

ASGAP BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Commersonias : *Commersonia pulchella* is flowering nicely in a pot at Merv Hodges place at present. *C. johnsonii*, formerly known as *C. sp.* Zamia Range, has just finished flowering in one of my elevated sand beds. The latter is supposed to sucker but is not yet doing so. Both are small erect shrubs with smallish leaves & pale pink flowers. The very widespread small tree, *C. bartramia*, bears its white flowers for much of the year here, & makes a very fast-growing windbreak or screen tree, with many horizontal branches. The similar *C. fraseri* can be a nuisance by suckering profusely. I have seen one sucker which was bright yellow, with no chlorophyll, but nourished for years by its normal relatives.

New *Commersonia* species : C.F. Wilkins & B.A. Whitlock, 2005 *Muelleria* 22 : 87-92, report a new species, *C. multiloba*, endemic to the northern part of the Eyre Peninsula in S.A. It is a rare dwarf red-&-white flowered shrub. The authors mention that the genera *Commersonia* & *Rulingia* (currently delimited from *Commersonia* by having one not three staminodes between the stamens) should perhaps be merged. 'Although these genera together form a monophyletic group, as shown by cladistic analyses of morphological data of the *Lasiopetalae* (Wilkins 2002) & recent studies of *ndhF* molecular data (Whitlock et al., 2001), the species are intermingled & neither genus is monophyletic' on its own. The authors plan to test this further by DNA tests involving all species in the 2 genera. I wonder if they realised how Guymmer (see next paragraph) was enlarging *Commersonia* ?

Gordon Guymmer, 2005 *Austrobaileya* 7 : 231-250, describes ten new species of *Commersonia* from eastern Australia & Vanuatu, & makes a new combination for *C. novoguineensis* from montane forest in Papua New Guinea. This was at one time included under *C. bartramia*, & more recently under *Disaster novoguineensis*. Must be a story behind the latter generic name. He gives a key to the 11 Qld. species of *Commersonia*. Their leaves are often interestingly lobed or crenate, often silvery or glaucous, & branchlets often have yellow or yellowish-brown hairs. Flowers are a little small in most species, but usually numerous, & many species are adapted to semi-arid conditions. His New *C. pedleyi* 'has a single staminode or a central & 2 lateral staminodes between each pair of stamens', but otherwise fits smoothly into *Commersonia*. The genus has about 30 species, mostly in Australia. Guymmer re-describes *C. leichhardtii*. It is a suckering shrub to 50 cm, with 12-15 mm yellow flowers, & comes from central Qld., from Boyd Creek west of Taroom to the Barakula State Forest near Chinchilla.

The new species are (1) *C. viscidula*, (formerly *C. sp.* Mt. Tinbeerwah), a suckering shrub to 3 m with 7-10 mm white flowers, from Woowonga Range in S-E Qld. to Bulga on the central coast of NSW. It is closely related to *C. fraseri*. (2) *C. argentea*, a silver-leaved suckering shrub to 4 m with 9-10 mm white flowers, from the Chinchilla- Carnarvon areas. (3) *C. beeronensis* is a suckering shrub to 2.5 m from Beeron Holding, a recent NP in S-E Qld. It has 6-7 mm cream flowers & golden pubescent branchlets. (4) *C. rossii* is a shrub or tree, 4-10 m, with 9-11 mm white or cream flowers, & comes from the south coast of NSW to East Gippsland, Victoria. (5) *C. obliqua* is a shrub or tree, 3-15 m tall, with 5-6 mm white flowers, from Vanuatu. (6) *C. reticulata* is a suckering shrub to 1 m tall with 9-11 mm bright red or red flowers, from south of Mt. Garnet to Townsville in N-E Qld. The leaves are broadly ovate to ovate-lanceolate, & glaucous or silvery, paler below. (7) *C. johnsonii* is a suckering shrub to 1 m with 14-17 mm white to pale pink flowers, & comes from the Zamia Range in Minerva NP, near Springsure in central Qld. (8) *C. pearnii* is a suckering shrub to 1 m from Blackdown Tableland, with 4-5 mm white, cream or pale green flowers. (9) *C. leiperi* is a suckering erect or prostrate shrub to 1 m tall, with 4.5 - 5.5 mm white flowers (with pink buds), from just south of Bundaberg to State Forest 57 St. Mary, S-W of Maryborough. (10) *C. pedleyi* is a suckering low spreading or prostrate shrub to 60 cm (20-150 cm across), with 6-7 mm white (aging to pink) flowers, & ranges from Gurulmundi (north of Miles) to west of St. George, often on sandy soils.

Late flowerings, etc. : A couple of my many plants of *B. bidwillii* 'Beau Belle' re-started flowering a couple of weeks ago, & are still in moderate flower, as at today on 14-6-2007. I doubt if they will continue long, as it has got down to 2 degrees on the last 2 mornings. Incidentally, what I call Beau Belle is the same

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clone as my K11 & Mervs Beau Bells. My 2 planted B. 'Robin Hood' have defoliated in the last few days, but none have at Mervs, which is slightly warmer, & his plants have been watered regularly. Other *bidwillii* hybrids, & *bidwillii* itself, are busily growing new leaves. Some *B. acerifolius* have just been attacked by the leaf-rolling caterpillars of a common pest moth, as often happens just before cold weather kills them off.

Yearly summary : A newish SGAP requirement. New scientific descriptions of Australian Sterculiaceae have been summarised, including the 13 spp. of *Commersonia* listed on the previous page.

Horticultural details have been recorded on many new promising hybrids (see n/1 no. 29), & unusual flowering durations noted on many *Brachychiton* species & hybrids. Merv Hodge has, this year & the last, sent many (hundreds) of grafted *Brachychiton* hybrids to councils in greater Adelaide, mainly to serve as street trees. Reports of trees sent last year, & the one before, have been extremely favourable. This is a big change for Adelaide, as I remember from the last SGAP conference in S.A. how Adelaide gardeners & landscapers seemed never to have heard of anything but *populneus* (kurrajong) & *discolor* (lacebark). Cultivars sent there in numbers have included Beau Belle, Jasper Belle, Belladonna, & Clarabelle. These 4, & Big Red & *B. spectabilis*, are popular in Qld. for their spectacular flowers, & one or more of the Robin Hood clones will be much sought after (on peoples comments) once Merv decides which one(s) to release.

A list is given of new hybrid seedlings raised, plus a couple of 'new' brachy species raised.

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