

Dear Members,

Autumn is with us again and although we have had only one good day's rain in months, it is definitely cooler already, especially at night, in Tasmania.

To my delight Acacia merinthophora of W.A. is flowering for the first time in our garden. It is growing against a north facing wall and was planted out in spring 1978. It is now about 1 m tall and slender in habit.

Welcome to members who have joined or rejoined our group since November 1980.

Geoff Briggs, 7 Cleverton Close, Warner's Bay, N.S.W. 2282
Judge J.P. Shanahan, 69 Spender St., Rockhampton, Qld. 4700
Arthur Chapman, 8 Horne Place, Latham, A.C.T. 2615
Dr. Mick Statham, 2 Brewer Place, Launceston 7250.

Please note a new address for Anthony Scalzo,
26 Lambeth St., St. Albans, Vic. 3021.

Thank you for members who have forwarded their subscriptions and a reminder to the others that this will be their last newsletter. I have indicated again with a red cross on the first page if your sub. has not been paid.

Many members have forwarded their annual Acacia growth reports, some going to a great deal of trouble to prepare them. This is much appreciated and I thank you. I look forward to receiving others so that we have a wide range of material from which to draw some conclusions. In the next newsletter I hope to give some results from these reports.

My thanks also go to the Beaufortia and Melaleuca Study Groups and Victorian Region for their very interesting newsletters.

SEED LIST : Thanks are due to members who forwarded seed for the seed bank.

ADDITIONS

A. adsurgens
binata
browniana var. intermedia
chrysocephala
filifolia

DELETIONS

A. echinula

Please add A. echinula for the seed required list which was included in our last newsletter.

ADDITION TO OUR BOOK LIST:

"Flowers and Plants of Victoria and Tasmania", (revised to include a Tasmanian section), Cochrane, Fuhrer, Rotherham, Simmons, Willis, published by Reeds 1980. Twenty-two Acacias are included.

MEMBERS' NOTES:

Russell Cook has written that he has been growing A. cardiophylla in a large tub since 1975. It flowers regularly and like most tub plants must receive adequate water to succeed. Also he is growing A. alata var biglandulosa and A. myrtifolia in 15 cm pots. Both flowered in 1980, about 2½ years from seed.

Bill Owen writes of his seed propagation methods;

"Most of my plants have been grown by soaking the seeds in boiled water for 24 hours - then putting each variety between sheets of kitchen paper towelling and stacking 5 varieties in a saucer with another saucer on top - about 20 to a stack - with boiled water poured on each group each day. The stacks were put on top of an oil heater which was operating 24 hours and the temperature on top was about 70°F. This heater was replaced late last year with a press button start Vulcan, so the seeds have not had the continuous heat and the 1980 germination has been very poor."

Mr. and Mrs. N. Graham have been concentrating on container grown plants and have 150-200 native plants growing in different potting mixes. These plants are mostly over 2 years old. He goes on to say:

"The interesting point of this is the response of different plants to varying conditions (of watering). Most of the plants, including Melaleucas, Grevilleas, Prostantheras and Westringea flowered reasonably yet the Acacias struggled to flower at all. A. oxycedrus and A. linifolia did not flower at all, A. baileyana showed a few flowers with A. suaveolens a bit better. Both the latter failed to produce seed.

Insect attack is much more pronounced on the container stock, with the acacias being among the most susceptible. Case moths, stick insects, caterpillars, grubs and at one stage bright orange-red small galls on the leaves of the Cootamundra wattles. As the damage is by insects and not disease we attribute this to the fact that the predators do not have their natural balance of enemies as they do in the open garden.

The A. baileyanas kept in containers have been constantly tip pruned back and most are just over 1 m tall at two years old. Growth

is sparse lower down and rather dull looking. Top growth is quite compact between the leaves."

Bob Cooper from Wynyard, Tas. would welcome a visit from any Acacia grower should they be in his area.

A comment from David Shiell's letter regarding the beauty of the "Point's Lookout" at Coleraine, which I have mentioned before. He feels that "it could be compared to Burrendong Arboretum (near Wellington, N.S.W.) except it is more garden-like with plants closer together. "It consists of 100 acres overlooking Coleraine with a variety of soils including seepages (Banksia coccineas were flowering magnificently). They have most of the Banksia species growing well with a large number of Acacia, Grevillea and Hakea and reportedly the largest number of Eucalypt species in one location in Australia."

An interesting comment regarding autumn sowing from Betty Chandler: "We both (Thistle Stead and I) feel that in temperate climates autumn sowing is perhaps better than our uncertain spring. Actually one can sow in February and there is time for seedlings to be potted and established by June, May is generally reasonably warm, I prefer to plant out in the garden in autumn (early), plants have time to become established before winter cold set in." (One must remember that Betty lives in Sydney and that these comments may not apply to all areas).

EXTRACTS FROM THE HERBARIUM JOURNALS:

Many Acacias are still to be described in Australia, seven of these have been published in the Journal of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens Vol. 2(4) 1980 by B.R. Maslin of the W.A. Herbarium.

1. A. abbreviata - a bushy shrub to 60 cm tall; clusters of fine phyllodes; short flower spikes May-July. So far known only from an area in N.T. in the vicinity of Tanami, near the W.A. border.
2. A. auricoma - most closely related to A. retivenia; rather straggly shrub to 2.5 m tall with elliptical grey-green phyllodes; brownish golden globular flowers in April-August. N.T. Border in region of Rocker River.
3. A. basedowii from N.T. - This reference merely includes the var. viridis Blakely within the scope of the species itself.
4. A. brachystachya group - Different opinions apparently exist regarding the species included in this group. In earlier publications Mr. L. Pedley (1978) Queensland Herbarium and Mr. D. Whibley (1980) S.A. Herbarium, have recognised A. brachystachya and A. ramulosa as distinct species.

Mr. Maslin has explained the approach he has taken in his forthcoming "Flora of Central Australia". His group comprises A. brachystachya Benth. (syn. A. cibaria, F. Muell.), A. linophylla W.V. Fitz. and A. ramulosa W.V. Fitz.

He considers that the distinction between A. brachystachya and A. ramulosa is rather indefinite when a large range of material is considered. To quote directly -

"Apparently A. linophylla is a terete phyllode member of the A. brachystachya group but there appears to be continuous gradation to distinctly flat phyllode forms (these flat forms are generally called A. brachystachya or A. ramulosa depending on their legume morphology). All terete phyllode individuals that I have seen possess either cylindrical or somewhat compressed legumes which are often broader (to 15 mm) than those found in other members of the group." He considers it possible that further investigation will reveal that A. linophylla should not be maintained as a distinct species.

5. A. dictyophleba - In 1978 Mr. L. Pedley described A. melleodora as a new species extending from Qld - W.A. and differing from A. dictyophleba in its smaller, less coarsely veined phyllodes and smaller flowers and flowerheads. The name A. dictyophleba was applied to Simpson Desert material.

From the study of a wide range of W.A. collected material Mr. Maslin feels that these distinctions do not hold in W.A. and probably also in western N.T. Therefore in the "Flora of Central Australia" he has used the well known name A. dictyophleba to cover a single variable species, acknowledging that further study may well come to a different conclusion.

6. A. dolichophylla - Dense, bushy, rounded shrub to 3.5 m tall; phyllodes 12-19 cm x 1-2 mm with three longitudinal nerves; very condensed racemes of pale yellow globular flowerheads in July and probably other times (not well collected) Found only from Chewings Range, N.T. near Mt. Giles.

7. A. hemiteles -
new synonyms : A. graffiana F. Muell.
A. dentifera Benth. var intermedia S. Moore

8. A. jamesiana - close to A. resinomarginea - spreading bushy trees or shrubs 3-5 m tall; phyllodes (rhombic in cross section) (8)10-22 cm long, 1-2(3)mm wide; flowerheads, single, dense, obloid 6-8 x 4-5 mm before opening. Flowering probably throughout the year; most specimens were collected July-November. From around Mt. Magnet, thence east and north east.

9. A. latzii - Most closely allied to A. calcicola. Bushy trees to 5 m tall; phyllodes 5-10 cm long, 2-4 mm wide; small globular flowerheads on short racemes probably April-May. Known only from Beddome Range on New Crown Station and Tempe Downs Station in southern N.T.

10. A. nelsonii - Shrubby trees 3-4 m tall with peeling curly bark (Minni-Ritchi); phyllodes linear flat 12-18 cm long, 1.5-2 mm wide; light golden flower spikes on short racemes collected in August-September when it had just finished flowering. Known only from Atherrita Bore, Rodinga Range and several dry water courses on Todd River Station, southern N.T.

11. A. papyrocarpa - This note places the well known A. sowdenii Maiden in synonymy and explains Mr. Maslin's reasons for this move. This change has already been noted in Mr. David Whibley's "Acacias of S.A.", 1980.
12. A. prainii - This note places A. prolifera J.M.Black and A. dentifera var parvifolia S. Moore as synonyms of A. prainii.
13. A. rhodophloia - Shrubs or small trees to 4 m tall with "Winni-Ritchi" bark, variable dull green phyllodes (1.5)2.5-10 cm long 2-8(13)mm wide; flowerheads varying from - globular to cylindrical on short racemes; flowering seems to be June to October. Widespread from Pilbara-Murchison regions, W.A. east to southern parts of Little Sandy and Gibson Deserts, into N.T.
14. A. tetragonophylla - this note reduces A. genistoides A. Cunn. ex Benth. to a synonym of A. tetragonophylla.
15. A. victoriae - this note records that A. coronalis J.M. Black should be reduced to synonymy under A. victoriae.

Dr. M.D. Tindale of the National Herbarium N.S.W. has published details of two new species from N.T., one from N.S.W. and a new record for N.S.W. in "Telopea" 2(1) 1980.

1. A. praetermissa - Shrub to 1.2 m tall; phyllodes falcate spreading, 7.5-17 cm long, 0.4-1.6 mm wide; inconspicuous flowers loosely arranged in spikes; woody erect pods; flowers probably March-July. Found Emerald Springs-Pine Creek district in Northern N.T.
2. A. prodcuta - Variable resinous shrub up to 1.5m x 2m wide; often resinous phyllodes 3-7.5 cm long, 0.5-1.5 cm wide; bright yellow globular flowerheads, occurring all year; woody, flat, erect pods. Found in N.T. around Katherine area.
3. A. jennerae - recording the collection of this W.A.-N.T. species on the Far Western Plains of N.S.W.
4. A. olsenii - Closely allied to A. storyi. Tree 4-15 m tall with bipinnate leaves; deep yellow globular flowerheads in racemes in May; pods bluish-grey, beadlike. Southern Tablelands N.S.W. to Tuross River.

Extracted from November issue of Queensland Region Newsletter.

"A Pick-me-up ----- A very weak solution of Formula 20 - about 3 drops in a bucket of water works wonders in keeping cut flowers fresh. The solution has been used at New South Wales Annual Exhibitions and keeps Acacias fresh for three days. It should also help with Callistemons, which do not usually keep well in water."

MULCHING

It is widely accepted that mulching of the garden is beneficial. We have mulched a large area of our garden and find that the improvement in plant health and growth is quite impressive. We have used pine bark and chips placed on top of layers of newspaper and cardboard.

Mulch enables moisture to be retained, soil temperature extremes to be minimised and weed growth controlled. Ideally mulch should be 8-10 cm deep and up to 12 cm if possible. Organic mulch, especially fresh grass clippings, should never be placed near or against a stem or trunk as bark damage can occur due to the heat generated by the mulch.

There are some disadvantages with some types of mulch and these should be considered. A mulch, such as sawdust, may compact too much thus preventing moisture from penetrating to the roots; others such as gravel, metal, straw or hay may well prove to be too efficient as seed beds for weeds. It is reported that organic mulches may encourage frost damage in colder climates, as moisture present in the mulch may freeze and thus damage the plants. With Pine or Tan Bark which is often derived from Pinus radiata, it is found to be slow to breakdown and may build up soil acidity. Layers of newspaper or cardboard used under the mulch may help. Some doubt has been expressed regarding the possible detrimental effect of toxins which are present in the bark. More work needs to be done with natives to ascertain their reaction to these toxins.

Some possible mulching materials:-

Wood chips, Sawdust, Pine or Tan Bark, Old Hay or Straw, Gravel or Blue Metal, Compost, Grass Cuttings (better used as part of compost)
Leaf or Bush Litter - beware of bringing disease such as cinnamon fungus in with the litter.

Seaweed - needs to be hosed to remove salt

Black polythene - generally not considered suitable because moisture cannot penetrate to the roots and it prevents aeration of the soil.

I would be interested to hear of members' experiences with different mulches and any recommendations they might like to make regarding ways of offsetting any disadvantages.

SEED GERMINATION - In "Australian Plants" Journal Vol.10(82) March 1980 an article appeared on the microwave treatment of Acacia seed, relating particularly to Acacia longifolia. It was suggested that members try seed of other Acacia species in domestic microwave ovens. Has anyone tried this method yet ?

M.H. Simmons.