ... those *cups of sun*

and Kimberley rose

... brachychiton,
blazing red.

When the Pilbara gets drenched, too,
we bump down its tracks
— never seen the
mulla mulla so big ...

diaphanous purple
flue-brushes
of ptilotus
quivering against a China blue sky
or the rusted wreck
of a car body ...

... spent gomphrena
soft among hard stones
... still *shifting*
in the *sifting* breeze ..

and *then* the spinifex ...
my goodness ..
triodia like a still-wet
dot painting
pinpricking the canvas
of a scree slope

... *chinky chips of iron ore.*

And the black and red eyed stars
of the annual show ...
Sturt's desert peas
partying along the verges
(in *numbers*)

We head on southwards,
seeking the spreads
of everlastings ...
yellow paperflower fields
and whites with confetti petals,
blue buttons
delicate in small patches
in shade ...

... to old haunts on the Yalgoo Road
and out at Ninghan Station
straddling the mulga-eucalypt line

delicate *Aster-a-ceae*
set against the arid earth

and the
myrtaceous hillsides.

That gossamer veil
of the season
continues to drift south
(*as do I*)

We see the season along the coast —

There's a small smorgasbord
served at Coalseam
with black carbon
still seen ... and

siltstones
claystones
sandstones

... striping the cliff faces,
telling a 250 million year story

in this home of
more than 300 species of
native flowering plants.

At Lesueur, there's maybe
10 per cent
of WA's known flora.

Smokebush is unobvious
most of the year
and then
... white and woolly ...
... conospermum
doing its thing.

Emu bush ...
Poverty bush ...
... eremophila in abundance

from a metre, to four
with flowers of
... purple, red, pink ...
... white, cream, yellow

Purple flags.
Kangaroo paws.
Wreath flowers at Pindar.

There will be shows of senna,
nectar-less,
but ready to offer
powdery reward
to buzzing pollinators.

And now I'm on my knees
in patches of shade
looking at orchids.
(Or, rather,
looking *for* orchids.)

"There," says my companion.
I squint.

"There!"

And, once you get your eye in,
there they are
dozens of delicats ...

Slipper and spider
cowslip and crested,

and donkey,
of course
(there's always a donkey among us)

And if you're lucky this year,
Hare and Rabbit
Bunny and Blue Sun

Rattle Beak and
Babe-in-a-Cradle

(There're all out there ...
"... there."
"... *there!*")

The inland deserts
are gardened by aridity

... these eye-height woodlands
of delicate trees

... miniritchie with red bark
like living shavings

... red dunes

... a cave where
a stick nest rat once was

... shrub steppes of acacia over spinifex
... dunefields and low ranges.

Just add water to WA ...

... the big monsoonal rains of the last
significant wet season in the Kimberley

the consistent soaking of the Pilbara

the tails of cyclones coming in
over the Mid-West coast,
dumping in the deserts,

fronts pushing in to the South West
and, down on the south coast,
where granite edges
the rollicking Southern Ocean
like nibbled piecrust
and blinding white beaches

... fragmented weather fronts
bringing, well ...
a blooming good year

(and *that* had to be said,
somewhere in this).

Just add water to WA
and it is all of this ...

For this is
Where the Wildflowers Are ...

planted across this ancient continent

painted onto this ancient canvas ...

And this is
Where the Wildflowers Are ...

planted in King's Park's wonderful botanic garden
painted onto its *curated* canvas ...

We are fortunate in WA.

For this is
where the wildflowers are ...

all around us.

