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NEWSLETTER OF THE "AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR CONTAINERS" STUDY GROUP.

Spring is very evident here in Wagga Wagga, despite two months of continuous rain and cold with just an occasional beautiful day when it is possible to enjoy not only the Australian plants blooming in our gardens but also the Acacias which are covering the hills and roadsides with a blaze of gold.

A few weeks back the Wagga Wagga S.G.A.P group visited Galore Hill Reserve about 60 kms. from here where one of our members, together with Rotary Groups have established plantations of our native flora. It was a delightful afternoon of varying colours, diverse foliage and plants large and small. If you are wondering what this has to do with Container Plants let me quote from "Grow Native" by Bill Molyneux, page 110 - "Selection of trees for ....containens could be from the range that would normally be considered too large".

An afternoon spent wandering through plantations of Hakeas, Grevilleas, Acacias, Eucalyptus and Eremophilas suggests that we should experiment with container planting of larger plants even if it is possible to enjoy their beauty for a limited time.

A few days later I was thrilled to receive a letter from Thomas Ross who is growing Australian plants at his home in Frankfurt, West Germany. I quote from his letter..."As our German winters are very rude, very few Australian plants can be planted outside here, and I have no choice but grow most of them in containers. Most of the plants I have are still young (1 to 3 years old), but I have some Eucalypts and Leptospermums which are up to 10 years old and seem happy in their containers. Most Acacias grow well.,.with the most notable exception A. buxifolia. This one stubbonly refuses to grow and always suffers from chlorosis. Chlorosis is a problem with other Acacias too, even though I give them liquid fertilizers and iron chelates. I have not yet resolved the problem of finding sufficiently well drained soil and, on the other hand, prevent deficiencies like chlorosis. Very well drained soils, like 80% sand, are not well buffered against variation of pH and washing out of nutrients. Unfortunately, many Australian plants require very well drained soil - even more so in our dull climate - but they won't grow in pure sand either." I would like to hear from anyone who can help Thomas with his problem and will be pleased to pass on to him any of your experiences or suggestions.

I would like to suggest that we find a spring folwering plant to challenge the Azalea. Every garden centre, nursery or super market has display shelves covered with Azaleas at this time of the year. Why shouldn't one of our own Australian plants be in that situation? Perhaps we could make this our special Bi-Centenary project - please let me have your thoughts when next you write.

I would like to thank all those who have responded to my request for information. Special mention must go to Annette Hallpike who has sent me a great deal of information on Nutrient Deficiency, Artificial Soils and Controlled Release Fertilizers, extracts of which will be included in future newsletters.

Clinton Garrett from Whyalla, South Australia writes of his successes with the species Eremophila - these he has growing in 20 litre plastic pots, some for up to 4 years, others 6 months to 3 years. Early plantings were potted into a mix of local red sand with coarse sand and peat moss which had a tendency to waterlog. Later plantings have been in a commercial pinebark compost and sand mix which seems satisfactory. Watering is generally through a dripper system with 4 litre/hour drippers

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on large plants and 2 litre/hour drippers on smaller plants via a time controller (usually 20 minutes). Fertilizing is with 50/50 Blood and Bo Complete mineral mix. Some species need iron chellate treatment as wate supply is salty.
Ida Jackson of Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, South Australia sends details of successful fern cultivation and seeds of Ixiolaena suppina, a white daisy she has had growing in a hanging basket for 6 years. She also suggests that Calocephalus brownii is a possibility as a container plant.

Jo Walker, Study Group Co-ordinator has sent seeds of Cheiranthera linearis which she collected at Murrumbateman. Now that spring is here I will plant these and let you know results.

Bill Watkins of Smithfield, Sydney grows most of his plants in containers and has found that the effects of heat on containers can be reduced by as much as 6° to 7°C by wrapping the pot in building type aluminium foil.

I am looking forward to hearing from you all and would like lists of plants you are growing, your successes, (and failures too), maintenance of plants, e.g fertilizing, pruning,watering, pests and diseases and any helpful suggestions which could be useful to us all. Auestions too are invited in the hope that one or some of our members can supply the answer.

As postage is so expensive it would be appreciated if you could send a stamped, self addressed envelope if you require a reply to a letter between newsletters.

Best wishes for successful container gardening,

MARGARET BARBOUR,
STUDY LEADER.