

Background to *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon'

The hybrid *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' was developed at Myall Park Botanic Garden in the late 1950s and the original plant still grows there.

How did *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' develop?

In the early 1950s many grevilleas were planted close together by Dave Gordon, in the hope of a natural hybrid that would feature the best characteristics of the parent species. After good rains in 1958, many seedlings appeared in the ground that had been recently cultivated. By 1963 one of these seedlings was 30 cm tall and featured promising foliage. Dave Gordon decided to stake and protect this seedling for further observation.

1968 was the year Robyn Gordon was diagnosed with cancer and her parents, Dave and Dorothy, were informed that their eldest daughter was not expected to live. They decided to name the new cultivar after her. Robyn died during her 16th year.

Also in 1968 there was enough material for cuttings to be taken. Material for propagation was sent to Alex Scott, Birkdale Nursery, and to Sid Cadwell. All *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' plants now in nurseries and gardens around the world have been propagated from this material. 'Robyn' does not produce seed so tissue culture, cuttings and grafts are the only methods of propagation.

Has Myall Park Botanic Garden benefited from the worldwide sales of the most successful hybrid grevillea?

Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) give a breeder or owner of a new variety exclusive marketing rights. These rights, similar to patents and copyright, are administered under the Plant Variety Rights Act Australia 1987. This was the first act passed in Australia of this type and earlier cultivars were deemed not eligible for PBR. No financial gain has flowed to the Gordon family or Myall Park Botanic Garden as *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' was developed and marketed before 1987.

A few brief botanical facts

The *Grevillea* genus is divided into ten botanical sections (Bentham, 1870). Planting species from the same section in close proximity enhances the opportunity of achieving healthy cultivars. The parents of *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon', *Grevillea banksii* and *Grevillea bipinnatifida*, are from a group of grevillea species within the Eugrevillea section. This group, called Hebegynae, have large flowers and the flower bunches are open and loose. 'Robyn's' parent species, though related, were separated millions of years ago. Because of this distant relationship, the resultant cultivar does not produce seed. Instead *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' flowers almost continuously under favourable conditions. *Grevillea banksii* grows only on the east coast of Australia whereas *Grevillea bipinnatifida* is confined to Western Australia.

Recognition for 'Robyn Gordon'

Grevillea 'Robyn Gordon' was named the floral emblem for the Year of the Outback 2006. Considering its parentage from east and west Australia and its intriguing history, this was an appropriate honour. It was also the floral emblem of the former Tara Shire and a single flower is the featured motif for the Maranoa Balonne Catchment Management Association.

Are there other hybrids similar to *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon'?

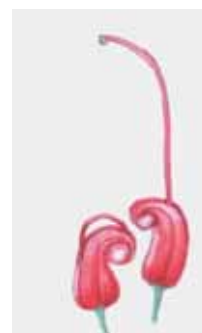
Yes, there are many and this makes its identification difficult.

Imagine a family of children all with the same mother and father. Often, the children have similar characteristics in face and body but if we stop and observe, there are differences.

You can tell a genuine *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' from all her brothers and sisters by the following: 'Robyn' is the only all red flower. There are no yellow or orange flourishes. The style, the long flower structure characteristic of grevilleas, is all red. There are other differences such as leaf shape, colour and texture, but the flower is the easiest method of determining if you are buying the real 'Robyn'.



Image of *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon'



Painting of two individual Flowers

Two more Gordon Grevilleas



Grevillea 'Merinda Gordon'



Grevillea 'Sandra Gordon'

Grevillea 'Merinda Gordon' also appeared as a seedling in the same year as Robyn, but within a different garden division. Parents – *G. insignis* and *G. asteriscosa*

Grevillea 'Sandra Gordon' appeared as a seedling in the same year and garden division as 'Robyn' in 1963. Parents - *G. pteridifolia* and *G. sessilis*.

