

ANPSA BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Flowering patterns for 2017- 2018 : This last year has continued peculiar climatically for the last 3 months of this financial year, with the local Toowoomba weather staying warm & fine through April, May & the greater part of June. From June 18th there were 3 very windy days down to -1^o, then calm sunny days ranging over 5-17 degrees. Total rainfall was 15 mm for April, 12 for May & 0.5 mm for June to date (the 27th). The drought in inland non-tropical Qld & western NSW continues unabated, & I'm glad I am not farming these days, & really feeling for my friends & relatives in western Qld. Meanwhile much of Victoria & all of Tasmania are enduring storms & extreme cold. Global warming is however showing its face in the Arctic. Some climate alarmists are claiming considerable ice loss in Antarctica, but other voices put all the alleged loss down to isostatic rebounding in Europe & N America, which is a fancy term for those continents still rising upwards after the last ice age, 12000 & more yrs ago, when ice kilometres thick covered huge areas. No wonder the Russians & Inuit find it hard to get worried about CO₂ levels, & surprising that Canadians don't join them. Satellites can now measure land positions down to mm, but snow sitting on top of ice on top of water or rock is still very hard to pin down due to the varying layer densities, dune effects & whatnot.

After being pruned in late March, a time dictated by tree lopping of large conifers & not by the best time for curtailing the brachys, almost all made some vegetative growth. BV1 continued to flower, & by May Coen Pink & Jasper Belle produced a few flowers after an inactive period, while Argyle Pearl reached peak flowering, still all males, & by June 25th its flowering slowed to a trickle. All four taxa are accumulating small flower buds, for the most part, rather than opening flowers, & those that open are of the order of 2 cm x 2 cm, about one third of their summer sizes. Argyle Pearl is still leafless, as it has been for over 2 months, despite its steady flower production until very recently. The flowers have however been getting smaller as the weather cooled. BV1 is accumulating the most flower buds by far, on almost all its surviving twigs, as the mature shrub of Jasper Lode used to do at Greenbank in winter.

Replacement plants : In April Graham Coombe from near Gympie, who had bought a lot of assorted brachys from me a couple of years ago, brought up some material from the *B.*

albidus he had got from me, as he knew I had lost mine from comments in a newsletter. Annabel did a few grafts the next day, & at least some have taken. As I have no heat facilities for propagation here yet, I won't know how many until spring. And I replaced a *B. collinus* maimed by the treeloppers with a grafted plant from Peter Bevan, which may or may not trace back to my original tree. The *collinus* will take a decade or more to flower, on my past experience, but will form a symmetrical tree with its maple-like foliage forming a neat cone almost to the ground.

Seed and plants available : I have small amounts of seed available from *B. muellerianus*, *bidwillii* (various forms), *australis*, Jasper Belle & Robin Hood. For those able to visit me, I will have grafted plants on hand in spring of nearly all species & cultivars mentioned in my book, except WA ones, *multicaulis* & Argyle Pearl. Small seedlings of *gregorii* & some hybrids will also be available. Seeds are free (bar postage) within Australia, & grafted plants \$12 at my door. Sometimes I can deliver small plants to Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra if I am going to that city for other reasons. Except to WA, grafted plants or cuttings can be sent by post or bus if wrapped in waterproof plastic around bare-root plants in moist (but not soggy) newspaper or wood shavings. Losses are almost zero due to the tuberous roots of young brachys, provided the State quarantine authorities don't suddenly impose a blanket ban on plants from Qld for some reason. I also have some native ferns & hybrids of the more spectacular native *Hibiscus* & the related *Alyogyne*s at most times. Copies of my 2014 book on 'Brachychitons' is always available at \$30 plus postage, 220 pages mostly of colour photos.

Nectary numbers for some tropical hybrids : I have been observing nectary numbers on some hybrids & also on some forms of species where there was some doubt as to their correct attribution. The counts are listed below ;

Argyle Pearl 15, 15, 13, 15 (a flower with 6 tepals)

Mt. White 14, 14 (2 of them small)

Coen Pink 12, 12, 12

Red *garrawayae* 15 (12 distinct), 15, 14

Robin 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10

Robin is clearly a *bidwillii*, as I thought, & the red form of *garrawayae* is not a *bidwillii*, although it could well be a hybrid. Before pruning it was 8 m tall, & fairly erect, 5 m taller than the same clone in 8 years at Greenbank. The much poorer sandy loam soil at Greenbank may explain the difference in growth, as watering was similar at both sites. The leaves are smaller & a different shape from the standard 'green' form, which has a flower which is relatively broad, & green at the base of the floral tube. I have not had pods on the 'red' form so cannot compare the two on that criterion, & I have no plants of the Laura sand

ridge form to compare either against. Anyone going that way, I would love plants from there, or fresh or dried specimens (for DNA testing), & good colour images of flowers of both sexes. The 'red' form has numerous 15 cm shoots since being pruned in late March. Whatever it is, it is hardy & very floriferous. My health, or more precisely my wife & kids' perception of same, won't allow me to head to Cape York this year.

The Argyle Pearl nectaries are covered with hairs, making it difficult to count them accurately as a blob could be one or several nectaries. My microscope needed repairs, so I trimmed the tepals & photographed them, & then zoomed out to look at the tepal bases. Tepal, incidentally, is a useful botanical term for when you aren't sure if you are looking at a petal or a sepal. Most nectaries are distinct little entities. Not so with Argyle Pearl & some Jasper Belle flowers.



Above, Argyle Pearl trimmed tepals with nectaries of various sizes, & below, a few Jasper Belle nectaries, & a thumbnail image of the sole surviving BR5 (Big Pink x Merv's Flat Red) flower to partly survive the hailstorm.



Flowering patterns over years, Toowoomba : The table below shows flowering duration for a few selected taxa from 2013 to the present. I have omitted data for 2012 & 2013 as many plants were too young to exhibit anything close to normal flowering patterns. All plants were grafted on to *acerifolius* rootstocks & grown in Toowoomba red clay with minimal added fertiliser, but ample water from the sky plus taps. Each column contains firstly the starting date (ddmm) of flowering in the relevant year, & secondly the ending date (in the same or the following calendar year).

Species or hybrid	Calendar YEAR			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>bidwilliis</i>	1-4, 19-1	28-10, 12-1	12-10, 6-1	3-10, 8-3
Argyle Pearl	27-11, 8-1	22-12, 23-12	9-1, 19-1 [#]	7-12, 30-6 [*]
BV1	2-7, 9-1	25-8, 15-1	12-4, 20-1	1-10, 30-6 [*]
Coen Pink	absent	1-1, 12-1 [#]	19-11, 10-2	4-10, 30-6 [*]
Jasper Belle	20-10, 9-2	13-11, 12-2	5-12, 18-2	1-10, 30-6 [*]

*Still making flower buds

both dates relate to the 'following' calendar year.

The increasing flowering periods over the years indicate the increasing maturity of the shrubs, apart from the early-maturing *bidwillii* types, & the mildness of early winter for 2017. Omissions from the list would, if included, have shown short or non-existent flowering periods for many species & cultivars due to erratic weather in spring & autumn of 2017-'18. For instance, *grandiflorus* & several clones of *excellens* did not flower at all.

Best wishes to all, & happy gardening.

Kerry.