

S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER NO. 5
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I think most of you know that Robert Coveny found himself unable to devote the necessary time to the affairs of the Acacia Study Group, and the SGAP has had difficulty in finding someone to take on the job of Leader, otherwise I am sure they would not have entrusted it to me! For unfortunately I have neither the experience of Dr Keane nor the erudition of Robert Coveny. In fact my acquaintance with acacias dates back only four years.

To put you in the picture, my picture that is, we bought this 5 acre property in 1966 when I hardly knew an acacia from a daisy having lived overseas for most of my adult life. However, despite a very severe bushfire in November 1968, and a disastrously wet summer this year (our drainage is appalling), I now have about 150 acacias, comprising some 45 species, including 30 or so *A. drummondii*. Seven of these are 4½ years old and the remainder about 18 months, including at least half a dozen self sown, all carrying buds and will flower this spring. With the exception of about half a dozen plants, all have been raised by me from seed. Forgive all this talk of me and mine, but I always think it is a help to have some sort of introduction to the person with whom one is corresponding. And I have the advantage of you, as I have many, perhaps all of your letters to Dr Keane and Robert Coveny.

Most of my acacias are the more common NSW species, although I do have a few interstaters, and that brings me to an aspect of acacia growing on which I think we should all try to do some more homework. As Dr Keane said many times we should all be trying to grow species which are not indigenous to our own area, in particular the smaller ones which the average garden can accommodate. So here is what I suggest:-

LIST OF ACACIAS: I hate to ask you to do this, as it has been done several times already, but your previous lists could well be outdated now and it would be a lot easier to make a fresh start. So will you please send me a complete list of all acacias, say at least 9 months old, which you are growing. It would be helpful if you could (a) put them in alphabetical order, and (b) mark with a capital 'S' those from which you could supply seed (weather and God permitting). No need at this stage to set out how they are doing. I will then collate all this information and send to members. We will then know who is growing the unusual and the smaller ones and we can go on from there to ask those members to tell us how they are doing. I make a very URGENT APPEAL to you to comply with this request. Only if all members co-operate in answering questions and supplying information can we hope to achieve anything. Incomplete statistics of any kind are, perhaps, not altogether useless, but a long way from being satisfactory.

GERMINATION: I would also like to have reports of recent germination results. These could be helpful in cases where someone gets very poor results from a particular species, and say, after a couple of attempts, thinks "Oh this is a difficult one, I'll give it a miss," and we may find that someone else has been quite successful. Personally I'm sure a great deal of the seed we handle is infertile. Nature being what she is, it would be very strange if this were not so.

For instance, I notice in a list of germination results in Newsletter No. 4 from Mr Meredith he reports "poor results – in fact virtually nil" for a number of species with which I have had quite good results, ie *A. acuminata*, *A. drummondii*, *A. pubescens* and *A. iteaphylla* (all some time ago) and recently 100% - 7 out of 7 with *A. pugioniformis*.

In the past I was in the habit of sowing vast numbers of seeds and finding myself with dozens of one species eg 18 *A. baileyana*, 12 *A. floribunda*. I didn't know anyone who wanted them – in fact I didn't know anyone in NSW, so I had to plant them myself. Most of them are still with me, occupying the prime positions and I would dearly like to have some of the space they occupy. Since taking on the leadership, however, I want to establish as many different species as I can, and in order to do this must cut down on numbers. I have, therefore, planted only about half a dozen seeds of each species.

Again, in the past, planting large numbers of seeds it has not worried me if I lost a few after transferring from seed box to tins or tubes. This time, not wanting to lose too many, I adopted a different method. I planted at least three

of each species in 2" propagating pots, one to each pot, and the remaining 3 or 4 in seed boxes. As soon as the seedlings popped up, sometimes with their "hats" still on, I transferred them immediately to tube or tin. In many cases the root had already reached the bottom of the 2" pot. Obviously no root disturbance whatsoever occurs and I have not lost a single seedling at this stage of the proceedings. In removing the others from the seed boxes, however, I have sometimes damaged the root or they didn't care for the disturbance and I have lost a few. I think Mrs Chandler has the answer – she plants 3 or 4 seeds in a 4" pot and presumably if one pops up you can turn the pot upside down, loosen the earth, extract the one seedling and replace the others. This is my usual procedure with cuttings.

I find it is important to have a very loose planting medium so that seedlings can be readily extracted with minimum disturbance. I use a lot of Yates' seed raising mixture with my loam and/or bush sand.

Here are my results since March 20th:-

<i>amblygona</i>	7/7	= 7 out of 7 in	16 to 26 days
<i>continua</i>	4/4		6 to 9 days
<i>brachystachya</i>	6/6		5 to 7 days
<i>vestita</i>	4/4		8 to 13 days
<i>undulifolia</i>	6/6		12 to 18 days
<i>subporosa</i>	4/6		11 to 18 days
<i>sclerophylla</i>	4/6		11 to 18 days
<i>farnesiana</i>	4/6		10 to 15 days
<i>pugioniformis</i>	7/7		12 to 20 days
<i>elongata</i>	5/5		7 to 10 days
<i>melanoxylon</i>	5/6		8 to 12 days
<i>notabilis</i>	7/8		9 to 23 days
<i>hakeoides</i>	4/6		12 to 18 days

Now we come to the not so goods:

<i>acinacea</i>	1/6	= 7 out of 7 in	19 days
<i>craspedocarpa</i>	1/5		10 days
<i>glaucoptera</i>	1/4		21 days
<i>merrallii</i>	1/7		21 days
<i>anceps</i>	2/2		10 days
<i>cyclops</i>	2/7		10 to 13 days
<i>alata</i>	2/7		10 to 14 days
<i>glandulicarpa</i>	2/4		18 to 21 days
<i>macradenia</i>	2/6		17 days
<i>pruinosa</i>	3/6		14 days
<i>gilbertii</i>	Nil		
<i>cuneata</i>	Nil		

SEEDS & SEEDBANK

It seems to me appropriate that the Leader should handle the seed bank, as this is such a vital part of our operations, so I asked Miss Pearce to let me have the seeds. Unfortunately she has been in very poor health for a considerable time and has recently been in hospital for some weeks. She does not feel well enough at present to pack and dispatch the seeds to me. I did offer to go to Katoomba to collect them.

Meantime, however, thanks to the co-operation of SGAP seed bank curators and other sources I have seeds of about 90 species, as per list enclosed. Some are in very short supply. We want many many more, so if you have any to spare or any opportunity to acquire some, please forward. I will be making a much more urgent appeal when collecting time comes around.

If there are any seeds not listed which you would particularly want (and I am sure there will be many) let me know and I will see whether I can get them. I have a list of about 50 I want myself! For a start, I don't suppose anyone has access to *A. cuneata* or *A. decipiens*? I wondered, also, whether there would be a possibility of sharing packets of seed. Normally you would pay 25, 30 or 50 cents a packet depending on where they were bought. This would

average out at about 3 packets for \$1.00. One usually gets far more seeds than one needs and by sharing we could probably make it 6 or 8 species for \$1. If anyone is interested in this please send in a list of ALL SEEDS you would be prepared to pay for at the rate of a minimum 6 packets per \$1.00, and if we get enough people wanting the same species, I will then “ask for your money” and go ahead with the purchase and distribution.

FINANCE

There is \$9.10 in the kitty at the moment which was handed over to me by Mrs Chandler and which will just about pay for this Newsletter, seed list etc, and I understand that we are to get a small grant from the SGAP. I will let you know when funds are running out!

AIMS & OBJECTS

Although I joined the Study Group in 1968 I never really discovered its aims and objectives until I was able to read Dr Keane’s Newsletters. I was a bit bewildered on hearing from Robert Coveny that he did not grow acacias. So for the benefit of others who might also be in ignorance I enclose a copy now.

SUGGESTIONS

Have you any suggestions as to what you think should be done as regards experimenting? How would it be if everyone nominated one species which he/she has had difficulty in growing and would like others to experiment with? This list would be circulated to members. Everyone would then write in (I hope) and say which they would be prepared to try, say 3 or 4, or more by all means! And with any luck we might find that every species had a few starters. Then, provided I could lay my hands on the seed, we’d be in business – not altogether a brilliant idea but could be a possibility. Can you think of something better? Personally, I’ve had endless difficulty with *A. decora*.

GENERAL NEWS

No one wants to hear in every letter what I have to say. We all want to hear about one another, and seeing there has been a deathly hush all round since March 1969 you must be bursting with news! Or queries! Or even complaints! Let’s have them all. Despite my inexperience I am building up a reference library and have had the luck to acquire a wonderful start to a herbarium collection from Mr and Mrs Jack Joshua who may be known to some of you. So if you have any queries please write and I will endeavour to get the answers. Letters requesting information, identification or advice which require prompt attention will be answered direct; others will be acknowledged in the Newsletter. Please remember that identifications will be checked with the Herbarium and this takes time.

Some of the older members will remember hearing of Mr R D Croll, who, in 1965, advised that he had spent eight years compiling a list of all the acacias found in Australia and hoped that it would shortly be published through the CSIRO in Melbourne. Nothing more was heard about this and I tried to contact Mr Croll. I finally tracked him down in London where he is Deputy Chief Scientific Liaison Officer in the Office of the High Commissioner for Australia. He writes as follows:

“My acacia list has not as yet been published because I am under contract with a commercial publisher to build the thing into a book on Australian acacias generally.

Under these circumstances I think it would be improper for me to release the list through other channels; moreover I am still completing it. I cannot at the moment predict when the manuscript will be finally ready for the publisher, but will certainly let you know as soon as it is available.”

AND THAT’S THE END OF THIS NEWS BULLETIN FROM YOUR HOPEFUL LEADER.

SGAP ACACIA STUDY GROUP – AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1. To draw attention to the attractiveness of many specimens of the genus, the majority of which are completely unknown to growers.
2. To select the types most suitable for planting in garden plots both small and large.
3. To ascertain the conditions necessary for the better growing of Acacias under cultivation.
4. And most importantly, to attempt to overcome the prejudice against wattles by the majority of people, gardeners and otherwise. This genus is widely believed to be:-
 - a) Short-lived: Some are of course as happens with any family, but many live 20, 30, 40 and even 50 years. (G W Althofer)
 - b) Attractive only when in flower: A knowledge of the subject will convince anyone that a vast number have outstandingly attractive foliage, with tremendous variation.
 - c) Prone to disease: Of course they are like every other body of plants, but who would condemn say rhododendrons for this reason. Rather, rhododendron lovers would seek a cure for or prevention of the disease and this is exactly what we are attempting to do.
 - d) Unlucky: Believe it or not! (Never heard that one!)
 - e) The Cause of Hay Fever: This is the most devastating superstition of all. If you suggest growing an Acacia in the garden almost everyone will hasten to tell you that they or theirs get hay fever from such a plant. This is complete nonsense for as it happens this type of pollen is a very rare cause of the disease. Thistle Harris wrote in the March 1965 issue of "Your Garden" known Australia wide as an authority on Natives, writes in the March 1965 issue of "Your Garden", - "There is no truth in the old legend that wattle pollen is the cause of hay fever. Wattle pollen is very heavy and so not air-borne for long distances, nor does it stay suspended for long after a high wind has dispersed some of it."

Mr F J C Rogers, author of "A Field Guide to Victorian Wattles" wrote in the June 1965 issue of "Australian Plants", on information obtained from the National Herbarium: "Certainly some wattle pollens are known to irritate the eyes and noses of a few highly sensitive people. Wattles in general have been listed among the first 30 species of plants investigated for Hay Fever and found to be 20th on the list. They rank lower than a number of popular garden plants – poppy, sunflower, dahlia, cosmos etc."

ACACIA STUDY GROUP SEED BANK – APRIL 1971

alata	conferta	farnesiana	notabilis	siculiformis
acinacea	crassiuscula	gilbertii	penninervis	sophorae
acuminata	cultriformis	gladiiformis	pilligaensis	sowdenii
adunca	cuthbertsonii	glandulicarpa	podalyriifolia	spectabilis
amblygona	cyanophylla	glaucescens	polybotrya	spinescens
anceps	cyclops	hakeoides	pravissima	stricta
argyrophylla	dawsonii	imbricata	pubescens	suaveolens
armata	deanei	iteaphylla	pugioniformis	subporosa
auriculiformis	decora	leptoclada	pruinosa	subulata
baileyana	decurrens	leucoclada	pycnantha	terminalis
binervata	diffusa	linophylla	retinodes	trineura
botrycephala	dodonaefolia	longifolia	rotundifolia	ulicifolia
brachyptera	doratoxylon	macradenia	rubida	undulifolia
brachystachya	drummondii	mearnsii	saligna	verniciflua
burrowii	elongata	melanoxylon	sclerophylla	vestita
buxifolia	euthycarpa	myrtifolia	sclerosperma	verticillata
cardiophylla	extensa	neriifolia	semilunata	victoriae
colletioides	falcata			