

S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER NO. 9
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“Lightly the breath of Spring wind blows
 Though laden with faint perfume;
 ‘Tis the fragrance rare that the bushman knows,
 The scent of the wattle bloom.”

- Gordon

We owe that delightful verse to one of our two new members, Pastor C. E. Sommerfeld, Ironbark Road, Morisset, NSW, 2264. The other is Mr Gary Phillips, 97 Gregory Street, Geraldton, WA 6530.

Although new members will always get a warm welcome, I am very happy with the present membership, as anything in excess of this number would make it very difficult to correspond on a personal basis. Robert Coveny has decided to leave us – says he is willing to help in any way he can at any time but as he has never grown an acacia in his life does not find the newsletter interesting. A blow to my pride! Seven other members, including two from overseas, have not paid their subs but perhaps they will open up their piggybanks any minute from now.

Mr K King has had to leave all his early acacia plantings, as he has moved to the Murwillumbah district to work on the Parks and Gardens section of the Tweed Shire Council. There should be some fine acacias there in a few years' time! His new address is:- c/- C King, Tyalgum, NSW 2484.

FINANCE:

Balance at date of January N/L		\$24.54
Subs received		21.00
Donations		<u>2.00</u>
		47.54
Duplicating 115 Report Sheets and		
115 Record Sheets	7.82	
Postage on N/Ls	5.35	
Foolscap Envelopes	<u>.40</u>	<u>13.57</u>
Balance in hand		<u>\$33.97</u>

The Report Sheets are for use by members and will be sent to you with July N/L when we'll be tackling certain species in the second half of the alphabet.

The Record Sheets are for use by the Leader to collate the information supplied by you – a separate sheet to be used for each species. As mentioned previously, duplicating cost of January N/L and all future N/Ls will be met by SGAP Sydney Region.

SEED LIST:

Additions

cognata
collettioides (few)
coolgardiensis
decurrens (dwarf)
daviesioides (few)
floribunda
fragilis (few)
gilbertii (few)

loderi
pratervis
pubescens
sedifolia
signata
tayloriana
vestita

Transferred from paying list to free list

glandulicarpa
glaucoptera
multispicata

Deletions

filifolia
xylocarpa

Many members have sent seed, and if there are any I have not thanked personally, please accept my sincere thanks now. We now have large stocks of some of the more common varieties, so will you please check with me before sending seed for the seed bank EXCEPT IN CASES WHERE YOU HAVE AVAILABLE SEED WHICH IS NOT ALREADY LISTED. That is always welcome.

During March I sent out the one thousandth packet of seed since re-starting the seed bank in March last year. If even one seed from each batch grows to maturity, there will be a thousand more acacias growing in a few years time than there would otherwise have been! That's a happy thought for all of us.

RECORDED DATA: Well, as I feared, no "pattern" of any kind has emerged from your reports, and in many species only one or two members can report on plants, two years of age. But if we keep up our present efforts and enthusiasm, in a couple of years' time we should have a lot more information. Meantime, a few points of interest.

It seems that Dr Ross Macdonald, Mr Vic Jacobs and Mr and Mrs Simmons are our most successful growers of the recorded species. By far the greatest number of enthusiastic growers come from SA and Victoria. Reports were received on 56 species. Of these 28 were being grown by only one person and 12 by two.

A. acinacea. Being grown by 8 members and of all those reported on, seems the most generally successful in many types of soil and in rainfall from 16" to 40". Mrs Cook and Dr Macdonald both report prostrate forms. Average size about 1.5m at 5 years.

A. boormanii. 8 members growing this. Surprisingly (to me) Mrs Perkins reports great success in clay soil waterlogged in winter. 1.5m x 1m at 2½ years and flowered profusely at 2 years. Mr Jacobs rainfall 37" 4 years old in raised bed 2.4 x 2.7 metres.

A. calamifolia. Best reports Mrs Cook in very dry conditions fine beach sand pH 8 to 9, and Mr Jacobs raised bed rainfall 37".

A. continua. I have found this very difficult. Lost 3 planted into garden and one which put on fantastic growth in a big size bucket – pot looks pretty sick right now. Vic Jacobs has one in his raised bed which flowered at 3 years, size .45 x 1.2m.

A. diffusa. I believe this is very beautiful. The only 3 people who still have it alive describe it as "native to area". The interesting thing about this is that Dr. M says it flowers in mid-winter. VJ's died in heavy loam with 37" rainfall – he concludes too wet.

A. ericifolia. Both Dr M and VJ have this flowering at 3 years and 2 years respectively.

A. flexifolia. Dr M and VJ both have this; both flowered at 2 years. Mr Smith of Tasmania must be our most patient member judging by his reported flowering times. He has two *A. flexifolia* which flowered at 6 and 7 years respectively. He does say they are heavily shaded. Incidentally, Dr M's is also shaded.

A. glandulicarpa. Several people growing this successfully, including Mr Copley in a 15" rainfall belt.

A. gracilifolia. Grown by 6 members. Seems generally successful in Victoria and SA, and even Mr Smith in Tasmania described profuse flowering.

A. iteaphylla. Being grown by 11 members, mostly successfully in its home state, SA, much less successfully elsewhere. Information on this seems to indicate that it certainly doesn't like too much water yet Mrs Lyndon of Leongatha, Vic. has one six years old, poorly drained, 37" rainfall, which does well!!

A. lanigera. Only Mrs Perkins and Dr M. grow this but Mrs P. says hers flowered at one year and is becoming dense and Dr M says his flowered at 2 years and grows easily. Both have clay soil. Mrs Perkins waterlogged in winter. Looks like a winner for wet clay soils.

A. lasiocalyx. Here's one I'm really envious of, if it's anything like the specimen I have in my collection. Messrs McD and Jacobs again, flowering at 4 years and 2 years respectively. Mrs Winn also has this but I believe it's not yet 2 years old.

A. ligulata. This is another beauty if you can get the orange flowered variety. Seeds in seed bank from Mr Althofer. Will ask him what the florescence is like. Specimens I have with orange flowers all came from the Centre. (Seed received this morning from Mrs Cook. Will ask her to let us know about hers).

MEMBERS' COMMENTS:

Of interest particularly to South Australians, Mr Story writes that young trees of *A. pycnantha* from the ironstone soil areas have very broad phyllodes while the plants growing in limestone have narrow. This difference gradually fades out as the trees reach 2 or 3 years of age. He also says **mag-amp** is a wonderful fertilizer for acacias, in fact for all natives except hakeas and banksias.

Removal of seedcases adhering to seedlings. You may remember my upside-down method expounded in October 1971 N/L. Miss Shadgett has an alternative. It works, but not so well for me as my less orthodox one. I quote: "Put seedling in container by itself. Get some coarse river sand and add water until sloppy. Put this all round the seedling, covering it. Leave for an hour. Then pour water out of a teapot on to the miniature sand hill, until the seedling appears. Seed cases should come off quite easily. If not, repeat the process."

Mrs Winn has some interesting comment on *A. rotundifolia*. She has several shrubs about 5 years old, planted in a spot where they get a lot of water from run-off and as they are below a vegetable patch, probably get the benefit of some fertilizer also. They are about 2 x 1.6 metres and flower prolifically. By contrast, other plants of this species which grow naturally in the area are only about .6 x .6 metres. This is a beautiful shrub, with graceful drooping habit and well worth growing. Proof, once more, that many species will respond to extra water and fertilizer.

Mrs Winn also reports re **damping off**. She experienced trouble with *A. rhigiophylla* sown in peat moss and sand. A second sowing in coarse sand only gave almost complete success. I had the same experience with *A. lasiocalyx*, *A. rossei*, *A. burkittii* and a couple of others. A second sowing in coarse sand only almost eliminated losses from damp-off. I also made sure, with the second lot, that seedlings potted on were kept in a position where air circulation is good.

Mr O'Donnell remarks that his *A. boormanii* failed to produce seeds after its first flowering. He asks whether others have had this experience with this and/or other species.

Des Nelson writes to say that a **branch of SGAP has been formed at Alice Springs** and that the speaker at the first meeting gave an illustrated talk on Acacias of the Centre.

Des Nelson has also tried with success a **new method of germinating hard coated seeds**. He describes it as follows:- Place the seeds in a small airtight jar with a piece of moist cottonwood or balled tissue (eg Kleenex). Leave the container in a sunny position, and plant seeds when they begin to germinate. He continues: "I tried this method with 3 seeds of *A. ancistrocarpa* and in 7 days the seeds had swollen nicely. Although I probably didn't need to do so, I then scraped the softened seed coats with a sharp knife, returned them to the jar, and next day germination was apparent."

I haven't tried this because I'm too impatient to wait 7 days for seeds to swell, but it seems to me a very good method for people who are not in a hurry and who don't want to be bothered with the nicking and boiling water. Sounds to me a method which would appeal to the male rather than the female of the species. I'll soon know whether I'm right or wrong when my fan mail starts to come in!

A letter from Mr Kurchian of Massachusetts, USA, dated January 27th says that he had in bloom at that time *A. armata*, *A. podalyriifolia*, *A. longifolia* and *A. baileyana*. I really take my hat off to him because he has them all growing in 5 gallon tins and they spend their summers out of doors and their winters in a greenhouse heated to 50 deg.

AND THAT'S ALL FOR NOW. NEXT NEWSLETTER JULY