

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

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Goodeniaceae Study Group Newsletter No. 5. *JULY. 1990.*

Finally this newsletter has come to fruition. I am afraid that I have a host of reasons for the delay but not many excuses. The main problem has been a lack of communication and material. The weather hasn't helped either with seemingly endless crises in the garden and in my "nursery" and an overseas trip thrown in for good measure. The NSW branch of the Society has supplied the money for a computer regulated watering system which should help immensely although over the past 6 months the problem in Sydney has not really been getting water to the plants but draining the water away. I am beginning to wonder whether the climate here has changed sufficiently to negate any thought of trying to grow most of the Goodeniaceae here although in the garden there have been surprisingly few losses of mature plants particularly the suckering forms and species. In the first 5 months of this year I received in excess of 1000 mm rainfall and losses of potted plants have been horrendous.

The theme for this newsletter is *Scaevola* - a continuation of my discourses on genera in the garden here. There is very little to report otherwise from members although a few things have cropped up incidental to the study group.

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General News

The final definitive key for the remainder of the family Goodeniaceae has, I believe, been completed by Dr Roger Carolin and is awaiting publication in the Flora of Australia. Publication date is however uncertain and I don't have access to the keys as yet. Unfortunately Roger has retired from the university and is living in Berry which makes him relatively inaccessible.

The National Botanic Gardens in Canberra has been in contact with me, as Leader, with an invitation to attend a conference in Canberra on maintenance of live collections, both public (gardens and arboreta) and private (study group collections and private gardens). The conference is likely to be held in March 1991 and I expect to attend and I am contemplating using study group funds to cover the cost of registration (\$55) - if anyone has strong feelings about this sort of use of funds please let me know.

In this context, funds are currently set aside for preparation of the newsletter and maintenance and propagation of the collection. The only reason we are reasonably solvent at present is that a lot of the costs involved with the newsletter are being reduced substantially by access to paper and copying at cost through my place of employment and because of the generosity of some individuals and groups who contribute in excess of the normal subscription.

The financial report for this year is shown below with the

only major item the contribution towards the water irrigation system. In passing there are a few obligations on the study group arising from the donation for this system. The system remains the property of the NSW Region until such time as it is written off or otherwise disposed of. The collections I maintain (including the Sterculiaceae collection) are to be accessible to the Region for exhibitions, etc and I agreed, on behalf of the group, to provide articles of general interest for the Region's newsletter from time to time. It would be very helpful if active members could write some articles for this purpose particularly about collecting and/or sight-seeing trips related to our interest. Members of the Society at large do have a keen interest in hearing about both local and interstate areas.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT (1989-90)

		BROUGHT FORWARD	\$ 80.20
INCOME			
	Subscriptions	\$126.00	
	Donation	\$650.00	
	Interest	\$ 27.44	
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		\$803.44	
			\$883.64
EXPENDITURE			
	Newsletter	\$ 32.05	
	Postage	\$ 8.20	
	Bank charges	\$ 2.31	
	Purchase Water System	\$640.45	
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		\$683.45	
		BALANCE	\$200.19

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#### Membership

As you may have guessed, with the new financial year upon us it is time for renewal of subscriptions. I will set the membership fee at \$3.00 again for this year but will foreshadow an increase to \$5.00 for the next year (1991-92). The source material at hand is primarily from garden material and the variety of species available is static at present. There needs to be a concerted effort to collect wild-sourced material and to propagate it in sufficient quantities to maintain its viability. That means

maintaining larger quantities of plants as source material and building up a reference library of herbarium material. That may mean individuals taking a larger part in maintaining sections of the collection (the Lechenaultia are almost a full-time job by themselves!) or the group specialising in only one genera i.e. the Lechenaultia or the Dampiera, etc.

Since the last newsletter there has been some additions to our membership notably one new active member, Gary Leske from South Australia. I have included below a full list of active members (for 1988-90) so that individuals can get in touch with each other if they wish and hopefully enthuse each other. The names marked with an asterisk are however unfinancial at this point and I will have to strike them off this year.

#### New South Wales

Bankstown Native Gardens, Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point, 2213  
\*Laurie Deane, 27 Lindfield Garden Village, Ulmarra Place,  
East Lindfield, 2070  
Philip Strong, 6 Jetty Ave, Charmhaven, 2263  
\*Heather Wood, 21 Elliott Rd, Menai, 2234

#### Queensland

\*Pat Shaw, 5 Fleetwood St, Macgregor, 4109  
\*Leon Steinhardt, Lot 56, Leurette Rd, M/S 231, Laidley, 4341

#### South Australia

\*Ida Jackson, 7 Centenary Ave, Kingscote, Kangaroo Is, 5223  
Gary Leske, 18 Leonard Ave, Port Pirie, 5540

#### Victoria

\*Peter Aldridge, 66 Ogilvie St, Essendon, 3040  
\*Joan Carr, 2 South Maddingley Rd, Bacchus Marsh, 3340  
Joan Hales, M<sup>c</sup>Donalds Rd, Glen Alvie, 3979  
\*Rita Luff, 95 Seebeck Rd, Rowville, 3178  
\*Neil Marriott, Box 107, Stawell, 3380  
\*Kathie Strickland, P.O. Box 31, Balnarring, 3926  
\*Martin Swanson, Lincoln Rd, Glenmaggie, 3859  
Barbara Tillotson, 16 Potter St, Black Rock, 3193  
\*Beverley Truscott, 22 Acacia Ave, South Oakleigh, 3167

#### Western Australia

\*Eileen Croxford, Box 297, P.O. Albany, 6330  
Hazel Dempster, GPO Box W2040, Perth 6001

It is not particularly inspiring to see all the unfinancial members we have at present. Hopefully they will "cough up" and get more enthused when they receive this newsletter. Some of our most active members are in fact not on this list being Study Group Leaders in their own right. They include the leaders of the Verticordia, Grevillea, Brachychiton and Dodonaea Study Groups with which I have reciprocal membership.

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Philip Strong has put pen to paper about some of his attempts at growing Goodeniaceae:

"In the No.4 Newsletter I mentioned that I was, at last, having some success with growing *Dampiera*. Alas, the very wet summer weather killed every *Dampiera* that was growing in the ground as well as some in pots. I still have *D. rosmarinifolia* growing in a pot so all is not lost.

Other surviving Goodeniaceae are:

*Lechenaultia biloba* "White Flash". These are growing well in pots under 50% shade cloth.

*L. formosa* prostrate red form (Beaumaris Red?). Also in pots under shade cloth.

One poor specimen of *L. formosa* with yellow/orange flowers. This plant has been growing in a raised bed of very sandy soil for about 3 years and is now only a bunch of dead twigs with one small leafy branch.

*Scaevola aemula*. One form has large, deep blue/purple flowers and was collected from the mid-north coast of NSW. Two small plants are growing slowly in very poor soil but when growing well this form will easily cover an area 1m across and absolutely smothered in flowers. The wet weather killed a lovely specimen of this plant, the branches wilting and dying one by one until the whole plant was dead. Another plant is a seedling from the first mentioned. It differs by not having as prostrate a habit. The paler blue flowers are held well above the foliage.

Evidently my main problem is one of poor drainage. Attention to this as well as the provision of a suitable inorganic mulch should do much to improve matters. The perplexing thing is that most losses have occurred in a raised bed in which a couple of W.A. banksias are growing well, which is no mean feat given the wet weather and the touchiness of W.A. banksias when grown along the east coast. I can only keep trying."

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My initial reaction to the above is that it may be better to grow these plants on the slopes of raised beds, particularly *Scaevolas*. My other thought would be that the judicious use of large chunks of rock to protect the root systems and get the foliage up off the ground may be useful. Most species tend to resent high levels of humidity in their foliage.

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## Scaevola in my garden

By Dennis Margan

Of all the genera in our area of interest I have tried to grow to date, the Scaevola would have to be the easiest to propagate and maintain. This is a dramatic generalization and there are a number of obvious exceptions however I still feel that Scaevolae do present less of a problem in my relatively light sandstone soils than many other species I have tried. They tend to be persistent, to maintain active growth throughout most of the year, to be remarkably resistant to climatic stress once established, to be resistant to disease and to insect attack and to be quite floriferous. An added advantage is that a significant number of species tend to be prostrate or semi-prostrate fulfilling a great need for small species capable of filling in the inevitable holes in one's garden i.e. they have significant horticultural potential. Again I will let my mind wander over my garden from front to back in this discourse so that I can more clearly picture the different species. The predominant colour with these species are white, pink and blue usually in pale shadings although there are again notable exceptions.

**Scaevola "microphylla".** This form is not regarded as a separate species although I have seen it sold under a variety of species names (all wrong) over the years. Professional opinion (Roger Carolin) suggests that this could be a hybrid of *S. aemula* or maybe *S. rotundifolia*. My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that it is the Kangaroo Is form of *S. aemula*. Specimens of the latter I received from Ida Jackson are so similar as to be identical however I haven't had the time to look at the botany closely. Whatever its parentage it is good hardy form. In my garden, on a very dry slope with little or no watering, 2 plants (from cuttings) have grown profusely and covered about 2 m<sup>2</sup>. There are flowers present all of the year with flushes in the late spring through summer. The foliage is grey-green and the leaves quite small. In light soils tends to grow compact and dense however in pots can get a little ragged if not groomed regularly. Makes an excellent container plant for a large tub. Flowers are small (rarely more than a cm across) with the typical tight fan-flower shape and are a very pale blue in colour. Easy to strike from cutting material.

***S. aemula*** It is probably fitting that I discuss the other forms of *S. aemula* in the garden at present or even in the recent past. A year or two ago I had a magnificent form of this species from Victoria with large, dark leaves and large, purple flowers which formed in clusters. It survived for about 3 years on a dry, barren slope (water did flow past but quickly!) and was an absolute picture covering about a metre in a partially shaded position. Unfortunately although I did propagate it all the plants including the one in the ground died (very quickly) from causes unknown and I no longer have this form. Another form, which is intermediate between the 2 forms described above in terms of leaf and flower size, is now colonizing my garden. And I do mean colonizing with seedlings coming up everywhere. This form again has a spread of

about a metre and is very floriferous after the first year and flowers all year round. This plant has done very well in full sun and is now in its third year. It is noticeable that this parent plant is very susceptible to heat stress drooping alarmingly in the midday sun in summer but reviving amazingly as the temperature drops in the evening. I have heard comments that most forms of this species are unreliable in Sydney but I can't believe that to be the case. Maybe people expect too much from this family of plants. After all they are predominately herbaceous and rarely develop the heavily wooded stems found with most long-lived species. Three years is probably the maximum mature life span and they do appear to colonize easily either from seed, sucker or cutting. The local forms of this species tend to be leggy with long internodes and very pale flowers however I haven't as yet tested them thoroughly in the garden. Easy to strike from cuttings.

**S. albida** There are a number of colour variants of this species ranging from pure white (collected in Queensland, I believe) through pale shades of blue to bright pink. This latter form was the first I obtained but only recently have I bothered to plant it out as it was so easy to maintain in pots. It is certainly vigorous growing to about 0.5 metre across in about 6 months in full sun on a mound. The white form took a little longer to establish in shady conditions but is now flowering profusely even in late autumn and is a very attractive form with dark-green relatively fine leaves and lovely contrasting flowers. This species again has the typical fan-shaped flowers and seems to sucker fairly freely. No sign of seed spread as yet. I am not cultivating the bluer forms at present although I did notice some large specimens in the National Botanic Gardens a year or two ago. All forms strike easily from cuttings.

**S. "Mauve Clusters"** This is apparently a form of *S. rotundifolia*. It is quite common in the nursery trade and apparently popular with gardeners. It is very similar in the leaf and flower to the "species" I described at the outset of this article, *S. "microphylla"*, except that leaf colour is bright green rather than grey-green and leaf size is slightly larger. In addition, the flower colour is a definite mauve and more intense. This form appears to prefer more sheltered conditions but dislikes competition. There is a tendency for dieback to occur if crowded particularly in very damp situations where there is a build-up of moisture around the leaves. This is most likely a response to fungal attack. May do better in partial shade. Flowers prolifically in season but flowering does appear to be seasonal. Needs more study in open conditions. Suckers and easy to propagate from cuttings. Snails are a real problem with this plant.

**S. "unnamed"** This is a species I collected from an enthusiast in Victoria (I think!) and its origin is unknown at present. Is very similar to *S. albida* (pink form) except the flower colour is more intense and even and the leaves tend to be "serrated". Growth habit, etc is similar to that species. Currently plant in ground in quite small and not showing vigorous growth but I expect that situation to change towards summer. As a horticultural specimen I would prefer it to the pink form of *S.*

albida. It is not included in the new revision as far as I am aware do to a lack of knowledge about its antecedents. Suckers and easy to propagate from cuttings.

*S. "sp. aff. ramosissima"* This is now a popular plant in the nursery trade which was apparently derived from one only collection on a headland near Newcastle. That headland soon after disappeared into the ocean along with the plant however the cultivars have persisted with great tenacity. Lovely large, open, intense mauve flower very closely resembling that of *S. striata* from Western Australia (not typical fan-shape). Leaves are relatively sparse with long internodes. They are very dark green in colour, linear with rounded tips and can be reasonably long (<4 cm). This form is very tenacious in my garden in appallingly hard, dry conditions on a low slope. In these conditions it appears to sucker freely although dieback of the older sections occurs in mid-summer. Seasonal flowering (summer) but floriferous when in flower. This plant(s) is some 6 years old at present although hard to say how much of the original material is still alive. Very easy to propagate from cutting and suckers.

*S. ramosissima* This is the common species from around the Sydney region but one of the most difficult to propagate and grow. Very variable in growth habit from compact bushes to 0.5 m to sprawling, twining vine-like forms. I have had little or no success either maintaining or growing this species but do intend to try again when my patience threshold rises again.

*S. striata* This species is quite common and vigorous in W.A., however in Sydney it is a bit of a disaster. I have tried 2 or 3 plants to date in the garden with no real success. Similar to the *sp. aff. ramosissima* mentioned above in all respects except capacity to survive. I may be a little harsh here as these trials were very early on in the study and I do appear to be doing better now with a lot of species. Maybe I should try again when I can get some more material. Difficult to maintain in pots for long periods here as susceptible to fungal attack in mid-summer. Not too difficult to propagate from cuttings particularly in the warmer months.

*S. linearis var confertifolia* Material of this plant was collected for me on Kangaroo Is (twice) by Ida Jackson. I have found this difficult to propagate from cuttings and, so far, difficult to grow in the ground. Lack of material is a problem at the moment. When I get sufficient material I will try again. At least I have one reasonable sized pot plant maintaining some growth at present so here's hoping. The foliage on this plant is almost minute and the white flowers present well so it is worth the effort.

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REMEMBER: Remember that I have cutting material available for all the species and forms mentioned in the past few newsletters on a postage paid basis. I would also appreciate any material I dont have mentioned!