



Association Of Societies For Growing Australian Plants
Banksia Study Group
Newsletter

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Dear all,

Good news on the Banksia book front as Alex George and Kevin Collins (see below) are collaborating on writing a new book on the genus. Rather than a 4th edition of the Banksia Book, Alex felt an overhaul and a new format was warranted, with more of an emphasis on horticulture. Hopefully it will hit the bookshops sometime early next year.

Meanwhile Ivan Holliday and George Watton are looking to publish a new edition of their book on Banksias.

In the meantime, copies do turn up on ebay and Amazon Books from time to time so it is worth checking these websites out.

PS: It's renewal time. Sorry about the lateness of this issue.

Rare & Threatened Banksia #8 – *Banksia meisneri adscendens*

Introduction: The Scott River Banksia (*Banksia meisneri* subsp. *ascendens*), was recognised as a distinct form of the more widespread *B. meisneri* by Alex George in 1981. It differs only in the erect, longer leaves, but the character is consistent and gives it a different aspect. It is the only taxon of the series abietinae known from the extreme southwest and is known from only a few localities in an area mostly cleared for agriculture.

(*Banksia meisneri* subsp. *ascendens*)

Scott NP – photo Margaret Moir)



It has been classed a priority 4 taxon (Taxa that are considered to have been adequately surveyed and which, while being rare (in Australia), are not currently threatened by any identifiable factors. These taxa require monitoring every 5–10 years). Though the majority of populations are within a national park, it would be vulnerable to fires at too-frequent intervals; as a seeder, the seedlings may take a few years to flower and hence could be eradicated from areas with fires of greater than this frequency.

Description: *Banksia meisneri* subsp. *ascendens* forms a much-branched spreading shrub generally less than 1m tall, though occasionally taller to 2m. It is nonlignotuberous, i.e. killed by fire and regenerating from seed. Stems tomentose. The foliage is a bright green with crowded leaves, ascending (i.e. arising at an angle to the stem, not perpendicular), the lamina linear to narrowly elliptic, 3–15 mm long, 1–1.5 mm wide. The small inflorescences occur in winter, and are 2–3 cm high - flowers are golden brown; with long yellow styles. Perianth 7–9 mm long including limb of 1.5 mm, hirsute outside with glabrous limb, glabrous inside. Pistil hooked, 18–26 mm long, glabrous; pollen presenter turbinate, 0.3–0.4 mm long and wide. Old flowers persistent for 1–2 years, then falling except style bases. Follicles narrow, 12–22 mm long, 1–7 mm high, 3–4 mm wide, rather undulate, tomentose, loosely packed among enlarged floral bracts. Seed obovate, 20–24 mm long; seed body oblong-obovate, 8–10 mm long, 2–3 mm wide, smooth.



(close-up of young bud (above), cult. Gin Gin)



(old cone (right), cult. Gin Gin)

It can be distinguished from *Banksia meisneri meisneri* whose leaves are perpendicular to the stem, and *Banksia pulchella*, whose cones have smaller grey follicles and are generally completely bereft of old flowers. Distribution is important to know here; *Banksia meisneri meisneri* stretching southeast from Collie to the Stirling Ranges and *B. pulchella*

Distribution/Habitat: *Banksia meisneri* subsp. *ascendens* is found in two disparate regions; two locations in ironstone vegetation (road verges) in heavily cultivated area southeast of Busselton, and (more widespread) on the Scott River Plains some 100km south, east of Augusta. The southern populations lie within the Scott National Park. It is generally found on flat areas on white or grey sand.

Cultivation: Rarely cultivated – Kevin Collins adds that he has struck it from cuttings and it is easy to grow from seed. It seems to grow smaller in cultivation, remaining a 0.5m spreading shrub, with a very attractive habit and foliage, rather than reaching 1-1.2m as it often does in the wild.

(in cultivation showing compact habit)



***Banksia rosserae* update – Kevin Collins**

Kevin reports;

“Another botanic first...ironically John Cullen (discoverer of the plant September 2000) accompanied by George Lullfitz find the first flowers on this species some five and a half years later. May 21st 2006.

A combination of drought, the plants remoteness and the hap hazard visits to check the plant for flowering has seen this mystery finally unravelled. The description can now be completed. "Beautiful golden yellow ball flowers with lime green presenters".



(*Banksia rosserae* late bud (r) – K. Collins)

The following day, after three previous cancelled trips earlier this year due to heavy rains since early January, some 250mm, I along with my wife Kathy, botanic artist Margaret Pieroni and past president of the Wildflower Society of W.A., Brian Moyle arrived at the site to see the fresh tyre marks and footprints of the previous days' visitors.



The flowering was very spasmodic as only two of the six plants growing in proximity to one another had flowers on them. A third plant had one bloom and a few buds. The remaining three had no sign of flowers initiating or recently finished. The best flowering two bushes also contained recently finished blooms so flowering may have commenced in March. I also found a new pod which had grown from flowering in 2005.

The two plants in a disjunct locality some 10kms away on sand dunes were also devoid of buds & flowers. Whilst on site I discovered two more plants approx. half a kilometre away to the east in vacant crown land.

These are additions to the twenty six plants previously plotted by John Cullen and myself in 2002. One of these plants contained buds at varying stages of development and the plant will have flowers for the next six to eight weeks.

The larger population of eighteen plants was not visited due to lack of time and difficulty in relocating the area due to the growth of shrubs along the side of the sand track obliterating the view.

A very happy lady, Celia Rosser has been busy painting since I forwarded a fresh bloom on returning from our trip.”

Banksia propagation by cuttings

Last issue I asked for feedback on successful propagation by cuttings as I had received requests for information from members.

Suellen Harris of Falls Creek writes:

I have successfully propagated *Banksia ericifolia* and *robur* from cuttings. To a lesser success rate, *spinulosa*, *paludosa* and prostrate *integrifolia*. *B. ericifolia* and *robur* cuttings were taken during the hottest months of January to mid February when the spring growth had hardened off. While these were easy to take root it has taken some time for them to be large enough to be planted out. I found that *B. ericifolia* puts on a lot of shoots from the stem (cutting). The stem remains the same length, thereby making the plant rather top heavy with new growth. This new growth has to be cut back. After propagating from seed, I think the seed method is best as the stem emanating from the seed grows at a fast rate, has length before branching, and makes a more sturdy plant. But it cannot be guaranteed to be the same as the parent plant.

B. integrifolia, *paludosa* and *spinulosa* are more fickle when sending down roots and my success rate has not been terribly successful and they take much longer to root. However, this pales into insignificance if you have found a parent plant that is unique and you want to keep those qualities. These cuttings I have taken during different times of the year and have had bottom heat. *B. paludosa* cuttings were taken around November (after coming back from WA) but success rate is small.

I use a cutting mix of 80:20 perlite/peat or straight perlite can also be used but cuttings will have to be watered more often. Keep up the mist as these cuttings dry out quickly. This method is for all banksia cuttings.

B. ericifolia and *robur* have taken about 4-6 weeks to send down roots while *B. integrifolia*, *paludosa* and *spinulosa* cuttings usually take 10-12 weeks to root (longer if no bottom heat or taken in winter).

Before bottom heat, I successfully struck cuttings in a polystyrene box (broccoli box) 1/3 filled with cutting mix, covered in bubble wrap to seal the heat and placed in a warm spot (in sun in winter). Polystyrene insulates the cuttings and the bubble wrap keeps the heat in, and allows light in. Don't forget the drainage holes.

I use Osmoform in the potting media. Basically it's a bark base mix with perlite (lots of perlite for drainage for the initial potting on) potting media with added water penetration crystals and a small pinch of native fertilizer. I pot these into 'grow tubes'. Check pH to ensure media is on the acidic side. Once roots are established, plants can be repotted into 75mm tubes or 6" pots with your favourite native mix and fertilized with native fertilizer (low phos).

Martin Swanson of Wildtech nursery in Licola, Victoria writes:

'Banksias we grow from cuttings include *Banksia ericifolia*, *spinulosa*, *integrifolia*, *marginata*, *occidentalis* & "Giant Candles" – all easy. We are experimenting with *Banksia meisneri* (20% success), *B. nutans* (50%) & *B. loricata* – no results yet. *Banksia paludosa* gives variable results.

All set on bottom heat 25C in sand, peat, pinebark, polystyrene mix at pH 5.5 with mist and fog. Try to avoid November and December when some species defoliate during propagation. All small leaf species may be suitable for cuttings and we are keen to try them.

Colour variation in *Banksia serrata* inflorescences

Suellen Harris writes:

‘We were up at the Grevillea Park, Bulli the other week in March those gorgeous *B. serrata* (these are small ones, 1.2-1.3m high and at least several years old) were still flowering. I still think these are some of the most beautiful banksias around, including this delightful pink form flowering next to the yellow form. The pink inflorescences actually stay pink for some time after the presenters open.



Information on cultivation wanted

Kevin Collins writes:

“As part of the new banksia reference book we hope to include best species for the major towns and cities around Australia, as well as list collections in overseas private & botanic gardens.”

“You can contribute by letting us know the most successful non-endemic species you’ve tried in your area. Ideally they need to be plants that have survived longer than four years and have preferably flowered. Please email me at banksia@comswest.net.au.”

Snippets

Jeff Irons from the UK reports that a friend of his in a suburb of the Yorkshire city of Leeds has had *Banksia oblongifolia* flowering outside for several years. However he has good katabatic drainage.

Interesting hybrid seen in WA



(inflorescence – above)

While in Western Australia, in bushland between Kalbarri and Shark Bay (and I paid for this with a tick infestation, didn't stop scratching for weeks!). We saw in low scrub on sand, a spectacular hybrid banksia – putative parents *Banksia prionotes* and *B. lindleyana*, both of which were growing nearby.

It was a squat 2 metre by 1-1.5 metre high shrub. I suspect it may have had a lignotuber but didn't check. It had bright gold terminal inflorescences some 10cm high and maybe 6cm wide. Leaves had zig-zag serrations and dimensions and colour were midway between *prionotes* and *lindleyana*. In bud the inflorescences were strongly reminiscent of *lindleyana*. Another candidate for a parent was *Banksia asbyi* though specimens were not close, maybe more than 5-10 km away.

The Banksia Atlas also recorded a hybrid from the same area, possibly even the same plant.

(habit (note low growing *B. prionotes* in distance)- below)



Another *Banksia candolleana* colour variant



North of Badgingarra, we saw a few plants with black tips to the presenters in bud, along with the usual all-yellow blooms and pink ones.

Odd *Banksia prionotes* tree



The preceding image is of a tree just north of Mingenew (more specifically on the eastern side of the Mingenew-Mullewa Road just south of the Depot Hill Road intersection) which brought the car to a shuddering halt. Initially it appeared to be some bizarre prostrate form, but after inspection it was a fallen branch which had remained attached to the tree and grown along the ground. Funny though.

Old Banksia Study Group Newsletters

The first three newsletters from my time as leader of the group are available at <http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/banksSG/index.html> on the internet, on the national website of the 'Society. I plan to get the next 3 newsletters from the financial year just go up there too soon.

Seed Bank

If you have a large excess of seeds, consider donating some to your local seed bank (or even another state!) as banksias are popular and the Regional seed banks rely on donations. Alternately, why not let me know and I can leave a memo in the next newsletter.

- Nindethana Seeds (08) 9844 3533
- Banksia Farm (08) 9851 1770 phone/fax
- Your Region seed bank will usually have a selection of species

If you are unable to find a particular species, please contact me and I may have some ideas.

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