

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS IN 11,000 COPIES

Australian Plants

Registered at G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission
by post as a periodical.

MARCH, 1969

Volume 5, No. 38

Volume 5 will comprise issues 37-44

Price: 30c



Block by courtesy of John Sands Pty. Ltd.

STURT'S DESERT PEA

WILDFLOWERS THAT REQUIRE LITTLE WATERING

HOW TO GROW STURT PEA

by F. N. Hall

A well grown Sturt Pea in full flower is a traffic stopper anywhere, and is worth the effort to grow it in the garden or a large container.

Time to plant. In the wetter areas or where frosts are severe. Sow September to early December. In areas where winters are mild and fairly dry, autumn sowings can be made for spring flowers.

Soil preparation. Dig over soil in usual manner. If soil has not been previously used, up to 1 oz. of superphosphate may be used to advantage.

Soil. Most soils are satisfactory, sandy loams, clay loams and sand. The important thing is for the soil to be deep and without obstruction to allow the tap roots to go down. Another important point is drainage which must be good, so no soggy soils.

Seed & Treatment. Seed is available commercially and is no problem to obtain. As the seed has a hard testa or coat it is necessary to assist nature to allow water to reach the seed. There are several ways of doing this—(a) By rubbing the seed lightly between two sheets of sandpaper or emery cloth to break the tough outer coat. Warning: Don't rub too hard or long or there won't be any seed left; (b) By nicking the seed with a razor or filing with a file. File or nick on the edge away from the "eye" of the seed; (c) By soaking in hot water.

Sowing. Sow in groups of 3 or 4 seeds at intervals of 18 in. or in rows 1 ft. to 1 ft. 6 in. apart. Plants can be thinned out later if over-crowding takes place. These methods will make a dense mat of plants. Germination takes place in 7 to 10 days. Sturt Peas should be planted where they are to grow as they resent moving. Sow in a sunny situation.

Watering. The soil should be just moist under the surface. Watering can be by sprinkler, but if leaf scorch occurs, water should be applied in furrows in the soil a short distance from the plant. Do not overwater as once the plants are established with their long tap roots, they require moisture only at depth. If they are overwatered or the ground becomes waterlogged, it is usually fatal as stem rot takes place at ground level.

To grow in a container, drum, etc., follow the preceding but be sure to:
1. Put in plenty of crocks for drainage; 2. Have a reasonably rich soil;
3. Have an open soil for drainage; 4. Mulch the surface to conserve moisture;
5. Grow in a sunny situation.

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

In keeping with our policy of providing reliable information on the cultivation of wildflowers, this issue is devoted principally to those who wish to establish wildflower gardens that require a minimum of maintenance. The main articles "Gardening in Low Rainfall Areas" and "Home Landscape in the Country" clearly indicate their intent but the conditions that they meet clearly apply to most gardens throughout Australia that are not located in very wet climates and from which artificial water is withheld. The initial idea for this theme arose following reports of distress from home gardeners in drought affected areas, including our large cities.

On this continent we will have to beautify our environment without the use of copious artificial watering so why not learn to do this with plants that have survived the rigours of our climate for centuries.

A number of series form articles have been suspended for this issue such as Street Tree, Epacridaceae—The Heath Plants, etc., but our series on native orchids is continued for the orchids *Pterostylis* on page 60.

LILIES? IRIS?

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PLANTS WITH FLESHY OR BULBOUS ROOTSTOCK (EXCLUDING ORCHIDS)

by T. R. N. Lothian, Director, Botanic Garden, Adelaide, South Australia

Although we normally associate a bulbous or fleshy rootstock with the plant families Iridaceae, Amaryllidaceae and Liliaceae, there are other groups which also have this characteristic. These notes cover the principal genera and species.

In addition there are numerous examples of herbaceous plants either with or without persisting foliage which possess sub-woody rhizomes or similar rootstocks. Plants included in this group have been mentioned briefly.

Anacampseros australiana (Portulacaceae)

A large South African genus of approximately 50 species, with one Australian representative. This plant is a low growing succulent under-shrub, with short stems arising from a thick fleshy tuberous rootstock which is up to 3" long and 1" in diameter. Numerous buds are found at the apex. The stems are between 2-6" high, usually with thick ovate-lanceolate leaves crowded at their apices. The succulent leaves are 1-1½" long, ¼" wide, glossy or slightly hairy, green or greenish red in colour. The flowers are borne on long bracteate stems 4-6" high. The sepals are fleshy, enclosing 5 pink petals about ½" long.

Usually propagated by seed it can also be readily increased by stem cuttings. It grows readily in coarse well drained soils or in a rockery. The tuber should be placed horizontally 2-3" deep, preferably alongside a large rock (simulating the natural habitat).

Originally found in the Flinders Ranges on rocky slopes, it has more recently been located by the author on open gibber plains in association with *Atriplex*, *Bassia*, and similar plants. It is fairly common, with the rootstock under gibbers a few miles south of Woomero and also north of Pimba towards Lake Hart.

ANGUILLARIA DIOCIA (Liliaceae)

An interesting small bulbous plant usually growing between 3-6" or even 9" high with a terminal spike of flowers. *A. dioica* is widespread, there are two other species in this genus.

Two or three long stem clasping green leaves are usually present. The flowers are either polygamous dioecious, star-shaped usually sessile and number between 2-6. There is variation in the colour. Usually white with a dark purple or almost black blotch about the middle of the petal, colour variants of cream, pale yellow or even pale pink, with or without the blotches are common especially in the drier parts of this (South Australia) state.

The white flowered form inhabits savannah country with light-canopy and is found in a variety of soils and habitats. In the arid areas, the yellow and cream forms can be seen in open country preferring sandy soils in which the bulbs are up to 6-9" deep. The pink flowered forms are usually on rocky areas associated with hills or ranges. One of the most spectacular was seen at Mt. Olga. It grows in colonies which often number several dozens.

A light sandy soil appears ideal and it also thrives in pockets in the rock garden. Propagated from seed.

This article is continued on page no. 74 describing the species in alphabetical order. The author concludes the article by describing a miscellaneous collection of plants that do not have fleshy rootstock but the roots are usually persistent. They are also Liliaceae and as they are of considerable horticultural value (and for economic reasons the colour plates must appear on the next few pages), they are described on the next page and on page 56.

