

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO 57
AUGUST 1989

Dear Members,

Acacias are flowering in our garden, surely Spring will soon be here. The first two to bloom this year were A. celastrifolia and adunca, now others are brightening the whole garden with their brilliant colour. I hope that you are thinking about the Acacias you intend to grow this season and are making lists of those you would like to try.

I was shown an outstanding Acacia in a local garden, it was a beautiful large flowered form of A. beckleri. It certainly was eye-catching.

 Welcome to our new members:

David Florance, P O Box 371, Cobram 3644
 SGAP Tamworth Group, c/- 99 Rawson Ave, Tamworth 2340
 Bronwyn Seal, 5 Cassells Rd. Research 3095
 Dale J. Dixon, P O Box 62, Weipa 4874
 Gilliam McDonald, 'Nullegai', Mulyan Rd. Clergate via Orange 2800
 Barry Nilsson, 43 Pebbly Rd Maraylya 2765

MEMBERSHIP: Members of Study Groups are required to be financial members of SGAP. The annual study group subscription is \$3.00 which was due for payment on 30 June. A large red 'x' indicates that your sub. has not been received and that this will be last newsletter I am able to send.

 Newsletters have been received from the Queensland, South Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian Regions and from the Dodonaea, Hakea, Eucalyptus and Daisy Study Groups. Thank you all.

SEED BANK: Thank you to members who have forwarded seed. It is always appreciated, especially if it is of plants not on our seed list.

 PLEASE NOTE THAT POSTAGE WILL INCREASE TO 41c ON 1 SEPTEMBER 1989

 There have been a few deletions from the seed bank: A. aphylla, continua and o'shanesii

I have ordered a few more Acacia seeds and have written a note on each:

A. ampliceps is a large bushy shrub or small tree 2-7 m tall from north-west WA and NT. It has showy very large cream ball flowers in May-August and grows along watercourses. It would probably grow best in tropical or sub-tropical areas.

A. dempsteri from south-west WA is a shrub to 3 m tall with grey-green phyllodes and twin spiny stipules at base of phyllodes; the flowers are deep yellow balls in September.

A latisepala from granitic areas near Stanthorpe Qld and New England Tableland NSW is an open shrub to 3 m tall with usually bipinnate foliage (phyllodes occur occasionally); brownish yellow ball flowers in racemes in September-October. Found in rocky areas, would require similar conditions in temperate to sub-tropical climates.

A maidenii from Qld, NSW and Vic is a small tree to 7-8(15) m tall with somewhat furrowed bark and green multi-nerved phyllodes and long pale spike flowers in Jan-May. Common in coastal and nearby regions often on edge of rainforests.

A menzeli from SA is a sticky shrub 1-2 m tall with fine phyllodes to 3.5 cm long; flowers are bright yellow balls in July-Oct; best in sunny position in well drained alkaline soils.

A uncinella from WA is a low bushy shrub with +- round phyllodes to 3 cm long and bright yellow ball flowers in spring. Found growing in rocky areas and would require a well drained sunny position.

MEMBERS' NOTES:

New member Trish Mactavish, leader of the newly formed Correa Study Group, sent us a leaflet describing the Dulegal Arboretum at Chaffev Dam near Tamworth where Tamworth Group has been allotted 50 acres in which to grow native plants. It will be interesting to hear from Trish about the Acacias they are already growing. I hope that we can help with this project through the supply of seed from the large range in our seed bank.

Arthur Baker from Qld wrote to tell us a very sad tale about two plants of the mauve flowered A. purpureapetala. He had two plants in pots and when they reached 30 cm tall they flowered and made their identity known to Arthur. Then sadly after heavy rain he found them dead, standing in water in their pots. They occur naturally in a very dry area west of Herberton Qld.

Norma Ali from Hobart who has a lovely garden overlooking the Derwent River has forwarded a list of Acacias she is growing successfully. There are about 58 species which include: A. ashbyae (WA), chrysocephala (WA) cometes (WA) dictyoneura (WA) farinosa (SA & Vic) gordonii (NSW) inophloia (WA) and ramosissima (WA).

A letter from Jeff Irons earlier in the year included a nursery list of Acacia plants available in England. These included A. bailevana, dealbata, filicifolia, frigesens, melanoxylon, myrtifolia, obliquinervia, pravissima, riceana and rubida.

Terry Tames from Belmont, south of Newcastle sent a report of his germination results. None of A. mitchellii seeds from the seed bank germinated. Has anyone else had this problem?

Terry's method of germination is to pour boiling water over the seeds and let it stand for 12-24 hours. Those seed which have swelled and softened are put between wet blotting paper and placed in a plastic icecube tray which is then put in a plastic bag and left in the sun (under shade cloth in the hottest part of the day in summer).

When the roots are 5-10 mm long the plants are planted into small pots and placed in a tray containing a small amount of water until the

cotyledons open out.

Some of the seeds germinated rather unevenly and Terry wondered about the fact that most of the species tried had a fairly limited distribution or were localised and he wondered if a possible reason for their restricted distribution was that the seed is not very viable or that germination requires more exacting conditions, chemical or physical, than he is providing. He tried fresh seed collected from about 30 species and had an estimated germination rate of 100% or very nearly. He wondered about the age of the seed in the seed bank and if it might have lost viability. (I must say that some of it is very old!). It was noted that species from the drier regions very quickly put down a long taproot whereas the coastal species developed more of a root ball.

Anyone care to comment? Your thoughts on the subject would be appreciated.

'WATTLE BECOME OF ACACIA?' - to borrow the heading of a paper published by Mr Bruce Maslin of WA Herbarium in the Australian Systematic Botany Society Newsletter March 1989.

In this paper Mr Maslin analysed Mr Les Pedley's proposition to split the Acacias into three groups and call most of ours 'Racosperma' and the others 'Acacia' and 'Senegalia'.

This move has not been universally accepted by the botanists concerned with Acacia. The division of Acacia as suggested by Mr Pedley would have far-reaching implications not only in Australia but internationally as Acacia is a world-wide genus. In Australia it would mean that 96% of our approximately 850 species (including those undescribed) would need to be changed to 'Racosperma' and the overseas species would also need to be re-classified.

In a lengthy paper Mr Maslin discussed the classification history of Acacia and analysed the evidence on which Mr Pedley based his proposition. He recognised the validity of part of it but suggested that the data acquired since 1986, when Mr Pedley's classification was published, would need to be taken into account before changes of this magnitude were made.

Mr Maslin agreed that changes were needed but until further specific studies had been undertaken of Australian and overseas Acacias, (especially those of American origin) and world knowledge is more advanced with a more thorough understanding of the relationships between the different groups that the change was premature, especially keeping in mind the huge disruptions and corresponding costs to herbaria world-wide.

Mr Pedley replied to this paper in the next issue of the journal June 1989 and not surprisingly did not agree with the contrary point of view. He went on to defend his position stating that his treatment of Acacia 'is a reasonable and responsible interpretation of available evidence'.

So until the results of the proposed studies are published, we shall await the outcome with great interest.

WATTLE DAY & AUST. NATIONAL FLORAL EMBLEM

An article published in June 1989 issue of the 'Garden Journal' attracted my attention. In it Maria Hitchcock has outlined the history of Australian Wattle Day and discussed the choice of A. pycnantha as our floral emblem.

Maria is writing a book on the 'Wattle Day' movement which is to be published this year. It 'will contain historical information, an anthology of wattle songs and poems and ideas for teachers and fund-raisers'. She would welcome material for inclusion in the book in the form of wattle poems, songs and anecdotes.

Finally, she says, 'if any reader would like to support the campaign for a National Wattle Day, they could write' to:

Maria Hitchcock
Old Inverell Rd. Armidale 2350

FINANCIAL REPORT TO 30 JUNE 1989

Balance June 1988	384.45	
Subscriptions & donations	232.59	
Interest	15.97	
		633.01
EXPENSES		
Seeds	32.00	
Post	103.10	
Stationery & petty cash	40.47	
Copying	43.75	
Bank Charges	85	
		220.17
BALANCE		\$412.84
