S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER 1965

A C Keane
544 Brunswick St
North Fitzroy

Welcome to two further newcomers:-

Mr G Echberg
Lower Dandenong Road &
Braeside, Victoria

Mr J G Martin
4 Mary Street
Gisborne, New Zealand

A stimulating letter from Mr Payne who reports:- "I have encouraged our local group to establish an arboretum of Acacia at our Waratah Park project. We have acres we can use here and intend to establish a row of every species for which we can obtain seed. This way as they die out they can be replaced, and we should in a few years, have trees of various ages of each species. Our first need is seed. Will you send me seed of every species that you can and request the group members to do likewise ….. I do not see why we cannot have 100 species growing by this time next year if people will rally with the seed."

This is an important project which will considerably advance our knowledge of Acacias, so will all please send any seeds you can spare to:-

Mr W H Payne
250 Picnic Point Road
Picnic Point, New South Wales

Projects such as this require seed in large quantities, so we want as a matter of urgency, everyone to collect all possible seed for future purposes and forward to the seed bank c/o Miss M Pearce, "Dunolly", Warne Street, Katoomba, New South Wales.

Mr I G Holliday of Tranmere, South Australia wrote to me some months ago re *Acacia gracilifolia* (this is a South Australian species, described by G W Althofer as suitable for dry areas only and growing to 15 ft). "I think your comment, 'it (*Acacia gracilifolia*) isn't in the race with several others I know', has been influenced by conditions. This plant under cultivation seems to grow very rapidly and flower more sparsely than under natural conditions. I certainly cannot imagine it flourishing in Melbourne. Anyone who has seen it growing naturally near Alligator Gorge in the Flinders Ranges would have to bracket it as one of the best."

I hasten to assure Mr Holliday that I agree it is one of the best – of its type of course, the tallish shrub group, for I have two really good specimens growing at Montrose. They are now in their third spring. One is 7 ft high and 6 ft across, the other 5 ft x 4 ft. They flowered well last September. I have not seen a specimen growing in the wild, but would be surprised if any were of better quality than these. I think too that I am safe in saying that this variety would grow well in Melbourne but – these plants received close garden type of attention during their first two years and I want to know from members' experiments if this is important. In particular, these were pruned moderately each year and an attractive shapely tree has resulted.

This raises the whole question of how successfully can wattles be grown under cultivation? Recently a student from the department of Botany (University of Melbourne) suggested our group should attempt to find out why wattles were so short lived under cultivation. I was not aware that this was so, but was prepared to be persuaded. So I asked for a reference to any research done in the matter. The answer came back that no such work had ever been done, but that the person who made the suggestion had merely heard from someone else that Acacias did not grow well in the garden. This is a job for us and not only to find out if they live a shorter or longer time when cultivated but, if the former, how to increase their life span. I have some interesting examples to quote on the longevity of some wattles planted from seedlings for a future article. All of you must know of some long lived wattles; if not try and find some. There are plenty about, as many wattles live a long time, a lot longer than you think. Anyhow I can't write the article without your help so what about it?

A reply to a note from Mr Scott Young of Cressy, Tasmania. He writes:- "I have been sent an *Acacia brownii* last September as a prostrate wattle for the rockery. The thing is growing like steam in pure gravel and is now 10 inches high, originally 2 inches,"

Acacia brownii according to E Lord grows to 3 feet and R D Croll gives its height as 4 feet so it is far from prostrate. The nearest to a truly prostrate specimen I have growing is *Acacia aculeatissima*, which reaches to 1 foot but spreads rather widely.

Mr Young goes on to say:- "My views on containers (ie plants growing in containers) for what they are worth. To my mind a container is not much better than the tube or pot the seedling originally came in. In other words if the seedling will not grow without being nurtured every so often then I would rather not have it. Or again if good drainage or a good gravel mulch is not enough then the plant is hard to please."

Is Mr Young right? What are the members' views and experiences? It opens up the whole and important question of the growing of specimens in containers and the cultivation generally of the smallest wattles, say 1 foot to 5 feet high. These are after all the ones which will be easiest to popularize in the home garden. It is our province to find out which are these small wattles, where to grow them, if they require attention and if so how much and most particularly where to obtain them. For it is manifestly useless to recommend an article which is unprocurable.

Firstly, to the names of those growing from 1 foot to 5 feet. These are selected from a list recently sent to you of wattles being grown by members. Mr Croll was good enough to advise me on the approximate height of many of these. The operative word is approximate as the growth of a plant depends on many conditions. Here they are:-

Acacia	*alata* (5')	*drummondii* (3')	*merrallii* (4')
	amblygona (4')	*enterocarpa* (3')	*microcarpa* (5')
	anceps (5')	*farinosa* (3')	*obliqua* (3')
	brownii (3' – 4')	*flexifolia* (4')	*pulchella* (4')
	bynoeana (4')	*gladiiformis* (3')	*rossii* (3')
	continua (4')	*gilbertii* (3')	*spinescens* (3')
	conferta (5')	h*akeoides* (v. *angustifolia*) (4')	*sclerophylla* (3')
	craspedocarpa (4')	*multispicata* (4')	*cuneata* (3')

If you wish to grow them where do you get them? Here is our position – I have plenty of *A. gilbertii* and quite a few *A. sclerophylla*. Some of each have been sent to our Seed Bank. I have a few available (possibly enough for 2 persons) of *A. alata*, *A. merrallii*, *A. obliqua* and *A. rossii*. The Seed Bank has some (? how many) of *A. brownii*, *A. gladiiformis*, *A. multispicata* and *A. pulchella*. None are available of *A. amblygona*, *A. conferta*, *A. craspedocarpa*, *A. drummondii*, *A. enterocarpa*, *A. farinosa*, *A. flexifolia*, *A. hakeoides* var. *angustifolia*, *A. microcarpa*, *A. spinescens* and *A. cuneata*. A concerted effort please to see if any or all of these can be procured anywhere. If you can help please let me know and I will inform all through he Newsletter.

The best way to grow them? This will be a matter of opinion and experiment and all are required to express their views. One's own experience is that Acacias (apart from a few including *A. elongata* and *A. subporosa* which thrive in the wet) must above all have adequate drainage. They simply will not stand for any sigh of wet feet. "Fundamental" you say. Yes, but many (too many) believe still that the so called tough, hardy Australian plants, especially the genus Acacia, will grow anywhere and are consequently planted as if this were true. Those dug up from the bush could have a chance but there will be few of these and the majority will be nursery or home grown specimens which require as a minimum good drainage for their survival. For the benefit of new members I quote my experiment of over 2½ years ago when I planted about 70 well grown healthy wattles, all of which I knew would grow well on my soil, in poorly drained bush land and then, left them to themselves for 12 months. At the end of that time I counted 7 survivors.

In order to complete this article in the next Newsletter I will be grateful for information from anyone who has any wattles growing in containers, especially the types used and the method of cultivation.