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ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP
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Newsletter No. 27. May 2006.
Leader : Kerry Rathie, Lot 5, Salston Road, Greenbank 4124.
'phone : (07) 3200 0268
Email :

Membership Matters : Welcome to new members Bernard Crow, 38 Glady Street, Innisfail, Qld.4860, Christine Wadey, 49 Allison Crescent, North Eltham, Vic.3095, Doug Harrison, 113 Philip Crescent, Barellan Point, Qld. 4305, & Tim Powe, 36 Burnett Street, Sadlier's Crossing, Qld.4305.

Things Not Done : Looking at newsletter no. 26, it is full of things I was going to do & have not got around to. This is largely due to several episodes of ill health, the first being a delay in my operation for prostate cancer when the hospital first lost my file, & then delayed the op while they decided if a minor heart murmur was relevant. Eventually I had the prostate all removed in August, with minimal drawbacks. This summer I got a good dose of Barmah Forest Virus (apparently spread from possums via mosquitos), which must have lowered my immune status enough to allow the Ross River Virus I had had 3 years ago to revive in force. Both viruses have their most annoying symptom as a 'chronic fatigue syndrome' plus a bout of depression, which laid me out for 4 months or so. Nearly gone now.

New Species (for me) at Greenbank & at Merv's : After the Sept. 2005 ASGAP Conference in Perth, Garry Sankowsky sent Merv Hodge some grafting material of an unusual form of Brachychiton muellerianus with multi-coloured (red, pink & cream) flowers. Merv gave me a plant of this, but none of them have flowered yet. The grafted plants at Merv's of material sent back in 2004 by Laylee Purchase & Jan Glazebrook have had mixed fates. The B. incanus is now well established, as is a plant of either B. fitzgeraldianus or B. viscidulus. More likely to be the former, as viscidulus grows extremely slowly on its own roots in S-E Qld, & grafted plants typically die down to the rootstock in winter. Initially Merv had grafted plants of both that had taken, but labels got lost & the two are very similar in leaf.
B. tridentatus is doing well. I have not got around to getting material up this year of the possibly darker (than Belladonna) forms of B. roseus from Melbourne.

Members Letters : Jean Dennis reported in Sept. 2005 that she had located & painted every described Brachychiton species in Australia, & she & her husband were just about to haul their trusty caravan to the Pilbara to re-paint 3 species. Some of the other paintings needed twigs & pods & so on added, but she had material collected to allow her to finish without another epic trek. Lucky she did most of her trips before recent rises in fuel prices. John Warneford has replanted some of the brachy species & hybrids that he lost on his Mudgee (NSW) farm in the ultra-cold weather 2 years ago. Wrapping trunks in newspaper has helped to protect plants grafted on to flame tree, which is more frost tender when young than things like B. bidwillii &B. populneus, & their hybrids.

New Commersonia Species : Several 'new' Commersonia species are about to be described as the Sterculiaceae section of the Flora of Australia comes closer to fruition. I hear Gordon Guymer has pretty well finished the Commersonias, & that the white-flowered Keraudrenia from the Brisbane suburb of Chermside has become a Seringia. As I mentioned a year ago, I am growing another small shrub about which I know little, Commersonia sp. Zamia Range, obtained from Yuruga Nursery. It seems tough, is upright, under 1 m, with small pink flowers, & has survived well in raised sandy beds during the present drought. Member Kris Kupsch, leader of the Rainforest study group, tells me he lost his specimens rapidly in the high rainfall red soil at Burringbar, in far northern coastal NSW. Peter Radke confirmed it was from a semi-arid area.

Best wishes to all for the new financial year, & may it rain heavily in all the parched dam catchments. Kerry.