

ANPSA BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP
ISSN 0816-178x

Newsletter No. 44.

May 2016.

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Flowering patterns for 2015-2016 : This past year has seen the poorest flowering of *Brachychitons* I can recall, taken over all species. An exception has been Flame trees, *B. acerifolius*, which have flowered at least as well as usual not only here in Toowoomba but everywhere I went in Qld. The drought, although very widespread in Qld & western NSW, does not explain the poor or absent flowerings, as my garden & most of the sites I visited was well watered artificially all year, & natural rainfall here was quite good for what was supposedly a severe *El Nino* year.

B. albidus flowered as well as the previous year, once again flowering better & longer than any *bidwillii*, with its peak in November after starting in mid October, & its last flowers in early January. Several pods were produced from pollen from Dark Knight, but several pods from later pollinations by itself or by Dark Knight aborted, possibly due to a few cold days or to the older pods winning a between-pods competition for nutrients.

BV1, a *carneus* (or possibly *allochrous*) x *bidwillii* hybrid, also flowered very well, starting in late April with small flowers (2cm x 2 cm), but soon increasing to its normal 5 cm or more; the largest were 6.5 cm wide x 2.5 cm tall, with the bottom 2 cm greenish. Some had 6 petals, & some petals had a central indentation in the outer rim. Flowers were pale pink for most of the first day, then darker, showing their *grandiflorus* ancestry. All flowers were male, & ceased in early January.

B. bidwillii ex Cania Gorge, a form with large & very lightly indented leaves, flowered well during November & early December. Most other *bidwillii* clones flowered poorly or not at all, which is unusual except in severe drought. Most Jasper Belle clones flowered briefly but well, during November or December, as did Mt White (a *carneus*). *B. muellerianus* had a few flowers in November,

'Argyle Pearl' flowered from late November to mid-January, & a pod was set using this pollen on a Red Baron *bidwillii* seedling similar to its parent. No seeds have yet germinated.

Rosalind, Will Scarlet & Dark Knight both flowered in early November, were a blaze of colour during mid-November to mid-December, & ceased flowering before Christmas. All, especially Will Scarlet, would normally flower for an extra couple of months. *B. bidwillii* x *B. carneus* 'BV1' flowered from 2-7-'14 to 9-1-'15, with a peak in mid-December. Like *carneus*, the flowers were pale the first day they were open. Their size was similar to a good *bidwillii*, i.e., c 5 cm in diameter, but markedly smaller for the winter flowers.

Most *bidwillii*s, *Belladonna*, *spectabilis*, & *bidwillii* Cania Gorge, Cormy, Robin & Little Ripper flowered well but briefly, as did 'Bellarosa' (see later note) .

Subscriptions : Due to having been slack in producing newsletters for the year just past, I shall note all subs for the year 2013-2014 as paid. For the current year, it remains at \$5. Members are entitled to a concessional price on the brachy book, namely \$25 for the first book & \$30 each for up to 3 more, & I will bear the postage for up to 4 books. Above 4 books the postage costs rise. Please let me know how many you might like at your early convenience. Anyone providing pictures for the book was sent a copy in October, but I have not heard if they got to the addressees in all cases. So if you missed out, let me know. I had a hectic time late last year as I lost my brother in October & my mother-in-law on New Year's Day, & Annabel & I have had to do quite a bit of arranging things, involving interstate travel & so on.

Welcome to new members : A warm if belated welcome to Ian & Joan Dunn of Plenty In Victoria (they attended the Bendigo seminar weekend), Michael Elgey from the National Herbarium of NSW at Sydney, Graham Coombs of Nambour in Qld (whom I have sold a few rare ferns to in the past, both for himself & for the Maroochy Botanic Gardens), & Oren Zeevi from the Negev desert in Israel, & anyone else that I may have overlooked. And recently, Joe Bletchly from Helidon in Qld, with interests in cattle & in equine events.

Oren has a 40 ha wholesale nursery, supplying quite a few brachys, including 2 PBR varieties, namely 'Mini-acer', an *acerifolius* type, & 'Julie', a *roseus* form. His website, www.botanimg , gives flowering periods of May for Mini-acer & April-May for Julie, & cites 3 tree sizes for each, depending on the chosen rootstock. They look fine, but I would not expect either to survive a PBR trial in Australia, as they look to me to fit in the natural range of *roseus* & flame tree respectively. The next 5 images are of these plants, from Oren's brochure, the first 2 being of 'Mini-acer', & the next 3 being of 'Julie'.



Assorted notes & photos. (1) *B. 'Bellarosa'*. This plant, pictured in my last newsletter, is still of uncertain parentage. I was given a sturdy grafted young plant at Bendigo by Humphris Nursery. It flowered briefly but well in November, with the leaves looking clearly *B. x excellens*, & the flowers appearing identical to 'Dark Knight', but a little smaller. This would be explained by the plant being younger, if indeed the 2 clones are identical. As Humphris Nursery initially claimed 'Bellarosa' was a 'Jasper Belle' they had sourced from Merv Hodge, this would make some sense as 'Dark Knight' originated with Merv.

(2) The image below is of *B. discolor* female flowers on a tree at Hay in south-western NSW, taken by Ivan Reynolds or a friend of his. The pink colour is darker than usual.



(3) The next two pictures were both taken recently by Simone Rushby in the East Kimberleys, near the N.T. border. The first is of a double flower, either of *B. tuberculatus* or of the natural hybrid that grows nearby, probably the latter. The second image is of the hybrid, as the flowers have the tepals (coloured sepals) joined almost to the tips, similar to the hybrid flowers on page 127 of the book. The leaves in both images match those of *tuberculatus*. The flowers of true *tuberculatus* that I have seen are always speckled. Simone's shots of the hybrid show clear (& darker) colours only. If we can only get either entity to cross with something like *bidwillii* that is hardy in most climates, & flowers while young, there are some potentially great hybrids to be obtained. Simone is trying to get leaves (for DNA samples) & seeds for me, but the weather in the East Kimberleys just gets wetter & wetter, as tropical WA gets ever more cyclones. Would you like me to send you some *bidwillii* plants by mail, Simone, (fairly easy to send them bare-rooted, in sterile wood shavings or something similar that keeps your state quarantine authorities happy), & you could then cross-pollinate them when the weather permits ?



(4) The next image is of a clump of male *tuberculatus* flowers on the tree trunk, taken by Attila Kapitany a few years ago. Note the speckles.



Climate : A few words about another of my interests. The chattering-class majority of journalists & environmentalists have succumbed to the temptation to over-emote about recent warm weather & postulated damage to the Great Barrier Reef. The 2015-16 weather has been dominated by one of the biggest *El Nino* events yet recorded, & this will have swamped the 'Global Warming' effects for the period. It may be a decade before all becomes clear, so precipitate claims & actions are unwise. What is clear is that only the far northern section of the reef off Cape York is severely affected by coral bleaching, & this should recover well as water quality is high now the *El Nino* has moved to neutral. As the Aust. Institute of Marine Science has just reported, 75% of the reef has escaped unscathed. Recent research has shown some corals will soon repopulate with their algal symbionts, & others will migrate into the damaged areas. And, as shown by the deep drilling in Pacific islands during the bad old atom bomb test days, corals found hundreds of metres deep prove how corals have risen as seas rose after past ice ages, the last ending some 15000 years ago. Like the deaths of polar bears, that of corals are vastly over-hyped. The DNA data from the bears show the species has been around the Arctic for scores of warm intervals between ice ages. **Best wishes to all, Kerry.**

