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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 71

JULY 1994

Dear Members,

To those of you making inquiries - no you haven't missed an issue of the newsletter. My apologies for the long time span but health problems and other interests have taken my time. My book came to grief when the publishers were closed and that seems to have given me an aversion to the keyboard. A further delay has been due to the fact I get the duplication done at a school which has been closed for holidays.

Wattle Day is 1st September, although personally I have Wattle Day each and every day I want to - definitely more than once a year.

The reduction in the number of newsletters this year has been due to the factors I mentioned above and also the lack of content coming from members. A few members have contributed. Who they are is apparent from past and present newsletters. The hardest part of getting a newsletter together is getting material to put in it. If every member was to contribute a half page a year, about some aspect of acacias, I am sure it would much more interesting and certainly make my task easier. IF there is no response from members then two letters a year will be about all I can manage. It is up to the members.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: Membership fees of $4 are now due. The current bank balance is about $760 plus about $80 in cheques and cash. (Most of the cash is to meet the costs of this newsletter.) I will have a financial statement for the past year in the next newsletter along with a membership list. As this list will be of financial members only please have your dues paid by 30th September. The address sheet of this newsletter has a "Membership Status" panel showing your situation as on my records. As I lost some data last year please let me know if you disagree with what is shown so that I can update the hard copy I now use.

I gave some consideration of reducing fees in view of the good balance but decided against it until the slide sets are complete. What do members think about getting the slide sets duplicated and the second set held by someone other than the group leader? There is a lot of work involved in preparing the sets and the slides would be difficult to replace if lost e.g. in a house fire. This would cost about $120 per set.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS IN EUROPE: Thomas Ross (Germany) and Jeff Irons (England) have written a book on the cultivation of Australian plants in Europe and seek illustration (slides or prints) of the following Acacia species.

alpina, argyrophylla, baileyana, boormanii, calamifolia, cardiophylla, cometes, dealbata, drummondii kybeanensis, meisneri obliquinervia, paradoxa, pataczekii, pravissima, retinodes.

Any one who can help can forward the photos to me by the end of August and I will forward them. You can claim the cost off your 1994-5 ASG membership or if there is more I will forward it to you.

SEEDBANK: Packing seed takes time, so would you list your requirements so I can cut your list up and insert each name in the appropriate packet. Also write your name on the piece of paper your list is on as letters and lists are separated, (if on different pieces of paper), when I get them.

Some new seeds have become available and I have listed these new stocks along with other replenished species. A brief description of each follows.

Acacia aulacophylla	A tree or shrub to 15 m. tall. Wide spread across northern Australia. Pale yellow spike flowers.
biflora	Shrub 0.5-1.5 m. high, spreading. Attractive ball type flowers. Reported life span of 4-6 years only. Requires good drainage, quick growing.
binervata	Spreading tree 4-10 m. tall, from NSW. Rare in Q'ld. Useful windbreak as it is bushy right to the ground and long lived. Good drainage required.
cooligardiensis	Shrub to 6 m. tall. An ornamental species from semi-arid WA. Rod type flowers to 7 mm. long.
covenyi	Shrub or small tree to 10 m. tall. From the southern tablelands of NSW. Ball flowers.
difficilis	Shrub or small tree to 4 m. Mostly found in Northern Territory. Flowers in dense scented yellow spikes.
exocarpoides	Shrub to 3 m. tall. From drier parts of sw WA.
flagelliformis	Erect shrub to 2 m. tall. From damp area. Can form dense grass like clumps.
frigescens	Tree to 6-15 m. tall. Naturally restricted to eastern highlands of Victoria. Pale yellow ball flowers.
grasbyi	Spreading shrub 3-4 m. Decorative bark and flowers. From a semi-arid clay areas. Adaptable?
heteroneura	Shrub 2-4 m. high. Decorative species from heavy soils in WA. Small globular flowers Sept.- Nov.
ligustrina	Dense WA shrub to 1.5 m. high. Ornamental. Requires drainage.
longispinea	Shrub to 5 m. tall. Best in dry hot climate.
macdonelliensis	Shrub or tree to 5 m. from mountain ranges of central Australia. Spike flowers.
neurophylla ssp. erugata	Shrub or tree to 6 m. high. From semi-arid area. Rod flowers.
olsenii	Shrub or tree 4-15 m. tall. Bipinnate leaves, globular flowers in autumn. A rare restricted species from NSW.
oxyclada	Bushy shrub to 2 m. high from north of Perth, WA. Requires good drainage as it is from rocky and sandy soils.
parvipinnula	(Silver Stemmed Wattle) NSW. Shrub or tree to 10 m. Leaves bipinnate, flowers. Attractive ferny leaves and silvery branches.
quadrisulcata	A showy shrub to 3 m. WA. Warm to hot climate.
retinodes (blue leaf)	Blue-leafed form of a well known species.
sutherlandii	(Corkwood Wattle) Wide spread in open forest of northern Australia. Shrub or tree to 8 m. tall. Bipinnate leaves, globular flowers.
validinervia	Central Australian shrub to 3 m. Previously known as a sub-species of A. notabalis.

Information on A. anthochaea, colei, donaldsonii, glaucissima, hadrophylla & paraneura cannot be found. They are new species available to members.

From the seed list DELETE A. havilandii and A. peuce.

MORE ON ACACIA PHLEBOPHYLLA: Charles Andrew of State College, Pennsylvania U.S.A. writes of his experience with this species. "I put the seeds in distilled water and tumble them in a small container with very fine sandpaper to capture any bacteria I might use as an inoculant for the one plant I have which is doing pretty well. A number of seeds spontaneously imbibed and I put them in a petri dish with a little fungicide and wet filter paper. A couple of days later three maggots were found having come out of some seeds. Each of these seeds had a very small hole.

I kind of like the tumbling action in very slowly reducing the thickness of the seed coat. I pricked each seed with a very small hole near the lens (sometimes it is hard to tell without a good microscope) and continued tumbling and soaking. After a couple of hours of tumbling I would take the seeds out and put them in distilled water and in the morning a few more would imbibe. I continued the process many times until all were done. It is still too early to tell what becomes of all this. I feel that I haven't hurt the seeds, so have options like drying and so on to avoid a trapped embryo.

Naturally imbibed Seeds

Acacia phlebophylla Seedling.

Photos by Charles Andrew

I have a letter from Harold Grant who took a vacation on Mt. Buffalo and month or so ago. He thought the trees looked terrible in that they were heavily infected with galls. He looked to see if ant seeds were on the ground, but apparently they are a favourite snack for insects and he didn't see a one. My plans are to send some treelets to Germany, New Mexico and California. People there are quite interested in seeing that it is saved and eventually distributing the seeds. One of them is Dr. Kapuler of Seed of Change. I have enclosed his catalog. Let me know if you would like to try some of the

unusual things he has been caring for.

Oh, one reason I lost so many seedlings from last year's batch was lack of sufficient light. I photographed my last plant in January before I put it under a 250 watt metal halide. It just grew overnight. I did have a small outbreak of fungus gnats that I think must have nibbled the leaves as you can see from the photos.

I have been adding a dilute solution of N, since my plant has no signs of nodules yet."

Charles included a print out of "Methods of Inoculation" outlining methods for VA Mycorrhiza fungi, Rhizobium and Frankia cultures.

Fred Bienvenu writes: "Acacia phlebophylla - I have, in the past, had no problems getting germination and growth of this species. I have had a plant growing in my garden for the past 13 years. It has grown about 3 metres, been blown down and grown up again in that time. It even survived a partial dosing of "BrushOff" to remove a recalcitrant blackberry.

Propagation of this species was no problem using the good old "nick with a sharp blade" system. (I rarely use hot water treatment for any acacias.) I usually lift off a small chip of the outer coating and plant them in straight sand and they come up like all the rest. I have not planted it for a few years now but should as as the existing specimen is a little sparse.

I live on the edge of the Mt. Buffalo National Park so the seed would have been fresh."

Fred will try and get some fresh seed and send to the Acacia Group.

(Has anyone any experience of growing acacias where inoculation is necessary for good growth? B.C.)

SLIDES: There will initially be three sets of slides, "An Introduction to Acacias", "Acacias of Southeast Australia" and " Acacias of North, Central and West Australia". It will be necessary to take some slides for the introduction. The "Acacias of Southeast Australia" will be the first set.

Inez Armitage has requested the slides she had made available be sent on to Bruce Maslin and it has been necessary to duplicate 80 of these. Inez has donated half the cost. Thank you Inez.

It may be possible in the long term to make up further sets of slides if members support the idea. Possibilities include separating the North, Central and West regions and "Acacias for Gardens, Parks and Farms" or "Small Acacias for Gardens and Containers". You comments would be welcome.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF ACACIA STUDY GROUP HISTORY: Jan Sked who retired as Study Group Coordinator recently compiled notes on the history of study groups. I have based these notes of the Acacia Study group on Jan's work.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants was founded by Mr. A.J. Swaby at a meeting held in the Horticultural Hall, Victoria Street, Melbourne, on 12th March 1957. Meetings in other states followed and a Federal Constitution was adopted in 1965.

"Study Sections" were first introduced by Bill Payne in the first volume of "Australian Plants" in December 1959. The first leader of the Acacia Group was Dr. A.C. Keane of North Fitzroy (prel961 - 1967) (deceased 1967).

The first Study Group Coordinator (Mr. Bob Ross of Bridgewater S.A.) was appointed in 1972 and Study Groups considered to be functioning at that date included the Acacia Group with Mrs. Inez Armitage, Terry Hills, N.S.W. as Leader. Mr. John Arnold of N.S.W. took over the Group in November 1976 and was replaced by Mrs. Marion Simmons of Tasmania on 15-8-78. Marion continued until the end of June 1991. I took over the Group in October 1991 when the only

alternative appeared that it go into recess for want of a leader.

BOOKS ON ACACIAS: Sometime ago Shona Sadlier sent me a list of references used to compile a list of Australian Acacias. Currently there is no complete work on these but a volume of the "Flora of Australia " is in preparation and should be available in a few years. Until then the best books I can find are those listed. Illustration varies from all to very few species being shown.

STATE FLORAS: Flora of South Australia Part II (1977) 107 species
Flora of New South Wales Part II (1991) 217 species
Flora of Victoria (Only Introduction yet published)

OTHER LARGE AREAS: How to Know Western Australian Wildflowers Part II (Currently under revision and not available. Deals with extratropical areas of the state only.
Flora of the Kimberley Region (1992) 81 named species + 12 unnamed species. (Covers most of the rest of WA.
Top End Native Plants (1988) 40 species from N.T.
Flora of Central Australia (1985) 116 species
Acacias of Southeast Australia (1992) (T. Tame) 230 species

BY STATES: Acacias in Queensland * (L. Pedley) (1987) 239 species
Acacias of New South Wales (I. Armitage) (1977) 195 species
A Field Guide to Victorian Wattles (F.Rogers) (1986) 83 species
Acacias of South Australia (D. J. E. Whibley) (1980) 97 species
This is almost the same as the information in "Flora of South Australia". (These last two books, I hear, have been revised and reissued.)

OTHERS: Acacias of Australia (M. Simmons) (1981) 150 species
Acacias of Australia Volume 2 (M. Simmons) (1988) 150 species
Growing Acacias (M. Simmons) (1987) Notes on over 360 species
A Biology of Acacias * (T.R. New) (1984)
Australian Dry-zone Acacias for Human Food *

* Books marked with * are rather technical or specialised.

Others books covering large or small areas are also available. "Plants of Western New South Wales" has coloured photographs of over 70 species which of course are also covered in "Flora of New South Wales".

ACACIAS AS FOOD: I have received a letter from Dr. Lex Thomson who has been asked by CSIRO to prepare a paper on the potential of Australian Acacia seeds as human food. He is researching literature on aboriginal usage which discloses use of a wide range of seeds to various degrees. "An important attribute will be production of regular heavy seed crops, such as is provided by A. victoriae and A. murrayana. Irregular seeders such as A. aneura have less economical potential.

I think that within the members of the SGAP study group there exists a valuable pool of the cultivation requirements and seeding/fruiting characteristics of many candidate species. I am interested in making contact with any members who may be willing to assist with provide of information for this paper."

The address is: Dr. Lex Thomson, 18 Etheridge Street, Page, ACT 2614.

FROM MEMBERS: Leon Steinhardt writes from Laidley Qld., where January 6th was the highest ever official temperature, after the driest year on record (337 mm), that it really tested the plants. He has lost some young and old plants, but had not raised any replacements, finding it easier to watch the TV news and envy those down south who were getting rain. However Leon has the good news that the council has put a trickle fed water system onto rural properties and the

litre per minute it delivers has him thinking of growing a few more acacias.

SOME WALLUM ACACIAS: Barbara Henderson, Samsonvale, Qld., the Wallum (Coastal Heathland) Study Group Leader has joined the Acacia Group and writes: "Our local Acacias have gone a bit un-noticed due mainly to a lack of available information. Our local wallum Acacias include: baueri - a very small plant to about 25 cm. in height and a spread of about 30 cm., with whorls of small linear phyllodes along the stems rising from the base, and tipped with a fairly sharp point, single yellow globular flowers and slightly brown pods to 2½ cm. in length. Flowers appear most of the year, as do the seeds and plants we have "rescued" (with the owner's permission) from "endangered" areas, have grown successfully in gardens. Considered rare and endangered, A. baueri is often plentiful when found, but can easily pass un-noticed, and grows in what could be considered "endangered" habitats. It seems to germinate after disturbance, often being found along edges of roads and tracks in wildflower areas.

A. ulicifolia is our "Prickly Moses", and is one of the more "unfriendly" heathland plants. While it usually favours the slopes of the heath dunes and sandy soils, it be found sometimes in moist peaty-sand areas. A shrub of about 1 metre, it flowers from May til September with cream balls which gradually darken to a ginger brown, covering the plant with flowers of all shades. Seed pods are brown and curved in a semi-circle, seeds being released in the warm days of October. Foliage is very prickly, phyllodes being about 1 cm., narrow and pointed, although sometimes instead of being very narrow they can be fairly thick although still sharp-ended.

A. hubbardiana is most attractive when in bloom, its cream balls having a delightful delicate perfume. Phyllodes are almost triangular, with a sharp tip, on plants which can be prostrate, low-growing to 1 m. or upright to 1½ m., depending on their situation. It seems to favour moist places or where there is a fair amount of soil moisture on hillsides. seed pods are very dark brown, flattened and up to 5 cm long, flowers in Winter and seeds in early Spring."

TOO MANY ACACIAS ?: From Greensborough Vic. Win Bennet writes: "Today's job is to pot on acacias that I planted in the autumn. So many have come up that it is an embarrassment unfortunately not many people wish to accommodate hundreds of acacias in their garden. I will not dispose of them yet - I might find a home for them."

Win had been to Central Australia on safari, " I was particularly interested in the acacias - many were in flower - the stands of A. murrayana were stunning to see. About 20 species were in flower and I could identify these, but I am still considering those not in flower."

A note from long time member **Inez Armitage:** "I have not been long home from 2 months in and out of hospitals in Sydney and am about to go into one of those dreadful hostels."

IN BRIEF: * Among cultivars registered by the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority in 1993 was one Acacia - Acacia acinacea "Ruby Tips".

*"The Examiner" on 19 July 1993 reported that a former resident of Campbell Town claimed Acacia axillaris could be threatened with extinction after the banks of the Elizabeth River had been bulldozed to clear gorse and blackberry. Of perhaps 20 trees, only one was spared. There were believed to be only two major populations of the species - both along the Elizabeth River.

Sorry about the line on the next page, but the processor seems to go it's way occasionally. Bruce.