

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTSMELALEUCA & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUPNEWSLETTER NO. 2 - APRIL 1990

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Dear Member,

The first newsletter published by the previous leader after amalgamation of Melaleuca & Callistemon Study Groups into the present Group was denoted Newsletter No. 1 so I will continue that sequence. I still have some copies of Newsletter No. 1. If you would like a copy let me know.

Revision of Melaleuca

Some sections within the genus Melaleuca have been revised over the past few years and other sections will be revised in the near future. Some name changes have already been made and there is a distinct possibility that further name changes will occur. One of the most significant changes is the inclusion of several species in the genus ASTEROMYRTUS.

Species which were previously Melaleuca and which are now in Asteromyrtus are:

- A. angustifolia
- A. arnhemica
- A. brassii
- A. lysicephala
- A. magnifica
- A. symphocarpa
- A. tranganensis (This is a new species)

Some other changes are:

- M. fulgens is now M. fulgens subsp fulgens
- M. steedmanii is now M. fulgens subsp steedmanii
- M. corrugata is now M. fulgens subsp corrugata
- M. tamariscina is now M. tamariscina subsp tamariscina
- M. irbyana is now M. tamariscina subsp irbyana
- M. sp 'Miles' is now M. tamariscina subsp pallescens
- M. erubescens is now M. diosmatifolia
- M. nematophylla is now M. filifolia

There has also been some name changes in the genus *Callistemon*:

C. 'Tinaroo' and its various forms is now *C. recurvus*

C. pungens is the name allocated to species collected in the Severn River of S.E. Queensland. This is a purple flowered species and it is not known whether or not this is a separate species to that previously known as *C.* 'Severn River' which is generally regarded as having pink/red flowers. I will endeavour to clarify the *C.* 'Severn River'/*C. pungens* question and will keep you informed.

C. macropunctatus is now *C. rugulosus*

Callistemon viminalis is being increasingly referred to as *Melaleuca viminalis* so it appears highly likely that it will end up in the genus *Melaleuca*.

Seed Bank

Thanks to Arnold Reick, L. Quinn and Barbara Buchanan for supply of seed. If you have any spare seed of *Melaleuca*, *Callistemon* or related genera please forward it to me for redistribution. I would particularly like to obtain seed of Northern Australian species. I have written to the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and to a private seed supplier in the Northern Territory and will keep you advised of the results of these requests.

Seed out of stock is *M. bracteata* and *M. leptospermoides*.

Additions are *M. thymifolia* (mauve), *calycina*, *lanceolata* (pink tips) and *thyoides*; *C. pearsonii*, *pachyphyllus* (red & white), *linearis*, *salignus* (pink & white), 'Endeavour', Emu Creek (white), *pinifolius*, 'Running River', *C. pachyphyllus* (white) is a doubtful name but that is how the seed was supplied. Is anyone interested in trying it to see what may result.

Contributions from Members

Thank you to those members who have forwarded information suitable for inclusion. I can't put it all in this issue but will catch up with it as time goes on.

Barbara Buchanan lives at Myrree, Vic. and is currently growing 30 species of *Melaleuca*. The property is subject to heavy frosts and these have been responsible for the loss of *M. nesophila*, two young plants of *M. elliptica* and probably *M. wilsonii*. Rabbits and kangaroos find her plants attractive and plants have to be protected from these predators.

Barbara uses a modified bog method for seed germination:-

Margarine containers of wet sand are microwaved for about 5 minutes per pot. Seed is added and water topped up until germination occurs at which stage drainage holes are punched in the base of the containers. Like many other operations, if you find a system that works use it!!

Gil and Fran Robertson have a 200 acre farm in the hills north of Port Lincoln, S.A. They are interested in the study of different growth forms of *M. lanceolata* and would like to contact anyone interested in trial plantings of this species. They would like several people in different environments to propagate and monitor 5-6 plants from each of 5-10 lots of seed and to report back the results over a period of 10 years or so.

If you are interested in helping Gil and Fran with their work on this species please contact them at the address given below.

Gil is also studying Aromatherapy by correspondence and would like to contact anyone interested in researching Australian plants for essentials oils. During the course of his study he has found that a number of Australian plants are used for oils in overseas countries (mostly grown there also). There are many Australian plants still to be checked for potential oil production. Gil is planning to construct a small testing still and would like to hear from anyone who has done any work on, is working on or is interested in working on this research.

Future plans for their property include planting of theme areas - edible plants, plants utilised by Aboriginal people, environmental ecotypes, dye producing plants, oil plants, furniture timbers, variants etc.

Gil and Fran would welcome a visit from any members who are passing through but they don't have any spare accomodation at this stage.

They have offered to arrange plantings of rare and/or endangered species for production of seed. Their climate is mild with wet winters having a rainfall of up to 500mm per annum.

If you can help Gil and Fran with any of their worthwhile projects please contact them at P.O. Box 56, Port Lincoln. S.A. 5606.

Derek Arnall of Malawi, Central Africa has been a member of the Study Group for many years and is growing Australian plants with the accent on *Callistemon* and *Melaleuca*. His property is on a latitude 1° North of Cairns, North Queensland with a climate and rainfall apparently similar to that of the Atherton Tableland. He has had quite good success with *Callistemon* spp but many of the *Melaleuca* spp have been frustrating. He grows other Australian species - *Eucalypts*, *Acacias*, *Grevilleas*, *Leptospermum* to name a few with some success and some failures. *C. polandi* is very prolific and *Grev. banksii* (red & white forms) grows quite well.

Many of you will have seen, or heard of *C. 'Malawi Giant'*. This is a form of *C. viminalis* (or *M. viminalis*) which originated in Derek's garden and which is a strong grower up to 10-15m in height. It can be pruned, if required, to contain it to a smaller size.

Joan Wilcox of Mt. Nelson in Tasmania advises she is growing 30 species of *Melaleuca* and about the same number of *Callistemon* species. She has forwarded a list of species with comments as to performance and which I will include in a future newsletter. The

Callistemon species listed are reported as being hardy (except *C. speciosus*). The interesting point is that most of the Callistemon species being grown by Joan also grow well in Queensland which gives an insight into their adaptability.

Many of you will have seen, or purchased, Ivan Holliday's book "A Field Guide to Melaleuca" which is a very useful reference. At around \$20 Volume 1 is good value. Ivan advises he has prepared photos and sketches for a further number of species for a second volume. Let's hope we see Volume 2 in the bookshops in the near future.

Ivan Tiley lives on a property "Buln Gherin" (aboriginal for black cockatoo) at Beaufort in the Western District of Victoria. The homestead garden covers 5½ acres and is one of the oldest near pure native gardens in Victoria. Ivan's own garden is much smaller but keeps him busy to maintain it in good condition. He finds *M. elliptica* and *M. ericifolia* are good bird attractors.

Mr. L. Quinn of Minalton, South Australia writes of a form of *M. lanceolata* seen in Innes Park S.Y.P. some 16 years ago. It differs from the usual form in that it has pink new growth and it flowers later - from end of March to the beginning of May. Seed capsules are also a pinkish colour. Mr. Quinn forwarded a photograph of a 5 year old plant which is dense and rounded and carrying a profuse crop of flowers and the pink new growth in evidence over the most part of the plant.

Feature Garden

Peter Lindley's garden at Alexandra Hills in the Redlands District of S.E. Queensland is a joy to visit at any time but in spring it is magnificent. The striking feature of the garden is the wide variety of Southern Australian flora which Peter has been able to grow successfully. The garden is 8 years old and in Peter's words "I wanted to create a bit of bush". The garden is on a 24 perch suburban block with a northerly aspect. Prior to the house being built the block, which is on a low ridge, was fairly level with a slight fall to the south. Soil is a silty clay containing moderate amounts of quartzite gravel. Local rock was used to form a retaining wall of approximately 1.2 metres high and some 3 metres from the rear boundary. The lower terrace between the retaining wall and the rear fence is where the garden shed, vegetable garden etc. is located. Drainage of gardens on the top of retaining wall level is good. Drainage for the front yard has been improved by the installation of a rock filled drainage trench running from the edge of the driveway (on the western side of the block) across the front garden and down the eastern side to terminate at the rear retaining wall. Depth of this varies from 0.5 metres at the commencement point to 1.5 metres at the outfall end. Width is about 1 metre. It was dug by hand!!! The trench is filled with broken rock up to 200mm in size. The top of the trench is the pathway across the front garden and down the eastern side. Spoil removed from the trench, together with other local soil, has been used to form mounds up to 1 metre high in the front garden and, to a lesser extent, along the eastern side.

Peter adds a little sulphate of ammonia to the soil when planting and then gives plants an occasional dressing of slow release fertiliser until they are established. After that they are on their own.

A permanent watering system has been recently installed and Peter claims this has improved plant growth probably because a more even watering rate and coverage is achieved.

Most plants are pruned to some degree after flowering each year. This appears to have two main benefits - it promotes fresh growth and prevents plants from becoming straggly. It also improves flower production.

I have prepared a plant list from Peter's garden - five foolscap pages - so I won't be including a complete species list.

M. fulgens subsp *fulgens* is growing along the top of the retaining wall and in the front garden. These plants are up to 2 metres tall and flower prolifically each spring. Colour range is dark red, salmon and cerise. One plant produces deep purple flowers and was purchased as *M. fulgens* (purple). Does anyone have any comments on this? The plant and the flower look like *M. fulgens*.

M. scabra, *holosericea*, *elliptica*, *radula*, *gibbosa*, *pulchella*, *filifolia*, *nesophila*, *thymifolia*, *incana*, *tamariscina* subsp *tamariscina*, *calothamnoides*, *hypericifolia*, *laterita*, *diosmatifolia* are all healthy plants and flower well each year.

Three colour forms of *M. viridiflora* are also planted in this garden.

Two plants of interest are *M. radula* x *M. diosmatifolia* (*M. erubescens*) and *M. armillaris* x *M. diosmatifolia*. These are growing and flowering quite well. Both carry mauve flowers. Does anyone have any comments on these hybrids and/or have any information as to their origin?

M. fulgens subsp *steadmanii* is approximately 0.6 metres high and has flowered well.

Other *Melaleucas* planted which are fairly small at this stage, but healthy, are *M. wilsonii*, *glabberima*, *spathulata*, *foliolosa*, *tamariscina* subsp *pallescens*, *minutifolia*.

M. diosmafolia has grown into a reasonably sized shrub but has not flowered even though it is some years old.

Callistemon species are an important part of this garden and virtually all species planted have thrived in this environment. Some 20 species have been planted which include a few unusual ones such as *C. 'Fairy Floss'* (pink), *C. 'Mrs. Foetel'* (dark red), *C. 'Wilderness White'* (clear white), *C. 'Pink Ice'* and *C. 'Wolumbin'* (orange).

Grevilleas provide good colour and attract birds to the garden. Species being grown include *G. formosa* from Northern Australia, *G. rivularis*, *G. dryandri*, *G. biternata* in addition to a number of the larger growing *G. banksii* hybrid plants and also the Northern Territory form of *G. pteridifolia*.

An interesting point is the number of grafted *Eucalyptus ficifolia* plants which are growing well and which have flowered profusely in past years. Two colour forms of *Eucalyptus phoenicea* are growing and flowering well.

Other genera represented are Banksia-spinulosa var collina, conferta, marginata, 'Giant Candles', robur, oblongifolia - Calytrix, Kunzea, Dampiera, Homoranthus, Bauera (pink, white), Prostanthera, Boronia, Baeckea, Thryptomene, Anigosanthus, Darwinia, Oxylobium.

There is a few Hakea species of which a grafted plant of H. bucculenta is well established.

This gives some insight into the diversity of Peter's garden. Peter is quite happy to have people visit his garden. Should you wish to visit please contact me so I can make the necessary arrangements.

During the interview with Peter in relation to this article I suggested he must have a secret formula. He has!! He claims that each night at 8.00 p.m. he goes out and sings to his plants which is enough to make any self-respecting plant get up and growing!

Membership

Membership Fee is \$5.00 and is due on 1st July each year. Because of the cost of producing and posting newsletters members will be deemed to be unfinancial if more than 2 months in arrears.

Many thanks to those who have already forwarded their 1991/92 membership.

Conclusion

It is not my intention that newsletters become too technical - that can be obtained from the many good books on the market. I am more interested in the successes and failures you have and the methods you employ so I can pass it onto others. Any information you may acquire about forms or variations you encounter during bushwalks, visits to private and public gardens etc. will be most useful and will add to the pool of knowledge about the genera. I look forward to hearing from you.

I will endeavour to keep you informed of changes etc. within the subject Group. If you require assistance with a particular project let me know and I will try to assist wherever possible.

Regards,

Colin Cornfoot.

P.S. A seed list has been obtained from Top End Seeds, Darwin. Prices for Melaleuca seeds range from \$7.50 per 25 grams to \$12.50 per 25 grams. The only one listed which is not presently held in the seed bank is M. dealbata and I will obtain stock of this when it becomes available.

P.P.S. To get things going, and to provide newsletter copy, I would like to hear from members of their successes and/or failures with various species. Details should include soil types, climate, drainage conditions, aspect.

I suggest that for the next newsletter we look at:

- M. abietina
- M. acuminata
- M. argentea
- M. bracteosa
- M. cheelii
- M. cajuputi
- M. decora
- M. tamariscina ssp irbyana
- M. groveana

Any information you can provide will be useful and will add to the knowledge of how Melaleucas perform both in and out of their natural habitat areas.

Cutting Bank

It is intended that the cutting bank continue. If you are prepared to forward cutting material to other members please forward to me a list of species from which you are prepared to provide cuttings and I will establish a register of names, addresses and species. Requests for cuttings should be forwarded to me and I will then pass the request to the relevant donor.

The method I have used to successfully send cuttings by mail is to wrap the cuttings in wet newspaper, seal the package in a plastic bag and then place it in a padded post bag. Mark the outside of the package "LIVE PLANTS - DO NOT DELAY".