

ASGAP

Banksia Study Group

Newsletter

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Bruce Gill 17 Mc Lennan Street Apollo Bay Vic. 3233 Phone 03 52 376716

Editorial

WELL!!! Here I am sitting in front of a computer trying to write a newsletter about BANKSIA'S.

Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that I would be doing this when I was a teenager, or even during my twenties, thirties, forties and fifties.

However at the age of sixty, it appears that the time has arrived to do so.???

For what reasons, I do not know, other than the fact that I am here, in front of the computer, so it is time

So let us begin — **PROFILE**

Bruce Charles Gill

At an early age I was showing a strong interest in gardening and plants in general. Being brought up on an extremely small dairy farm, and having two brothers [one either side], we had, by necessity, to grow all our own vegetables and fruit.

Having absolutely no interest in the cows it was my job to water the garden whilst the others milked.

I found this very interesting, learning what to grow where and what to plant when.

Also the pollination of plants, some such as pumpkins, being hand pollinated to ensure fertilization and fruit set.

All of this was fascinating to me, besides it kept me away from those infernal cows which all looked the same to me, even if one was black and one was white.

At least that was what I made out to my parents if asked which cow is that. In those days all of the cows were named [there

only being about 35 of them] and "sheila"

was a silver-black cow and "linda" was an orange coloured cow.

When asked which one is that, and pointing to the silver-black cow, I would answer "linda", and so on, trying not to get it right, although on occasion I did get one right, only because I had absolutely no interest, and really did not know one cow from another.

When I accidentally got one correct my father would beam with excitement and say that there might be some hope for me after all?, but when I was wrong, which was most of the time [intentionally or not] he would say get out of here and over into that bloody garden and make yourself useful!!! Adding, [as I was rushing off to avoid that size 11 boot that was always on offer if you were a bit slow] *I doubt if you could be useful anywhere*!!!!

There was plenty of natural vegetation in the vicinity to hide oneself in, when one was wanted, especially Sundays, when Sunday school was on the agenda.

I guess these "bush trips" must have taught me something, as I can still remember the plants vividly, one of which was a pimelea the like of which I have not seen since.

My eye for detail of plants was excellent, but for cows, useless.

Somehow I managed to avoid that size 11 boot enough to survive, and went to Melbourne to do an apprenticeship in carpentry. This was about as close as I could get to working with plants at that

time .A course in horticulture was almost unheard of, besides this cost money and the income from such a modest number of cows was not sufficient to fund such a course.

Employment just had to be a paying job and scholarships were not available. The time spent in Melbourne,I refer to as lost years, with no plant contact whatsoever. Sure, I did learn carpentry, which has been my source of income ever since.

After about seven years I returned to Apollo Bay and slowly started to find happiness again .

It was not very long and I had enough money to start to purchase a property of my own.

This property was planted with whatever I could grow, mostly what looked good in flower, and would grow in the extreme salt conditions, being right next to the ocean. The soil was pure beach sand and choice of plants very limited .

I spent thousands of dollars learning what will grow , and what will not grow in those conditions. A very costly , but very valuable lesson . When I eventually sold that property I had a truck load of empty pots to cart away, but did not leave a great legacy of plants behind .

During the period at this property I started to develop a greater interest in native Australian plants, banksia's being one of the major ones to attract my attention .

I did not have much success with banksias as at that stage I had not learned that neglect was the best fertilizer that you could give a banksia, in fact any native .

With beach sand as soil, I used to fertilize with superphosphate with additives of potash and nitrogen very heavily, to counter the leaching through the sand in our heavy rainfall area [45 inches] .

All of this being totally incorrect to grow any native, let alone proteacea species .

The best teacher is always hands on experience, or the hip pocket nerve , *as you see that the only thing that you can*

grow with any regularity is the number of empty pots in the garden shed .

The years of early life on a dairy farm where pasture production is the essence of life, had instilled in my mind, "use super.-- use super ---- use super", a hard sin to break away from .

Work and "going to the office every night" seemed to take up most of my time during this period .

Come 1988 I decided that I needed to get back to nature a bit more and bought a quarter acre block toward the back of town , forfeiting all of that lovely beachfront for a "*barren bit of land that would not grow anything*" according to my now retired farmer, father . "You will need to put a lot of super on that" he kept telling me, whenever I visited him .

Well????? With "*super in my mind and my father's harping , - - - super----- super - ----- super*" I succumbed ----- ONCE !!!!! This has prevented me from growing West Australian Banksias until just recently .

So what have I learned :-

Artificial fertilizer namely superphosphate kills the soil for about ten years and renders it useless for growing banksias, although the east coast species will tolerate a small amount, some even thrive with a light application . However we will address that at a later stage .

Realizing that I would never be able to pay the rates, let alone live, on the beachfront property, after retirement, I sold it and built on the other block, where hopefully I will remain, although I get itchy feet when I see a few acres under native plant cultivation .

Perhaps if the right sandy acres turn up at the right price ----- who knows ??????

Having not been able to grow camelia's rhodo's and azalea's in the highly alkaline soil at the beach property, I proceeded to plant these at random, with great success .

I found I could also grow east coast Banksias, and other natives,[other than callistemons] grew readily .

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH BANKSIA'S
WAS NOW GROWING IN MY GARDEN

It is not as though I can not grow callistemons here, it is just that they also grew quite well in the alkaline sand .
I proceeded to plant all the variations of east coast Banksias that I could find .
I would occasionally plant a west coast species only to find that they would die .
Some would die immediately and others would hang on for quite a while .
Now with no super [other than that one early effort] I am finding that I am able to grow more & more western species .
In fact if I plant something now and it dies I am wondering why, what have I done wrong .
Most casualties now, I find are caused by water problems, an item that I will take up in a future issue, as it is a whole story on it's own .

Banksia's That I Have In

Cultivation :-

Integrifolia	var. Integrifolia
Integrifolia	Dwarf form 2m x 2m
Integrifolia	Prostrate form
Integrifolia	Mauve bud form
Marginata	Western district plains form
Marginata	Woolly shrub form
Marginata	Tree form
Marginata	Schnapper point form [dwarf]
Marginata	Woolly tree form
Marginata	"Longcone" Melbourne form
Bauerii	
Praemorsa	Red
Praemorsa	Yellow
Paludosa	Upright form 1.5m x 1.5m
Paludosa	Green cape form
Spinulosa	Black stamens yellow flower
Spinulosa	Dwarf honey colour flowers
Spinulosa	Dwarf Maroon stamens honey
Spinulosa	Dwarf brown stamens yellow
Spinulosa	Small shrub red - yellow
Spinulosa	Dwarf black - yellow
Spinulosa	Lemon yellow
Spinulosa	Yellow
Spinulosa	Carnarvon gold
Spinulosa	Several other variants

Prionotes	
Solandrii	Grafted onto Integrifolia roots
Conferta	Var Conferta
Coccinea	
Speciosa	
Ericafolia	Red form
Ericafolia	Red & white form
Ericafolia	Dwarf red & white form
Media	Prostrate form
Attenuata	
Caneii	
Giant candles	
Marginata	x Spinulosa [I think]
Robur	
Menzesii	
Candolleana	
Brownii	
Lindleana	
Aemula	
Baxterii	
Dryandroides	
Oreophila	
Talmattiaii	
Quercifolia	
Serrata	Large flower form
Serrata	Large lemon bud & flower
Serrata	Large pink bud - yellow flower
Serrata	Small brown bud - yellow flower
Oblongifolia	
Blechnifolia	
Gardnerii	Var. Gardnerii
Gardnerii	Var Hiemalis
Pilostylus	
Seminuda	Red
Littoralis	
Tricuspis	
Grandis	
Verticillata	
Marginata	Mauve form
Occidentalis	
Elderiana	
Menzeisii	Dwarf
Petoilaris	

There are probably a few at the farm that I cannot remember off hand, the last eleven are growing at the farm and as yet not growing at my house property, which I hope to rectify soon at the expense of some more exotics .

The Study Group

The farm :-

Two or three years ago through a mutual friend I met a fellow Banksia Nut in Apollo Bay, one, Nigel Strauss . Nigel is a doctor in Melbourne and does not find enough time to spend at his property in Apollo Bay to plant enough Banksias . He had planted some which were doing very well when we met . Now here was a man whom had plenty of land on which he wanted to grow banksias but had little time to do so .

I was a man whom had plenty of time to do so but short of land .

A handshake deal soon settled that problem, we would not let up until we had every known species and cultivar established on that property, leaving room to trial new cultivars if we are successful in breeding some .

I do have quite a lot of new species under cultivation at the moment, which will be planted out next autumn, if they continue to grow well .

The reason that I have [In theory] got time on my hands is that I developed a heart condition about five years ago, subsequently ending up unable to work, and now receiving a disability pension . One of my ambitions is to attempt to hybridize Banksias, already having one that shows some promise, enough to be quietly optimistic . Perhaps it will warrant a story at a later date . Just to tease you it is a possible cross between an east & west species and only in the seedling stage, having been planted last spring .

Also experimentation with grafting is on the agenda at a later stage [time permitting] .

Seed That I Am Looking For :-

Chamaephyton Elegans Epica
Aquilonia Gardneri var Brevidentata
Oligantha Paludosa ssp Astrolux
Seminuda ssp Remanens Goodii
Sphaerocarpa var Dolichostyla & caesia
Plagiocarpa

Bruce C. Gill.

The study group currently consists of fourteen financial members, not bad for only three months since being formed on the new principles along the lines of a club as requested by A.S.G.A.P. Co-ordinator Jan Sked to keep it in line with other Study Groups . To date I have not had the time to advertise our existence nor to campaign for members .

These Members Are :-

Mr. Bruce Gill Victoria
Wildflower society of Western Australia
Mrs. E. E. Brett Corowa N.S.W.
Australian Plants Society Maroondah Vic.
D.V. Lightfoot & S.J. Corcoran Vic.
"Banksia Hill" [P & J Grenfell] Vic.
"Dealtry Native Plant Wholesale" S.A.
Warrnambool S.G.A.P. Vic.
Mr Rhys Walkley Vic.
Australian Plants Society S.A.Region S.A.
Dr Nigel Strauss Vic
Blue Mountains Group S.G.A.P. N.S.W.
Society for Growing Australian Plants
N.S.W. Ltd. N. S. W.
Dr Cas Liber N. S. W.

Please Note :-

You will note that I have not included addresses in this issue, as some people may not like their addresses made public, if this small circulation could be thought of as public. In future issues I believe that addresses should be made known to fellow members, along with other information, such as phone- fax numbers & websites, e-mail etc.

Can you please advise me of these details & whether they can be used in this newsletter or not . Already at least one member has notified me of these details, and I believe that for those that are on the "Net", some wonderful discussions could take place .

I am hoping to be connected myself in the not too distant future, cost, and the fact that I am new to computers, being my reasons for delay .My brain does not allow me to learn everything all at once .

Seed and Plant Lists

It is my intention to establish a list of Banksia seed that is available from members, on an exchange basis, or sale basis, at what price.

This is not a seedbank as such, where I store the seed, but a central contact point where you can contact me to find out what is available at any given time, from whom and at what price.

I also wish to do the same thing with plants, so send along your lists of both, plants and seeds that you have available. Please state whether they are, give-aways, swaps, or for sale and at what cost. I already have some available myself, both plants and seed.

Profiles

Each edition it is intended to profile a different member, similar to the profile that I have done on myself in this issue.

I ask that you volunteer for this to be done, saving me the embarrassment of nominating some one.

Please can you do this profile yourself and send it to me along with a photo of yourself and any other photo's that you might like included, along with "your life history" and how you became involved with Banksias. Make it long or brief, but please do it! *Don't be Shy.*

Next Issue — Peter & Jan Grenfell
"Banksia Hill" Quantong Vic.

Apology

I promised some colour photo's in each edition didn't I?.. To date this is not possible as I have not learned how to do this as yet, despite having some lessons on how to operate this infernal machine. I am new to computers and am finding it a bit slow to sink into my brain. I have only just learned to master the ball point pen, when along comes this monstrosity.

I can not seem to get the photo's and text together on the one page as yet.

Maybe by the next issue I will have it all together.

Our Heritage

A while back I asked our previous leader Trevor Blake if he would like to put something together, in regard to our group, as the outgoing leader of the study group. This is what he has to say.

Banksia Study Group

An Historic Perspective

By Trevor Blake

It is great to see an enthusiastic banksia grower take over the Banksia Study Group and its encouraging to see a person with experience and capacity for generating great interest have a go at running the study group.

It may be worth my while reflecting on the group over the last twenty years or so. In this way we may be able to trace the changes and reasons for developing the group the way it became. Initially it was one of the earliest study groups to come into being, along with hakea, and pea. The seeds, as I remember them, were sown by Maroondah Group at a time when they were conducting native plant identification courses and seminars on groups of plants to improve understanding of the range of species available for selection. Over a period as wide a range as possible of species were propagated for distribution during the seminar weekend. Amazing species came to light, many only heard of or read about in books or herbarium journals. Some of those seminars included Goodeniaceae, Epacris, Darwinea, Fabaceae, Correa and Eremophila. Booklets of notes were published and enthusiasts and plant growers of the genera focused on were invited to talk to Maroondah Group at their Friday evening meeting which

launched the seminar. They were extremely successful and the enthusiasm generated matured into some of the well known and valued publications on Australian flora that continue on today.

Jim Carney began a group to study W.A. banksias as they were reliably unreliable in the eastern states and particularly in the shallow clay soils around Melbourne. Jim produced the first of these "Western Banksia Study" reports in June 1972 but tragically he was killed early the following year and as I had been fairly closely associated with the study I took over. Because of the interest shown in the genus I decided to expand the study to cover all of the species. A second report was published in June 1973 and was one that had been started by Jim. A third report, which was expanded to some 38 pages was produced in June 1974 and at this stage Alf Salkin, who was undertaking his Masters degree in Banksias, became heavily involved and remained a great source of knowledge and enthusiasm throughout.

Our efforts to sustain a seed supply became frustrating as the seed sent into the seed bank was generally fairly commonly available, and we were buying from the same suppliers as the public could access.

The demand, of course, was for all the scarce or rare species, so we decided to discontinue this practice and publish all the known suppliers. Our aim was to publish all worthwhile information and not conduct a chatterbox newsletter every few months. This practice I followed to the present and so did not fit in with the regular study group format. There were no fees and the only revenue raised was when a report was available and these were advertised in the state newsletters and "Australian Plants". A great deal of letter writing took place and I always encouraged people to contribute articles or tell of their experiences, both good and bad. Only when enough worthwhile data

amassed was another report produced, as a result we had no membership, but instead a loose group that I could write to for information etc. This suited my style, my interest in banksia and my available time. No doubt this will be improved on by Bruce as he is an extremely keen Banksia grower and his enthusiasm is boundless.

On a couple of occasions I set about closing the group down and suggested that it be combined with the Dryandra Study Group, but was talked back into keeping it going.

Alf Salkin was well under way with his degree and was finding lots of fascinating data through his research. One of the projects that he needed to carry out was the planting of the enormous collection of seedlings that he had collected seed of on his travels up the east coast. The R. B. G. at Cranbourne provided a site where he could do just this, and with all the redevelopment that is being carried out, most of this has been retained. His enthusiasm expanded and he eventually took over a sandhill, where most Banksia, Dryandra and a wide range of other Proteaceae species were grown. Report 4 was produced in 1977, 5 in 1979, 6 in 1982, 7 in 1986, 8 in 1988, 9 in 1992, 10 in 1995.

In the meantime of course, the genus was revised in the journal from the W. A. Herbarium by Alex George "Nuytsia" Vol. 3 No.3 1981 and then "The Banksia Book" by A. George was produced. At the same time Celia Rosser had started on the first of her 3 tomes which were finally completed in 1999. A major study of the genus began and resulted in the "Banksia Atlas" 1998 which added to our knowledge of the whereabouts of all the species, and in so doing unearthed many more interesting variations. Back in 1982 the "Elliot & Jones Encyclopaedia Vol. 2" was produced with the genus being covered from a horticultural point of view and updated in the first supplement in

1994 .Wrigley & Fagg also produced a text on Proteaceae covering all species of Banksia in 1989 which had emphasis placed on their horticulture . The long awaited "Flora of Australia" Vol. 17B was published in 1999 and both Vic. and N.S.W. covered Banksia in their respective flora's published over the last ten years .

It was interesting that of all the 'new' species named since that 1972 revision , and there were many , and despite repeated requests for information on their growing , germination etc. in all S.G.A.P. publications both state and national , only a handful of reports emerged which indicated that they were either not known and grown , or that people just hadn't got round to sending in data .

A healthy cut flower trade has developed during the last twenty years , some being genuinely interested in promoting the genus as a genuine "Aussie" flower and those that we are all too aware of in making sure that they muddy the waters and flog anything that grows in this country as Australian natives . These we know are represented by Proteas, Leucadendrons, and other such South African species , which is a pretty poor reflection on those companies .

It is good to see that the study has reached the hands of a new keeper , one with a great eye for the genus and passion for the horticulture of every species . Well done and good luck with your endeavour Bruce .

Editors Note .

Thank you for this article Trevor setting out the heritage of our study group . I know that I am enlightened on some of the facts , for instance I did not know the study was started by Jim Carney as I am sure others who are only recent members of S.G.A.P. like myself may not know . It is fairly common knowledge that a lot of "South African Weeds" are passed off as Australian natives. A lot of people , general

public , and even in the nursery trade , will argue that they are .

This is an area that this group can do some work in to ensure that this is corrected , even if is ever so slowly , as there are a lot of people who will not admit to being wrong, they think they know it all and no one else knows anything .

These usually turn out to be the ones who know the least .

Trevor, all that praise , how am I going to live up to that ? . You have set a hard enough act to follow already with all the good work that you have produced during the last twenty eight years .

Even if, somehow, I can match the quality that you have produced , what about the 28 years , that would make me 88, which casts a big doubt doesn't it ?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you have done to date , not only for your role with banksias , but also all the other wonderful work that you have done with Australian native flora. We owe you our gratitude and hope that you have many more years in doing what you want to do, and having fun doing it .

New Members

Since I printed our membership list we have had three additions , these are
Mr Jim Pelacchi Vic.
Mr Paul & Mrs Barbara Kennedy Vic.
Australian Plant Society Tasmania Inc.

This makes 17 members including myself and I welcome you all, and hope that we can increase more as we progress.

I have noted that not all states include lists of study groups and contacts in their newsletters, an issue that I will be taking up with our co-ordinator , as nobody can join study groups if they do not know where to contact them.

*I Would Like To Wish You
A Merry Christmas
And Happy New Year*

Letters

Each edition I Hope to publish letters that you have written to me about. Please keep it to do with Banksias, as I might not publish other letters, and refusal often offends. Some have enclosed letters with their applications for membership. If your letter is not published at the time of writing, don't dismay, I will get around to it. I do not want to fill the newsletter with "letters to the editor only", we have a lot more than that to cover, to make for an interesting read.

The first are letters passed on to me by Trevor that he has recently received.

From Mr J. H. Russell "Jillamatong"
4 Princess St. Goulbourn N.S.W. 2580
12 th July 2000

Dear Trevor,

A call for assistance if possible.

I have been growing Australian plants for over thirty years now and propagating also for that length of time. Just over 4 years ago, I sold my house & two plus acre garden and built a new home and garden next door on a smaller block. In a short time the garden has grown in leaps & bounds, but I still have the same problem that I did in the old one.

I have always had a preference for Banksias [east coast & W. A.] In the new garden the Banksias [ericifolia] have reached 5 to 6 feet tall, are healthy and flower to perfection but some plants insist on showing strong yellow foliage which is worse some months than others.

The soil is well drained and the P. H. is stable throughout the garden at 6.5.

They are never fertilized as they don't need it. I have dosed them with Magnesium sulphate, Iron chelates, and added Sulphate of iron around the drip line in small holes [covered]. I have added Sulphur to the soil as well as light irregular sprinkles of Sulphate of ammonia ----- all this to no avail.

One thing that amazes is that one or two other B. ericifolia ---- same height etc. close by never show the yellow colouring

which makes me enquire if this is an accepted thing in some plants and not others?

Banksia marginata, integrifolia, cunninghamiana, oblongifolia, paludosa, bauerii, and others close by are fine.

A Banksia Giant Candles near an entrance way remained so yellow after all treatments that I finally removed it.

Would appreciate if you and your group could give me your thoughts on all of the above.

Thanking you John Russell

Editors Note

Wow!!!! after a dose of chemicals like that I think I would be a bit yellow too John.

Seriously it somehow seems like a lime problem, although some of that species seem to yellow somewhat in summer and autumn, due it would seem to water shortage. The "Giant Candles" cultivar that you removed from near an "entrance" may hold the key. Was the "entrance" a driveway or concrete or brick?

You could be getting lime leaching from any of these materials, or perhaps builders rubble including plaster from when the house was built. Ideally the P. H. could be a little lower.

Does anybody else have any knowledge that may help John on his problem?

From Jonathan Lidbetter 29A George St.
Pennant Hills N.S.W. 2120 29/6/2000

Dear Trevor,

I would like to join the Banksia study group but am uncertain of the appropriate fee.

Further I am particularly interested in the area of grafting Banksias. I have read that numerous graft combinations had been tried in the late 70's and early 80's but have not been aware of any later information.

I also have an interest in accessing the Banksia Study Reports 5 [1981] and 6 [1982]. Are the reports printed by your study group? Is it possible to get copies of these documents?

Waiting for your reply with great interest.

Regards J.Lidbetter

Editors Note

I am also interested in grafting of Banksias But have not attempted it as yet ,how about yourself .Doug McKenzie at Ocean Grove Vic. has, in the past done a considerable amount of grafting of various species onto various root stocks, with mixed success .He no longer grafts Banksias as he believes it is not commercially viable. If this is the case then I believe that Amateur grafters such as may exist within our group should persevere until a successful & viable method is developed.

At this stage none of the reports done by Trevor are available any more , although I will be contacting him to see if it may be possible to reprint some copies if I can get copies of the original to start with, CAN ANYONE HELP IN THIS REGARD ?.

From Barry Kemp 11Bligh Drive
Boambee N.S.W. 22/8/2000

Dear Trevor,

I thought this may be of interest .

In report no. 10, Alf Salkin reported a number of interesting cases of Banksia hybridization. Banksia 'giant candles' is a well known hybrid , reputedly from a garden source. Recently I realized that I have a seed-grown plant identical to 'giant candles'. The seed batch was collected from a roadside plant north of Mittagong in about 1992. I labelled the seed "Banksia Spinulosa var. Spinulosa"without further details . I germinated some seed and planted one seedling in my garden . When we decided to move to a larger property , I grew a number of Banksia seedlings , including three from this same batch.

Of these three plants , one has the 'giant candles' form , the second is much shorter but has leaves almost the same , 30—50 mm long, with the two toothed tip of *B. ericifolia* and occasionally a small central tooth, but this one has [very rarely]one or two extra teeth at 2 to 3 mm spacing below the tip. It has not yet flowered . The only other var. spinulosa I have to compare it with is from Qld., and the extra teeth on this are always present.

The third plant has leaves again looking like those of *B. ericifolia* , but averaging about 30 mm. long. It has an unusual form, with a loop in the trunk just above ground and with the small branches curved up to 180 degrees, displaying the silvery underside . One flower spike has been produced and this appears to be close to *B. ericifolia* .

A pressed specimen [foliage only] of the plant at my previous property was placed in the herbarium of the North Coast Region Botanic Garden. This plant had leaves more or less like 'giant candles' but with extra teeth on some leaves . However, this plant was only two years old at the time , so may have been in transition from juvenile foliage .

Since this was not a planned exercise, my record keeping was fairly casual and I was slow to recognize that something interesting was going on , but I thought it would be worthwhile reporting the experience and I will watch the plants more dilligently from now on .

The plant Resembling 'giant candles' is developing follicles , so I hope to collect and sow seed to see what is produced..

Editors Note

What can I say without seeing the plants concerned , excepting that I believe that there will be many such variants & hybrids around , especially in gardens where various species are planted in close proximity . As members of this group it is our duty to seek out these plants , trial them and if they are worthy of it , introduce them into cultivation, and of course naming them .

Summary

Please keep those letters coming in , even if it is only to fill up these pages if I can not find anything else to write about . This is not at all how I had imagined this newsletter to be , mainly due to the fact that I am not the master , as yet , of this computer monster , however all that I had planned to include is still in the file for later .Happy Banksia Growing Bruce