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

I must apologise for the delay in sending out the April Newsletter and in acknowledging correspondence. During April and May we were enjoying an overseas holiday, visiting Greece, the U.K. and Italy.

It was interesting to note during our travels in Greece (which were extensive - covering most of mainland Greeceand some of the Aegean Islan that Australian trees, mainly eucalypts, are being used extensively and very successfully in many situations. We were told, although I could no get official confirmation, that eucalypts have been established in Greec for over 100 years. Roadside plantations, particularly in Southern Gree brought strong feelings of nostalga; in fact we could have been drivin down any country road in our homeland.

We were impressed with the use of pots on balconies and windowboxes and whilst these were filled with exotics (some natives of Europe, of course) we did see one magnificent specimen of Asplenium australasicum on a flor stand outside the Greek Parliament House in Athens - it was unnamed and had no cultural notes so I hope it survived so far from its native habit

A highlight of our stay in London was a visit to Kew Gardens to see the Australian House where plants from low rainfall areas are growing in a garden setting. We wandered through the greenhouse, enjoying the overall landscaping which was very effective, noting specimens of the following species - Banksia, Callistemon, Calothamnus, Correa, Acacia, Casurina, Melaleuca (nesophila), Hibbertia, Anigozanthos, Helichrysum, Viola (hederacea), Whalenbergia, Brachycome, Brachysema (lanceolatum), Actinoti Also noted in the Temperate House was a fine specimen of Grevillea X gaudichaudi.

Unfortunately, time did not permit a visit to Wakehurst Place, an estate in Sussex taken over by the Royal Botanic Gardens in 1965, where there are many plants from Australasia growing out of doors - a situation rarely seen in England.

Back home it was pleasing to find that all my container plants had survived in spite of very changeable weather and, with a little cosmetic care, should be ready to greet the spring. Correa "Marian's Marvel (C. backhousiana x reflexa) which I have had in a pot since 12.8.84 is still blooming, 2½ months after the first flower appeared.

Graeme Mee of Singleton is specialising in Anigozanthos species. He live in Singleton, N.S.W. The block of land on which his house is built is badly eroded, having been overgrazed and overcleared prior to subdivisior development when it was cut back down to lower clay levels, leaving no topsoil. He has been there over six years and whilst he has had success with eucalypts, melaleucas, callistemons, acacias, hakeas and some grevilleas; boronias, eriostemons, croweas, correas, banksias, anigozanthus and prostantheras quickly died. He is now attempting to grow the latter in pots as well as rulingia, palms and ferns although the kangaroo paws are his major interest.

During the past two years he has had the following experience with 3 A. manglesii and 3 A. flavidus (red) in individual 60 mm pots. He repotted them into larger pots but decided they would be more effective in one large individual pot for each species. The size chosen was 300 mm and the potting mix was 3 parts coarse river sand and 1 part peat moss, sterilized with "Terrazole" fungicide and fertilized with Nutricote Slow Release Pellets. The plants grew well in the spring, forming new rhizome but during December, 1983, wet weather caused deterioration. The plants were drenched with fungicide and river stones placed on the surface soil ....."these stones were effective in that they generated heat which kept the base of the plants dry and so helped to contain the fungus

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infection where it readily attacks kangaroo paws. After this treatment the plants displayed rapid improvement in health and vigour."
Further heavy rains in February and March of 1984 affected the apexes of A. flavidus. They showed a lot of discolouration with the margins turning black and a red colour appearing inside the margin. The affected leaves were cut off and the plants were generally tidied up with the removal of weeds which were developing around the base and the removal of dead leaves. The plants entered a dormant stage during which few change were evident.

In March Graeme added A. pulcherrimus and also attended a meeting and workshop where he obtained the following hybrids: manglesii-viridus, manglesii-flavidus, rufus-flavidus, viridus-bicolour, humulus-flavidus. These were potted on in a similar mixture to that previously used.

Graeme's letter continues:- "Towards the end of July and early August we experienced a lot of drizzly windy weather. The A. manglesii and A. pulcherrimus deteriorated in quality and displayed evidence of ink disease. One Friday afternoon in August I inspected the plants and found the manglesii and pulcherrimus with the leaves lying flat and limp in the pot and showing ink disease. I felt I had lost these plants just as the manglesii were displaying evidence of flowering.

The next morning I sprayed the plants with "Terrazole", Lime-sulphur fungicide and Captan fungicide. Miraculously after a day or so these plants recovered dramatically although the A. pulcherrimus had been so badly affected that after I had cut off all the infected leaves and cleaned up the plants there were only a few tiny green leaves left.

I am not sure but the plants may have been additionally stressed as I was not watering as regularly as I normally do (about every second day) due to the drizzly weather. The drizzly rain may not have been sufficient watering because of the blustry, windy weather. The other problem that I noticed had developed was that I had placed the pots in the sunniest spot in the garden on slightly sloping lawn. As a result the plant in the pot on the lowest side had developed at the expense of the 2 plants on the higher side.

To overcome these problems I attempted to get the pot level and began a programme of watering weekly with Aquasol to get the plants growing vigorously again. I also began a weekly application of fungicide but varied the Fungicide used each week e.g. Week 1 Mancozeb, Week 2 Captan, Week 3 Lime-Sulphur, Week 4 Terrazole, Week 5 Mancozeb.

Since this action has been taken the plants have developed in vigour and the A. pulcherrimus has begun growing again. The manglesii have begun to flower, however the two retarded plants have only sent up pathetic little flower spikes (the first one slightly deformed as my new programme had not had a chance to take effect). However my most vigorous plant has about 7 magnificent spikes and more still coming.

The hybrid plants obtained from Merv Turner have displayed total resistence to fungal attack and have required no fungicide treatment at all. Some of these are now beginning to send up flower spikes e.g. rufus-flavidus and manglesii-flavidus."

Graeme's report covers so much of interest to us all that rather than abridge it I will continue it in our next newsletter.

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A letter in March from Thomas Ross reports a devastating winter...."two periods of 10-15 days with continuous frost between 7°F and 15°F and lots of snow (fortunately because snow protects the roots and at least part of the stems). I guess that all Australian plants in German gardens have either been killed or cut to the ground. I had lots of Eucalypts and Callistemons, several Acacia pravissima - all gone. It was the second worst winter of the century. I am looking forward now to the next 25 to 50 years with (hopefully) milder winters".

NEW MEMBERS:

Russell Cheal, 2 Christine Court, HEATHMONT. VICTORIA 3135
Maroondah S.G.A.P, P.O. Box 33 Ringwood VICTORIA 3134.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Thomas Ross, Langstr. 29, 6232 Bad Soden 3, WEST GERMANY.

A request to all Active Members: Please forward details of your progress to me periodically. Remember this newsletter can only be as informative as the information I receive from you.

Best wishes for successful container gardening,

MARGARET BARBOUR,
STUDY LEADER.