

NEWSLETTER NO. 2, June 1978.

Leader - Daisy Phelps, Loxton North, 5339.

No sooner had I posted out 23 copies of the first newsletter I received another 35 letters which had been written to the previous leader. Fortunately I had kept the master copy, and was able to run off some more, but of course those 35 names were missing from the membership list. They will be included this time.

Thank you to those who have written to me since receiving the first newsletter. Thanks especially to Mr. Colin Cornford, Secretary of the Rockhampton SGAP Branch, who wrote a long letter giving conditions in his area, and describing 38 varieties of Callistemon which have been planted there. Part of his information will be included this time and some in future.

In March, I was pleased to have a visit from members David and Helen Tongway, who are both involved in soil testing at the O Riverina Laboratory. Any other members passing this way are welcome to call in. I will be pleased to pass on cuttings of any of my plants which are big enough.

In the Feb. newsletter, I asked whether anyone knows of a key or botanical description of eastern varieties of Callistemon. Ann Boden, of Griffith, A.C.T. writes, "There is a key to species in the Sydney region in 'Flora of the Sydney Region' by Beadle, Collins, and Evans. As that area of N.S.W. is rich in Callistemon species, the range included is quite extensive. The three species native to A.C.T. are listed in 'Flora of the A.C.T.' by Burbidge and Grey. Collins' 'Field Guide to the Wildflowers of South-east Australia' by Jean Galbraith describes 20 species in field guide form, but it is not a key."

Seed has been sent in by Ellis Smith, Ann Boden, and Bill Cane. Thank you to these members. Varieties now in stock are rigidus, robustus, citrinus, citrinus var. splendens, linearis, formosus, punctatus, subulatus, purple pallidus, lilacinus, purpurea, laccous (mauve), violaceous (wine), endeavour, Injune, Guyra Field, red pityoides, and a very floriferous species with a lil pink-red brush. When asking for seed, please enclose a stamped envelope.

Donations of any other varieties would be very welcome. Does anyone have any seed of acuminatus to spare?

Thank you to those who have offered cuttings for other members. Mr. G.J. Cousins, 28 Brighton Avenue, Toronto, 2283, offered cutting when writing to the previous leader. Among varieties available were brachyandrus, formosus, Harkness, Seelam Creek, pinifolius green and red, phoeniceous, polandi, ignus (pink), subulatus, Tinaroo Falls, viridiflora.

A letter from Alan Williams, 17 Green Street, Altonside, as was mentioned in the first newsletter. He was offered some cutting material, but, as his list of varieties had been reported from his letter and only arrived in the last batch of seeds, I could not mention his offer until now. He has the following varieties in his garden. Gawler hybrid, shirehall, emana (Benark's form), majus (upright and weeping forms), majus (upright and weeping), montanus, paludosus, gillerii, ovali, bicifolius (green and red), citrinus (solandens and alba), auris, comboyensis (prostrate), pallidus (purple), pachyphyllum, abori, Teewoomba form, salignus (3 forms), sp. Chinacilla, myra, sp. Astina, sp. Severn River, and 10 forms of virginalis, sp. Goulia, Bald Hills, Dawson River, Wild River, Marlborough, Belconnen, Laidlaw Falls, 'Prolific', Captain Cook, Rose Opal.

None the above offers are now 18 months old, but I hope they will still hold good.

#### EXTRACTS FROM YOUR LETTERS.

Mr. J. Cornford, 155 Hobler Avenue, Nth. Rockhampton, Q.

Rockhampton is just north of the Tropic of Capricorn and 100 miles from the coast. Annual rainfall is around 200 mm with a majority of our rainfall being received in the November to February period. During this period we can get some very hot and humid weather. It is usually during these hot, humid periods that we experience loss of some plants which come from the temperate part of Australia, particularly Grevilleas.

Winter is usually mild and dry with frosts being a rare occurrence in the city area. Frosts are experienced in the districts to the west and south. Temperatures in the city range from around 5C in winter to around 37C in the summer.

Soils in the city area vary considerably. Hard, stony areas occur in the higher parts of the city while heavy clay soils are widespread in the lower areas. The heavy clay soils do become very waterlogged during the wet summer period. There are occasional areas of red clay loam soils and brown sandy loam soils. It has been our experience that Gallisteroms are very tolerant of soil types and weather conditions. I do not know of a grower who has had much difficulty in growing Gallisteroms. There are a few southern varieties which don't flower well here.

There are a few Gallisteroms which grow naturally in the area. The most common are G. virginalis and G. palandifera and G. farraii.

Gallisteroms are not plagued by many pests and diseases in this area. The leaf roller caterpillar is a pest in plants as it rolls the new leaf growth round itself and eats out the living point. It attacks plants of all ages, mainly during winter. Its effect is not so noticeable as the plant gets larger, it can be controlled fairly easily with Carbaryl or Dieldrin.

We also have trouble with a wood borer which attacks the lower upper branches. As it lives inside the branch, its presence is not noticed until the branch dies. The only thing that can be done then is to cut the branch back to below where the hole is, and destroy it. As a matter of interest, this borer attacks some of the melaleuca species.

Pink wax scale is a minor problem on some varieties. It seems to be mainly a problem of young plants, but does attack *Leucadendron* "Alba" fairly consistently. It can be fairly readily controlled with white oil.

There doesn't appear to be any problem with soil nutrient deficiencies, although an iron deficiency shows up occasionally following a prolonged wet period. This is fairly easily corrected by watering with a solution of iron chelates.

My garden is located on one of the stoney ridges about 100 feet above sea level. I have the following varieties growing quite successfully.

Terminalis: A large shrub or small tree. It carries a profusion of large red brushes in spring with occasional flowers during the rest of the year. It has a weeping habit and grows to 5-6 metres. It is very easy to grow and is by far the most commonly grown in this area. There are a number of forms, having variations in leaf shape and flower colour although colour is always a variation of red.

One form I know has a deep plum coloured flower.

Guyra Hybrid: This one grows to about 2-5 m. and spreads about 2 m. Deep pink brushes are produced 3 or 4 times a year. It is easily grown. Tip pruning when young seems to be helpful in producing a better shaped plant.

Handy Pink: The deep pink brushes of this shrub are produced in profusion 3 or 4 times a year. Brushes are about 150 mm in length. The plant grows to about 3 m. In general appearance and lower form this one is very similar to "Guyra Hybrid" but seems to be slightly more upright in growth. It is easily grown.

Swallow Hybrid: This is fairly slow growing here but is magnificent in flower in spring. It will produce an occasional flower during the rest of the year. It is easy to grow and quite hardy.

Prunus: (Pink Form) There is also a red form of this. The one I have produces pale pink brushes with yellow stamens. It flowers for a long period. The pink fades to white as the flower ages. It is quite attractive as it carries pink and white brushes simultaneously. Grows to about 3 m. and is easy to grow.

Berundah Station. A sparse shrub carrying pale pink brushes about 75 mm in length. It flowers on and off throughout the year. Flower colour fades very quickly to white but it is a worthwhile addition to the shrubbery. It grows fairly slowly and will reach about 2.5 m. in height with a spread of about 2 m.

Albizia Rubra: As the name suggests this is generally regarded as a tree. However, my plant has pale to medium pink flowers to about 50 mm in length. Yellow stamens stand out from the main part of the brush. It is a shrub with open habit. My plant took four years to flower, but now flowers fairly continuously. It grows to about 3 m. with a spread of about 3m.



Captain Cook: This small shrub, to 1.5 m. in height, is fairly ugly when not in flower but is magnificent when it flowers in spring. The deep red brushes, about 100 mm long, are massed over the whole of the plant. It is a dwarf form of *C. Viminalis* sometimes listed as *C. Compactus*.

Big Onal: This dwarf form of *C. Viminalis* flowers heavily in the spring. Flower colour can best be described as deep red. Flowers are borne in clusters at the end of the branches. It grows to about 1.5 m. with quite dense foliage. In my experience it would be a better plant to grow than "Captain Cook" whenever a small plant is required as it is more attractive when not in flower.

Infolius: I have the prostrate form of this. It has an open habit and will spread over an area of 2-3 m. with a height of about 0.5 m. The apple-green flower, about 100 mm. in length, is tight and very attractive. The upright form is fairly sparse and grows to about 2 m. with a similar flower colour.

Emboynensis: This is a semi-prostrate red-flowered shrub growing in a very open form. My plant has not yet flowered but other plants in Rockhampton have, on occasion, flowered fairly well. A well-grown plant can spread over 2-3 m. to a height of about 0.3m.

Africanus "Alba": This is a semi-prostrate form growing to a height of about 1 m. and with a similar spread. It is a very active shrub with its pale green leaves and pure white flower. It flowers once a year in the spring. My plant is growing quite well in fairly heavy shade.

Inaroo: A small-leaved plant from Nth. Queensland. It is usually an open spreading shrub growing to about 2.5 m. The small, tight red brushes with yellow stamens are about 50-75 mm in length. It grows readily in all soil types in Rockhampton.

(Some of Mr. Cornford's interesting descriptions will be included in the next newsletter.)

P. Watson, 12 Knights Road, Galston, N.S.W. "We have nine *Distemon salignus*, all at least 15 feet tall, the largest being approximately 25 feet by 25 feet. One of them seems to be a better form than the others, not so much in flower quality as in general appearance and greenness of leaf. I put in some cuttings and hopefully a couple have struck. I would be happy to supply cuttings to others interested. One of the characteristics I admire in these plants is the beautiful pink foliage in Jan-Feb. I enclose a photo I took last year of some new leaves."

(P. Watson's photo shows a plant covered with delicate pink tips. My own plants, much smaller than hers, have several flushes of pink new growth each year, but in winter it is sometimes killed by frost, and in spring is sometimes chewed by caterpillars. It is the only variety with which I have caterpillar trouble.)

Gane, Box 10, Haffre, Vic. "Callistemon strikes readily from cuttings, the time of the year not being as important as with the wood. The softer the wood, the shorter the cutting time; and the more roots per cutting. Although in this district the soil temperatures are too low for rooting, cuttings taken from April to July will root in August-September from the onset of current season's growth, and during that period would be prone to bacterial attack or wilting."

Cousins, 28 Brighton Avenue, Toronto, N.S.W. "Almost all my Callistemon has been grown from cuttings, using pure vermiculite (pH6). I use cuttings 10cm long and about match thickness. The time to take cuttings is when the terminal leaf-bud is just swelling. I get 90% success by this method. The cuttings are kept in the enclosed plastic bag system, and root in 2 to 6 months."

Kendall, RMB 43, Mitchell Rd., Clifton Mail via Wagga Wagga. I'd be pleased to raise seedlings for other members while growing them for my own plantings. We have 5 acres of reasonable soil, probably part of the flood-plain of the Murrumbidgee when it is larger than now; pH is about 6.5."

S. T. Smith, 208 Greenwattle Street, Toowoomba, Q. "I have growing in our garden 140 Callistemons in varying stages of growth and flowering. Forms and species would be in excess of 40."

Daniels, Box 201 Bilcoela, Q. "A few years ago I planted seedlings of a Callistemon Gawler Hybrid "Harkness", and planted out about 20 of the seedlings. Most of the plants were fairly similar to each other and to the parent, but with some variation in shrub form and leaf colour and shape, but there were a few markedly "dwarf" types, with one plant in particular being a dwarf compact form only about 2½ feet (65cm) in height. All, with the exception of the dwarf shrub, have flowered fairly well, with colour similar to the parent."

There is a small callistemon which grows along creeks on the tableland on Blackdown Tableland. This is a high tableland of about 3,000 feet, about 100 miles west of Rockhampton and probably has more rare species of plants than any other area of similar height in Australia. Quite a number of species grow nowhere else. This callistemon is almost certainly a new species. It is a small, fairly open shrub growing to about 4 feet in height. Its leaves are not unlike *C. subulatus*, but slightly smaller and more prickly. When the foliage is held in the hand it feels prickly. It has small but attractive red brushes. As far as I know it has not been described or named."

Benham, 12 Somerset Square, Coonellabah, N.S.W. "Some years ago I found growing in a Lismore garden a small tree (about 3 m.) covered with brushes about 5cm long by about 2.3cm in diameter. I sent specimens to the national herbarium, who replied that it was not a known species. I was successful in propagating seedlings from cuttings."



1977, Burrendong Road, Gilgandra, N.S.W. "I want to tell you  
of a green-flowering Callistemon, found when my brother-in-law  
clearing virgin bush between Mendocoran and Gilgandra. The  
suckers up from the bottom to form a thick shrub of long  
leaves (almost grass) about 4'6" to 5' high. I have sent a sample  
to Peter Althofer at Burrendong Arboretum. He believes it to be  
a species of Pinifolius. Having nothing to dig with, we pulled  
one of these suckers and managed to get just a few roots.  
We loaded the tons back, cutting off all the young soft wood. Of  
the pieces planted, the only two to show any sign of growing are  
those that had only soft growth, so it looks like I did the wrong  
thing. One very large specimen of this plant is on a track  
near one area of cleared land and another, but is likely to be  
destroyed, as the owners are not particularly interested.

In January 1977, I visited the Burrendong Arboretum, and  
there was a beautiful specimen, a round thick shrub of  
weeping habit, about 6' high, it had 4" pink flower heads.  
The color was a cross between pink and cream, but a definite pink. Peter  
Althofer said it had set no seed, but they were trying to grow  
it from cuttings. He believed it to be a Queensland variety.  
Does anyone help?"

Sam Quint, 16 Evans Street, Peasehurst, N.S.W. "Do you have  
information on Callistemon ligma or licma? I bought one  
recently and I can't locate it in any of my native plant books  
or lists. The owner of the shop said that he'd had one in his  
yard for fifteen years."  
Does any member know anything about this one?)

Hayward, 355 Marion Road, Nth. Plympton, S.A. "I have tried  
Pinifolius (seed gathered at Wilpena Pound) at Linden Park  
Plympton but find it very slow. It probably needs more sun.  
I recently have a few seedlings of the same, and also some  
gathered from a garden specimen, and both show leaves wider and  
more upright than the Flinders Ranges variety."

PRUNING CALLISTEMONS. From an article by Edwin Ashby in a book,  
"Australian Gardening of Today", published some years ago.  
Practically all myrtaceous species can be hard cut back (not  
pruned like fruit trees). The result usually prolongs the life  
of the plant more than doubles the amount of flowers borne. Whether it  
is better to cut at ground level or higher up must be determined  
by the limitations of the garden and the wishes of the grower.  
For some species it is best to cut out half the branches annually  
(the inner centre one year, the outer the next). With others it is  
done every third year.  
Some callistemons may, in a larger garden, be allowed to  
grow to fifteen or even twenty feet and are very decorative from a  
distance point of view. However, where it is desired to limit  
them to about five feet, it is a good plan when once the bush  
has reached, say three feet, to cut out half the branches at  
ground level, and repeat the process every three years."