

Leader - Doris Phelps, Loxton North. 5333.

Last June, just after I had posted out Newsletter No. 2, I received a letter from Mr. Peter Lumley, a horticultural botanist at the National Herbarium and Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. He expressed interest in working on the taxonomic revision of Callistemon. I replied, sending him copies of the newsletter.

In September, I was informed that Mr. Trevor Whiffen, of the Dept. of Botany, La Trobe University, was also interested in the subject. I wrote to him, and below is part of his reply.

"I have been interested in working on Callistemon for some time, and have finally decided to start. The help of your study group will be very important.

"I will study Callistemon in three stages. Firstly will be a preliminary study of the known natural species. I hope that this will tell me the approximate relationships and groupings of the species, and also serve to indicate the characters which will be important in the longer term study. My approach is to use the morphology (form) and the chemistry (leaf volatile oils) of the plants.

"Secondly, I will study the variation within all species. For this I will collect from natural populations throughout the range of the various species. This is a longer term study and will take perhaps three or four years. I will be visiting Western Australia next August, and will be spending time in Queensland for much of the second half of next year. I will, over the next few years, visit all areas where Callistemon occurs naturally. My collections will also be introduced into cultivation, via cuttings, at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. I will be cooperating with Peter Lumley during this study.

"Finally I will be studying all cultivated forms and varieties, including hybrids, and will attempt to relate these back to their natural species.

"I would much appreciate any help you can give me during the first and final stages. For the methods that I use, I need approximately 100 to 200 grams of fresh leaf material, and also dried pressed specimens, preferably of both flowering and fruiting material. Normally I would collect these myself, with the help of the member concerned.....

"For this preliminary study I would probably hope to obtain my material from botanic gardens or private persons with large collections. I would collect from natural populations or small private gardens only to fill in the gaps.

"Your help in the final stage will be even more important. I would want to obtain material from all cultivated varieties, forms and hybrids. These will of course be entirely in private collections and botanical gardens. I will probably not start collecting these for a couple of years, but at that time your help will be much appreciated."

It is good to know that Mr. Whiffen and Mr. Lumley are working on the sorting out of the callistemons. I am sure they would be pleased to hear from anyone who has an established collection of a number of species, or anyone who knows of an interesting natural stand of callistemon.

Their addresses are:-

Mr. T. Whiffen, Dept. of Botany, La Trobe University, Bundoora. V. 3083.
Mr. P. Lumley, Senior Botanist, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue,
South Yarra. V. 3141.

Subscriptions. In common with other study groups I now have to ask each member for \$2 for 1979. The rise in the cost of postage is the main culprit. The previous newsletters cost just under \$40 each. This one will cost about \$45 which includes the cost of postage, paper, envelopes, and master sheets. There is no charge for typing and duplicating which I do myself. When this issue is posted, there will be no money left, so please send in your \$2 as soon as possible.

Seed Bank: In addition to the seeds listed in the previous issue, the following are available: - *C. phoeniceus*, *tinaroo*, *polandii*, *polandii* x *tinaroo*, *viminalis*, *salignus* (pink form), 'Compacta', *pachyphyllus* (red, white and green forms), *Citrinus* 'Endeavour', *citrinus* 'Alba', 'Berundah Station', and an unnamed species from Blackdown Tableland, Q. Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope when asking for seed.

Additions to the Membership List.

Miss J. E. Walters, 63 Bay Road, New Town. 7008.
Tasmanian Region SGAP, Box 1353P, Hobart. 7001.
Mr. Adrian Lawrie, Box 215, Pt. Pirie. 5540.
Mr. W. Cane, Box 19, Maffra. 3860.

(Mr. Cane was an original member, but I neglected to put his name on either of the previous membership lists.)

CALLISTEMONS IN THE ROCKHAMPTON AREA.

Below are more of Mr. Colin Cornford's descriptions, continued from the previous issue.

C. formosus: The bright lemon coloured flowers of this make it a worthwhile addition to any garden. My plant has been flowering from an early age and flowers fairly continuously, although flowering habit tends to be a bit variable between plants. When fully grown it will reach about 3-4 metres and has a fairly upright habit.

C. pachyphyllus: I have two forms of this species (red and green). These are native to the coastal areas in the Bundaberg district of Queensland and south from there along the coast. The flower size is similar in both types, about 100 mm in length. The red form is deep red. The green form could best be described as apple-green. Both types are very straggly shrubs to about 1.5 metres. They are not suitable for specimen plants but are ideal in shrubberies. There is also another form with creamy coloured flowers.

C. sieberi: This is the alpine callistemon. It is growing slowly but is healthy. It is 3 years old but has not yet flowered. It is possible that it may not flower in this area.

C. pallidus: A slow-growing shrub which hasn't shown any sign of flowering to date. It is developing into a multi-stemmed shrub and should be quite attractive when it grows a bit bigger. It is supposed to have a bright yellow flower.

C. polandii: Red and pink forms of this grow naturally in this area. Both are large, fairly dense shrubs to about 4 metres in height. The red form flowers more profusely than the pink form. The red form flowers for most of the year. The pink form flowers heavily in early summer and carries a few flowers during the rest of the year.

C. Polandii x tinaroo: So far as I know this is a natural hybrid. It is spectacular when in flower, being covered with a mass of bright red flowers with yellow stamens. It retains the smallish leaves of C. tinaroo, but the flower tends to be of the form of C. polandii. It is an upright plant growing to about 4 metres.

C. citrinus: Three forms of this are known to grow and flower in Rockhampton - a red form, a white form, and one known as C. citrinus 'Clusters' (also red). They are generally fairly upright shrubs to about 4 metres. Brushes are about 75-100 mm in length. C. citrinus 'Clusters', as the name implies, produces large clusters of flowers at the ends of the branches.

C. citrinus 'Endeavour': An outstanding shrub when it flowers in early summer. The large, brilliant red brushes completely cover the plant. Unfortunately, it is in flower for only a few weeks of the year although it does produce a few flowers for a short while after the main flowering period. The foliage is very dense and a glossy green. It would be suitable for a low dense hedge. Height when fully grown is about 2 metres. It is easy to grow.

C. speciosus: One of the S.G.A.P. members has this growing in his garden and although it has grown well into a shrub about 2 metres high, it flowers very poorly, producing only one or two flowers per year. The blue-grey foliage makes it rather attractive even though it doesn't flower well.

C. phoeniceus: The only plant I know of this species is not in a very favourable position as it is in heavy shade. It has reached a height of about 1.2 metres in 4 years, but has, as yet, shown no sign of flowering.

C. linearis: There are two forms of this, both red. They are fairly open shrubs which tend to be a bit straggly. Brushes are up to about 100 mm in length. A feature of this species is the very large seed capsules which are held on the plant for long periods.

C. 'Eureka': This one grows prolifically here. I have yet to see it flower, but as it was only released in 1977 there is still plenty of time. My plant has grown to about 2 metres in just under 12 months. All the other plants that I know of around the area have grown just as well.

C. sp.: This unnamed species comes from, so far as I know, the Injune area of Queensland. It has a heavily weeping habit and is a very attractive shrub with its greyish foliage carried on reddish branches. The brush is deep red and is about 100 mm in length. To date, my plant has not set any seed. It is 2 years old, about 1.5 metres high, and has a spread of about 2 metres. I don't know what height it will reach but from present appearances the spread is likely to exceed the height. Cuttings of this have been tried, without success so far.

POINTS FROM YOUR LETTERS

Marie Hitchcock, "Fangorn" Old Inverell Road, Arridale. 2150.

"I have recently learned of a method of raising cuttings quickly and have been very successful with my own *C. viminalis* cuttings.

Method: Take a glass jar or fishtank with a glass lid.

Fill half full with sphagnum moss. Add about 1" of water.

Allow moss to grow so that green shoots dominate.

Place cuttings in upright position in moss. Put jar on sunny window-sill. Leave lid slightly open to allow for air circulation.

My cuttings were disease-free and rooted in 4-6 weeks.

Tips: Sphagnum moss is very sterile, but only in the green state.

I like to sterilize both jar and cuttings with household bleach before putting in jar. My cuttings were placed against the glass so that I could see rooting progress. I used a Seradix cutting powder to help things along."

Aileen Black, Lindsay Avenue, Valentine. 2280.

"For striking cuttings I use coarse river sand and vermiculite (2 to 1) in tubes stood in a plastic ice-cream container, and all placed in a plastic bag tied firmly at the top. Two pieces of tie-wire arched across the container stops plastic touching the cuttings."

Trevor Blake, 12 Little John Crescent, Vermont. 3133.

Most of the callistemons I grow are pretty common, but one is a little unusual, a prostrate form of phoeniceous. This was first grown in Melbourne at Blackburn on shallow grey soils of 20 - 35 cm over heavy yellow clay. It spreads 1 - 2 metres and may be only 25 cm high. Flowers extremely well. It has been grown here for 15 years or so and is readily propagated from cuttings."

Andrew Burnett, 86 Bamfield Street, Sandringham. 3191.

"Have any members any bottlebrushes to recommend for harsh coastal conditions? At our holiday house on Phillip Island we have a couple of *C. citrinus* which are currently flowering. They seem unable to take the harsh conditions because both are badly burnt during the winter. A *C. speciosus* is in a more sheltered position and is displaying good growth."

(I have had no experience with coastal conditions, but would suggest trying the species with narrow foliage, such as *C. pinifolius*, *C. rigidus* and *C. linearis*. *C. brachyandrus* might be worth a try.)

Phyllis Dadswell, 10 Duffield Street, Gawler. 5118.

"Callistemons grow well here, and are extremely hardy. They are slow growing if they are not given ample water, but stay very healthy, which is good from the point of cost of water, and the possibility of water restrictions in the future.

Callistemons I have growing are *C. citrinus*, *C. citrinus* 'Endeavour', *C. 'Reeves Pink'*, *C. linearis*, *C. linearis pumila*, *C. macropunctatus*, *C. montanus*, *C. paludosus*, *C. phoeniceous*, *C. pinifolius* (red), *C. polandii*, *C. rigidus*, *C. salignus* (red), *C. shiressii*, *C. teretifolius*, *C. 'Captain Cook'*, *C. viridiflorus*, *C. 'Harkness'*, *C. violaceous*, *C. sp. ex Dawson River*."

(I agree with the description, "extremely hardy". Five years ago we planted a *C. phoeniceous* and a *C. violaceous* at a roadside parking bay. They have not been watered since the first season, and although growing slowly, they have survived several years in which the rainfall has been less than ten inches. Last spring they even managed a few flowers.)