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ANPSA BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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black For easy photocopying.)

Change of address : Due to family reasons, mainly related to where my relatives & grandchildren now live, Annabel & I moved to Toowoomba in late September of 2011, & have been a bit slow in notifying everyone except my family. This is partly due to the fact that I have moved the bulk of my smaller plants up here, 26 Hi-Lux ute loads to date, plus carting 70-odd ute loads of green waste to the tip. Making my 11 & a bit acres presentable to potential buyers who may not appreciate the jungle ambience is a major job after 30 years of planting & the last 2 years of phenomenal rain. Since even a dense-planter like myself cannot cram vast numbers of brachys into a little over a quarter of an acre, I have moved most of the bigger ones to my brother's 10 acre block at Kurwongbah, on Brisbane's north side, plus my larger cycads. A friend at Rochedale, in Brisbane's inner southside, wanted to transform 10 acres of bare land into rainforest, so his block is now richly endowed with quite a few grafted brachys plus scores of flame trees & *bidwilliis*, & lots of RF trees & shrubs.

Due to the abysmal state of the Brisbane property market, especially for acreage, we still own our Greenbank block, & have to visit regularly to mow lawns & so on. And this does not look like changing in the near future.

Weather & flowering times : As everyone would know, 2011-2012 weather has been exceptional, particularly in Qld, just like the previous year, & mainly wet & cool. June, July & August were all cool with 10 frosts between late June & mid-August, & lots of rain. Both Qld & Australia had the coldest autumn since the 1940's in 2011. The 9th was the coldest June maximum for Brisbane since 1916. Heavy coastal rain flooded northern NSW from the Qld border to Newcastle, being worst around Taree. The 21st was the coldest day around the NSW Southern Highlands for 30 years.

Spring was fairly normal, although a little cooler than average, with only a few days over 30 degrees. Fine & sunny for a change, at least on the coast. Late November was the start of heavy rain in western Qld & N-W NSW, which has continued almost non-stop inland so that as I write several small Qld towns have been evacuated & the larger town of St. George been compulsorily evacuated as already-record floodwaters are expected to rise another 2 m or so. The levee banks at Charleville barely held, & Mitchell & many small western towns are still heavily flooded. Roma is drying out. Moree, Wee Waa, Taree & many NSW coastal towns have been flooded ---again. Ditto for N-W Qld, although due to the low population the area does not get the same news coverage as S-W Qld & N-W NSW. At this point dying relatives & other distractions lead to 3 weeks in Sydney & Jugiong (near Yass), & the NSW & N-W Victorian rain decided it was its turn to grab the headlines. Cool weather continued, most of the NSW Riverina, where I lived for 10 dry years, went under water, as did much of N-W Victoria. This was local rain, as

the latest round of Qld floodwater is still on its way south. Warragamba Dam overflowed copiously, making fools of Flannery & his fellow-doomsayers 'It will never fill again', etc. I was at Jugiong, helping my brother-in-law move some possessions from his sheep property which he had just sold, & we just got out before the operators of Burrinjuck Dam let water out in amounts greater by far than ever before, & the Murrumbidgee cut off that property, & many others, & little Jugiong was evacuated & then flooded. Soon after that water flooded parts of Canberra. I had never seen so much grass in the Southern Highlands, which is usually brown & bare in mid-summer. Driving back to Toowoomba along the New England Highway, I was struck by how many of the English deciduous trees had foliage which was already well into autumn garb.

Brachychiton flowerings have been a mixed batch this year. In all areas it seems to have been a great season for flame tree flowering, while some of its hybrids have not done quite as well. Robin Hood plants at Greenbank flowered poorly or not at all, but Will Scarlet flowered well for 3 months at Merv's (warmer than Greenbank). Clarabelle (*acerifolius x discolor*) returned to normal & several trees flowered for 2 months. Most *excellens* (*bidwillii x discolor*) flowered well, including Rosalind & pots of Dark Knight & Little Ripper, but the original Dark Knight did not flower until late December. Several as yet unnamed clones of *excellens* given to me by various people mostly did not flower. Most forms of *bidwillii* flowered well, especially Red Baron, Beau Belle & Newbie, The last-named looking as if it has a large splash of *excellens* in it judging by its leaves. *B. roseus* (*acerifolius x populneus*) flowered only very briefly. *B. albidus* from Cape York flowered well at Toowoomba, from early October to early December. Small plants of *B. garrowayae*, from the top of Cape York, did not flower but the 7-year-old plant at Greenbank flowered normally, starting in early November & fading by late December. At Merv's, his 20-year-old seedling of *spectabilis* started to flower in early January, & ceased in late February. I visited Brent Vieritz' nursery at Beachmere (opposite Bribie Island) in late September, & he had the cream-flowered form of *B. megaphyllus* in peak flower, as was Garry Sankowsky's multi-coloured *muellerianus* hybrid (possibly with *grandiflorus*; large flowers & leaves). At Toowoomba, in a much cooler climate, my plants of the same cream clone began to flower in mid-October, as did my tangerine *megaphyllus*, & *spectabilis*, & all three continued until early February, when they switched to growing new leaves. My plant of Sankowsky's hybrid grew well but did not flower. Brent's had ceased flowering by mid-November, but he crossed it to Rosalind & has seedlings up. He also crossed the cream *megaphyllus* to Red Baron, & has seedlings up. I put various pollen samples on to both my *megaphyllus*, but the pods aborted early.

Jasper Lode flowered from 11-6-2011 to 10-3-2012. As usual, it started with many small red flowers during the cold weather, & from September on they doubled in size & became pink with sometimes an orange tinge. Its sibling Jasper Belle plants had a shorter flowering period, September to late November, but one clone, JB2, flowered very well which it had not done as a younger tree. It has apricot-pink 6 cm flowers, larger & a different shade than Jasper Lode. One clone has not flowered for seven years, & I left it to see if it ever would again; it did have a few flowers as a 2-year-old. None of them set any pods. The parents must be just too far apart genetically. The JB pollen is fully viable as I have raised many seedlings using it.

Pink-peduncle trait : Pods of *bidwillii* x two different (Dark Knight & BV1) clones of presumed *excellens* showed the bright pink colouration on the half of the peduncle (pod-stalk) nearest the pod. I have seen this before in *bidwillii* plants & hybrids when pollen from plants with *discolor* genes are used on them ; see newsletters 21 & 28. The colour slowly fades to brown as the pods mature.

Variation within species : Attila Kapitany's booklet, 'Australian bottle trees & boabs', illustrates some of the wide variation in leaf form & flower colour in *B. rupestris*. I have recently been sent material from *B. discolor* & perhaps some of its hybrids that show great variability in leaf shape & size. The species varies quite a lot in flower colour also, from nearly white to nearly red, with a purply-pink interior & a pale exterior being the commonest. The photocopied leaves are of 2 normal adult *discolor* leaves on one side, & a single leaf of a giant-leaved clone on the reverse. I have not yet seen the latter flower. The colour images show some of the colour variation in flowers of *B. megaphyllus*, which is common around Darwin & much of the Top End of the N.T. The commonest form by far is a red flower with green inside the throat, for about one third of the distance from the lower end. This also applies to the taller *aff. megaphyllus* trees seen west of Katherine. The white colour is the rarest, perhaps due to attracting fewer pollinators which may well be attuned to more flamboyant shades. On page 4, the images are, clockwise from the top left, white *megaphyllus*, tangerine *megaphyllus*, 'Dark Knight', & *B. albidus*. On page 5, the images are, clockwise from the top left, *B. bidwillii* 'Profuse Pink', 'Clarabelle', 'Rosalind' & 'Will Scarlet' (which is a Robin Hood). I shall send printed colour sheets to people without email & SGAP/APS secretaries, & email them to others either with the rest of the newsletter, or separately (have to get my scanner going again). *Photo pages not available.*

Seed available : I have available seed of *bidwillii* Red Baron & Beau Belle, both of which seem to breed pretty true, & in any case should produce nice plants. Should flower in 3 years from a spring sowing. Sow about the depth of the seed. It may pay to cover the pots for 3 weeks or so to deter rodents & birds. After about that time the scent must wear off & they don't worry them. Germination % should be close to 100. A couple of 60 cent stamps will cover postage. I also have tiny amounts of seed of *B. x-vinicolor* & *B. discolor* & a couple of *excellens* cultivars.

Close planting : In my new garden I have planted 50 or so brachys about a metre apart, much closer than normal for most species, but OK for small species like *megaphyllus* which is slow-growing outside the tropics anyway. I shall have to prune most of the others in due course, which at least will enable me to advise people who want to plant them in tubs & so on. I expect most will flower normally if pruned in autumn or winter.

Best wishes to all for 2012-13.

Kerry.



