

NEWSLETTER OF THE "AUSTRALIAN PLANTS FOR CONTAINERS" STUDY GROUP.

Winter has come to Wagga Wagga on the appointed day, so different from our summer which did not arrive until autumn had commenced and lasted well into April.

It was so hot and dry (no rain at all from January until April) that we had a small brown snake come down off the hill behind us and explore our patio in search of water. I hope it was as frightened as I was!

The Indian Summer proved disastrous for my *Boronia mollaye* (elatio) - it bloomed from Late spring, all through our unseasonably cool but very dry summer and then died overnight. I have had quite a few dissapointments now with *Boronias* in pots and I am beginning to feel that they should only be recommended for short term cultivation with replacement always in view. We enjoy cut flowers for a short time so why not a beautiful *boronia* for one or two seasons.

This area has been an entomologist's paradise this year - both garden and container plants have suffered and my pride and joy, a *Crocea exalta* was decimated by a Looper caterpillar. This beautiful plant did particularly well last year, blooming over a long period but this year there will be no flowers. However, it is recovering slowly and has started to shoot so all is not doom and gloom on the container front.

Recently, I managed to find two specimens of *Callitris rhomboides*, the Port Jackson Pine (very hard to find in the nurseries in this area) which are thriving, and a *Darwinia leiostyla* purchased for the garden but planted in a container after consulting Wrigley's "Australian Plants".

Thomas Ross writes from Germany of weather problems - mild in December and January with February mostly below freezing for almost the whole month. The lowest temperature in the most favourable part of his garden was -12.5. He reports that his container plants are mostly well but still dormant and that the granulated lava he is using to provide sufficient drainage contains about 12% CaO which is unsuitable for plants that do not tolerate alkaline soils. Acacias do not like it but most of his other plants grow very well, particularly *Banksia spinulosa* and *Banksia occidentalis*.

At the time of writing (March) Mr. Ross reports that *Acacia uncinata* flowered beautifully in the middle of winter, *Dendrobium speciosum* flowered in February and *Acacia boormanii* and *Hibbertia dentata* are presently blooming with *Hymenosporum flavum* soon to scent the whole greenhouse. Congratulations are certainly in order although the pleasure of seeing all these beautiful plants in bloom in the middle of a dreary winter would be reward enough.

From Germany to Lawnton in Queensland (south west of Mackay) where Jan Sked's interest is rainforest plants. Jan is growing these to plant in a rainforest which she is creating as the beginning of the Pine Rivers Botanical Gardens. From Jan's experience rainforest plants make ideal container plants, the following being magnificent foliage plants:-  
*Argyrodendron actinophyllum*, *Athertonia diversifolia*, *Darlingia darlingiana*, *Davidsonia pruriens*, *Geissois benthamii*, *Grevillea hillii*, *Hedycarya angustifolia*, *Hicksbeachia pinnatifolia*, *Leea indica*, *Macaranga tanarius*, *Musgravea heterophylla*, *Polyscias elegans*, *Schefflera actinophylla*, *Wilkiea macrophylla*.

Jan's letter continues:- "My favourite foliage plants are the ones with gold under the leaves - *Amorphaospermum antilogum* (Brown Pear Wood), *Argyrodendron trifoliolatum* (Brown Tulip Oak), *Grevillea pinnatifida* (White Oak), *Opisthiolepis heterophylla* (Blush Silky Oak) *Planchonella obovoidea*. Also *Croton insularis* (Silver Croton) with silver under the leaves. I also like the ones with interesting textures and prickles.

*Ficus coronata* and *F. fraseri* (the Sandpaper Figs) have very rough textured leaves. *Brachychiton bidwillii* (Little Kurrajong) and *Commersonia fraseri* (Bush Kurrajong) have delightfully soft, furry leaves. *Alyxia ruscifolia* (Chain Fruit), *Alchornea ilicifolia* (Native Holly), *Akania lucens* (Turnipwood) and *Aphananthe philippensis* (Native Elm) have sharply toothed margins to their leaves. All these plants make quite good container plants. The best indoor plants are definitely the Umbrella Tree (*Schefflera actinophylla*) and the Kauri Pine (*Agathis robusta*). Both of these can stay indoors for years without suffering greatly and are very tolerant of air conditioning. Naturally, they are even better if they can be spelled outdoors from time to time."

I would certainly agree with these comments about *Schefflera actinophylla*. I have two which have thrived inside in our dry inland atmosphere - so much so that they have been relegated to our patio.

Annette Hallpike reports that she has planted out most of the Banksias she had in pots. She finds some species are very hard to keep alive in containers for any length of time. For seedlings she recommends that, when they are ready, they should be potted on but still kept under cover. When firmly established pot into bigger pots and take outside. Annette is still busy grafting Banksias and has recently started with Dryandras.

My belated thanks to Marion Simmons for copies of the Acacia Study Group Newsletter, which is very much appreciated. I quote from Newsletter No. 46 - March 1986 "Growing Acacias in Pots for Display" "Plants in pots are often needed for display or show purposes or as part of educational programmes. There are a number of Acacias which lend themselves very well for this purpose.

There are several points which need to be considered first of all. The time of year when the plants will be displayed. It will be necessary to plan to grow from seed two or three years ahead and maybe longer with the longer lived species.

Choose carefully the species that will flower when you need them at their best.

The potting mix may be your own, using a well drained gravel/soil mix (80%-20%) or a good quality native plant mix without added fertiliser.

The container which will ultimately be used for showing. Plastic is best as it is lighter in weight and does not dry out as quickly as do terra cotta pots. Start with a small pot and as the plant grows repot into a slightly larger one. Do not put a small plant into a large pot. Fertiliser will be needed in spring - slow release pellets suitable for native plants or straight blood and bone (no additives) may be used. Watering is most important and great care needs to be taken not to over water. At the same time the pots should never be allowed to dry out. When the plant has advanced to a larger container it may be advisable to insert a narrow piece of plastic pipe into the soil near the centre before placing the plant in the larger pot. This will enable water to be dripped in and so ensure that the soil in the centre is thoroughly watered. Pruning. To produce a really good pot plant it is necessary to prune carefully and regularly. Tip pruning as the plant grows will keep it bushy and sturdy. Pruning after flowering will encourage a flush of new growth. Labelling is important too. Provide a label than can be read easily without the viewer having to bend or twist.

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Some acacias suitable for container growing:

A. aculeatissima  
alata  
brownei  
brunioides  
chinchillensis  
cometes  
drummondii  
echinula

A. ericifolia  
flexifolia  
glaucoptera  
guinetii  
handonis  
languinosa  
luteola  
mitchellii

A. mooreana  
pulchella  
restiacea  
rhetinocarpa  
spinescens  
truncata  
toretifolia  
trigonophylla

S.G.A.P. BIENNIAL CONFERENCE/SEMINAR.

A decision of the conference held in Brisbane last September is that all members of Study Groups must be financial members of the Society for Growing Australian Plants. PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IF YOU HAVE LET IT LAPSE OR IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER PLEASE JOIN.

Another decision made at the conference is that all study groups are to co-ordinate their subscription dates to 30th June. Therefore all subscriptions are now due for 1986-87 on 1.7.86. The subscription is still \$3 per year.

Best wishes for successful container gardening,

  
MARGARET BARBOUR.

PLEASE INDICATE WHEN PAYING YOUR SUBSCRIPTION, THE NAME OF THE S.G.A.P. GROUP TO WHICH YOU BELONG.