

ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Mea Culpa : Once again I am cramming all newsletters into the last month of the financial year. Can't blame it on the computer this time, but have waited until flowering etc. information was in. I had hoped to get web sites set up for both study groups by now, so that I can direct people to the relevant parts of the sites for 2 main purposes :- (1) to display colour images without the cost of colour photocopying, & (2) to set up fairly static information on what species exist, & their

horticultural pros & cons.

I should have this done some time in July. The timing is uncertain as I have prostate cancer & am having surgery around July 6th to completely remove it (hopefully leaving a few crucial nerves fairly intact), & they tell me I won't be able to do much for 2-4 weeks. I have spent more time in hospital day visits having biopsies, scans & X-rays than I will take to write these 4 newsletters. For each study group I have edited items so that, for instance, all the weather bits are in the early June newsletters, for easier reading.

Nomenclature : To be pedantic, all scientific names should be in italics, & all cultivar names in quotes, but I have mostly only done this to avoid confusion, or for the first appearance of a cultivar or species in this newsletter. I do follow the convention that species names are always lower-case, & cultivar names start with a capital letter.

Membership Matters : Subs are still \$5 in Australia & \$10 for overseas, & run from July in one year to June in the next. The 1-line table below shows your status as per my records, where a tick means paid up.

'01-'02	'02-'03	'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07
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Weather & Plant Behaviour : July & August alternated between a couple of days of frosts to - 4 (all values in degrees Centigrade), then several with minima between 7 & 12, then frosts again. September was frost-free & normal, but the earlier temperature alternations threw almost all orchids out of kilter, & most hybrids based on *Dendrobium speciosum* &/or *D. kingianum*, or straight *D. kingianum*, failed to flower. *Sarcochilus* flowered poorly or not at all. *D. speciosum* flowered, but not well. Normal hot weather ensued from October '04 to March '05, & April was cooler as expected. May & June were warmer than usual, with a first frost on June 24th followed by nights around 10 or greater.

In early September '04 the *Brachychiton bidwillii* & *B. 'Jasper Belles'* (*B. spectabilis* x *B. bidwillii* "Beau Belle") were in bud here & at Merv Hodge's place, but the *B. spectabilis* were still fully dormant at both properties. My place seems to stay a steady degree C. or two cooler than Merv's all the cool months, & probably hotter in summer by a similar margin. By the 12th my *Lysiosepalum involucreatum* & *Lasiopetalum macrophyllum* & *L. ferrugineum* were in full flower, & lasted till mid-October. Merv's *L. macrophyllum* kept on a good deal longer. By the 21st the *Jasper Belles* were in flower. By early October so were *B. bid. Maroochydore* & *B. xincarnatus 'Griffith Pink'*. Later in October so was *B. bid. 'Clayton'*, *B. bid. 'Beau Belle' & 'Large Red'*, *B. discolor*, *B. xvinicolor 'Clarabelle'* & *B. xexcellens*. By 8-11-04, *B. xexcellens 'Rosalind'* & *B.sp. Exmoor Station* were in flower, all male, as were all *Rosalind* flowers in the last two years. By late October *B. spectabilis* & *B. 'Robin Hood'*, {*B. bid. Beau Belle* x *B. acerifolius 'Ian's Giant'*}, were in full flower at Merv's. This *acerifolius* is the one mentioned in earlier newsletters with leaves more than twice as large as normal, & 65 cm inflorescences. None of my plants of either flowered that spring or summer. Too cold & dry for the *spectabilis*, I presume. My several plants of double white *Rosa banksiae* came into flower in mid-November, 3 months later than in any of the previous 22 years since I planted them.

On 21-11-04 I had my first *B. muellerianus* flower, male, apricot pink & 6.2 x 3 cm. In early December some *B. megaphyllum* started to get leaves, & the *B. viscidulus* were 2 weeks later. None flowered of either species. By 6-12-04 all *B. bid. Maroochydore* had finished flowering, *B. bid. White Star* was just starting a 2 week run (normally 2-3 months), & *Rosalind* was near its peak. *Clarabelle* was

slowing down, & only had a trickle of flowers after 20-12-04, by which date Griffith Pink had finished. On 20-12-04 *B. xochroleuca* had its first 2 flowers ; 2 x 3 cm, deep apricot, with only a tiny fringe of unjoined petals. By Jan. 1st '05 all my Brachychitons had stopped flowering, except 1 'Jasper Bell' & 'Clarabelle'. One clone of Jasper Belle, JB7, had all flowers with fully recurved petals for the first 2 days, & the flowers drop a day or so later. Don't think I will be breeding from that one!

At Merv's, the Beau Belles & Large Reds slowed their flowering after January, but never entirely stopped, & now have quite a lot of flowers on, & plenty of buds, but not as many as in a normal spring. They have leaves on. It will be interesting to see if their spring-summer flowering is as good as usual (which is splendid). Merv tells me the Beau Belle trees planted at Nielsen's Native Nursery at Loganholme, which is warmer than his place, have been flowering for some time & are covered in flower buds. Normally, *B. bidwillii* stops its main flowering by mid-February, although some clones have a trickle of flowers (among leaves) all year. At my place, *B. xroseus* 'Belladonna' kept its leaves & flowered briefly & poorly. Both 'Belladonna' & 'Jerilderie Red' flowered well at Merv's for 2 months, mostly with leaves on. Their parent *B. populneus* is one of the few fully evergreen brachys ; *B. gregorii* & *B. diversifolius* (some forms) are others, but these latter 2 shed their leaves in dry times.

My sole *B. vitifolius* was leafless by mid-April '04, then made some small leaves which I noticed on 12-5-05, dropped them soon after as the frosts started, then died. I have a big batch of 9-month-old *B. 'Beau Belle' x vitifolius*, & will be interested to see if they show much of the heavy veining that makes *vitifolius* leaves unique.

I have lost some seedlings, mainly over last winter, which have just rotted off. Probably too wet for too long. They included *B. acerifolius*, *megaphyllus*, *chillagoensis*, *excellens* x itself, *albidus*, *bidwillii* & *garrowayae*. Others treated identically have thrived. *B. diversifolius* likes to be dry over autumn-winter, as does *fitzgeraldianus* & *viscidulus*, even when past the small-seedling stage.

By 1-4-05 most *B. megaphyllus* & *viscidulus* were leafless, & all were by mid-June. All *B. chillagoensis*, & most, but not all, *B. spectabilis*, were leafless by mid-May. Does not give the *megaphyllus* or *viscidulus* long to store up energy from sunlight, since as noted earlier they did not leaf up until December or later, so I am expecting a very poor flowering in spring.

Red Peduncles : I noticed red peduncles on all *B. bid.* *Maroochydore* x Jasper Belle pods, & on the Large Red x Jasper Belle pods. As previously, only the half of the pod-stalk (peduncle) nearest the pod turned a scarlet colour which faded to pink over 3 weeks or so, & then to brown. That half of the peduncle must be controlled by genes from the pod &/or seeds, & the other half by the plant proper, at least as far as outer colouration goes.

New Hybrids : Those raised in the past year, with the female parent listed first, include Clarabelle x itself, *bidwillii* *Maroochydore* Form x Jasper Belle, *bidwillii* 'Clayton' (a clone of the Bowen area coastal form, with highly lobed leaves, like *Maroochydore*, but lacking the purple-new-leaves & extreme hairiness of the latter) x *bidwillii* *Maroochydore* [the first few leaves are not heavily lobed in the crosses], 'Clayton' x Jasper Belle, *bidwillii* 'Large Red' x Jasper Belle, Robin Hood x discolor, Robin Hood x Clarabelle, *bidwillii* 'Beau Belle' x Clarabelle, *B. xexcellens* x itself (several parental clones, all pink or red), Beau Belle x discolor, Beau Belle x Jasper Belle, & Beau Belle x *excellens*.

With the extreme drought (at least until the last week) we have had rodent problems at an unprecedented level—rats, mice, hares & a lost-looking rabbit— & I lost some early-germinating Brachychiton seeds until I took 2 days off & built a rodent-proof roofed enclosure of ringlock for strength, covered by layers of chicken wire & budgie wire. It used up a lot of the scrappy bits of mesh & wire that I had been hoarding for years. I am hoping to get later germinations of Robin Hood x *muellerianus* & Beau Belle x *ochroleuca*, & have refrained from exterminating a couple of feral cats that are trying to eat their way through the rodent largesse.

Seedling Traits : Most brachys are in section Brachychiton of the genus, & this is the only section with cryptocotylar germination, which means the cotyledons stay in the seed. The Robin Hood seedlings all had obvious cotyledons, so the gene for normal germination must be dominant, as *bidwillii* is in section Brachychiton, as is discolor. The Robin Hood x discolor seedlings also seem to have visible cotyledons, whereas I expected only 50% to have them. This could be an artifact of low numbers, but 20:0 isn't much like a 1:1 ratio. Time will tell, as more germinate.