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# NEWSLETTER

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### editor's bit

Hello to everyone.

Summer is over - I hope all the pots, tubs etc have survived the hot weather and that watering hasn't been too difficult. John and I were away for two very hot weeks in December and January and we were so fortunate to have a kind neighbour come over each day with a little TLC.

An interesting Newsletter coming up with a variety of content - thanks to all the contributors. Please let me know what you think, and don't forget, any photos you have would be most welcome for our Study Group album.

I am going to the South Gippsland Group of Australian Plants Society (Vic) in April. We are going to discuss Plants in Containers - should be fun.

Happy planting and growing.



from **Judy Barker**, Leader of the Australian Daisy Study Group

### an assortment of Daisies suitable for containers

Most of the Australian Daisy Group's container growing is done in order to obtain information about new species for current projects, not necessarily to produce glorious displays. Sometimes the appearance obtained by chance has been surprising and given lasting pleasure. When Pat requested an article on this topic, I enlisted the help of **Maureen Schaumann**, the founder of our Group and an expert on this subject. The following notes are based on our joint experience, acquired over many years of germination and growing trials.

1. *Rhodanthe anthemoides* 'Paper Cascade' - a lovely perennial for a large hanging basket. As its name implies, the stems cascade to almost a metre; the grey-green leaves are small, neat and smell distinctly of chamomile, hence the common name, Chamomile Sunray. Pointed wine-red buds are produced in profusion in winter and open to white paper daisies with pointed bracts in spring. A close relation, *R. anthemoides* 'Paper Baby', makes a handsome plant for a container, and is pleasing in baskets but the foliage does not cascade as far as 'Paper Cascade'. 'Paper Baby' differs in that the buds are rounded, and the white bracts are pleated and blunt so that the flower-heads present a cupped appearance. stems of this form are branching. If two or more plants of the red-budded, branching form which are of different genetic constitution are grown in close proximity, viable seed will be formed.

Another form of *R. anthemoides* with a tufted habit and unbranched stems to 30cm is also a pleasing container plant. This form has the advantage that the white paper daisies (1.5-3cm across) are borne terminally throughout the year. Buds may be straw-colored or sometimes purplish but are never the deep red of the branching form. Viable seed will be produced if plants are grouped together.

Both forms prefer some shade in summer. They should be cut back after flowering is finished and when new growth is apparent. They grow without much attention paid to them but put on a better performance if fertilised and watered regularly. (*Sounds great*).

2. *Brachyscome multifida*. Again there are many forms of this species which look pleasing in containers. One of the best is *B. multifida* 'Amethyst' which arose as a chance seedling in Peg McAllister's garden. The flower-

heads are more purple than the better-known *B. multifida* 'Breakoday', and the newly opened centres are lime green, the foliage is finer, and the stems are usually dark red. As the stems cascade and plants flower for most of the year they make excellent hanging baskets. Another seedling from Peg's garden is *B. multifida* 'Bright Eyes', a cushion to 15cm high with small mauve heads over a long period. This form is suitable for a small pot. A very handsome form we call 'Peg's Large' grows to 40cm high and 40cm across. Heads are large (3-3.5cm across), silvery mauve, and appear in profusion from spring to autumn. Peg advises that 'we give it a good hair cut twice a year', but it is difficult to choose a time when flowers are completely absent.

3. *Ozothamnus ledifolius*, endemic to Tasmania, and formerly known as *Helichrysum ledifolium*. It is a bushy shrub (0.5-1 x 0.5-1m) with attractive yellow stems and small, neat leaves, glossy green above and yellowish beneath. The new growth is very colorful. In spring terracotta buds in clusters appear at the tips of stems and gradually become more conspicuous as they enlarge. In early summer the buds open to fluffy, white flower-heads. Plants grow slowly, are equally happy in sun or part shade, and are suitable for temperate climates. They also grow beautifully in England according to one of our members, Jeff Irons, who recommends pruning in early spring before the buds form, rather than when flowering has finished, at which time new growth is very slow. Stems are usually short, and do not dry well, but stems bearing the terracotta clusters are most attractive and have a long vase life. (*One for you, Liesbeth*).

There are many other species of daisies that could be grown to advantage in containers. The fact that they flower for long periods is of great benefit.

If members of the Australian Plants for Containers Study Group embark on growing some of the species suggested, we hope that they will find the experience as enjoyable as our own. Should some of the forms be unavailable in nurseries, members of our Group may be able to supply plants, seed or cutting material. I am indebted to Maureen for her invaluable advice.

Thank you Judy and Maureen



from **Gwen Elliot**, Victoria, Leader of the Epacris Study Group, and member of our Study Group

### growing Australian plants in containers

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the publishing by Hyland House, Melbourne, of *Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers*.

The remarkable aspect of this anniversary is that the book remains in print, although in a revised and updated version (1988) entitled *The New Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers*. There are very few books now in Australia that have a life-span of 10 years, let alone 20 years, apart from standard texts and publications such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and recognised reference works. What this does indicate is that there is a continuing and in fact 'growing' interest in Australian plants, and their cultivation in containers, as well as in the garden.

In our major cities, many gardens are becoming smaller rather than larger, as we find more and more flats, units, high-rise apartments and dual-occupancy sites in suburbia. However, regardless of our reduced space we still enjoy having plants around us, so more and more people are using tubs on balconies, verandahs or paved backyards and are constantly looking for a wider range of plants suitable for cultivation indoors.

Our lives are enhanced by living in a pleasant environment and by having plants to care for and enjoy. Children can enjoy caring for their own potted plants from an early age, and those in the grandparents age group often find gardening in large pots more comfortable than regular gardening which involves bending or kneeling.

Our general palette of plants suitable for growing in containers has now enlarged considerably to include many Australian species. In fact most plants can be grown in containers, although some undoubtedly perform better and look more attractive than others - just as some do in the ground. It's a case of choosing the right plant for each situation, considering the aspects of sun, shade or other climatic conditions, and selecting a suitable container together with a potting mix which is appropriate for the plant or plants being grown.

While some plants in containers can be very long-lived, the majority of container-grown small to medium shrubs tend to need replacement in somewhere between 4 to 8 years. By this time we've usually had excellent value from the plants being grown and are ready to make a fresh start anyway.

I thought I might include a favourite Australian plant for container cultivation, but there are so many it has become a real struggle. Some of the *Brachyscome multifida* selections are excellent in tubs or hanging baskets, particularly if pruned well each year to encourage dense new bushy growth. They are certainly among my favourites.

In one of the Botanic Gardens in the USA recently, there were huge baskets of about 1.5m across, festooned with *Scaevola* 'Purple Fanfare' in combination with a bright red-flowered non-Australian fuschia. Several small tubs of each plant had been used to create a very dramatic affect.

Finally, for a plant perhaps not quite as well known, I would recommend *Xanthosia rotundifolia*, commonly known as "Southern Cross." It will grow well in sun or semi-shade, liking humus-rich, moist but well-drained soils and can be stunning in an erect log, tub or medium-sized hanging basket. As with nearly all container-grown plants, pruning will result in good growth and vigour. In spring to early summer this *Xanthosia* provides a profuse display of pink buds opening to white flowers in a formation similar to the stars of the Southern Cross, but there are usually some flowers to be seen right throughout the year, and with dark green, rounded, toothed leaves it is a really great plant.

There are many other favourites that could be included here, and also as the years proceed there will undoubtedly be others which will be constantly added to the list. That's what makes gardening in containers so interesting and challenging.

Happy gardening to all.



### **my Dad's Bunya pine from David Ratcliffe, Raymond Terrace, NSW**

Back in 1977 a nurseryman from the north coast of NSW who had over-estimated his own demand for Bunya Pine seedlings, brought me a number of 'poly' fruit boxes each containing about 20 seedlings, some 25cm tall. I had also found the demand to be very small so I potted a dozen or so into 20cm pots and discarded the remainder. Yet even of those I had potted, few sold and the bulk were pushed to the back of the nursery - out of view and out of consciousness.

I had always harboured a fondness for Bunya Pine, not only for their multi-faceted historical significance which included being a valuable food item for some aboriginal communities, an important timber resource for colonists and a popular tree for ornamental planting, but also for their handsome, if rather pungently-pointed, leaves. It therefore came as no surprise to me when, in the early 1980's, my father, looking for something to brighten his parlour, took a fancy to one of the, by then, very pot-bound Bunya Pines.

The years of neglect had stunted their growth and they remained less than 60cm tall but otherwise, despite their ordeal, the plants still looked remarkably well. After a little root trimming and a move to a larger container, his chosen plant took up residence behind the lounge where its prickly foliage would not present a problem to anyone except the housekeeper on her periodic rounds; and there it remained.

In 1988 I was looking for plants to photograph for a book I was writing about the value of Australian plants for use indoors. Naturally I rekindled my acquaintance with the Bunya Pine. By then it had grown a little and filled out to form quite an acceptable house plant and although I didn't consider the background very inspiring, I took my photograph and moved on. After all, I had work to do.

This year the old Bunya turns 21 and I cannot believe how well it looks. Although I have seen it many times in the intervening years, each time I visit, it is more striking than before. It now stands 1.8 metres tall and has not shed any of its lower branches or leaves despite the rather dim light where it stands. It's long branches fully clothed in deep green mature leaves and contrasting sprays of bright green younger leaves hang gracefully almost to the floor and glisten in the light which reflects from their glossy surface. The stem too, has retained most of its leaves which stand as rigid spikes to ward of those who might casually push it to one side.

This outstanding Bunya Pine is one of the best potted plants I have encountered. It has performed remarkably well under adverse conditions and with very little attention. It should alert us to some of the unexplored potential of our Australian rainforest plants and encourage us all to try something a little different. *(I love this story, don't you?)*

**David Ratcliffe** has been a specialist native plant nurserymen for more than 35 years and for the major part of that time has specialised in rainforest plants. He is, with his wife Patricia, the author of a book about the use of Australian plants indoors, first published in 1987 entitled *Australian Native Plants for Indoors*, Little Hills Press, Sydney. Reprinted as *Australian Native Indoor Gardening Made Easy*, (the publishers title choice). He has also made a significant contribution to numerous other works, and published papers on environmental matters.

If I had to choose three of my favorite rainforest plants for growing in containers, well.....I should hardly know where to begin.

I could choose from three spectacular ferns. I could have the rough Maidenhair fern, *Adiantum hispidulum*, tough and wiry but very showy especially in new growth, or the beautiful Schellolepis fern *Schellolepis percussa* with its long and gracefully arching light green fronds, or for something really unusual, the long weeping fronds of the Common Tassel fern *Lycopodium phlegmaria*.

Perhaps I should choose orchids. I could have the deservedly well-known King Orchid *Dendrobium kingianum*, either the pure species or one of the many hybrids between *D. kingianum* and *D. speciosum* now sold under the name of *Dendrobium X delicatum*. I really love the Christmas orchid *Calanthe triplicata* with its lush rich green foliage and long-lasting heads of clean, white flowers, or there's the tough old favorite *Dendrobium gracilicaule*, but the flower fragrance of the latter is very bold.

Palms are another popular container plant and I would have great difficulty in overlooking the beautiful Walking-stick palm, *Linospadix monostachya*. A well-grown specimen standing 1.5 metres or more with a delicate skirt of long arching fronds laced with equally long spikes of bright red berries is one of the most beautiful plants one could see. The Lawyer Cane palm *Calamus caryotoides*, which has a climbing habit also makes a very attractive container plant, while one of the best palms reaching the market in recent times would have to be the Licuala Fan palm, *Licuala ramsayi*. It is still a little hard to come by but remains very desirable.

Another useful group are the Palm Lilies. One of the nicest is the diminutive Dwarf Palm lily *Cordyline haageana*. This is a handsome clumping species with red flowers and it scarcely reaches 50cm in height. At the other end of the scale is the beautiful Broad-leaf Palm lily, *Cordyline petiolaris*. This is an excellent container plant with unusual foliage. It may be multiple-planted for good effect but needs a good big pot to reduce the risk of being blown over in the wind.

Maybe I should look to the Gingers and their relatives. I live at Raymond Terrace just north of Sydney and one of the most handsome ginger plants I have here is the Little Ginger *Alpinia modesta*. It performs well in light shade and in containers it forms thick clumps about 50 cm tall. Another of my favorites is the Wavy-leaf Ginger *Alpinia arundelliana*. It grows a little taller than the former species and has narrow, glossy green leaves with delightful wavy margins. The leaves of the *Alpinia modesta* are reddish green above and deep red below. For something different I could have a Costus, *Costus speciosus*. These are somewhat taller again and have unusual, soft, pale green foliage on long canes. The drawback with this plant is that in cooler climates it will die down each winter and even then need some extra protection.

What about a Lily? Lilies are good. I could have the spectacular Cape York lily *Curcuma australasica*, a relative of the culinary turmeric. Although this plant too, dies down in winter, it is relatively tough and is well worth growing just to see the emergence of the flower spike in spring. The flower heads usually emerge first with spikes of bright pink bracts hiding the yellow flowers. The leaves which soon follow are also quite showy. Curculigo *Molineria capitulata* is another useful container plant. It grows to about 1 metre in height and has long, broad, yellowy-green, closely pleated leaves on long stems. It forms thick clumps and tends to creep out the drainage holes and into the garden if given the chance. In the garden it spreads by underground rhizomes. To these I could add the River Lily *Crinum pedunculatum*. Crinum is a fleshy lily reaching a metre or so in height. The showy clusters of large white fragrant flowers are held on long stalks atop a 50cm spike.

There are always the climbers, - say the Climbing Pandanus *Freycinetia scandens* or *F. excelsa*. These are attractive root climbers and best if supplied with a totem for support. A similar group are the Rhipidophora which are not unlike the exotic Philodendron. *Rhipidophora australasica*, which is available through specialist nurseries, is an easily grown species which has long, glossy, spear-shaped leaves which often develop holes or windows. For something with showy flowers I could have a Hoya or Passion Flower. The Pink Passion Flower *Passiflora aurantia* is most unusual. It is a light climber bearing masses of large flowers which open white and gradually age through pink to red, allowing a complete range of colors to be displayed at the same time. It is an excellent container plant and may be grown over a light wire frame.

(To be continued in the next Newsletter)



## talking point

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At the end of last year, **Geoff Simmons** wrote to me - I quote:

"While the display angle may not be directly relevant to the Study Group, the question of using potted plants in displays organised by SGAP/Aust Plant Society branches is of interest - a useful insight into the appreciation of container-grown plants as a means of publicising the growing of Australian plants. In 1977 in a Queensland regional bulletin, the Flower Show committee proposed that a register be compiled of plants grown in tubs or pots which could be available for displays".

A interesting point Geoff. I know of at least two members of the Study Group who are frequently involved in setting up displays. Perhaps they can tell us about a display they have set up at some time...



## "big pots versus little pots"

At the end of November, just as Newsletter No 19 was ready to go out, I received an interesting fax from **Lorna George** of the **Central Coast "Plants in Pots interest group"** about some of the activities and issues they had been looking at.

"As a group we are interested in the proposition that a small plant will do better in a big pot instead of a little pot - but we have not finalised our thoughts as results are very diverse and records not too good! We are planning to get together and review what we have done so far, and to work out guidelines for a definite programme. The idea of minimising 'potting on' is a good incentive."

(It will be most interesting to hear the results, Lorna)

Christmas trees. **The Plants in Pots Interest Group** has been growing several different plants with a view to finding one we feel would be suitable for a truly native Christmas tree. The Huon Pine seems to have some of the characteristics we felt necessary. The characteristics we felt important were:

- 1 Overall pleasing shape
- 2 Able to display some Christmas decorations
- 3 Able to withstand fairy lights and a period indoors
- 4 Able to be maintained in a pot for several years.
- 5 Able to go into the garden as a garden tree after use as a Christmas tree.
- 6 User-friendly - not too prickly for small fingers.

The Group has kept records when potted on, size, etc, but have not yet correlated these. The trees in which we have been interested are:

- *Callitris rhomboidea* - indications so far are that its columnar growth (ie - shape) make it less than ideal.
- *Podocarpus elatus* - an attractive plant, shape not ideal and ability to be maintained in a pot is suspect.
- *Syzygium francisii* - something quite different from a conifer-type tree - the nursery trade as marketed one of the *Syzygiums* as a Christmas tree under the name 'Syzygium blaze'. We feel there may be a lot going for this tree.
- *Callitris oblonga* - a later starter, we have not been growing this as long as the other trees. To date we like the shape. At Central Coast's Christmas party last year, we used both the *Podocarpus* and the *Syzygium* decorated as features, and plan to use another of the project trees this year.

(This fax arrived in late November - so it will be interesting to hear more of this project. I should be happy to hear other members' comments and ideas too. Incidentally, in David and Patricia Ratcliffe's book **Australian Native Plants for Indoors**, there is a picture of an *Araucaria heterophylla* used as a Christmas tree, fully covered with decorations - Pat )



## another item from the 'Plants in Pots Interest Group'

Some golden rules for successful container plants: a selection from members' list of best practices.

- 1). Know your plant, its family, natural habitat and growth pattern, preferred soil and water need.
- 2). Choose good quality potting media, varying it to suit the plant's requirements.
- 3). Perfect drainage, an open mix, avoid plants standing on bare ground.
- 4). Group pots together for protection and ease of watering.

- 5). Mulch pots with gravel, small stones or tanbark.
- 6). Water by placing pots in a tub/bucket of water and soaking is effective. (ie if pots are not too large).
- 7). Rotate pots for even growth, moving them from time to time to maximise appropriate shade/sun needs.
- 8). Tip-prune to maintain shape, check regularly for scale, sooty mould, mealy bugs, ants etc..
- 9). Hanging containers require more water. Adding *Wettasoil* or equivalent to the mix can help absorption.
- 10) Used potting mix should be put out so that salts and pathogens can leach out - add to the garden rather than re-use.

Two points on fertilisation:

- Add a slow release fertiliser- (Native Osmocote, Kuranga Two-in-one or an equivalent). When reapplying, do not leave pellets exposed to light on top of the pot - cover with mulch.
- Fertilise with a weak mixture of soluble Aquasol, Maxicrop or spray foliage with same, fortnightly.

*Thank you, Central Coast for your welcome contributions. Do keep us posted please.*



from **Lorna George**, Glenning Valley, NSW (*in February*)

Our Group held quite a lengthy discussion on fertilisers at one of our meetings, and I am pleased to pass on some of our ideas and conclusions.

Osmocote Use. The rationale for **not** leaving Osmocote pellets on the top of the pot and covering with soil or mulch was our understanding that Osmocote breaks down almost immediately when left in sunlight. The result is that it then releases the nutrient all at once - thus defeating the slow release sought, and perhaps exposing the plant to an over-supply of fertiliser which could be damaging. It would be interesting to hear whether others shared this view.

I use Osmocote Plus as my slow release fertiliser of choice as there has been a suggestion that it is more benign than Nutricote Purple which may cause a phosphorus deficiency with continuous use. (This may well be a controversial statement!) Generally speaking, as a Group we have found Osmocote Plus satisfactory, but like all things, used with due care and moderation.

The concept we emphasise is, whatever the fertiliser used - use little and often. Regular fertilising with small quantities should be the practice, rather than an occasional 'splurge'.

Other fertilisers. Fertilisers suggested by the Group members were Seasol, diluted fish emulsion (the smell precludes use on indoor plants); urine-based fertilisers; Blood and Bone was popular (keep away from the stem). I use liquid made from cow manure and left to stand - this makes a good pick-me-up. It is a powerful fertiliser and need well diluting before use. Other fertiliser suggestions in the Group were kelp, chopped and soaked in water for six months, then applied in diluted form. Dynamic Lifter, particularly Long Life Dynamic Lifter. An interesting additive which was recommended at this meeting was Zeolite. This is said to trap nutrients and prevent rapid leaching. It can be added to the potting mix or a pinch can be scattered around the top of the pot. I regularly use it myself, but could not evaluate its effectiveness apart from general pot management.

I suppose I could sum up our Group's conclusions from their discussion on fertiliser use as follows:

- 1. Fertilise regularly - use little and often.
- 2. Don't be afraid to change fertilisers, or even mix them. There is a wide variety available - vary and use as seems fit.
- 3. whatever the fertiliser used, use in moderation and always with care - for example, always water a plant well before using any fertiliser.

Watering. I personally feel my losses with plants are the result of faulty watering. I would be interested to know how others in the Study Group fare, and how they handle the problem of judging when water is needed and how much.

I have the feeling that my 'finger test' is not the most effective!

*(Two excellent references for me are "Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants", Elliot and Jones, Vol.1, Chapters 8 & 9, and "Australian plants for Small Gardens and Containers", Gwen Elliot, Chapter 16. Pat)*



This last season I have grown three varieties of Australian lilies in containers with great success.

*Arthropodium strictum* - Chocolate lily.

Relatively short-flowering season, but a memorable one with such sweet perfume - I couldn't resist stooping for a sniff each time I went past. A light potting mix worked well. Not sure if I have to repot these or not. This is a slender plant with basal grassy leaves about 1cm wide from which a smooth leafless stem arises about 20 cm high with racemes of light purple flowers at the top. They are beautiful plants in their natural surroundings of open grassland, but here at Killarney the rabbits would make short work of them, so I decided to use them in a container.

*Arthropodium milleflorum* - Pale Vanilla lily.

This has been a spectacular success - two small bulbs have sent up huge flowering spikes of about 80cm with dozens of delicate very pale lilac flowers with conspicuous fringed stamens. I know I will have to repot these as the sides of the plastic pot are bulging outwards, and even the tops of the bulbs are pushing out of the top of the potting mix. These have actually flowered continuously for months.

*Arthropodium minus* - Small Vanilla lily.

This is just a small version of the above, but several bulbs have produced about 10 flowering stems only to about 20 cm but just as long-flowering. These are in a terracotta pot.

Next year I'll try to get my hands on some of the other Australian lilies or those plants which grow from bulbs, to give them a try. I'd especially love to try the *Thysanotus* sp. - Fringed lilies - they have been really beautiful this last month in the bush. I collected some seed of the *Wurmbea dioica* or Early Nancy, so will sow these as soon as the weather cools a little.

Lilies are not spectacular, but delicately beautiful.



letter from **Liesbeth Uijtewaal-de Vries**, The Netherlands

On the 31st January I went to Essen (Germany) to a professional International Plant Fair which is always open to the public on its last day. It's great to go there (it was my third visit), not only because they show lots of novel things and beautiful plants, but also because many companies sell their plants at the end of the day to save themselves the trouble of taking them back home. And at low prices - which isn't bad at all either!

Like in other years I went several times to an Israeli nursery that grows and propagates a lot of beautiful Grevilleas amongst other Australian plants. I had a lovely chat with the lady who is responsible for the propagation of the Grevilleas and she gave me a lot of interesting information. She, in turn, was very happy to hear that G.'Ellendale Pool' (or *G. fililoba*: of which I sent you the photo) did so well in our climate despite the dreadful summer. She would be very pleased if I could give her more information on "Grevilleas in Holland", so gave me some rooted cuttings of four different species she had with her, to try them out. Not bad at all I have to report on bud formation, flowering time etc.. Quite a nice job I think.

She even happened to have rooted cuttings of G."Ellendale Pool" with her. I was really happy with these, since my own plant didn't survive the winter stopover in the greenhouse. (Did I tell you? - I was rather upset about that). Other species she gave me were *G. johnsonii*, G."Poorinda Rondeau" and another species I forgot to ask her the name of, out of sheer excitement! I'll ask her later on. Now you'll understand why the guest room is getting rather crowded! (Liesbeth, in another letter, told me how she has to move most of her Australian container plants into the guest room of her house during the winter - sounds an interesting exercise!). Apart from these species I bought *G.lanigera* "Mt. Tamboritha" and *Chamelaucium* "Sweet Georgia" which look lovely too. So it was a great day!....

Other pleasing things in the guest room are two *Grevillea* "Robyn Gordon" plants (got them as rooted cuttings in Essen last year) with flower buds. They were propagated there, so apparently it's a nice place to stay. I hope they will come into flower, the buds are getting quite large now. *Alygoyne hueglijii*, *Callistemon* "Hannah Ray" still has the odd flower, and another *Callistemon* is about to burst. I was afraid the artificial light might not be strong enough but apparently it is quite alright. Even a *Boronia heterophylla* cutting, potted on a few months ago and now some 7cm high has flower buds. Silly thing!



**Angiopteris evecta as a container plant** from Geoff Simmons, Elimbah, Queensland

In its natural habitat in sub-tropical and tropical regions, this fern is often seen with huge fronds measuring several metres in length. It cannot be classed as a small plant for a container or position.

It has a peculiar characteristic in that it requires an adequate water supply to keep the fronds upright and rigid as it lacks the fibrous or wooden structures present in other plants. This has advantages for the gardener as it represents a built-in indicator for watering. If fronds are drooping, application of water usually results in a rapid response, restoring the fronds to an upright position.

How to satisfy this special requirement to keep turgidity in the fronds is an interesting challenge.

Several points may be made in this regard.

- 1. TLC is needed to rectify any lack of water before the plant becomes too distressed.
- 2. A water-retaining medium including water crystals may be used.
- 3. Larger size containers may be used so that there is a buffer in respect of the amount of water available.
- 4. A built-in reservoir in a container would be advantageous.

It is fortunate indeed that there are now quite large self-watering plastic pots readily available in garden centres and supermarkets. These reduce the amount of attention necessary to grow these remarkable ferns as a plant pot.



### **STOP PRESS - Victorian members in particular.**

"Kuranga" Nursery in Ringwood is having an Easter Feast for people who enjoy growing plants in containers. A special display of pots and containers, and demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday 3rd and 4th of April, between 2 and 4pm. Gwen Elliot is going to be there on both afternoons. It sounds great, and I shall try to get to Kuranga on the Saturday.



**Closing date for next Newsletter : 30 June 1999. I look forward to hearing from you.**

