

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
 CALOTHAMNUS & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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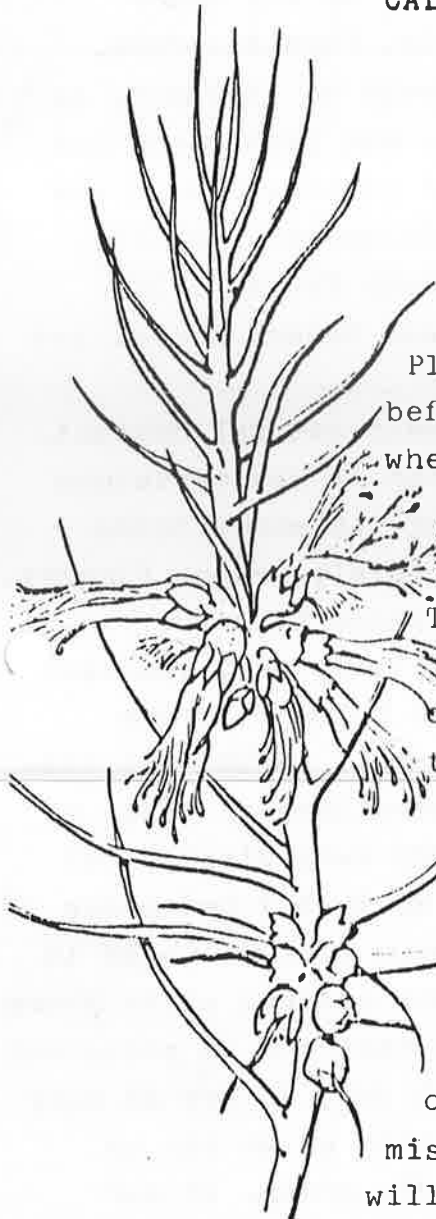
Please forgive me for not getting a newsletter out before this, as our wonderful trip ended tragically when my husband died suddenly.

As we neared Calothamnus areas we made lists of the species likely to be found in the different districts. This was made possible as Trevor Hawkeswood had sent me copies of his papers covering much of his work on Calothamnus. This included keys on species, descriptions of new species & others as well as distribution maps for the species.

As you can imagine it took a lot of time to travel through Calothamnus country, having to stop at every, or nearly every, brilliant splash of red. I took many slides, pressing specimens, & collecting seeds when possible. Although we found quite a few of the species we were hunting for, a lot were also missed so when I get the herbarium specimens sorted out will make a list of those still needed.

One of the most spectacular species was *C. homolopholus*, both the bush form & the prostrate one. Clear, bright red flowers, just massed on the bushy one while the prostrate ones were not as thick with blooms, but that could have been because they were growing in very exposed positions on & near cliffs. Maybe that is why they are prostrate? Many forms of *C. quadrifidus* were seen from over 4m to prostrate. *Calothamnus kalbarriensis* eluded us as time seem to catch up so quickly! A great thrill was finding *C. longissimus*, a little gnome of a plant. The ones we saw were quite small, generally only consisting of one stem, growing in rather swampy ground. Of course it had been raining quite a bit when they were found. Flowers were sparse but the corky stems & tangle of very long, thin leaves were fascinating. Unfortunately we could not find any seed.

Calothamnus sanguineus that we saw had almost finished flowering, but I liked the neat little shrubs with their small, light green, crowded leaves. Looking at the shrubs I would say that the flowering had been very prolific. Should be a good garden shrub.



As luck would have it I hadn't been able to get a key or any other information for our "Allied Genera", being *Beaufortia*, *Phymatocarpus*, *Regelia* & *Eremaea*. I had thought that *Lamarchea* would be included, as the flowers have quite a similarity to *Calothamnus*, but have found out that it is in the "Melaleuca infra-alliance". After getting home I was able to obtain "How to Know Western Australian Wildflowers" part 111 by Blackall & Grieve, so bought it for the Study Group for \$33. If anyone would like a copy of the keys for any of these Genera please let me know.

But back to my impressions of our plants in their natural habitat. There were probably lots I didn't even recognise, but it was marvelous to see thick hedges of *Eremaea* sp along the sides of the sandy roads between Three Springs & Eneabba, just covered with lovely orange flowers. There was another smaller shrub also covered with orange flowers. *Regelia velutina* was a beautiful large shrub with silver, grey leaves. There were many beautiful *Beaufortias*, especially at Kalbarri & the Stirling Ranges. *B. heterophylla*, although a very small shrub, was outstanding with its very deep red, nearly purple flowers. Some of these as well as the lovely *B. squarrosa*, were growing in very damp places, but would become very dry in the summer. This reminded me that I had grown a *Beaufortia squarrosa* for many years without a single flower! Could it be that there was too much grass around it? In their natural state there is very little grass & none of the invasive species that are so prevalent in the Eastern States. So this is our most important job, to try as many of these plants as possible in as many different places as we can as there are so many attractive small shrubs in our study group. In our next newsletter I hope to tell you of any seeds I have been able to obtain.

The most exciting part of the hunt was for the very rare *Calothamnus tuberosus*. From the Stirling Ranges we went to Lake King, taking in a very nice flower show at Cranbrook, then on to the dirt roads past Frank Hann National Park. This was a vast Park, mainly heathlands, just a mass of flowers. Soon started pouring rain so we sheltered for a while under a huge roof which drained water into a very large tank in the middle. It was here we found the very large *Calothamnus quadrifidus*, out in full flower. All the largest ones, over 4m, were growing close to the shelter or in the shallow drainage lines which, I think, showed that plenty of water increased their growth. Of course this was sand hill country, so the drainage was excellent.

When we came to the turnoff to Peak Charles there was much discussion of the wisdom of taking that pretty bad road to our destination,

but wishful thinking convinced us that the rain would have stopped by the time we arrived at the Peak. But no, if anything it was heavier, so we admired the beauty of this lovely place, seeing the water pouring down the rocky slopes & a heavy mist covering the top of the peak. So we stayed for a couple of days in Norseman while the weather improved a bit.

When we returned to the Peak I was pleased that we had waited as the weather was great so we set up camp under some beautiful Acacias. Then I set off up the lower slopes, as it was a bit too late to attempt the main climb. I could see some very large grey shrubs pretty high up on a very bare rocky area & when I had climbed up to them what joy it was to realise that they were *C. tuberosus*! Here were these really small trees between 3 & 4m tall, growing out of cracks between large, bare slabs of granite. The strong, grey, terete & very pungent pointed leaves grew at the ends of the many branches, the older leaves falling to make compost for another rare & endangered species, *Melaleuca steedmanii*, to grow in. There were a few more small flowering plants growing in these gardens made by our magnificent *Calothamnus*. The trunk was slightly papery.

Next morning while climbing up Peak Charles itself I spotted a few more as well as hundreds of large, brightly flowering *Calothamnus quadrifidus*. Although at first glance this large granite dome looks bare & inhospitable for plant life, there are many nooks & crannies, even large gullies carved into the rock where these wonderful gardens were able to grow. Some even contained mosses, ferns & lovely ground orchids.

On our way from Peak Charles we spotted some more *Calothamnus tuberosus* growing on some flat granite, but right on drainage lines. Not far from them were many heath plants growing thickly on the shallow soil, so it looks as if this *Calothamnus* is a pioneer species, preparing the way for other plants. I will be very interested to see if they grow in soil as any I saw were actually growing in cracks in the bare granite rock.

I realise that our main brief is to see how our plants grow in cultivation, but really believe that to get proper understanding of any of our native plants they need to be seen in their natural habitat. It is also very inspiring to see them in their own homes. Of course, my brief visits were only superficial, so any reports from anyone who has any information of any species in our study, would be most welcome.

All the best,

Barb.