

ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Membership matters : Subs are due as at 1-7-'98; still \$5 within Australia , \$10 overseas. It is best if overseas members send notes (US\$ or A\$), or cheques if need be. Don't send money orders, as bank charges eat up 80% of the value on \$10. If there is an x between the asterisks on the next line, my records have you as in arrears:

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New trees: Not as many to report as last time. In fact only one type. From Yuruga Nursery on the Atherton Tableland, via Fairhill Nursery (as Yuruga had already run out) , 2 seedling *Brachychiton garrawayae*. This species is endemic to Cape York Peninsula between latitudes 13 & 15 & a half degrees south, being common NW of Laura & near Coen. The trees are 5 to 12 m tall, are deciduous from August to October (up there), & Guymer describes the flowers as dull red, with 3 to 5 mm of pale green at the base. Yuruga just call them pink. It will be interesting to see if the deciduous period alters much in this climate.

Weather & plant behaviour: The last year has been most peculiar, weatherwise, here in Brisbane. A long El Nino drought period started to break up in autumn. A mild winter was followed by a cool spring , with good rains in September (usually very dry) & then a dry spell until mid-November, & moist since. Through spring & early summer there was an occasional really cool day. The mild winter caused (I presume) the poorest flowering of *Dendrobium* orchids (*kingianum* & *speciosum*, & their hybrids) I can remember. Gingers & aroids were slow to re-emerge, & some N.T. cycads are still (as at Jan. 30th.) totally dormant, almost 2 months later than usual.

All N. Qld forms of *Brachychiton bidwillii* defoliated & started to flower in mid-June, & are still in flower (& essentially leafless) now, although the first leaves are just starting on some. Usually they don't start to flower (or defoliate; the two go together) until spring. As a result, I haven't grafted a single *B. bidwillii* in the last six months, due to lack of scion material. Local forms of *B. bidwillii* flowered only in spring, as usual.

The mild winter resulted in seedling 2-year-old *B. diversifolius* mostly keeping their leaves. Seedling *B. spectabilis* & *B. viscidulus* plants defoliated in May '98, & did not start to make new leaves until early Jan.'99 & 18 -1-99 respectively, as against mid-December for both in the previous year. Grafts done in both species in Mar.'98 took & grew, but died over winter, even in pots kept on an electrically- warmed pad. A 3-year-old graft of *B. spectabilis* at Merv Hodge's place, warmer than here, flowered in early Nov.'98, & Merv pollinated the (initially all female) flowers to *B. bidwillii* 'Large Red', getting 4 pods to set before hail & wind destroyed the later flowers. The plant did not keep flowering, & was in full leaf at all times, & about 1m tall, derived from cuttings I took off a mature plant at Jasper Gorge in the N.T. in Oct.'95.

All clones mentioned as new grafts in the last newsletter survived the winter, & most are now planted out . Ten small shoots from the weeping form of *B. populneus*

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were grafted on to *B. acerifolius* in early Dec.'98, & 4 took, a poorer rate than usual. May try using seedling *B. populneus* as rootstock next time. About 90% of *B. Griffith Pink*, *Butt's Red*, *Bella Donna* & *sp. Ormeau*, also done in Dec.'98, took successfully, but the *sp. Ormeau* were noticeably slower (by an average of 3 weeks or so) to make shoots than the other clones.

Other happenings: For about 2-3 weeks in Nov.'98 one of the prettiest sights in the garden was the new leaf flush on the adult grafted *B. sp. Ormeau*. Leaves were various shades of bronze & bronzy-green, quite unlike their mature dark green. The plant seems to grow like many citrus, in rapid bursts with big pauses between the action.

Merv's *B.-x excellens* (*bidwillii* x *discolor*) '*Rosalind*' flowered for the first time in Nov.'98, with purply-pink flowers similar to *B. Griffith Pink*. The purply shade of fading *B. discolor* flowers seems to come through in fresh flowers of many *discolor* hybrids, but not in the very similar *Butt's Red* & *Gympie Red*. My *B. Rosalind* is yet to flower, as are 2 other clones with the same 2 species as parents.

The overwhelming (>95%) majority of flowers on the northern *B. bidwillii* in their long display season have been male, as I have been checking them daily looking for females to use in cross-pollination (mostly to *discolor*). The early flowers were entirely male.

Member's letters: Welcome to new members Gahan Gilfedder of Gondwana Nursery, Barker's Vale, NSW, & Dr. John Warneford, Wahroonga, NSW, & David Carey, Ingleburn, NSW. I appreciated a cheery letter from Alfred H. Guhl of Tucson, Arizona, where the *Brachys* come in 2 types, *populneus* & *rupestris*. Sounds like his Qld bottletree might be the biggest around Arizona. David Long from Rockhampton advised that the grafted *B. spectabilis* I gave him made a bud or two, but some voracious bug then got them. Any luck since, David?