

BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA (STERCULIACEAE) STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 1

March 1986

INTRODUCTION

The Brachychiton & Allied Genera Study Group was formed due to my interest in Brachychitons. When I was asked to include the allied genera I had to look up a few books to see what this involved. Fortunately I had a few Thomasias growing. As they were still alive I accepted the extra responsibility & the study group is as it stands now. Since then I have realised the diversity of the family & I am looking forward to the prospect of growing as many of the species as possible.

Unfortunately I cannot devote a lot of time to the study group. My studies were supposed to be completed in 1985 but have spilled over into 1986 & are still occupying too much of my time. However they must be completed within a few months. As I cannot guarantee results for the study group this year, there will be no subscriptions. I expect to get out 2 or 3 newsletters of uncertain size (it depends on your response). I am breaking myself into the leadership in stages.

Participation is very important in every study group. The more people that help, the more we will all benefit. I would like to learn more & would like you to teach me. I am asking for your experience for my, & others, benefit. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate any articles or letters to publish in this newsletter, or write to me & I will extract the information included.

The most important part of the study group is the newsletter, if anyone can help me they will win a friend for life. Please let me know if you can assist with any part or the lot. Someone with access to a stencil machine is my greatest desire.

STUDY GROUP OBJECTIVES

Planned activities for the study group are:

1. Cutting exchange. I am building up a stock of plants for cutting material. This will be available to members during the cooler months of the year. I expect members to do the same with any unusual plants they have in stock.
2. Information exchange. This is the simplest & I hope the most successful of our activities. This is via the newsletter.
3. Seedbank. This is beyond my resources at present. If someone would like to take on this job I will assist them. Until then, any seed can be sent to me & I will make it available. There is very little known about propagating many of the Sterculiaceae from seed

& some very useful research could be done here. The big problem is the collection of seed (this should not be difficult if the plants are examined carefully).

4. Availability of species. Hopefully the study group can assist the distribution of species so that a wider range of species are available to the general public. This is not necessarily restricted to species as there are also some very attractive *Brachychiton* hybrids that will be available. These are often better grafted & this will be covered in the next newsletter.

GENUS FOR DISCUSSION: *Keraudrenia*

Keraudrenia (pronounced Kero-DREEN-ee-a) is a genus of 8 species. 7 of these are found in Australia, the other is in Madagascar! The genus is named after Pierre Francios Keraudren (1769-1851). He also has Cape Keraudren & Keraudren Island named after him.

The 7 Australian species are:

<i>K. adenolasia</i>	Qld.
<i>K. corollata</i> (incl. <i>K. hillii</i>)	Qld, NSW, NT.
<i>K. hermanniifolia</i>	WA
<i>K. hookerana</i>	QLD
<i>K. integrifolia</i>	Inland Aust.
<i>K. lanceolata</i>	Qld.
<i>K. nephrosperma</i>	Inland Aust.

The species tend to be either tropical or inland species.

In appearance the flowers are very similar to a *Thomasia*. The main difference is the manner in which the anthers shed the pollen. The differences are not great.

I have two species in cultivation. My experience with these is:

Keraudrenia corollata (var. *hillii*): I collected cuttings off a plant growing at the base of Mt Beerwah, one of the Glasshouse Mountains. At the time I was surprised to see a *Lasiopetalum* with Blue flowers. At least I didn't think it was a *Thomasia*. Before long I learnt that *Lasiopetalums* have brown flowers & therefore this was something else. (I have since learnt that some *Lasiopetalums* have blue flowers after all). Some time after forming this study group I was informed by Jan Sked that it was probably *K. corollata* that I had. A quick check confirmed this.

The original plant was almost 2 metres high & was sparsely branched. (It had a few less branches by the time I left). It was growing in moderate shade in a very dry situation. It did not have many leaves but was flowering well (Dec, 1984). I gathered some cuttings which I potted up when I returned to

Sydney.

Two cuttings struck. I then tried to duplicate the original conditions & one plant died. The other tried to die but I managed to stop it. In Jan, 1986 it flowered although only 3" high & with only two leaves. I then altered my ideas on how to grow it. I fertilised (Aquasol) & watered it regularly. Its growth has been very good since then. From my experience, the original plant must have been about 500 years old to have grown that big under the harsh conditions I saw it in. I guess I saw it at the wrong time. It showed me very clearly that the natural conditions (or supposedly natural conditions) should not be duplicated blindly.

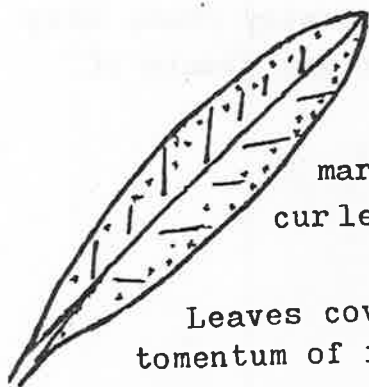
Keraudrenia integrifolia : I purchased this plant from a nursery. They had a lot of very healthy specimens for sale, all in full flower, in February of this year. Although a sick plant was not to be sighted, this nursery is very careful with disease & any plant not at its best is rapidly removed. Therefore the impression of reliability the rows of healthy plants gave may not be true.

This is an inland species & so must be carefully placed if it is to be grown on the coast. My plant is still very healthy (I don't look at it too often though). The plant forms a tidy bush a metre or so high. The flowers are about 15 mm across, purple & very Thomasia like. The plants flower profusely in February followed by some flowers for another month.

The value of both these plants is that they produce attractive flowers during our hot summer when flowers are sparse. I grow many daisies, & similar, with yellow flowers & the blue-purple is a welcome contrast. Also both plants appear to be hardy. K. integrifolia may be just biding its time waiting for me to post this before it dies, however K. corollata is a very, tough & resilient plant & I look forward to having a large bush of it.

I will have cuttings of K. integrifolia available this year but K. corollata will not be large enough.

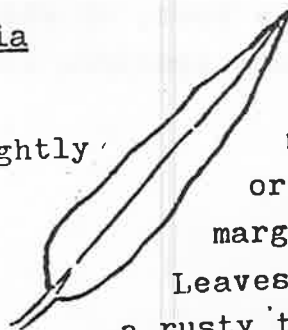
I would be very interested in receiving information &/or material on any of the other Keraudrenias.



K. integrifolia

Leaves leathery, margins entire, slightly curled under.

Leaves covered with a tomentum of rusty hairs on both sides, moreso on lower.



K. corollata

Leaves softer, margins may be denticulate or entire, my form has wavy margins.

Leaves glabrous or covered with a rusty tomentum. My form is glabrous on top, hairy below.

SPECIES IN CULTIVATION

I want to build up a list of all the species in cultivation.

This is a list of the species I have in cultivation. If you have others could you please let me know. I have a few unidentified species growing, some are common species I am just unsure of the name of, a few are new to the botanists & are presently awaiting names. If you have a species not listed here, could you press a stem with 3 or 4 leaves & send it to me & I will see if I already have it. If I don't, we will arrange something.

Brachychiton acerifolius, *B. bidwillii*, *B. discolor*,
B. diversifolius, *populnues*, *rupestris*, various hybrids.

Commersonia fraseri, *C. bartramia*.

Guichenotia ledifolia.

Heritiera actinophylla.

Keraudrenia corollata, *K. integrifolia*.

Lasiopetalum behrii, *L. floribundum*, *L. dasyphyllum*
(prostrate & upright forms), *L. ferrugineum* (prostrate & upright forms), *Lasiopetalum* sp undescribed.

Rulingia hermannifolia, *R. pannosa*.

Sterculia quadrifida.

Thomasia foliosa, *T. grandiflora*, *T. petalocalyx*,
T. pygmaea, *T. rhyncocarpa*, plus other *Thomasia* species that I am not certain of the correct name.

I will be visiting Burrendong Arboretum this month. Their collections are excellent, in fact I have seen a wider range of species from the Sterculiaceae there than I have seen at the National Botanic Gardens. I know for a fact that the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney have nowhere near the collection. Peter Althofer will probably allow me to take propagating material of plants that are large enough so the list above should be extended. I will also be taking some things out to him to enlarge his collection.

The only other way we will enlarge our stock is by our cutting exchange. If you see a new species in a nursery, consider it your annual subscription, buy it & send me a cutting or two. If you go into the bush, or even drive along a country road, keep an eye out for more species. This is how we will get plants of real interest.

STUDY GROUP DISPLAY

This study group has been asked to put on a display for the 1988 flower shows organised by the NSW SGAP. Dennis Margan already has a wide range of *Thomasias* growing & I am growing the species previously listed. If anyone else can assist their help will be appreciated. Alternatively, if anyone from another state is interested in doing the same, the study group will assist where possible.

If you visit the 1988 displays come & see the plants. We may even have displays in the flower shows leading up to then.

CORRESPONDENCE

This section will include feedback I get from members, mainly from those too shy to write a complete article.

A number of members have reported difficulty growing various *Brachychitons*, mainly *B. discolor* & *B. populneus*. I have also found these (the lacebark & the kurrajong) to give problems at times. My kurrajongs are extremely slow growing yet some plants given to me grow quite fast next to them. From that I conclude it is the potting mix I put mine in. I have tried fertilising my plants & watering well but they refuse to grow. They are still 6" high, yet the kurrajongs given to me are now about three feet high. At the start their heights were similar. A member from Boree Creek (NSW) places a large stone under his kurrajongs to control tap root growth. This idea came from his observation that kurrajongs grew best on stoney rises. This member has seen enough evidence to be convinced of its success. By controlling tap root growth, the energy & growth goes upward. With my plants, it is the ones in the large pots (12" across) that are the slow growers. The plants in 6" pots continued to grow all the time, even when embarrassingly potbound. This appears to be confirmation of the theory.

The lacebark (*B. discolor*) is an easy plant to grow. It must be remembered though, this is a tree of the drier scrubs. Even the flame tree, which originates from the rainforest, does not like constantly wet roots. The lacebark may rot below ground if overwatered. I use the lacebark as my grafting stock as it is such a hardy plant & is well adapted to the average garden conditions.

Jan Sked (Lawnton, Qld) has a range of the *Sterculiaceae* from her area growing. Her *Commersonia fraseri* suckers freely, up to 20 feet from the parent plant. She has allowed some suckers to form a hedge. Jan also sent me a slide of a form of *Lasiopetalum*

dasyphyllum that has bright pink flowers with black centres. It is quite an attractive form. I arranged the smuggling of cuttings out of Qld during the national SGAP conference (just as well the way they sell off their national parks). Hopefully we will have plants soon.

Well thats about all to start with. I am withholding some information in case I don't receive many contributions for the next newsletter (about July), but please don't let that put you off.

MISCELLANEOUS

Most of our members are from Victoria. We have about 15 at present. There were two from Eaglehawk in Vic. Do you know each other?

My current address is 66 Ridgeway Rd;
New Lambton Heights,
NSW, 2305.

This is rented accommodation & so may change again. I use my parents address, ie

Lot 5 Anderson Rd
Berkeley Vale 2259

as it is permanent. However if you are up this way, call in & visit. Make sure it is the right address first. My phone number is 049.524523 at home or 049 24536 at work. I will be staying in Newcastle for quite a while so my work number will not change.