

**ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP**

ISSN 0816-178x

Newsletter No. 29. May 2007.

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**Organisation :** 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 or August 2007, roughly a year later than planned. I will be grateful to receive email attachments of pictures of any brachys, or their relatives, for possible inclusion in the web site or a future book on the genus. For web sites images need to be fairly low on pixels, say 300 x < 300, while for books they need to be say 6 megapixels. I can easily edit images smaller, & can convert analog (film) images to digital, although at a cost, which I am hoping to greatly reduce in the near future as SGAP-Qld. has recently purchased the relevant equipment. I just have to queue up to use it.

For each study group I have edited items so that, for instance, all the weather bits are in the one newsletter, 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. An 'x' before a 'species' name indicates this scientific name refers to a known (usually natural) hybrid. Brachychitons are unusual in having quite a number of hybrids with valid scientific names.

**Membership Matters :** Welcome to new members Philip Docherty, P.O. Box 5683, Cable Beach, WA 6726 ; Lindsay Daniels, 75 Bell Street, Biloela, Qld. 4715 ; & corresponding member Chris Marshall, P.O. Box 86300, Tucson. Arizona 85754, USA. 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.

'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09
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**Weather & Plant Behaviour :** This last 12 months the incessant drought has, as for last year, really hit plants hard, with many brachys failing to flower unless watered, which most of them could not be. June to December was nearly rain-free, & *Lysiosepalum involucreatum*, *Lasiopetalum behrii*, *L. macrophyllum* & *Rulingia hermannifolia* flowered very briefly or not at all. Brachychitons failing to flower included most flame trees & lace barks, some *B. bidwillii* (most unusua), many northern Australia species (*spectabilis*, *viscidulus*, *tridentatus*, *macrophyllus*, sp. aff. *macrophyllus*, *grandiflorus*, *chillagoensis*, *diversifolius*, *collinus*, *australis*, sp. Exmoor Station & *velutinosus*). Well watered pots of some northern species (*x ochroleuca*, *garrawayae* & *muellerianus*) flowered briefly. Well established hybrids (*x excellens*, *x vinicolor*, *x incarnatus*) flowered near to normally, while younger grafted trees of the same clones did not flower. *B. x excellens* 'Rosalind' flowered normally. Several plants of *B. bidwillii* 'Maroochydore' & 'Clayton' flowered poorly & for only 3 weeks, starting in early October, as did my sole adult plant of 'White Star'.

All of 2006, & 2007 to date, has been severe drought in S-E Qld., with less than 20% of normal rainfall, virtually no rain over summer, & no creeks running since 2004. The first frost of 2006, a -3 degrees C., was 2 weeks earlier than usual, on May 24<sup>th</sup>, & the other 5 were in July & milder. Early spring was a bit cooler than usual, then normal, then mid-November was unusually cold (as it was in the Blue Mountains, Victoria & Tasmania), with lows to 5 degrees & highs to low 20's. Several days after Christmas were also cool, with December 27<sup>th</sup> being the coldest Brisbane Dec. maximum for 100 years at 19 degrees. The rest of summer was normal, hot & sometimes humid, but

rainless. Autumn 2007 has been warmer than usual, with minima above 15 degrees even in May, & maxima above 30 for most days in March, April & the first half of May.

**Flowering :** After cold winters, *Brachychiton bidwillii* usually starts to flower in Sept.-October, & *B. spectabilis* (from the Top End of the N.T.) usually is a month or so later. This spring some of the F1 hybrids between these 2 species, which I call Jasper Belle, were in full flower by 5-8-06. By late August, several clones of the Leichhardt form of *bidwillii* (Beau Belle, Large Red, Gails Star & Small Red) were in full flower. Small Red, as usual, put on a good display but for only 6 weeks. The other clones flowered well until late February, with occasional later flowers. *B. spectabilis* started in early October, & also ended in late February. In early November, a potted *B. garrawayae*, my largest Clarabelle, Rosalind, *B. roseus* Belladonna & a potted *B. muellerianus* from Wenlock River began to flower. By this time most of the 30 or so 3-year-old seedling clones of Robin Hood (*B. bidwillii* 'Large Red' x *B. acerifolius* 'Ian') at Mervs place were in flower, & almost all were most impressive, due to the superior clones used as the parents. All but one were in large pots. Two more clones I had planted out at my place, & watered well, did not flower. I have found that grafted pure adult *B. acerifolius* kept in pots usually flower after 2 years, but if planted out take 5 years or so, until they get big enough. Seedlings often take 15-25 years. The Robin Hoods (a temporary name only) at Mervs flowered well until late February, & set a lot of fertile seed.

My big Clarabelle flowered superbly, as always, & was at its peak in early December, & almost finished by late January. Rosalind flowered well for 3 months, with all male flowers for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in succession. In early December my other large Clarabelle started to flower, & lasted until early June 2007. Also in early December a *B. roseus* 'Jerilderie Red' started to flower, & lasted until late May, well past the 'Belladonna' which finished in late January. On Christmas day, Garry Sankowskys form of *B. muellerianus*, which may be a natural hybrid with *B. grandiflorus*, flowered briefly in a pot, for the first time, on a very small grafted plant. This clone is shown in flower on the back cover of an issue of 'Australian Plants' some 4 years back, which I have temporarily mislaid. In late January the other potted *B. muellerianus* flowered again for 10 days. In early April most Jasper Belle clones finished flowering, although 2 lasted till mid-May, due to the unseasonably hot conditions. This gave 1 clone a 9-month period continually in flower, & leafless almost all of that time. Another clone never flowered, & had flowered poorly the previous year.

In late January 2007 I got my first large purple-red flowers on a grafted *B. 'Butts Red'* some 20 years old. The scion material came from a huge mature tree which flowered profusely & regularly. Three grafted trees of similar age are yet to flower, which is why I have not sold this clone in the past decade. The ancestry of this clone is obscure. It & similar trees, some still visible around Gympie, were sold by Qld. Forestry soon after WW II, as F1 *discolor* x *populneus* hybrids, which is plainly ridiculous. 'Griffith Pink', which is of that ancestry, has thin-textured leaves of an entirely different regularly-lobed shape. Butts Red has leaves like a juvenile lobed *B. acerifolius*, with heavy *acerifolius*-like texture, but the flowers are *discolor* size with the purple colour always seen in F1 *discolor* hybrids. I can see no signs of *populneus* in either the leaves or flowers; it may be a late generation *discolor* x *acerifolius* hybrid, & it would be interesting, & perhaps a good Uni student project, to do a DNA analysis of it compared to *discolor*, *populneus*, Griffith Pink, *acerifolius*, & Clarabelle (which is F1 *acerifolius* x

discolor). A quick & dirty method like RAPD should serve to establish its likely ancestry.

**Sizes & colours of new flowerings :** Forgot to measure Butts Red. About 5.5 cm long x 5.5 cm wide.

Garry Sankowskys B. 'muellerianus' ; 6.5 l x 5.0 w, a pale greeny-apricot.

B. muellerianus from Musgrave Roadhouse ; 3.5 l x 4.0 w, a pale apricot darkening to pink-apricot after a day or so.

B. garrawayae from Wenlock River ; 5 l x 4 w, a clear bright unfading red similar to B. bidwillii Large Red when it first opens (it later fades).

**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. x *excellens* x itself (several parental clones, all pink or red), Beau Belle x discolor, Beau Belle x Jasper Belle, Beau Belle x *excellens*, Clarabelle x Jasper Belle, Robin Hood x muellerianus, Beau Belle x garrawayae, Beau Belle x muellerianus. And, from seed collected at Dundee Beach, 2.5 hours drive S-W of Darwin, the local form of B. diversifolius ssp. diversifolius. The other subspecies, orientalis, comes from north Qld.

**Email Addresses :** Anyone who wants to send me their email address, & reduce their sub to \$3 per year, feel free to do so, & I shall send their newsletter by email. My computer insists in putting my email address in red, which photocopies poorly, so I repeat it below with illegal blanks between each word, which will fool it.  
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