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Australian Plants

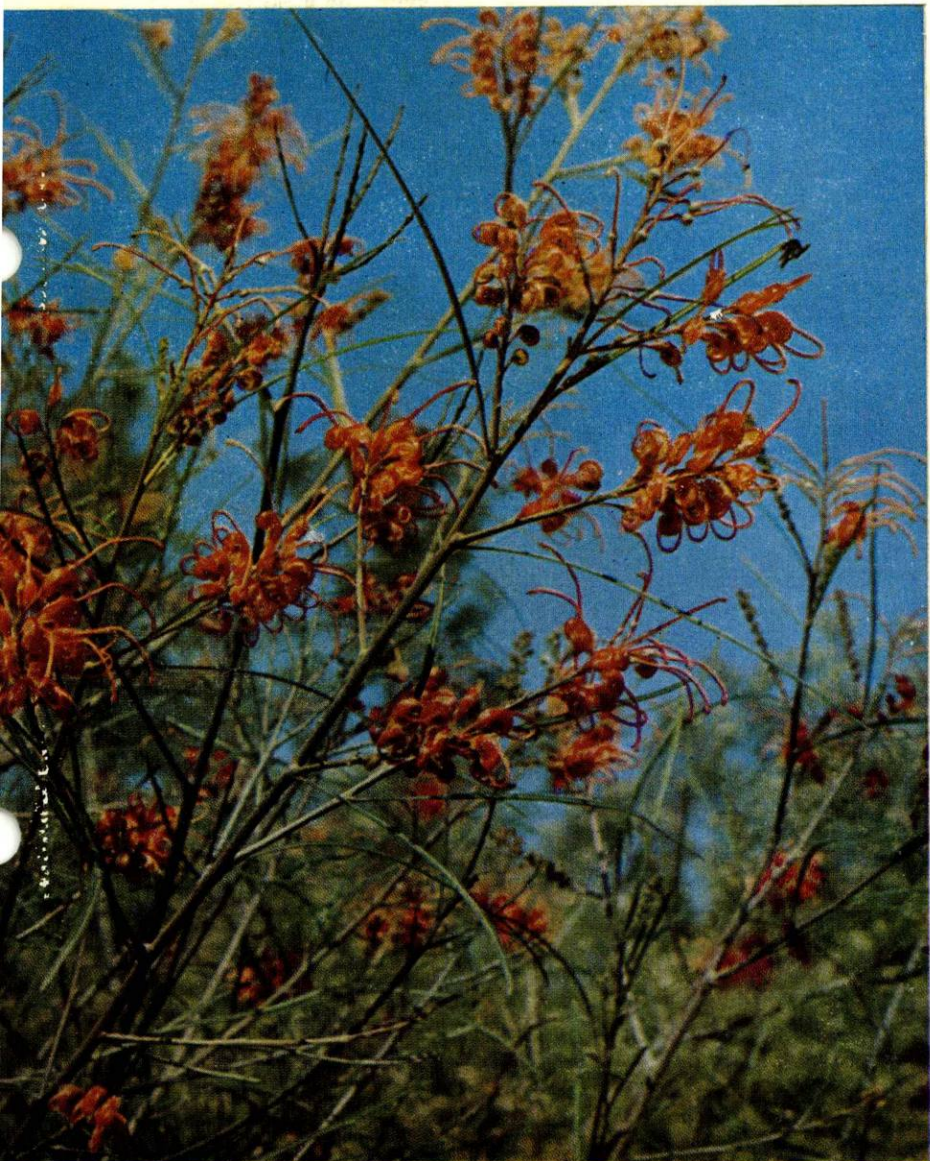
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Photography by M. W. Hodge

GREVILLEA LONGISTYLA

The Grevillea of Queensland and their cultivation in gardens.

GROWING GREVILLEA

GREVILLEA IN BRISBANE by M. W. Hodge

Grevilleas are among the most appealing of our native plants and the Genus could be used exclusively in a home garden without producing monotony. They vary in size, foliage, habit, and flower character and colour. The length of the flowering season varies with the species, from a few weeks to the year round. They have the added advantage of attracting many nectar-feeding birds to the garden.

There are a number of species which are suitable to Brisbane's climate. Though the more difficult plants generally are those which are indigenous to districts of a low summer rainfall. Brisbane has an annual rainfall of approximately 40 inches, most of which falls during summer. Some of the species which are difficult in Brisbane grow well 100 miles away in less humid areas west of the Great Dividing Range.

Greatest losses occur here during the humid summer months particularly after prolonged periods of rain. With this in mind I have avoided conditions which allow the soil to hold excess moisture and encourage damaging soilborn organisms.

My garden is on a moderate slope facing west and has less than 18 inches of top soil (pH 6-6.5) over heavy red clay. I have provided good drainage and do not use heavy layers of organic mulch around Grevilleas. Other growers have used heavy layers of organic mulch with good results particularly during dry periods.

There should be no doubt that many Grevilleas respond to rain and artificial watering but the latter can be overdone. I prefer to allow established plants to rely on the rain during summer months.

I must emphasize that these methods are used for Grevilleas on heavy soil where there is a normally high summer rainfall.

Many of my early attempts at growing Grevilleas failed because I applied general garden fertilisers. I have since been informed that the phosphorus content was the cause and that it will also kill other members of the Proteaceae family. It is preferable not to try to force growth into Grevilleas but to allow them to grow at their own pace. Some are very slow to start and others grow only at certain periods during the year. One plant (*Grevillea thrysoides*) has only recently shown progress, two years after planting. I have used iron chelates and sulphate of ammonia to correct chlorosis on a few plants. They are mixed in solution at the rate of one level teaspoon of each to two gallons of water.

Damaging roots of Grevilleas can cause their death sometimes weeks later so it is preferable not to dig near them but pull weeds out while they are small. I have seen large but not very old Grevilleas die with root rot which seems to be centred near a spiralled root so it may be preferable to select plants which do not have spiralled roots in the bottom of the pot.

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This issue has been devoted to the wildflowers of Queensland with particular reference to the Grevillea. Other beautiful plants from the sunny north include *Melastoma*, pp. 12; *Passiflora*, pp. 13; *Alocasia*, pp. 19; *Crinum*, pp. 20 and *Banksia*, *Buckinghamia*, *Dorlingia*, *Hakea*, *Oreocallis* and *Stenocarpus* on page 18. They will grow in southern gardens.

AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS—*Corybas*, 15; *Thelasis*, 30; *Cadetta*, 32; *Dipodium*, 34; *Apostasia*, 36 and *Phaius*, 37.

