THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS - FERN STUDY GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO: 3. (July, 1976)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OF LEADER. Since the last Newsletter Steve Clemesha has moved to the Coffs Harbour District. His new address is c/- Post Office, Moonee Beach, N.S.W. 2450. Please send all mail to this address.

SPORE BANK: Ray Best of 15 Orana Avenue, Kenthurst. N.S.W. 2154, runs this. It is a time consuming job. Please help Ray by sending in fresh spore and being reasonable in your requests. Spore does not hold its viability long. Always send a self-stamped envelope for any requests.

IDENTIFICATION: Send specimens to Steve Clemesha for identification. Keep a number code as specimens do not need to be returned. Try to send reasonable specimens. Pressed ones are satisfactory. Give approximate area of origin and description of the habit of the plant.

MEMBERSHIP: We now have 88 members. Membership renewals will not be sent out till more funds are needed. Do not send in renewals until they are asked for. (A revised membership list is attached).

NOTES FOR NEWSLETTER: As no contributions at all came in for this Newsletter I have had to compile it myself with the help of Gerry. Notes on any aspect of ferns are welcome anytime. If any member has successfully raised spores of Platycerium superbum (known until recently as P. grande) could they send details. This fern is easy to get through the early stage of spore raising but difficult when about the size of a five cent coin upwards.

A NEW FERN BOOK: Books on ferns are in short supply but one will appear about September this year. It is "A Selection of Australian Ferns" by David L. Jones and Stephen C. Clemesha. It is the largest book on Australian ferns yet published. It contains chapters on fern structure and identification and life cycle, cultivation, propagation, hybridization, cultivors and the ferns themselves are divided into different chapters - fern allies, tree ferns, filmy ferns, fern oddities and those which do not fall into these categories are treated alphabetically. In all 307 species are covered and there is a line drawing of each one; also some excellent photographs taken by E. Rotherham. Treatment of each species is as follows: A description of the plant ~~including its habitat details~~ using only well known botanical terms and emphasising distinguishing features. This is followed by notes of interest on the plant including its habitat details, uses by native people if applicable, etc. Confusing species are then named and features which distinguish the plant from these follow. The distribution is then given and lastly details on cultivation based on the considerable experience of both authors. Details of price and availability will be given in the next newsletter.

ANGIOPTERIS EVECTA. The King Fern (of North Queensland). This is the largest of our ferns. It does not form a trunk like a tree fern, but its crown of fronds is in a good specimen larger than that of a large tree fern. Impressive specimens grow beside some highways linking the North Queensland coast with the highlands. This fern once extended to the Tweed River in N.S.W. but now appears to be extinct in N.S.W. (There is one growing in the Sydney Botanic Gardens). I have not seen any plants in Southern Queensland, so if still present it is rare there. A small population of them grow in a sheltered side gorge in the Carnarvon Gorge of Central Queensland. This interesting area contains another interesting

fern - Platycerium vietchii - a fern which for many years was thought to be confined to this area. The main habitat of Angiopteris is in the rain forests of North Queensland. Here feral pigs have destroyed some plants so that the species has suffered by man destroying the rainforests where it grows and by introducing destructive animals. The plant has thick, fleshy roots not unlike those of Monstera deliciosa. The crown of the plant is large and starchy inside. The base of the frond is partly enclosed by a fleshy structure called an auricle. The stipes aresmooth and the fronds dark shiny green. The individual leaflets are more or less lance shaped, though some have edges which appear lacerated. The spores are carried in minute clusters of small boat like structures. This distinguishes it from its near relative, Marattia salicina, which has longer spore cases which are single and not in groups. Angiopteris and Marattia are primitive ferns. Their prothali live in a delicate association with soil fungi and are impossible, as far as is known, to raise in cultivation. Therefore we have to rely on vegetative propagation. If the structure which encloses the frond base is cut off with the stipe base still enclosed it will eventually produce a small plant. The frond base will rot out in a few weeks but the structure that encloses it will not unless kept too wet. This is particularly important in the early stages. Under Sydney conditions it takes about a year, but should be faster in more tropical places. Angiopteris can be cultivated outdoors as far south as Melbourne in sheltered situations that are not subject to frost.

FERNS THAT CAN BECOME PESTS:

Whether or not a fern will become a nuisance in the garden depends greatly on the situation. The greatest fern pest of the farming world is bracken. This is unlikely to become a pest in the fern garden or be a persistent "ring-in" in the spore pot. It is difficult to eradicate from areas of the garden that can't be dug or mown. Ferns that can become a pest are mainly those with long-creeping rhizomes, i.e.: Histiopteris incisa, Denstatia davallioides and species of the genus Hypolepis.

Pteridium esculentum (Bracken). The deep tough rhizomes of this fern make it a very difficult plant to eradicate, but it is more a weed of farmlands and sunny places than the fern garden. Its prothali are not a serious problem for appearing as ring-ins in pots of more desirable species.

Histiopteris incisa (Bat's wing fern). This species also has a fast spreading habit and it is likely to become a nuisance in wet situations (sunny or lightly shaded). It is a real nuisance as a "ring-in" in spore pots and areas where it grows nearby.

Denstaedia davallioides has fine lacy fronds and fast spreading rhizomes. It will quickly spread through shady and damp situations.

Hypolepis punctata, H. muelleri and H. rugosula, and no doubt other Hypolepis sp. spread very quickly but the rhizomes are slender and fairly easy to pull up.

In certain damp, sunny situations Sticherus flabellatus, other Sticherus sp., Gleichenia sp. and Dicranopteris linearis may become a nuisance, and if the area is rocky they are difficult to eradicate. Under different situations other ferns may prove troublesome. Reports on these would be welcome for future newsletters.

OUTING TO SONTER'S NURSERY: Sydney members of the Fern Study Group wish particularly to thank Mr. George Sonter and his wife, Val, for their hospitality recently when they conducted us on a tour of their fascinating nursery. It is a very large wholesale nursery where ferns are produced under controlled and intensive conditions from spores to mature plants. The sheer quantity of ferns produced is overwhelming, but the quality of the ferns which are carefully selected is most impressive.

SYDNEY REGION MEMBERS: We are now meeting about every three months at various members homes - looking at their ferns and how they are grown - generally discussing problems, etc. In between this we plan to have excursions to various areas and study ferns growing in their natural habitat. For this we are fortunate to have Bob Covney from the Sydney Herbarium to lead us and give us help with identification. Our first outing is to Lawson in the Blue Mts., on Sunday 25th July, but this will probably be over by the time this Newsletter is distributed. The next meeting will be held at Ray Best's, 15 Orana Road, Kenthurst, on Sunday 26th September at 2 p.m. Anyone requiring further information can phone Gerry Parker, 451 6558.

We suggest that members in other areas where there are sufficient members close enough together to meet that they do a similar kind of thing. Activities will depend on circumstances and won't necessarily be the same; but, if we report back to Steve on these some interesting ideas and results may eventuate.

Our Group is organizing a display for the S.G.A.P. Exhibition at Kings School on 11th and 12th September and Geoff Edwards is the organizer for this. He will need plenty of help, so will you please contact him at 449 1414 and let him know what you can do.

SOME FERN NAME CHANGES:

Pneumatopteris pennigera (Forst.) Holtt. Vic., Tas.
syn. Cyclosorus pennigera Forst.

Lastreopsis acuminata (Houlston) Morton Q, NSW,Vic,Tas, SA.
syn. Lastreopsis shepherdii (Kze ex Mett.) Tindale

Asplenium australasicum (J.Sm.) Hook Q. NSW.
replaces Asplenium nidus L. (Bird's nest fern)

Lygodium microphylla (Cav.) R.Br. Q, NSW.
replaces Lygodium scandens (L) Sw.

Blechnum wattsii Tindale Q, NSW, Vic, Tas, SA.
replaces Blechnum procerum (Forst.f.)Sw.

Christella dentata (Forsk.) Bromsey et Jermy Q,NSW,Vic,SA,WA
replaces Cyclosorus nymphalis (Forst.F.) Ching

STEVE CLEMESHA - LEADER,
FERN STUDY GROUP.