

## ANOTHER QUIRK IN NATURE

Things that can all around us be just taken for granted but if we investigate the history of the plant and ignore the purpose as to its existence some fascinating facts emerge, one I will comment on is one that grows here not only on our property but in most places in NZ and it is called *Cornus Capitata*. Its family name *Cornaceae* (do good) not to be confused with some of the *arbutus* group, and it is referred to in laymen's jargon as the Himalayan Strawberry Tree because the fruits look not unlike large strawberries, where is the going - bear with me, that's a big ask, don't reach for the depression pills, now let's go back in time 200 million years, when India was a large Island well south of where it resides now, not far from Australia, this shrub flourished and being an early Angiospermae family that is the first dicots (plants that produced flowers) up to the cretaceous period things trundled along fairly settled then 70 million years ago the Teutonic plates started pushing India into Eurasia and of course all the plants were slowly pushed up to at least possible 10,000ft. Now to put some sort of prospective on the plants change of environment, it had come from a cosy sub tropical and eventually a cooler one, in all probability, a vast number of the smaller plant family didn't survive and another question does surface as to the proliferations of the *Rhododendron* and *Azalea* Family, clearly mutation would have taken place as they also went on this adventurist ride up the hill so to speak, the back of the leaves indicate the change to resist cooler temperatures like many Alpine Plants. What is the common denominator??? - they are both Evergreens being sub tropical and both have the ability to grow in warm and cool climate conditions and thrive so genetically carry 2 sets of genes but back to my original *Cornus* here on the property, it does some very strange things.

1. In November it suddenly produces small clusters of fruit about 6mm across, about 3 weeks later they suddenly produce pale yellow flowers around the small fruit lets, the flowers are around 4cm across and clearly show their ancient heritage of the early Dicot Family.
2. The question is the fruit have set so what is the purpose of the flower? Now for a wild stab as to that and it is a wild stab, it is possible that as the plant as pushed higher and higher, the insect or organism that pollinated the flower did not survive once the plant got into much cooler

conditions which created a big problem, but plants do have some sort of back up genetically and its between asexual and the development of the monocot family of flowers and this correlates to the plants ability to come up with plan B to ensure the viability of the species after all top of the to do list is the future of same. I can substantiate that now. It is now the first of March and the fruit are now nearing maturity about 2 to 3 cm across and turning reddish, but all around these are dozens of new small fruit but now sign of any flowers and by May another harvest of fruit for the birds. Let's go back to the start, the plant would have flowered and produced fruit all the year round as they do in the subtropics but when you place it in a completely different place it either mutates or vanishes. One other factor have observed is the tree sheds all its redundant and surplus leaves in December, again it seems to either ignore seasonal factors or relies on other per sensory factors not fully understood such as the amount of red spectrum and the radio magnetic wave length which have also changed and I have dealt with the as best possible in other notes.

My curiosity does border on complicated confusion but what drives one on – is the staggering amount of information we can learn from plants and just always remember this, when the preacher stands up in the pulpit on Sunday and pontificates on all creatures great and small, somebody should ask him what about the wonderful plants and a prayer for all, the ones that are constantly bombarded with Glyphosate (if you believe in reincarnation don; come back as a weed as your stay could be rather brief and take out some Cigna Insurance) - Plants have been genetically engineering themselves for at least 500 million years now man is doing the same for the betterment of producing more from the plant, which to a certain point agree on, they have just modified the sugar cane plant to eradicate the borer disease which causes up to 2.2 billions costs of insecticides etc. I for one support this as I consume at least 72 kgs of raw sugar per annum and my greatest fear is a complete shutdown of all the sugar mills in the world. But there is also a dark side of genetic engineering is that I mean plants that could be genetically altered to produce deadly toxins, not too difficult as quite a few do it naturally now, with the bizarre world we all live in. Unfortunately there are a lot of dangerous ones with dangerous agendas and the greatest asset we have as a country is our isolation to a certain amount of the unrest that surrounds most of the world. Any way have digressed a wee bit from where we started but in my world there are so many

question that are difficult to sieve through and so many that none of us will ever fully understand and as stated many times is reality an allusion or is an allusion a reality and at times we may sometimes have difficulty separating the 2 or how do we interpretate what is important and what is just useless flotsam that pervades our life every day and to be fair we all have choice how we use our time on this Planet and to so many it's just a day to day situation but some of us are very lucky and just wish one could live to 150 years to cram it all in - but that is not reality and reality is we come and we go just the same as every other organisms on this planet - Are you confuse??? You should be – that just means you are normal, well “reasonably normal”.

By Fred Field

12/3/2018