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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

CALYTRIX STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO 9.

JULY 1995



CALYTRIX DECANDRA

FROM BREMER BAY TO ISRAELITE BAY

SOUTH COAST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## RESIGNATION

I have decided to resign as leader of the Calytrix Study Group. This has nothing to do with present members, but rather with my own professional and private duties which have made such demands on my time as to make it impossible for me to carry out my Study Group duties at all.

I am therefore, writing my final newsletter after having brought the correspondence up to date and banked the money.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have written to me and taken an interest in the group, as well as the regions who have supported the group with funding. I will be able to hand over the Group with reasonable funds in hand.

If you are interested in the position of Study Group Leader for the Calytrix species please contact Helen Morrow who is the Study Group Coordinator. You will find her address on the last page of this newsletter.

All Study Group assets will be handed to Helen Morrow at the ASGAP Conference being held in Ballarat, Victoria in September of this year (1995).

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## QUERIES FROM MEMBERS

1. Are there slides or audio visuals available ?

Yes, there is a slide set with a written text. This is currently available from me, but will be passed on to Helen Morrow in September.

2. What do you think causes the colour difference in seed, (some is light and some dark). ? Particularly true of the fine seed of many species.

Does when you collect seed make a difference to this 'pepper and salt look'. ?

Does this mix of maybe viable and unviable seed affect germination. ?

Well, what do you think. ? Maybe some experimentation would help. With Calytrix it is important to check some of the seed for insect damage. You will need a hand lens to be able to see the tiny holes.

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## CALYTRIX TETRAGONA

For those living in the Eastern States, Calytrix tetragona is the most reliable of the genus and the most widespread. It occurs in Central Queensland south through the coast and

ranges, and parts of inland New South Wales, through Victoria and the wetter parts of South Australia and finally on the southern coast of Western Australia.

It is a very variable shrub in size, size of leaf, hairiness, and flower and calyx colour. This means there are forms of this plant available which will suit your garden.

I have been collecting forms of this species since I took over the Study Group some years ago. I now have forms from

The Glasshouse Mountains in Qld, (pink and white flowering). These have arching branches and dense pale yellow/green foliage. They are currently growing in pots with some overhead cover giving them some protection from our extremes of climate. I have had no problems growing them from cuttings. They seem to prefer some light cover outside and root best in the warmer months (Jan-March).

Victoria. I do not know the exact locations of these plants. One is a very hairy form to about 0.5m H x 0.3m W. It has deep pink flowers in spring and the calyces are deep burgundy. It has been in the garden for ten years and flowered regularly except for 1994. (As we do not water the garden and we had had no rain during winter/early spring in '94 it is not surprising.) This plant has been grown from cuttings, but it is necessary to use very small cuttings as the plant only produces small amounts of new growth. I keep it under tree cover and while it is slow to root, it does eventually produce some plants, (about 50% strike rate). It does not like humidity and I cannot put it in the hotbed.

The other *Calytrix* from Victoria has mid-pink flowers and is a vigorous shapely shrub 2m H x 1m W. It also has a 50% strike rate. I have grown this from soft and semi-hard material in the hotbed. At present I am experimenting growing it in the shade using IBA 4000 (liquid form).

I do not know anything about the provenance of two low growing forms I have purchased. One is a prostrate pink plant which forms a dense mat to 1.5m W. I have had a lot of success growing this plant from cuttings both in the hotbed and in the shade. However it is somewhat susceptible to fungal attack in the hotbed. The other plant is a procumbent form with arching branches and white flowers. It too forms a good cover to about 0.5m H x 1.5m W. This form has done well from soft cuttings taken in Nov., and placed in the hotbed.

In the Canberra Region there are a number of different forms usually with white flowers, although there is a lemon-flowered form in the nearby mountains. I have found these all do well here. It is interesting to note that some grow on river flats, some on hillsides and one on rocks in the middle of a river. Obviously some of them do not mind the occasional inundation as long as they have good drainage for most of the time.

I have several other forms from various parts of N.S.W. as well as one from S.A. These are mainly white, although I have another lemon-coloured one given me by Max Hewitt. As yet these are all in pots and I haven't done much work with them.

The hormone treatment I use for most Calytrix is in liquid form, IBA1000 / NAA500 for soft material and IBA 2000 for woody material. When I use a different strength I have included the information with the form being discussed. There is a liquid hormone currently available in nurseries. It is IBA 4000, Brand name Rootex-L. It can be diluted to the appropriate strength with water. I have found liquid hormone better than the powder forms. I have not tried gels.

I noticed in the recent Grevillea books just published that strengths of hormone given for growing grevilleas are lower than the ones I use in Canberra, so if you live in a warmer climate at lower altitudes you may find that you need to modify the dosage for Calytrix.

If you would like cutting material of any of the forms of *C. tetragona* mentioned above, please let me know the optimum time for cuttings in your area and I will be glad to send you some.

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#### MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Cynthia Beasley has been trying her hand at grafting. She has had success with a graft of *C. fraseri* onto *C. tetragona*. This was a spline graft using Nescofilm tape. Six weeks later the graft appears to have taken.

I have had a couple of letters from Kerry Rathie, one while in the Northern Territory and one later back at home in Queensland. He tells of the Calytrix there:-

"I was up here last in Dec. 89, in the wet, and the inland stands of *Calytrix exstipulata* (4-6m H) were a blaze of purple, and obviously healthy. I particularly remember stands in the vicinity of the habitat of gorgeous *Cycas conferta*, between Pine Creek (half-way between Darwin and Katherine) and the boundary of Kakadu National Park. ....this time all inland *Calytrix* have had few or no flowers and are obviously under stress (Oct 92)."

Kerry collected various forms of *C. exstipulata* on this trip including a yellow-leaved inland form, a taller green-leaved form from near Darwin and a grey-green leaved form. Unfortunately the later letter tells of the death of most *exstipulata* material.

Also collected was material of *C. brownii* which fared better than *C. exstipulata* but appear slow-growing. *C. brownii* has cream to white flowers and usually grows to

around 4m H.

While in Darwin Kerry visited Arafura Wholesale Nursery. The nurseryman told him of the difficulty he has encountered growing *C. exstipulata* from seed and cuttings, while *C. brownii* is quite easy.

My own experience growing *C. exstipulata* from seed was quite successful. I can only assume I was lucky to have viable seed. Insect damage to *Calytrix* seed is quite common.

I hope the snippets from Kerry's letter will encourage you to look out for *Calytrix* spp. if and when you travel in the N.T.

**Max Hewitt**, who is the leader of the *Verticordia* Study Group also grows some *Calytrix* in the Sydney area (Cherrybrook). He sent me the following information along with some cuttings of a lemon-flowered form of *C. tetragona* from the Clarence Water-holes area.

*C. angulata*. - is growing well on mounded clay which has been improved to loam in the surface stratum by digging in humus and gypsum.

*C. aurea*. - is also doing well in the same material and seems to be quite tenacious, although growth has been considerably slower and the total height considerably less than a plant grown by Dennis Margan in lighter soil conditions (sand and bulldozed sandstone pieces). The latter plant however, although apparently very robust did not go the distance and went to the garden in the sky a couple of years ago.

*C. leschenaultii*. - does well for me in heavy clay loam and has also produced a seedling nearby. (Fantastic!!!) Surface mulch is thinnish quartz pea gravel.

*C. glutinosa*. - is carrying on reasonably in heavy clay loam and has produced some flowers for the last two years, but not what you might call a dense flush.

After reading about Max's plants perhaps we shouldn't be worrying too much about the sandiness of our soils.

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#### CALYTRIX OF THE ENEABBA AREA

In the spring of 1991 Geoff (my husband) and I were fortunate to be able to spend nine days in the Eneabba area in Western Australia. We stayed at the Western Flora Caravan Park and found the owner to be most helpful in directing our search for *Calytrix* species which grow locally.

While there we were fortunate to see many species in flower, in fact it is very difficult to identify them if they are not.

In this area there are 16 or 17 *Calytrix* species and we were fortunate to find 10 of them in flower. They are plants that are used to cool wet winters and hot dry summers. Many grow in deep sands, sand over laterite or shallow sands where they sit with their roots in water when it is wet.

Plants such as *C. acutifolia*, *C. angulata*, *C. aurea*, *C. depressa*, *C. fraseri*, *C. flavescens*, *C. glutinosa* and *C. leschenaultii* have already been tried in horticulture with varying degrees of success. In Canberra I have *C. acutifolia* doing well in the garden. Last year it survived a very cold winter with two frosts of  $-10^{\circ}$  as well as many less severe. I love it for its fluffy looking white flowers which appear in spikes. *C. angulata* has also done well in the ground. It likes a sunny well-drained spot with some overhead shade. *C. leschenaultii* has proved a little more difficult. I still have it growing in the ground after a number of years. Its purple flowers delight me every year, but it seems to get very spindly and sparse. Perhaps it needs pruning or would like a heavier soil. *C. aurea* I have managed to keep alive in a pot. It likes to shelter with other pot plants in semi-shade. *C. glutinosa* and *C. depressa* I have managed to grow for a short time but they may be candidates for grafting.

However there are other beautiful species from this area that as far as I am aware have not been tried as yet in the Eastern States. Purple flowered species include *C. strigosa*, a lovely small mounding species great for a rockery; *C. oldfieldii*, a beautiful dainty small shrub and *C. sapphirina*, with the petals and anthers a similar colour, not two-coloured and changing at anthesis like many of the other species. Yellow flowered species include *C. chrysantha*, a shrub to 1m with awns 1cm long and *C. drummondii*, another 1m H shrub with awns to 1.5cm long.

Grafting of difficult species on to *C. tetragona* certainly looks to be the way to go. You probably have a form of *C. tetragona* growing somewhere near you that would do well in your garden. This could then be used to graft on the more difficult species.

As I have said previously I will still be continuing my interest in the *Calytrix* and am only too happy to share cutting material, seed and experiences etc., with you. You only have to ask. All the forms of *C. tetragona* mentioned in the first article and all the species mentioned in this article as being grown by me in Canberra are available.

**GOOD LUCK AND BEST WISHES IN YOUR CONTINUING EXPERIENCES  
WITH CALYTRIX !!!!!**

GWYN CLARKE.