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editor's bit

Hello again! Newsletter time once more; subscriptions now due too for 2000-2001. \$8 or \$10 for overseas members. Please send as soon as possible.

John and I were in New Zealand in April enjoying the magnificent scenery of the High Country in South Island near Lakes Wanaka, Pukaki, Tekapo and Waikato. We were lucky enough to get good views of Mount Cook and Mount Sefton, which are often covered in cloud. In our first week we visited gardens and historic farming properties. In some of the gardens we were most impressed with the use of containers as part of the landscaping; skilful and artistic use in courtyards, on verandahs and patios. One bit of fun - two old boots near a shearing shed overflowing with plants - I could imagine *Viola hederacea* here. Some of the pottery containers were works of art, ingenious and elegant, many having been made by the gardeners themselves. A winter hobby being essential when your garden is under a metre of snow for several months. It was a memorable holiday in many ways.

In this issue you will find an article by Dr Kerrie Rathie - Leader of the Cycads & Palms Study Group; another from Jan Sked, our Study Group Co-ordinator for ASGAP; an article about the development of some of our lovely daisies in the horticultural industry - and much, much more.

A time for assessment

Winter is an excellent time in the garden - a good opportunity to plan and make changes or rejuvenate an area. So it is with our containers - a time to review. Some questions to ask:

- What has grown well this year?*
- What will I dispose of or renew?*
- Will I treat myself to a new container? What kind?*
- What would I grow in this container?*
- Should I try a new plant or two? Which ones?*
- What can I do to improve the growing area for my pots?*
- Did your feeding regime work well for you last year?*

As early spring comes, some of your plants may need repotting, pruning both the roots and the top of the plant. Perhaps Kerrie's article will tempt you to try something different. Good luck - why not use the checklist to share some of your experiences with the Group?



from Dr Kerry Rathie, Greenbank, Queensland. (Leader of Palms & Cycads Study Group)

Palms and Cycads for Containers.

A large number of Australian palms and cycads are suitable for growing in containers for periods of about five years - the cycads surviving much longer. The great majority of these are not suitable for lengthy indoor use, but like patios or other situations with airflow and filtered light (eg semi-shade).

Perhaps two of the three best 'inside' plants in the world are the two *Kentia Palm* species, *Howea forsteriana* and *H. belmoreana*, both originating from Lord Howe Island. Both tolerate dry air, relatively dark conditions and both

are fairly slow-growing, (particularly *H. belmoreana*, the 'Curly Leaf Kentia'), and drought tolerant. Slow growth is often an advantage with indoor plants as they don't outgrow their pots or become ungainly.

Single-stemmed palms and cycads have a known size and shape profile, which makes them suitable for formal arrangements. Cycads as a group have a fern-like appearance but are hardier than most ferns, and many are suitable for full sun conditions. Most would suffer little harm from a month or two without artificial watering.

An exception (re hardiness) is the very fern-like genus *Bowenia* which botanists originally classified as a fern - until it produced cones. They are slow-growing but gorgeous. Both *Bowenias* (*B. serrulata* and *B. spectabilis*) need semi-shade and frequent watering. Like all cycads, they need good drainage. Young *Bowenia* are 'touchy', particularly about drainage and root damage during potting or transplanting, but older plants are quite hardy. Their eventual height is up to two metres.

Almost any *Macrozamia* species make frost- and sun-hardy pot plants, but they vary greatly in size. Even the largest *M. moorei*, makes a good container plant, and fits in a large tub for 30 years or more, (I have a 25-year old). Other good, readily available species are: *M. spiralis* and *M. miqellii*; and smaller-growing species include *M. fawcettii* and *M. fearnsidei*.

Cycads have very few diseases and pests, with scale insects being the most common. The scale can be manually removed, smothered with Pest Oil (labelled Pest Oil) - which is much safer than white oil, which is dangerous in hot weather and affects fewer insects than Pest Oil. Alternatively, they may be killed by systemic insecticides such as Rogor (not human-friendly, but much safer than any organo-phosphates).

Cycads and most palms grow superbly in my standard mix of 50% furnace ash and 50% cow manure. The furnace ash is actually a clinker-like power-station fuel residue, is pH neutral, non-degradable and contains a maze of small holes which impart perfect drainage. Any good rotted organic matter can replace the cow manure. This 'cycad mix' is excellent for lithophytic ferns like the *Drynaria* spp., terrestrial orchids like *Calanthe* and *Phaius*, semi-lithophytic orchids like *Dendrobium kingianum* and *D. speciosum*, and ferns in general.

Northern Australian cycads will happily grow in sandy soil in the tropics but need better drainage if grown further south. Cycads respond well to fertiliser, even those from infertile soil; but they usually occur naturally on rocky slopes where pockets of leaf humus build up.

Most rainforest palms - perhaps all - like a fertiliser regime very high in nitrogen and potassium, (say 3-nitrogen, 3-potassium, 1-phosphorus, 1-sulphur, 2-calcium, 1-magnesium), but will tolerate a lot less. This applies to exotic palms also. (Our inland forest country *Livistona* spp - cabbage palms - are much less demanding, but mostly too large for containers). No commercial mix comes even close to the recipe above - I suggest one buys a bag of lawn food and add extra nitrogen and potassium.

(Thank you, Kerrie, for this interesting article - ed.)



from "Australian Horticulture", March 2000

You will be pleased to hear that *Florabella Australia*, a small plant-breeding business in the Ovens Valley in NE Victoria, won the prize for a new pot plant (vegetative) in the Society of American Florists 1999 competition - with a compact flowering form of *Bracteantha bracteata*. After using four generations of breeding, using a prostrate ground cover type and a range of color variants, they produced a plant that grows to about 40cm and produces masses of bright paper daisies.

The *Florabella* series was released in Australia and America in 1999 and is to be released this year in Europe. The response so far in North America has been great. They are working on another range of *Bracteantha* for 2001.

(Keep your eyes open Liesbeth for this one for this pot plant in Europe and let us know if you see it.)



from Liesbeth Uijtewaal-de Vries, Neer, The Netherlands

(March 2000) Today my children are playing outside - making a snowman! What a miracle that you have a map with Neer on it! It's a very small village but the main facilities are there and for the children it's only 5 minutes by bike to go to school. (Liesbeth moved into her new home in December '99)

In my plants' winter home however it is lovely. Wattles are flowering and their scent is delicious. *Pandorea pandorana* is in flower (a lovely sight; I bought it last year so hadn't seen the flowers yet). *Westringia fruticosa* has many flower buds (I haven't seen it flowering before either, apart from pictures), and many grevilleas and callistemons are in bud too.

I'm really looking forward to next winter; if things go as they should, I'll have my own greenhouse then! Didn't I tell you? This house used to be a farm (the area is 8000m²) and we can convert the stables into greenhouses. Take the roof off, replace it by glass and there you are. As simple as that!

The garden needs some effort too, since it's only meadow with fencing, so it'll take some years before you can actually call it a garden. But my pots have the space to grow and they'll enjoy it.

Last Friday we had our bi-monthly meeting of our container plant society. Someone told us about plant fertilisers, including Osmocote. I asked the man whether Osmocote for Australian Natives was produced in Australia. It was not: all Osmocote happens to be produced in a place some 50km away from here! Quite a nice detour 'my' bucket of Osmocote made when Bert brought it back from Australia! If I'm lucky, I can obtain it right here from the factory - but in minimum quantities of 25 kilograms.....! I'll have to grow some more grevilleas and banksias.

At the moment I'm trying to grow *Swainsona formosa* again. I sowed it directly in high, narrow containers containing a lot of perlite, vermiculite and sand. See what happens - the seedlings are 3cm high now. (Another name change for the Sturt's Desert Pea - it's latest name is *Willdampiera formosa* - though there does seem to be discussion still going on about this - ed.)



from the Australian Daisy Study Group

Judy Barker, leader of the AD SG, loaned me an interesting report put out by the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation - (the research arm of the Australian Horticultural Industries).

"Western NSW flora as flowering pot plants", by Ross Worrall, NSW Agriculture, published in 1996. To anyone interested in the use of flowering potted plants it is a document worth looking at. I refer to a few relevant items. The objective of the project was to find out which plants would be suitable for further development and which ones showed promise for the expanding overseas markets for potted plants.

There is a keen interest in Europe and North America in using Australian natives as flowering pot plants. These plants have to compete in the market place with exotic plants - the latter having undergone many years of plant improvement programs.

The article lists the twelve criteria which are essential for the nursery trade here and overseas. These include colorful, showy flowers, attractive foliage, a good growth rate under normal commercial production conditions. Tissue culture is discussed, seed biology and various methods of overcoming dormancy.

The project showed that there is a wide range of plants to be fully assessed in western NSW. Pot size, and the use of growth regulators is discussed. Mention is also made of nurserymen from San Francisco and Japan who have undertaken the evaluation of a range of Australian plants for potted specimens.

In Appendix 2 of the article, a list of plants is given and the reasons they were selected for the trials and whether they met the specified criteria - eg a selected form of *Prostanthera microphylla* which has a compact habit, unusual pale green flowers and small, dark green foliage. (Selected mainly for it's novel green flowers).

It lists the plants not selected because of their failure to meet many of the criteria. Appendix 3 shows the selection criteria checklist -

eg Ornamental quality 1 - 5 (5 = good)

Culture - ease of growing 1 - 5 (1 = difficult, 5 = easy) etc.

Prostanthera microphylla ranked 4 for ornamental quality, 4 for ease of growing and 5 for novelty and so on.

A statistic which was mentioned (which I found amazing) was that a German nursery in the early 1990s introduced *Brachyscome multifida* (one color form only) to the European market and has been selling approximately six million 100mm pots per annum, plus a large number in hanging baskets.

The report is a most interesting document and I thank Judy for sharing it with us.

(Postscript: Sadly I see our local shopping centre at Balnarring today is using a blue South African daisy instead of one of the *Brachyscomes*. Oh dear.)

from Jeff Irons, Heswell, England

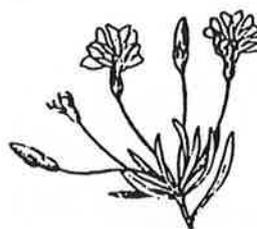
We have several problems with the cultivation of Australian plants here: soil which is waterlogged in winter, low light levels as a consequence of the low sun elevation, fluctuations between cold and warm spells and finally the different plant mechanisms for coping with cold. You think that a plant is winter-hardy, then a different set of weather circumstances comes along, and it dies. Plants have three mechanisms for coping with cold and few Australian plants can cope with the transition from the first stage to the second stage. It occurs at around -4 to -5°C.

A good popular exposition of physiological botany is given in the book "Reaching for the sun - how plants work", by John King, published by Cambridge University Press in 1997. It may still be available or you could ask your local library to order it for you.



from Barbara Melville, Wyoming, NSW (Plants in Pots Interest Group, Central Coast, NSW)

Something interesting has happened to some of my potted plants. A few weeks ago (April) I "Seasol"-ed our garden but also gave all the pots a drink.



I have a young *Xanthorrhoea australis*, approximately three years in my care. It has just 'sat' in it's ½ barrel all this time. Occasionally it looks like it might settle in but then it just sulks again. However.....it seems apparent that it might just have loved it's Seasol drink - lots of fresh growth.

There is also some improvement in the condition of my two *Eremophilla niveas*.

I can't say I have noticed dramatic changes with other plants - maybe it is simply coincidence. Has anybody else tried Seasol on their potted plants?

(*Hope your Xanthorrhoea australis continues to flourish. It would be interesting to hear some other members' 'feeding regimes'. Mine is rather haphazard. I use a half-strength solution of 'Maxicrop' every six weeks or so from November to March, Osmocote in October/November and if I feel it necessary, again at the end of March - beginning of April. -ed.*)

a container plant exercise

In February I visited the Peninsula Group of Australian Plant Society as their guest speaker. It was a very hot night - mid 30s - but with twenty members present we had a fun evening, everyone participating. I gave them a group task; four groups of five participants as follows:-

GROUP TASK

Imagine that you are a firm of Landscape Garden Consultants focussing on using Australian plants in containers. You have been asked to consider one of the following sites.

Sites to be considered:

New office complex in an inner urban area. Entrance exterior and central interior atrium.

Retirement village and community centre Easterly aspect, barbecue area and one small unit garden facing north-east.

Holiday apartments/cabins with individual patios. Various aspects, easterly, west and north - with prevailing SW winds off the nearby sea.

A group of 6 Town houses with a communal entrance/courtyard, and one of the townhouses which faces south-east - as a 'show garden' for marketing the complex.

Points to consider when designing-

- Plants are to be grown in containers. What size and type of containers would you suggest using?
- Suggest some appropriate plants to be grown, noting the use of this/these building(s) by their residents/visitors/workers.
- Maintenance - suggest what maintenance should be done by the owner/occupier. What advice will you give re watering, fertilising, pruning and repotting?
- Or alternatively, will your firm of Consultants/Home maintenance do the plant care? Outline briefly some particular area of care, noting frequency of plant replacement.

One group did a particularly good job, and I thought this would be of interest to you, so from their notes I'll tell you about it. Their task was **the Town House garden** with a communal entrance/courtyard.

The entrance courtyard was to have large troughs lining the entrance planted with *Syzygium australe* (dwarf), trimmed to give a hedge-like appearance. Behind these were to be half casks filled with *Correa decumbens*, *C. glabra*, *C. reflexa* 'Southend', and *Crowea* "Poorinda Ecstasy", using *Brachyscome multifida* as a filler. At the entrance, two large terracotta pots with a *Xanthorrhoea* in each.

They chose to put a water feature in this area with a small fountain, having some ferns - *Blechnum spp.* and *Restio tetraphylla* around the sides.

The Town House display garden facing south-east. Time was running out for planning this area, but the group's brief outline was to have a large trough or brick built-up area along one wall, with suggested plants: *Melaleuca spathulata*, *M. thymifolia*, both responding well to regular pruning to keep neat and tidy. Also *Prostanthera cuneata*, *P. incisa* and *P. "Poorinda Ballerina"*. All these plants would like the south-east aspect, and should be pruned regularly, especially after flowering. The group suggested using self-watering pots for any free-standing containers. They thought a container with *Banksia* "Birthday Candles" in the sunniest part of the small garden would suit. It was also suggested to use *Brachyscome multifida* as a filler plant.

Maintenance in the courtyard area would be by a visiting gardener but one of the unit owners would water daily in summer. (*Lots of chat and discussion in all groups - a good evening. - Pat*)



***Helichrysum calvertianum* - Maureen Schaumann**, reprinted with permission from the Australian Daisy Study Group newsletter, March 2000

"I had never heard of this *Helichrysum* until Judy Barker gave me three small pots last August. Judging by their appearance at the time, I thought they wouldn't amount to much, so I put them in my tube rack, watered them daily and practically ignored them.

When tiny buds started appearing in late September, I felt guilty at overlooking these little plants for so long, and hastily potted them into a large terracotta pot. Here was the possibility of something nice - totally unexpected. Since then, they have not looked back, and I have been thrilled with the ease with which they have grown.

Pot culture seems to suit them because they spill nicely over the sides. They are continually covered with pink to white-coloured buds and small white papery daisies which appear to last for a very long time.

After a couple of months, bare brown stems were obvious at the base. Fortunately I put off pruning and now all the old wood is covered with fresh green growth. I have been collecting seed since early December and am looking forward to sowing it in autumn. Hopefully plants will be available for our May meeting.

After reading in the *Encyclopaedia* (Elliot & Jones) that this species would be suitable for cool temperate regions in filtered or part sun, I moved my pot from full sun on the patio to a partly shaded spot under trees for the summer months.

Fresh flowers make a nice miniature posy in a small discarded scent bottle. They last up to two weeks in water. The stems are too small to wire."



from Lorna George, Glenning Valley, Central Coast, NSW

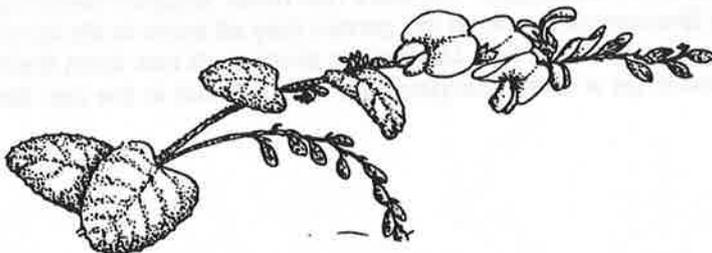
I wonder if the Study Group generally would find this Christmas tree project of interest. At our "Plants in Pots" meeting yesterday (March), we discussed a news item that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* just before Christmas. This described the shortage of a supply of suitable Christmas Trees. The interesting part (to us) were the paragraphs which I quote:

"Mr Grul said he was developing what he hoped would be Australia's first home-grown Christmas tree - a *Banksia* variety he believed could be groomed into a shape not unlike the popular California *radiata*. I'd like to see a true-blue Christmas tree, something a bit Australian. Nobody that I am aware of is doing any experiments with a native Australian. I am confident we can get the right shape to it".

Mr Grul is a nurseryman. None of our nursery contacts - to date - know about Mr Grul, but someone may unearth some information. We are still chewing over whether some contact with him may be appropriate or not; we fully appreciate trade sensitivities. The upshot of yesterday's discussion was to renew our interest in our Christmas tree project. A *Podocarpus elatus* was pruned to shape immediately (mine will follow). We are continuing to work with our *Syzygium francisii* (shaping), but have rejected *Callitris rhomboidea* as completely the wrong shape (too columnar). I personally have a fondness for this tree. I used it as our Christmas tree and it attracted favourable comment with its displays of lights and small decorations. Obviously the slender branches will bear only very light decorations and one cannot hang presents on it. As a result of yesterday's meeting we are looking for another *Callitris* to trial and other possibilities are being sought - perhaps *Banksias*. We think there could be suitable candidates amongst the Tasmanian flora and would be interested in any comments or suggestions from Tasmanian members.

Members may be interested in another idea we are following up, and that is looking at waterwell pots and the plants that do well in them. Some of us think that not all plants flourish in waterwells. I may have some more comments to make on this, later in the year.

(I shall be interested to hear your comments on waterwell pots. I used one last year and did not find it satisfactory - for a *Brachyscome segmentosa* - the mix became stale and sour, and the plant did not look nearly so healthy and happy as one I had in an ordinary pot. I sat this latter plant in a bowl of water for an hour or two once a week, and with usual watering it did well, giving white daisies throughout the summer. I also put my bonsai plants for a soak each week, especially during this last February when our average daily maximum temperature was 30.1°C - the highest for over 100 years, and only 41mm of rain - ed.).



reprinted from SGAP Queensland Region 'Bulletin', March 2000 (letters to the editor)

“ Dear Jan

Following the publishing of Pat Webb's letter in the December 'Bulletin', I thought you would like to hear the story of my **special and much loved pot plant** - *Araucaria cunninghamii* - the Queensland Hoop Pine - so called because it develops rings in the bark of large trees growing in their habitat.

This potted tree was given to me by a member of the Queensland Naturalists Club, Elsie Earnshaw, in 1965. She told me it was 35 years old, that she was too old to look after it any longer, and would I like it. I answered in the affirmative.

When I saw the plant, brought to me next morning in a 3 inch pot, it looked poorly. At home, I tipped it upside down prior to repotting, and found hardly any soil was left and that the roots had gone round and round in the pot in a dense mass. I wondered how on earth it had continued to live. I guess continual watering had saved its life.

So I untangled the roots and cut them back to where they had commenced to circle. The poor plant - it looked terrible. Its height was only about 12 inches, and I did not reduce the top at all.

Planted in a size larger pot with some of my homemade potting mix, with plenty of humus and some compost, some ordinary soil and a couple of cups of peatmoss wetted with hot water first, it surprised me by soon showing signs of new growth.

Over the year it was repotted into fancy pots, bonsai bowls and finally, when I was no longer able to re-pot it any more, it went into a 10 inch pot, and there it has stayed.

Now about 33 inches high, I have tip pruned the top to keep the height to about the size that suits my verandah, where it stays all year, except for being put out into a shady place in my garden twice a year for about a month.

It has a drooping habit which is attractive and I think the foliage is still juvenile. I fertilise it with "Tropic" twice a year. Occasionally small branches die, and, as I can still see colour, I remove them with finger and thumb. It has developed two trunks.

It has been used as a small Christmas tree when occasion arose and has some small baubles hanging among its foliage now.

It is now about 70 years old and one of my prized possessions.

Thank you for the 'Bulletin'. It is so wonderful to have, even though I read it in instalments in my 93rd year.

”
Yours affectionately

Win Bristow



from Jan Sked, ASGAP Study Group Co-ordinator, Queensland

Jan not only does all the administrative work for the Study Groups, but edits the Queensland Region "Bulletin", and has many other SGAP "hats", so it was good to hear from her about her container plants. -ed.

I have well over 300 plants in pots, but most are being grown to sell at the SGAP Autumn Plants Sale and a couple of Open Garden our SGAP Branch is supporting this year. I have about 30 plants that I consider as container plants; some are in hanging baskets and other in large pots.

Around the edge of one of my garden beds I have a number of pots and broad shallow saucer-like containers. They sit on the besser blocks that form the edge of the garden. In the saucer-like containers I have *Viola hederacea* and a couple of *Tetragonia tetragonoides* (Warrigal Greens or New Zealand Spinach). This is a bush tucker plant and I use it in various foods. It is especially good in a vegetarian quiche as a substitute for conventional spinach. I also make a pesto with it, using Macadamia nut oil, Macadamia nuts and Tetragonia as the basic ingredients.

I keep a couple of containers with a sand and peat mix (and no plants) on the edge of the garden to catch the seeds that fall from the various plants in the garden. They germinate well in the sand and peat and I just have to pot them up. I never know what will come up in them. The birds drop little gifts into them as well.

Other pots on the edge of the garden contain *Artanema fimbriatum*, *Viola betonicifolia* and *Pseuderanthemum variabile*. The *Viola* and *Pseuderanthemum* self-seed everywhere and the *Artanema* dies off and regrows from seed all the time and there always seem to be flowers on it. I think it makes a good container plant.

A friend gave me a nice pottery container she had made with a *Brachyscome multifida* growing in it. This I placed on the edge of the garden bed with all the other containers. The plant has never stopped flowering and looks very nice in its attractive container. When I plant *Brachyscomes* out in the garden they all seem to die fairly quickly.

The largest plant I have in a container at the moment is a *Davidsonia pruriens*. It has been there for many years and is about 1.2 metres tall. It is supposed to be a dwarf clumping form that will fruit in the pot. So far, it has

produced flowers but no fruit. However, it does sucker from roots in the pot. It is a very attractive plant, but will either have to be re-potted into something larger soon, or planted out.

Another large plant is *Rhododendron lochae*. I have had it for about twenty years and it has been re-potted a number of times. It was recently repotted into a 80cm diameter pot which should hold it for a number of years. It flowers through spring and summer and occasionally also in winter. The flowers are a lovely clear tomato red. Although it flowers well every year, it never sets mature seed. The fruit starts to form, but then just drop off. It is a fairly compact form. Originally I had it potted in cymbidium mix, but this last time I used a commercial potting mix that I have been buying lately, which is giving good results with my ordinary propagation. I always use slow release Osmocote or Nutricote and recently I have been adding some water crystals into the mix.

I had two other northern species in containers for some time, but they were quicker growing and I decided to replant them into the garden. They were *Cleistanthus apodusi* (Weeping Cleistanthus) and *Phyllanthus cuscutiflorus*, (Pink Phyllanthus). I planted them out after they reached 1.5 metres in the pot and both are doing quite well in the garden.

I also have a Tinkling Satinash (*Syzygium alatoramulum*) in a pot for some time; it seems to be a good one for containers. However, I decided to plant it in my son's developing rainforest garden. Before doing so, I took some cuttings from it, so I may try it again as a container plant. It is fairly slow growing and has interesting square stems.

I also had a very attractive *Lepidozamia peroffskyana* in a container for many years and it would have looked good for many more years, but I decided to re-do part of my garden when a very large tree fell over and I wanted to have an area of tree ferns, ground ferns and zamias. So I planted it out, along with a *Lepidozamia hopei* and two *Bowenia serrulata*. They were all excellent in containers, especially the *L. peroffskyana*. It really is a top container plant.

Another plant I have in a pot is *Plectranthus habrophyllus*, one of the rare *Plectranthus* found in only two locations in southern Queensland. It is very quick growing and I have to prune it continually. It is a low-growing succulent shrub with soft, densely hairy, aromatic, dark green leaves. It will spread over a metre in width if I let it. I have quite a collection of *Plectranthus* spp., but most of them are in the garden. Some are quite rare and others have the most delightful aromatic foliage.

(Second episode of Jan's interesting article in our next newsletter. - ed.)

new to me.....

After receiving Jan's lovely long letter I looked up some of the plants she mentioned, quite unknown to me. *Plectranthus habrophyllus*. What an interesting genus this is, well worth reading about and looking at some of the photos. Some of these plants would make delightful container plants in southern areas. Jan is obviously growing quite a collection in her garden. (Reference: Volume 7 Elliot and Jones, pp 372-3). Pruning is certainly very important too as the plants do have a tendency to become leggy, but respond well to hard pruning. The most common method of propagation is from stem cuttings; they produce roots very quickly and do not require rooting formula.

Plectranthus habrophyllus is an endangered species in the wild. It is found in the Moreton Bay district where it grows in rocky outcrops with some shade. Elliot & Jones state that it "warrants further attention and has potential for rockeries, borders and containers."

Another attractive species I noted with silver/green leaves is *Plectranthus argentatus* from the border mountains of Queensland and NSW, with whitish flowers "often profuse and moderately conspicuous". Apparently the plant hybridises readily. Some plants are marketed in south eastern Australia too.

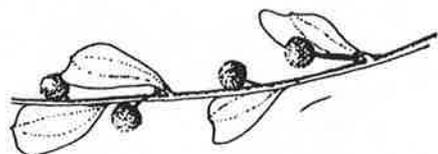
This looks a good genus for container growing. Flower color ranges in the various species - from white to purple, including mauve and pale blue - all popular colors with growers.



pat's pots

About twenty years ago when we first lived in Mount Waverley, John and I went to an Orchid Show and came away with a *Dendrodium x delicatum* with cream flowers. I found this plant a delight and have given away many progeny. When we went to live in Tasmania 13 years ago, I gave them all to various friends, and on return a friend gave me one back. It again has been divided several times but I have two large pots still and they reward us each September/October with so many flowers. They are easy to grow and maintain too. My plants, along with two *Dendrobium kingianum* (pink flowers) live on the south side of the house under a *Cyathea australis* from October until April, then as the sun loses it's intensity they come around to the north side so they enjoy the sun, some warmth and we enjoy watching the flowers develop.

They are certainly hardy and vigorous plants but do appreciate daily watering on the hot, dry and windy days. During the winter I only give my plants a drink every 7 - 10 days. They are repotted every 2 - 3 years using a proprietary brand orchid mix. Each November I feed them with Osmocote slow release, and six-weekly liquid fertiliser (diluted solution of Maxicrop) through the summer months.



I have no idea which cultivar they are. There are about 1400 species growing in Asia, Polynesia and New Guinea. In Australia there are about 56 species, growing mainly in Queensland and NSW, with two species extending as far south as Victoria. One species grows in eastern Tasmania, *Dendrobium striolatum*. I remember our great delight when finding this orchid on a large granite boulder at Bicheno and sharing our delight with some folk from outback NSW. Apparently this species is adaptable to cultivation in temperate climates. It can be grown in a hanging basket with the leaves growing through the wire or slats. They can be grown in pots of coarse mixture, cork or tree fern. They do need protection from slugs or snails. These plants are apparently quite tolerant of long periods of dryness (they would need to on their home ground!)

Refs; Elliot & Jones, *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants*, vol 3
Orchids of Tasmania, Plant Identikit, publisher SGAP Hobart 1993

my "plant of the year"

I must share with you the pleasure of this little blue flower *Lobelia membranacea*. This small perennial herb was given to me in December last, in a tube. I potted it on into a 12cm pot, then in March into a 30cm wide x 15cm earthenware pot. It has filled this container with blue flowers and delicate obovate leaves hanging down the sides. It has flowered consistently since December and, at the end of May, I counted 80 flowers this morning. They are tiny, 0.5 to 1cm, a delicate blue above with a white throat. (At the end of June, the flowers have gone).

I understand that this little plant is found in the sheltered edges of rainforest in eastern Queensland - always in moist soils. It would certainly make a most attractive basket plant. I hope mine will survive the winter. I am enjoying it immensely, a five star container plant for me. (Needs protection from slugs and sails).

Welcome to new members:

Jennie Lawrence, from Burnie, Tasmania. Many of you will know Jennie, a long-time active member of the Australian Plant Society, Tasmania. Jennie has a lovely hill-top garden overlooking Bass Strait. She grows a number of the indigenous Tasmanian pines, and many ferns in her shadehouse.

Bev Kermond, who lives in Brighton, Victoria and grows some of the dwarf Banksias in containers. She is most eager to learn more about container plant growing with our Australian flora.

Pat Kerrison, of Hobart, Tasmania. The Kerrisons have recently moved into an apartment in Salamanca Square after having quite a large garden. What to grow on their balcony is the big question now.

June 25th. "Plants in Pots Interest Group" at Gosford, NSW

John and I have just returned from visiting family and friends in Sydney and we had two lovely days at the home of Lorna and Don George who are members of the Central Coast District Group. Lorna is convenor of the above interest group, and they have been meeting regularly over the past six years. We were delighted to participate in their meeting on Sunday at Audrey and John Taggart's home. Sixteen members attended; lots of discussion, 'hands-on' stuff - each member bringing a plant to show or to seek advice from other members. This is a most valuable group for members who grow a variety of plants in containers for all sorts of reasons. They meet three times a year on a Sunday afternoon: February/March, mid-year and November. I did enjoy the welcome I was given, talking with some very knowledgeable plants people and being able to share a meeting with them.

You will hear more of this group - Lorna is going to send me the minutes of the meeting.

Why not consider something like this in your District Group? Perhaps an occasional Members' meeting, led by people who do grow some of their plants in containers. Tell us (the Study Group) about it too. I am sure Lorna would be very happy to supply any information if you contacted her on 02 4388 3056, or at "Shamley Green", 170 Glenning Road, Glenning Valley, NSW 2261. Or by email: d.george@bigpond.com



THE NEXT NEWSLETTER is due in November. Closing date for contributions, October 1st. I'd love to hear from all of you. (John won't mind typing a 12 page Newsletter!)

I have already an interesting lead article from Geoff Simmons in Elimbah, Queensland. It was waiting for me on our return from NSW. His subject - "Containers without Walls" - Now there's food for thought!

Good potting to you all. Our shortest day has passed; Spring is around the corner - enjoy!

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUB FOR JULY 2000 - 2001? NO GST PAYABLE!

