

Region ✓

ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP
ISSN 0816-178x

Newsletter No. 17. February 2000.

Leader : Kerry Rathie, Lot 5, Salston Road, Greenbank 4124.

'phone (07) 3200 0268

Email : krathie@powerup.com.au

Weather & plant behaviour : Once again our local weather has been most peculiar, being unusually mild through winter, then abnormally cool all through spring. Brisbane had its coldest November day on record, & nights below 10 degrees C. were common throughout spring. Then suddenly summer arrived, with Brisbane's hottest (40 degrees C.) January day on record on January 20th, after weeks of top temperatures in the 20's. We are always hotter in summer than Brisbane, & colder in winter, being slightly inland. Our hottest day was also January 20, at 44 degrees, & 43 the day after, then 36, & then back to 2 weeks of weather in the high 20's again, cooler than usual for this time of year. That brings it up to the date of compiling this newsletter. The 2 days of heatwave jolted most plants of *B. megaphyllum*, *viscidulum* & *spectabilis* out of near dormancy ; most had been leafless until then, although some plants of the first 2 species had flowered. The grafted *B. spectabilis* kept in my 'hot box' (with electrically heated buried insulated wires) defoliated in late June, as did juvenile *B. garrawayae*, & new leaves did not appear on the *spectabilis* till 18-12-99, & on the *garrawayae* seedlings until early February. An ungrafted *B. viscidulum* kept in the hot box kept its leavesthrough winter, & defoliated in mid-spring.

The 8 *B. bidwillii* Leichhardt Form plants that flowered so long during winter-to-summer of 1998-99 either have failed to flower this year, or flowered late (Dec.-Jan.) & sparsely. But plants at Merv Hodge & Jan Glazebrook/Denis Cox, each 20 km or so away, have flowered normally, as have potted plants I recently obtained from Denis. The northern coastal form of *B. bidwillii* (3 shrubs), & *B. bidwillii* "White Star" have missed flowering ; they defoliated , then went straight to new leaves, for the first time ever.

Some *B. viscidulum* & *megaphyllum* plants flowered in November although only 4 or 5 inches high. Despite their meagre stature, they are about 4 years old, but die back almost to their tuberous roots each winter. One *megaphyllum* flowered at Merv's as a 2-year-old, at the grand height of 3 inches.

New plants : The red-flowered species mentioned in the last newsletter as growing for Jan & Denis was collected by Maurie Tucker on Exmoor Station, & I'll put a location map in the next newsletter. Well inland from Bowen, on the inland (western) side of the Great Dividing Range. It is a new species, very distinctive, with ovate (about 9 x 5 cm.) leaves, sometimes very slightly lobed at the base, brick red flowers, & grows as a tall upright fairly narrow tree. It grafts easily onto *B. acerifolium*, so I now have about 10 plants.

I have recently acquired grafted unflowered plants of *B. grandiflorum* from N. Qld., from Jan/Denis & from Merv, probably tracing back to Maurie. I also have, on loan from Merv until I get some grafts going, a hybrid *Brachychiton* collected by Maurie a little south of Coen in N. Qld. It has not flowered for Merv, but the scion material came from a tree in flower, so hopefully it will get round to it before too long. Maurie is fairly sure 1

parent is *B. grandiflorus*, as the leaves are maple-shaped like *grandiflorus*. The other parent is likely to be *garrawayae* or *muellerianus*.

Merv's *B. spectabilis* x *bidwillii* seedlings are healthy but growing slowly. His large grafted *spectabilis* flowered nicely this year, but set no pods. Merv had tried to cross it with *B. acerifolius* & *B. bidwillii* 'Large Pink'.

Palm & cycad nurseryman Stan Walkley gave me material of a mystery juvenile hybrid, possibly *B. rupestris* x *acerifolius*. One piece took. The palmate leaves have thicker 'fingers' than *rupestris*, with an *acerifolius* colour & texture.

I have pollinated flowers of *B. bidwillii* 'Large Red' with *B. acerifolius* (failed : probably the pollen tubes are too short), *B. garrawayae*, *B. megaphyllum* & *B. discolor*. The *discolor* have set pods, & the other 2 are too early to tell. As for last year, almost every *B. bidwillii* flower is male for the first 6 weeks of flowering, & females have predominated for the last 2 weeks.

New members : Welcome to new members Don Lynch of Mt. Tamborine (Qld.), Ian Anderson of Hughes (A.C.T.) & Mrs. Jean Dennis of Benalla (Vic.). Don is Land Manager at the Land Warfare Centre at Canungra, where he has put in 2 arboreta of rainforest trees, an arboretum of *Brachychiton* species & hybrids (plants from Merv & myself), & various trials (in conjunction with several non-army research organisations) of cabinet timber species. Jean has a passion for botanical painting, & is hoping to paint all or most *Brachychitons* from life, & already has tracked down many northern Australian species, & painted them. And, I nearly forgot, Mt. Annan Botanic Garden, south-west of Sydney.

Allied genera : *Lysiosepalum involucreatum* doing well, as always. My one plant of *Thomasia pygmaea* is still alive, but did not flower this spring. Doing well, at least vegetatively, are *Lasiopetalum behrii*, *L. baueri*, *L. macrophyllum*, & *Thomasia sarotes*, *foliosa*, & *solanacea*. Jan Glazebrook, & several people at Toowoomba, have *Thomasia purpurea* & *T. rhynchocarpa* growing well. Brent Vieritz, 5 minutes drive north of me, has had *Lasiopetalum behrii* growing for 7 years or so, & it flowered for the first time last spring, as a large shrub. It also flowered well this spring.

Variants : Member Ian Waldron has a tree of *B. acerifolius* with unusually long racemes of flowers ; I intend to photograph it next week. I have a small flame tree with reddish twigs, which looks extra red when in flower due to these twigs & to the absence of leaves, & a clone from north Qld. with orange-red flowers, as many northern flame trees do. I have seen 2 flame trees in full flower, all over, in Brisbane suburban gardens recently, still with all their leaves on. I don't recall seeing this before ; it could be genetic, but I suspect the unusual weather is the cause. I do have one clone of *B. bidwillii* which differs from all other *bidwillii*s in 2 ways ; it flowers all year (more heavily in spring), & always flowers with its leaves on.

In the public eye : In early June I took a ute-load of plants to Sydney, including quite a few *Brachychitons*, mostly grafted, for Mt. Annan Botanic Garden. Mt. Annan is a purely

Australian natives branch of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, with a large land area & excellent facilities.

At the ASGAP Biennial Conference held in Brisbane last July, we had a study group display of plant posters, plus potted *Brachychitons* from myself & Graham Nosworthy.

BEST WISHES TO EVERYONE, & I intend to put out another short newsletter before long.