

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 10. DECEMBER 1990.

323 Philp Ave.,
Frenchville.
Q'1'd. 4701.

Dear Members,

We at the Rockhampton Branch of S.G.A.P. extend to you and yours the compliments of the Season, and wish you all the best for the new year.

As we sorted through the material set aside for publication in the newsletter, we were faced with a dilemma. The backlog goes back a couple of years, and it seems a bit strange to be printing letters from ourselves. However, they were written as ongoing accounts of the establishment of the Useful Plants Section of the Cliff Kershaw Australian Flora Botanic Gardens in North Rockhampton, and in that light are probably still of interest, though somewhat out of date. (As well, Rodney had already prepared the early ones for printing, and we'd hate to let that good work go to waste!) So, we'll go ahead and publish them, in chronological order, starting in this issue.

In July, the Study Group received donations to the reference collection of "Go Native--Wild Food Cookbook" and "Bush Medicine" from the author, Jan Sked, and Pine Rivers S.G.A.P., for which we are most appreciative.

We have received a number of enquiries about various "Bush Tucker" type products, including wattle essence, about which we have so far been able to discover nothing. It would add to our store of knowledge if anyone who comes across any of this sort of article could send us a copy of what's written on the label for our files. (A handwritten transcription will be fine.) It might also give us a starting point when extra information is requested about a product that we've never seen. If you could also include a description of the item, and comments re use and taste, I'm sure it will be useful.

Also in the post have come requests for people willing/able to speak at meetings etc. If any members who would be prepared to speak in their local areas could contact us to signify their willingness, we could organize a list we could consult. Some S.G.A.P. groups, and others, offer travel expenses or a fee to those addressing their gatherings. This is one way of spreading awareness of our plant foods directly, so

we hope to hear from a number of volunteers. In a similar vein, we have also been asked to supply an audio-visual presentation suitable for showing at displays and so forth. At present, no such thing exists, but it sounds like a reasonable project. At this stage, a video would have to be an individual or small group effort on the part of someone with access to the appropriate equipment, but we could start collecting suitable slides with a view to collating them into an A.V. If members could forward a copy of any slide they consider might qualify for inclusion, we could start that straight away.

We have some progress to report on the magazine articles. Species studies received so far are *Ficus coronata*, *Eupomatia laurina*, and *Tetragonia tetragonioides*. That leaves plenty of scope for the rest of you!

Another request for information has surfaced, this one on the native Curry Tree, believed to be a species of *Murraya*. Please help.

Mr. Hedwig Scheer, Heidestraat 18, B3451, Kortenaeken, Belgium, Europe, has written asking for information on Podocarpaceae---Podocarpus sps., Dacrydium sps., and Phyllocladus sps. We have sent "textbook" info., but if anyone has had experience with growing cool climate members of the family, such as *Podocarpus lawrencei*, please consider sharing your knowledge, either with the editors, or directly with Mr. Scheer.

Best Wishes,

Lenore Lindsay and Rocky S.G.A.P.

WELCOME to the following NEW MEMBERS:

Des LARDNER, Shop 1, Horsham Plaza, Darlot St., Horsham. VIC.
Dory RUSSELL, Jack's Creek Rd., Whittlesea. VIC. 3757
Mwyfanwy KING, Lot 17, Crooks Rd., Mandalong. N.S.W. 2264
Brian ARCHER, 2 Daydawn Ave., Warner's Bay, N.S.W. 2282
Leo DUIVENVOORDEN, c/- Biology Dept., U.C.C.Q., R'ton. 4702
Dorothy BREMNER, P.O.Box 618, Nowra. N.S.W. 2541

CHANGE of ADDRESS for:

Robyn PARKER, 50 St. George's Rd., Nth. Fitzroy. VIC. 3068
A. MOORE & J. BLATCH, P.O.Box 159, Nimbin. N.S.W. 2480
Colin HIGGINSON, P.O.Box 77, Alderly. Q'L'D. 4051
Carol NEWTON-SMITH, 235 Heytesbury Rd., Subiaco. W.A. 6008

SEED BANK: Neil and Diane HOY,
12 Anderson St., Rockhampton. Q'L'D. 4700

FLORAL EMBLEM: The Samford Branch of S.G.A.P. has chosen *Macadamia integrifolia* as the floral emblem for their branch. They have chosen this particular plant because of the outstanding and naturally occurring ancient macadamia trees in Ward's Scrub, Highvale, in the Samford Valley.

EDIBLE SPECIMENS TABLED AT MEETINGS:

27.7.90: Seedlings of *Capparis canescens*, *Diospyros humilis*, *Eugenia reinwardtiana*, *Lomandra longiflora*; flowers of *Acacia podalyriifolia*, *A. decora*, *Grevillea pteridifolia*, *G. asplenifolia*, *G. "Sandra Gordon"*.

24.8.90: The specimen table featured a large selection of nectar producing blossoms, including *Grevilleas banksii*, *oblongifolia*, and "*Sandra Gordon*", *Callistemon pachyphyllus*, and *Melaleuca viminalis*.

28.9.90: *Grevillea banksii* (red and white forms), *G. "Ned Kelly"*, *G. stenomera* (pink form); *Callistemon polandii*, *C. formosus*, *C. "Blackdown Tableland"*, *C. pachyphyllus viridus*, *C. "Captain Cook"*, *C. "Rose Opal"*, *C. "Eureka"*, *C. "Purple Splendour"*, *C. salignus*, *C. "Mt. Wheeler"*; *Melaleuca viminalis*, *M. dealbata*, *M. linarifolia "Snowstorm"*, *M. armillaris* (pink form); *Rubus moluccanus*; *Sterculia quadrifida*.

26.10.90: *Brachychiton bidwillii*; *Cassia brewsteri*; *Curcuma australasica*; *Dianella* sps. (2 varieties); *Grevillea robusta*, *G. banksii fosteri*; *G. "Superb"*, *G. "Coochin Hills"*, *G. obtusifolia*; *Lomandra longifolia*; *Lysiphyllum hookeri*; *Melaleuca nervosa*, *M. linarifolia*; *Mucuna gigantea*; *Sterculia quadrifida*; *Syzygium coolminianum*, *S. wilsonii*.

24.11.90: Flowers of *Backhousia citriodora*, *Grevillea "Honey Gem"*, *Hibiscus splendens*, *Leptospermum petersonii*, *Sterculia quadrifida*, *Syzygium australe*; Green fruit of *Pipturis argenteus*; Ripe fruit of *Rubus moluccanus*, *Syzygium fibrosum*.

EXCURSION REPORTS:

15.7.90: Working bee at the Kershaw Gardens. Ripe fruit on 2 of the figs:- *Ficus virens* and *Ficus fraseri*.

4-5.8.90: Weekend camp at Blackdown Tableland. Many wattles in flower, including *Acacias brachycarpa*, *buxifolia*, *cretata*, *gittinsii*, *juncifolia*, *leichardtii*, *leieocalyx*, *leptostachya*, *macradenia*, *neriifolia*, *podalyriifolia*, *ulicifolia*, *venulosa*. Flowers on *Banksia spinulosa*, *Grevillea floribunda*, *G. longistyla*, *Leptospermum flavescens*, *Livistona* sp., *Billardiera scandens*, *Eustrephus latifolius*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Lomandra leucocephala*, *Lomandra* sp., *Lomandra obliqua*, *Dendrophthoe vitellina*. Fruit on *Elaeocarpus reticularis*, *Ficus obliqua* v. *petiolaris*, *Myoporum acuminatum*, *M. montanum*, *Persoonia fastigata*, *Billardiera scandens*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Viscum articulatum*.

2.9.90: Canoona. Flowers on *Hibiscus heterophyllus*, *Xanthorrhoea media* subsp. *latifolia*, *Dianella* sp.. Fruit on *Ficus opposita*, *Grewia retusifolia*, *Dodonaea lanceolata*, *Cassytha filiformis*, *Gahnia aspera*.

6-7.10.90: Weekend camp at "Yarra", Gogango. *Alectryon connatus*, *A. diversifolius*, *Brachychiton australis*, *B. rupestris*, *Capparis loranthifolia*, *Carissa ovata*, *Citriobatus spinescens*, *Diospyros fasciculosa*, *D. geminata*, *D. humilis*, *Lysiphyllum hookeri*, *Owenia venosa*, *Pleiogynium timorense*, *Cissus oblonga*, *Geitonoplesium cymosum*, *Rauwenhoffia leichhardtii*, *Dianella* sp., *Cymbidium canaliculatum*.

4.11.90: Garden visits. Aitcherson's at Koongal----a range of habitat and vegetation types from dry open forest on the top slope to rain forest at the bottom; Collins's suburban rainforest at Frenchville; and Kirby's "young" (4 yrs) garden, also at Frenchville, where we enjoyed afternoon tea in the gazebo by the pool.

2.12.90: Breakup at Kershaw Gardens. Late afternoon walk and barbecue. Night stroll through the new scented gardens.

FROM OUR FILES

I have a small potted specimen of a plant that was unlabelled when I purchased it a number of years ago at a native plant nursery. I am reasonably sure it is *Rhodomyrtus trineura*. It has rarely been without flower and fruit since it was bought. It is now about 90cm wide and only about 30cm high in a 250mm pot.

The abundant fruit are good eating. They are small (7 to 10mm) cream in colour, covered in soft hairs, and have five prominent sepals in the calyx. The seeds are small and gritty. The juicy flesh has a taste similar to *Austromyrtus dulcis*, but are sweeter and less aromatic.

Also, has anyone tasted the fruit of *Helicia australasica* (Proteaceae)?

Kym Brennan, in his book "Wildflowers of Kakadu" describes it as follows:-

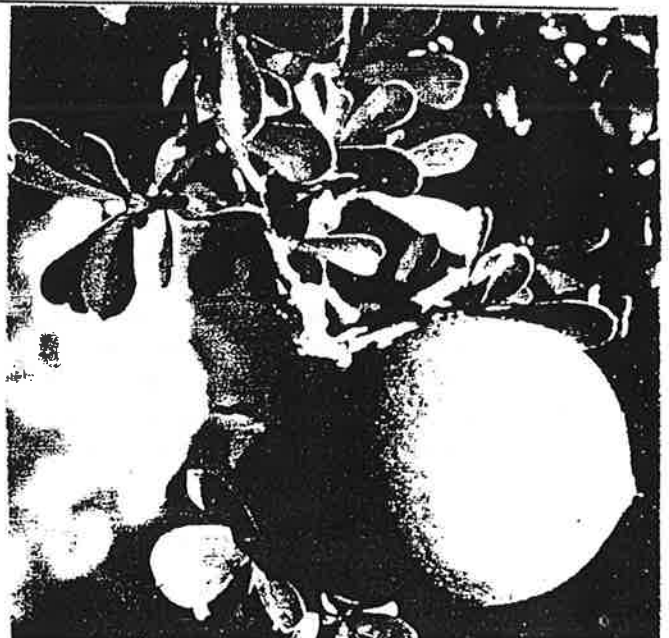
This medium-sized tree grows beside water in gorges and near springs along cliff lines (of sandstone monsoon forest). During the wet season it produces clusters of black, grape-sized, pleasant-tasting fruit.

A 4 year old specimen in my home garden has a height of only 2m. A photograph in the book mentioned shows a 130mmx35mm inflorescence produced on a stem of approximately 10mm diameter.

Does anyone have any further information on this plant, and more importantly, the quality of the fruit? A cutting of the specimen did eventually strike, and has adopted a multi-stemmed habit.

Peter Steel.

CITRIBATUS SPINESCENS:
(Wallaby Apple, Orange Thorn):
Ripe fruit picked on 9.7.90 at Kemp Beach. Sampled raw, the astringent, aromatic qualities are most pronounced and quite unpleasant. Flesh is greenish-cream, with a thick crisp rind and small seeds embedded in softer yellow pulp which discolours quickly after exposure to air. Boiling in two changes of water made no difference to the taste. In spite of looking like food, it definitely rates a "no" vote!



FROM OUR FILES

Lenore Lindsay from the Rockhampton SGAP wrote to me some time ago. They had tried to grow Salacia chinensis from seed, but had no luck and were interested in other sources of seed. If anyone can point them towards another source, they would be grateful.

1987

Her letter continues:

At the January meeting of the Rockhampton branch of S.G.A.P., the following edible plants were included among the specimens brought by members:-

Flowers of:

1. Lysiphyllum carronii - nectar washed out to make a sweet drink (Pegunny)
2. Melastoma polyanthum - fruit eaten.

Green fruits of:

1. Nauclea orientalis (Leichhardt Tree)
2. Podocarpus elatus (Brown Pine)

Ripe fruits of:

1. Ficus racemosa (Cluster Fig) - soft sweet apple-flavoured flesh; good for jam too.

2. Syzygium wilsonii - crisp, slightly tart white fruits; also for jelly, jam, and pickles.

3. Davidsonia pruriens (Davidson's Plum) - large, purple/black fruit, very bitter raw (contrary to the Cribbs' opinion). Much improved by cooking; makes beautiful wine, and a delicious (to my taste) very tart preserve. Once I inadvertently produced toffee glazed fruits, which were quite intriguing with their sweet sticky red/purple toffee surrounding the soft tart ooray fruits. This is one fruit tree that would repay selective breeding.

4. Cordia dichotoma (Pink Pearls; Snotty Gobbles) - pale pink marble sized fruit borne in bunches on a medium riverine tree, widespread around Rockhampton. The fruit consists of a clear, thick, sticky/slimy pulp surrounding a central seed, and tasting rather like a sweet, slightly under-ripe persimmon.

It is very popular with birds, especially parrots, who "prune" the fruit bunches, apparently to encourage the growth of the remaining twigs. Although the taste is palatable, the texture is not inviting. It is a very handsome tree, and recommended for ornamental planting, though.

FROM OUR FILES

not near an outdoor barbeque or pathway. Seed may be cleaned by processing in a blender of water, but it is of low viability.

Regarding notes on native citrus in an earlier newsletter, Eremocitrus glauca is widespread in the brigalow scrubs of Central Queensland. It propagates freely from root suckers. The small limes make an excellent drink, and may be used in any recipe calling for limes or lemons. The tree is very thorny, which is a disadvantage in the home garden. However, if planted in a well drained position, is hardy and drought-resistant. Definitely another to be tried for selective breeding !

We would also like to draw members' attention to the facsimile booklet of A. Thozet's "Notes on some of the Roots, Tubers, Bulbs, and Fruits, used as Vegetable Food by the Aborigines of Northern Queensland". The original was published in 1866, the facsimile edition in 1985. It is available from the C.I.A.E. bookshop for \$4.50 plus postage (Capricornia Institute, Rockhampton, Qld. 4700)

Yours faithfully
Lenore Lindsay (Mrs)
for the Useful Plants
Sub-Committee
Rockhampton S.G.A.P.

[Ed. note: Somehow I overlooked a letter from the Rockhampton SGAP, which I received early last year (all my correspondents soon learn that my organization is not good). Well, here it is, and it has some exemplary lessons for those who are setting up large plantings, of which I expect there will be more, as interest in native food plants seems to be increasing.]

20. 2. 88

Well, I am finally able to report some progress with Rockhampton S.G.A.P.'s Useful Plants Project in the new Australian Flora Botanic Gardens! After the initial listings and research, we seemed stuck in limbo for ages while we waited to be told exactly what part of the gardens was to be our responsibility.

Eventually we were shown an area, a little over 2 hectares in size, irregularly shaped, and down to a poorly drained area on the east. This area is enclosed by a meandering path, and in the south-west, on the summit of the ridge, is to be a lookout and information boards.

We then had to come up with a general planting plan, and decided that grouping plants by habitat seemed most logical. The area was therefore subdivided

FROM OUR FILES

into the following spaces:- Dry Inland, Dry Scrub, Rainforest, Woodland, Heath, Littoral, Riverine and Swamp. So far so good! Then the real problems began! Every time any of us visited the Gardens, our area looked different. The ridge was raised another metre or so; more and more large rocks sprouted overnight, complete with woodchip garden beds. We began to wonder if there would be any room left between the rocks for trees! Then a plantation of hoop pine seedlings appeared on the grassed area on the ridge slope. Finally definite lines of communication were established, and things settled down. The hoop pines were to be removed and replaced by bunya pines, and the poorly drained area was to be left that way, so we could establish a fresh water swamp (well, a modified one, anyway!).

The go-ahead to begin planting was given in October 1987, and on 1st of November, we had a club working bee during which 130 trees and large shrubs were planted out. Some of these were supplied by the Council nursery, some by members. There were no problems, except with the Riverine-Swamp area. We found that the area planned as the focus of the swamp had been

drained by ceramic pipes, and loads of fine blue metal dumped and spread there. However, we made some ad-hoc decisions and re-located the swamp, and went ahead with the plantings (and awful hard digging it was too, on top of the old rubbish dump!). The City Council arranged for the metal plate name signs to replace our temporary name tags, and also took over watering and maintenance. The plants on the ridge and slopes, which are visible from the road, seemed to thrive, and the club entered the Christmas recess feeling quite elated at what had been achieved.

But - next time we saw the "swamp", in January, it had disappeared! The melaleucas and livistonas, which formed the structure plantings, had been transplanted and spread over a raised, rocky flower bed a couple of metres away, and the area drained and filled. The clump of coolibahs on the other side of the division seemed to have disappeared under another large, raised flower bed bordering the path. So at this point, we don't know where we are with this habitat area, but negotiations are continuing. The rest of the habitat areas are coming on very nicely, though we have discovered we made some errors, which we

FROM OUR FILES

must avoid in the future.

Chief of these was not enough room for a ride-on mower to manoeuvre easily between trees. Although we allowed for a push mower, some spaces are a bit narrow for the other. Nor did we think of staking the trees, and quite a few have disappeared, courtesy of the same mower. Also, we planted out some that were a bit small, and too hard to see apparently.

We have another fifty or so trees ready to be planted, and as many again that are still a bit small, so we will be having another planting bee soon. The sooner the trees and larger shrubs are established, the sooner we can start understorey plantings.

We have also been asked to do the aquatic plantings in a large pond and waterfall area, crossed by a small wooden bridge. This will enable us to incorporate a number of food plants which were local staples, thus effectively adding another habitat to those already planted, although it is not in the same general area. Next step will be collecting and propagating these plants - lilies, sedges, blechnum, marsilea, triglochin, aponogeton, etc., which will be quite a challenge! Any tips on

growing aquatics gratefully received!

Yours sincerely
Lenore Lindsay

P.S. Tried the bluish berries of Sollya heterophylla in the Clark's garden in Canberra during the recent ASGAP conference. Flesh is dryish, white, surrounding a hollow containing numerous small seeds. Not unpleasant, but nothing much to recommend it as a food either.

P.P.S. The Council has just rustled up another bundle of trees for us, so the next planting out is 6th March.

Update to last letter: 27.2.88

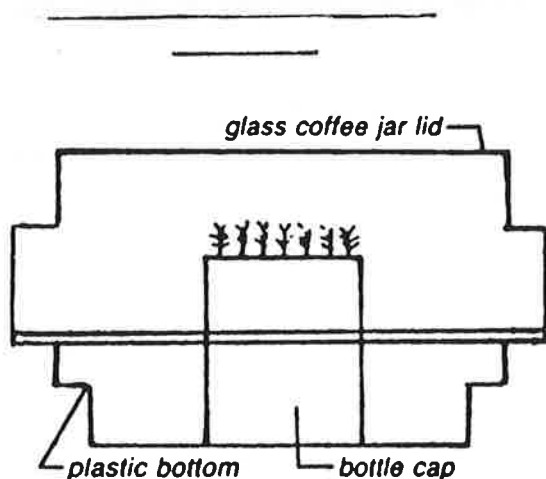
Re the Cordias: The pink pearls or snotty gobles are Cordia dichotoma. The orange, thin-skinned fruit came back as Cordia sp., with a note to the effect that there were 269 species of Cordia in the world, and they needed flowers. Perhaps they didn't quite understand that these appear to be native Australian plants!

We haven't followed up the Dianella story. My big clump are

FROM OUR FILES

Dianella revoluta, but we've made no attempt yet to unravel the mixed bag previously lumped as D. caerulea.

Asked members re seed of Leptomeria and Smilax requested. Blank stares! However, there are occurrences of smilax on Mt Archer, and new President Neil Hoy has offered to get it identified, and take it from there. All we know about Leptomeria is that L. billardiera is a shrub of the dry inland, and is a root parasite (common name Broom Bush). Leptomeria aphylla is in the books as "a currant bush" for southern Qld. This is probably the one you are interested in, but is known to us only from books, so we can't help at this stage. Western NSW, Vic. and Sth Aust seem more likely hunting grounds.



Home style micro-propagation unit

MACRO RESULTS FROM MICRO METHOD

by Ted & Cynthia Beasley

Our method of propagating some of the scarcer and smaller pieces of cutting material may be useful to other members. Stem tips of about 5 mm are placed into damp sphagnum moss in a bottle top. Then this is placed inside a shallow container and sealed. No need to water as the condensation keeps it damp. We use glass coffee-jar tops which have a plastic sealer underneath.

Some of our cuttings, of the same plants propagated by more traditional methods, died. All of the micro-cuttings have survived, making sturdy little plants. We do treat all micro-cuttings with a fungicide e.g. Previcur or similar.

We feel this method could be of use to anyone with limited space for propagating, as containers can be stacked on top of one another (so long as you choose coffee with a flat topped lid dome).

A little extra care may be needed during the hardening off period for these mico-plants.

- Reprinted from the S.G.A.P. Victoria Newsletter, June 1988.

BOOK REVIEWS

DJ Collins et al. **PLANTS FOR MEDICINES** CSIRO (Victoria) 1990
\$70. 303 pp. 64 colour illustrations.

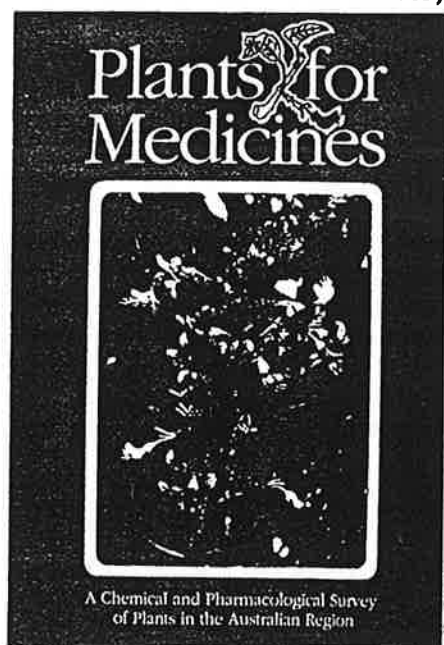
During World War II, CSIRO (and others) began screening Australian plants for medicinal drugs. This developed into a project called the Australian Phytochemical Survey. This book is the first comprehensive publication of the survey results, and includes previously unpublished information.

Not light reading for the faint-hearted - it is a very technical reference, suitable for biochemists, pharmacists, organic chemists and enthusiastic (but cautious) amateurs.

Would be useful for identifying non-nutritive factors in potential food plants (alkaloids are potentially harmful, so that foods containing them should be avoided, or treated to remove the alkaloids), and for identifying possible active ingredients in recognised medicinal plants (allowing preparations to be made which optimise and standardise the content of those agents).

Includes an account of the clinical testing of many of the substances identified, and also has an extensive bibliography to the original publications, which are otherwise difficult to locate.

Worth a look at your library (talk them into buying a copy for the Reference section).



- R. Barker