

ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: Welcome to new member Ian Waldron, Jimboomba, Qld, & returned member Shona Sadlier of Epping, NSW. Not a lot to report this time, so I need you all to take pen in hand & send me some news, anecdotes, gossip or whatever. As ASGAP decree a certain number of issues must be produced, I will write skimpy ones if necessary.

ERRATA: On page 2, item 2 of newsletter no. 12 I had a mental block & called *B.x roseus* 'Bella Donna' "Prima Donna" instead. And it wasn't due to over-indulgence in opera either. Same error in paragraph 2 on page 1.

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS: David Long from Rockhampton reported the grafted *B. spectabilis* I gave him was growing well, although not as fast as local spp. Also, "Some *B. spectabilis* seedlings retained their leaves throughout the winter & one actually produced new leaves after heavy unseasonal rain. All other NT & WA seedlings defoliated over winter. Seedling *Brachychitons* from WA & NT are still slow & prone to sudden death for no apparent reason." Our experience in Brisbane has been similar, with *B. viscidulus* being very slow to put on leaves; my first plant was on 14-12-97, with *B. spectabilis* being a week earlier, but growing a good deal faster. Grafted plants of both species are growing vastly faster than the seedlings. David thinks one *B. spectabilis* tried to flower, but some insect struck first. None of my far northern spp. flowered. I am hoping that *B. viscidulus* grafts done in spring will be big enough this year to allow them to die back a bit over winter & still be alive above the graft union, unlike last year. Seedlings died back quite a bit also.

TREE GROWTH: *Brachychitons* planted near or in my nursery area, & hence getting a lot of water, are growing at 4m high after 2.5 years, & 2m wide or more. These include *B. populneus* & *B. sp.* Ormeau, & the hybrids Griffith Pink, Bella Donna, Clarabelle & Butt's Red. Early growth of *B.x incarnatus* 'Gympie Red' makes me feel it will match the fastest-growing clone, Butt's Red. Seedlings of *B. diversifolius* from various sites in the NT & the Eastern Kimberleys kept their leaves over winter, & grew rapidly with minimal mortality. Why can't the small stature red/pink

flowering northerners do likewise! Most seedlings of *B. acuminatus* failed to survive winter, & survivors are tiny. *B. megaphyllus* seedlings survived well.

[GRAFTING]: A shortage of flame tree seedlings last autumn lead me to use *B. discolor*, & it gave good results for the hybrids mentioned above. Gympie Red (parentage *discolor* x *populneus*) seems to graft better onto *discolor* than *acerifolius* (7/8 took versus 4/9). Merv Hodge mentioned he'd got a 100% take with a *Brachychiton* stored in the frig for 4 weeks, so I tried the same with the DPII clone of *B. acerifolius*, & got 10 out of 11 (adult on to juvenile). Still had 7 thick branch tips about 3 to 4 inches long left over, so I used these as cuttings, & 4 took.

[BOOKS]: I've been glancing at quite a few "bush tucker" type books lately, & have yet to see one that comes even close to getting the *Brachychiton* names right. Most have now been returned to their library-owners, but one I still have on hand is "A Companion Guide To Bush Food" (Lansdowne, 1996) by Jennifer Isaacs. According to her, 'red kurrajong (*B. paradoxum*) occurs in Arnhem Land, Cape York & Western Australia ... & the nuts that follow are still relished throughout the north. ... When green, the pods are collected in large quantities & baked in the ashes. When they are opened the whole of the pod contents, the seeds & their packing, are peeled out. The nuts pop easily out of the packing & can then be eaten. The packing, however, is very poisonous & must be thoroughly removed & the hands washed. ... To prepare (ripe) pods ... the packing & nuts are extracted & baked together. The fire tenders must sit with one side to the fire so that no smoke blows into their eyes. When baked, the sandpapery packing is rubbed off the seeds between the hands.' She has cheerfully lumped about 10 species into *B. paradoxum*, which occurs in the eastern part of the Darwin & Gulf Districts of the N.T., & near the Gulf in the Burke District in Qld. *B. viscidulus* from the Kimberleys certainly has caustic, as well as sticky, seed packing, but I wonder how many others really have poisonous seed packing. Does anyone know? Certainly it is usually composed of itchy fibres.

Being pedantic, she has a colour photo of "zamiad nuts", taken by Vic. Cherikoff, on page 21, & the leaves look awfully like the African genus *Encephalartos* to me.

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