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Leader and editor Pat Webb
18 Landscape Court, Balnarring, Vic., 3926
ph. (03) 5983 2163; fax (03) 5983 2173

editor's bit

Summer is with us - I am a bit like my pots - not too keen on the heat!

I do hope you all had a good festive season. Personally I was sorry that 100 years since Federation still sees us with a Monarch living overseas, but we have been reminded (by events in the USA) that we must get it right when we do become a Republic.

Did you use an Australian plant for your Christmas tree? Once again my Huon Pine bonsai was great for a small table decoration and 'talking point'.

This is my last newsletter from our Balnarring home. The next issue will come from our unit in Berwick, with a **very** small area of garden and my containers of course. (See last page for date of move and new address.

John and I hope to be in Canberra in September for the ASGAP Conference, so we do look forward to meeting some of you there.

Our Study Group is celebrating the beginning of 2001 with a colour page - I hope you like it.

Good Growing!

PART 2 of "Bonsai with Tasmanian Plants" from Will Fletcher (see Newsletter #25 for Part 1)

The following is a selection of Tasmanian plants that have felt the nip of my secateurs, ending up in bonsai pots. Some, you will notice, also occur on the mainland.

Athrotaxis spp. Our southern conifer friends, the King Billy Pine, *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, Intermediate Pine *Athrotaxis laxifolia*, and the Tasmanian Pencil Pine *Athrotaxis cupressoides* are quite happy to grow in pots. The most suitable, I feel, is the Intermediate Pine, a naturally occurring cross between the other two. It has small foliage which is a light yellowish-green, is vigorous and has a pleasant cascading habit. The King Billy has larger leaves, really needs to be a big bonsai and seems to require regular feeding - I will have to work more on this species - it certainly is a handsome tree when well presented.

The smallest leaves belong to the Pencil Pine and I'm sure it will make a very reliable bonsai, however it is very slow to develop thickness in the trunk. Either be patient, or acquire a larger specimen and cut it back.

In the high country where it grows are to be found the most magnificent aged trees, as in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, many hundreds if not thousands of years old. Absolutely magnificent!

Baeckea gunniana. Occurring as a small shrub in alpine regions, this *Baeckea* has fine, aromatic foliage. I have a small plant, placed in a windswept, rather weather-beaten looking display, and very happy after five years. Being a small shrub, it is not necessarily a plant that I would imagine to be long lived, but on the other hand, having observed gnarled specimens on the mountains, with the little amount of growth they experience every year, some may be 50 years old or more, so I'm keen to try.

Banksia marginata. An absolutely first rate bonsai plant. I have a planting of four (three together plus one) on a low sandstone outcrop, reminiscent of a coastal scene, now 5 years old and looking superb. Initially I carved out two bowl-shaped depressions in the rock, using an angle-grinder, but with the *Banksias* in place, they look quite natural on the outcrop. I have root-pruned every couple of years, and they have been trouble-free and easy to care for. The rock holds some moisture and I would imagine aids in the drainage for the root system.

Callistemon viridiflorus A small-leaved bottlebrush, endemic to Tasmania and displaying greenish-yellow blooms in November, is another species I have mounted on a rock, this time an upright boulder, (dolerite, and heavy as... - I wouldn't recommend it). In this case I have the bottlebrush perched on a little shelf at the top and rear of the rock, and it lurches out to the side as if growing out of a crevice. The rock sits in a shallow bowl of water, and I suspect that some moisture is available to the plant via a fine crack or two, even though it is a long way up. It is not difficult to imagine it being a scene from the wild, and in this case the rock is the dominant feature, certainly conveying the strength of the mountains - the callistemon indicating the tenacity of nature.

Hakea epiglottis. An endemic hakea with fine, curving needle-like leaves, and small cream or yellow flowers in spring. (We also have *Hakea megadenia*, very similar, but flowering in autumn). These hakea appear to be quite hardy as bonsai specimens, their fine foliage and flowers presenting very nicely.

Hymenanthera dentata An interesting, sparsely foliaged, spiky shrub. The branches strike off in a very geometric fashion, and the tiny yellow bell flowers along the stem, followed by white berries with purple tonings. Quite fascinating. It can make a very striking feature, with a likeness to those prickly African savannah trees that one sees lions and zebras relaxing beneath (well, on the Telly anyway).

Kunzea ambigua A great plant to date, with its fine foliage and attractive bark. I have two forms, the normal upright shrub and a prostrate form in a windswept setting. I think the Kunzea has great potential.

Lagarostobus franklinii Our Huon Pine with its weeping foliage makes a distinctive bonsai. Although the foliage is quite quick-growing, the trunk is very slow to develop some girth. However it is a good hardy pot plant and well worth the effort.

Of the remaining Tasmanian conifers, *Diselma archeri* is most recommended, also the Celery Top Pine, *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*; the South Esk Pine, *Callitris oblonga* and the Creeping Strawberry Pine, *Microcachrys tetragona* have potential.

Leptospermum spp. Traditionally, *L. laevigatum* has been used to great effect. I haven't tried it, but I'm happy with *L. lanigerum*, (especially alpine forms), *L. scoparium* forms, *L. nitidum*, *L. glaucescens* and *L. rupestre* - the last two being endemic to Tasmania. In Tasmania we find many differing forms of *Leptospermum* species (as I suspect, Australia wide) with the coastal and alpine variants providing most of the spreading, prostrate and slower growing subjects.

With the spreading forms it is quite straightforward to construct windswept styles or cascades, the latter being where the plant is placed in a small squared pot, with the main branch plunging down one side.

The leaf, flower and nut on most *Leptospermum*s are perfectly scaled for bonsai work. The bark on many of them develops to be a real feature.

Notelaea ligustrina The Native Olive adapts well to the pot and develops a nice trunk and branching. Here in Tasmania, a little grub helps itself to the new growth every year and thus the plant is self-pruning.

Nothofagus cunninghamii The Myrtle reigns supreme. With a beautiful array of fan-shaped foliage, its precise, sculptured leaves, its ease of forming a trunk of substance and its adaptability to a pot, it comes in with five stars! But.....what about our deciduous *Nothofagus gunnii*, absolutely delightful, it would have to be the best but for one thing - it's so unreliable to grow. Oh well, look at it as a challenge, or look at it in the wild - with awe.

Other plants that perform well are *Melaleuca spp*, *Grevillea australis* (the only Tasmanian *Grevillea*), *Eucalyptus vernicosa*, *Allocasuarina*, *Trochocarpa* and *Cyathodes*. Many other species I have not yet tried, but expect success with.

What a plethora of fine plants we have here in Tasmania. It's mind-boggling.

Certainly many of our cooler-climate plants seem quite adaptable to lengthy pot culture, so looking at the resource we have here, it'll last me out! I have many more to try yet, and there are an infinite number of stylings and landscapes one can construct in miniature with bonsai.

As for how they look - well, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I have a lot to learn and I'm looking forward to the journey.

I am delighted to have shared Will's enthusiasm with you - he has certainly inspired me to continue with my "little friends". -ed.



Pat's Pots - January 2001

Problems - blackbirds! They have dug out all the moss from around my bonsai - it was growing well and really did add a dimension to the small containers with the plants. (This is despite having several birdbaths for them to splash in and plenty of mulch). In one pot I have used *Pratia* around the base, and this has grown well, but I still like the texture and growth of moss around the Huon Pine.

Lots of change in my pot culture coming up in 2001. I shall have to get to know our new microclimate around our unit, and only a very small area. Challenges ahead - I'll keep you posted. We shall have the use of a communal glasshouse in the winter which could be beneficial for the *Lobelia membranacea* and for the *Tripladenia cunninghamii*. Berwick is some 26 km inland from Westport and in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, so we will probably get some frosts - a very rare event here in Balnarring.

My pot of the month is *Brachyscome formosa* "Pilliga Posy". Its delightful pink flowers have been prolific over the past two months - I do keep it watered in these hot, dry months.

I have given all my pots a 'pick-me-up' of Maxicrop Plant Food, (half strength) in November and again this week (7th January).

✂ a Christmas letter from Liesbeth, Neer, The Netherlands

Now we've got a greenhouse! The asbestos on the barn has been removed, quite a job which we did ourselves, and replaced with glass. All plants are inside now and fortunately we had no frosts until last week, which is very exceptional. The heater wasn't installed until two weeks ago, so we've been very lucky.

There is not much to say about the plants at the moment, many of them are still flowering which is lovely. Most people in our society have plants which flower all the way through summer and do nothing but sleep in winter. It's a real oasis in here, compared to other people's greenhouses. But still quite a cold oasis with temperatures just above zero! I will go and check the plants soon and rearrange them, they are still packed together a bit. The weather is clear and sunny now which is nice, but as a consequence it is cold at night (minus 5 to 10°) and just above zero during the day. But the sun gradually warms the greenhouse during the day so I hope it will be a bit warmer now (2pm). I hope the *Grevillea banksii* can cope with these conditions. Wait and see!

✂ Pam Valentine writes from Liverpool NSW - January 2001

Pam has a very small townhouse garden. She is running out of space for many larger plants and is planning to build up her bonsai collection.

"I have just come back from a trip to Thailand where we fell in love with their bowls of water lillies. I am trying to reproduce an Aussie version. So far, an earthenware bowl with a rush plant surrounded by small floating plants is the result. I am searching for - and it is proving difficult - to find a ceramic version with some water lily-type plants. I have tracked down Mary Moodies *Southern Aquatics* at Mortdale and shall visit next weekend - I am hoping she has what I require".

Do keep us posted Pam. Good luck with your bonsai - do tell us how they are going too. I enjoy mine immensely.

Some of the plants which Pam grows in containers in a shady south-facing area (sun only in summer) are: *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Correa reflexa*, *Correa* "Marion's Marvel", *Bauera rubioides*, *Alpina caerulea* (native ginger) and maidenhair fern. Pam also belongs to the Eloura Native Reserve Committee and enjoys working in this community group with bush regeneration. -ed.

snippet

What about a new plant for a tub or container? Kuranga, in last year's *Winter Bush Telegraph*, tells us about some of their grafted Darwinias. The "foliage is almost conifer-like" but the tips of the branches have delightful bells. The plant described is *Darwinia macrostegia* - a neat shrub of about 50cm to 1m, with bell flowers streaked white and red. *Darwinia meeboldii* x *macrostegia* hybrid has greenish bells with pointed tips throughout spring. We had a *D. meeboldii* in the garden for six years and only last year I pulled it out because it had become too woody - I should have pruned it more. The flowers last well inside as a small posy or floating in a bowl.

Some small orchids new to me

During the spring of 2000, when visiting a local nursery, I saw some beautiful epiphytic orchids in small containers - I fell in love with them and returned a couple of times to admire and enjoy. I wasn't tempted to buy then but have promised ourselves one in our new home next winter. *Sarcochilus falcatus* (orange blossom) and *S. hartmannii*. Certainly an outstanding species when in flower. They looked good in an unglazed bonsai-type pot or a slab. The flowers were white/cream with reddish markings.

The *Sarcochilus* species may be grown readily in a bush-house in all but the coldest parts of the country (Ref Wrigley & Fagg, 4th edition). The plants came from the nursery of Wayne Turville.

(See next page)

Australian Native Dendrobiums - Wayne Turville

Wayne Turville has a wholesale nursery and is sending me his catalogue in April. I shall be interested to see this. Wayne puts out an excellent leaflet for cultivating Australian Native Dendrobiums and has kindly given me permission to pass this on to you.

Welcome to the fragrant, colorful world of Australian Indigenous orchids.

These rewarding and uniquely attractive orchids are endemic to eastern and south-eastern Australia. As such, in most cases, they do not require the demanding temperatures and high humidity that most other exotic orchids require. In the wild, most grow either as Epiphytes (growing on the outside of other trees and shrubs on their bark), or as Lithophytes (growing on wet cliff faces or boulders). In most cases the roots of the orchids are covered with the ferns and mosses that also inhabit these spots, so they rarely if ever, dry out completely. These same ferns and mosses also add plenty of humidity to the air around the orchids, so a damp airy atmosphere is the most suitable. (Fernery conditions).

The locations in the wild where these occur are usually quite bright as few other plants grow under the same conditions. Australian epiphytic orchids enjoy bright but definitely not hot positions. A gentle shadow should be seen when placing your hand over the top of your plant. Dark wet conditions will allow rot to occur and blooms will become spotty with fungal infections.

So where to grow them? We recommend a special orchid growing house that has shade cloth sides to allow ventilation and also keeps out the bugs, and a hard, clear plastic roof to stop drenching winter rains spoiling the blooms and drowning the roots. If this is a bit grandiose, then on a verandah or pergola facing north to enjoy winter sun. Native orchids enjoy winter sun but would prefer more shade during the warmer months. Under the eaves of the north side of the house is also a suitable location. Remember though, to keep them off the soil or worms will enter and destroy the specially formulated orchid compost.

How often to water? Basically just keep them moist all year, although they will enjoy a dry spell in mid-winter when the buds are forming for spring. If in pots, check the drainage holes to see if damp - you will soon learn how often to water. It may be daily in summer but only fortnightly in winter.

Should I feed my natives? If you can be bothered, try applying liquid fertilisers mixed in a watering can and simply pour it over the top of the plant foliage - and usually one gram of most fertilisers per litre of water fortnightly in spring and summer will give great results.

Be careful though not to apply too much nitrogen after February as you will retard the blooming with too much leaf growth.

When to repot? I recommend you repot only when the plant is ready to split the plastic pot! Pot-bound native orchids bloom prolifically. If you have to repot, or wish to divide them, then October is the most suitable time. We recommend chipped pine bark that has been professionally composted or aged, preferably also laced with Dolomite lime. Each capital city has its own supplier. In Victoria, I recommend Debco 5-10mm bark straight.

Should I divide the native? Basically no. Only divide it if a friend has been annoying you for a division or you wish to make a little pocket money by selling your excess plants. Simply split the plant into halves, quarters or minimum 5 cane pieces. Kingianum style hybrids and Kingianum itself can, with care, be divided down to single canes. (Be careful!)

How much light do they require? Native Dendrobiums require bright conditions to flower well. If they are grown too dark they will produce lush soft canes prone to disease and will not bloom well, if at all. This is the main reason for natives not to flower. Bright, straight winter sun will encourage your Dendrobiums to bloom well in spring. In summer, provide all the shade you can to stop the leaves scalding and becoming lemon in color. And for spring and autumn - somewhere in between.

Wayne Turville Orchids operates as a wholesale nursery from POBox 123, Hastings, Victoria 3915. Phone 0417 505429. Fax 03 5979 7699. Email wto@peninsula.hotkey.net.au.

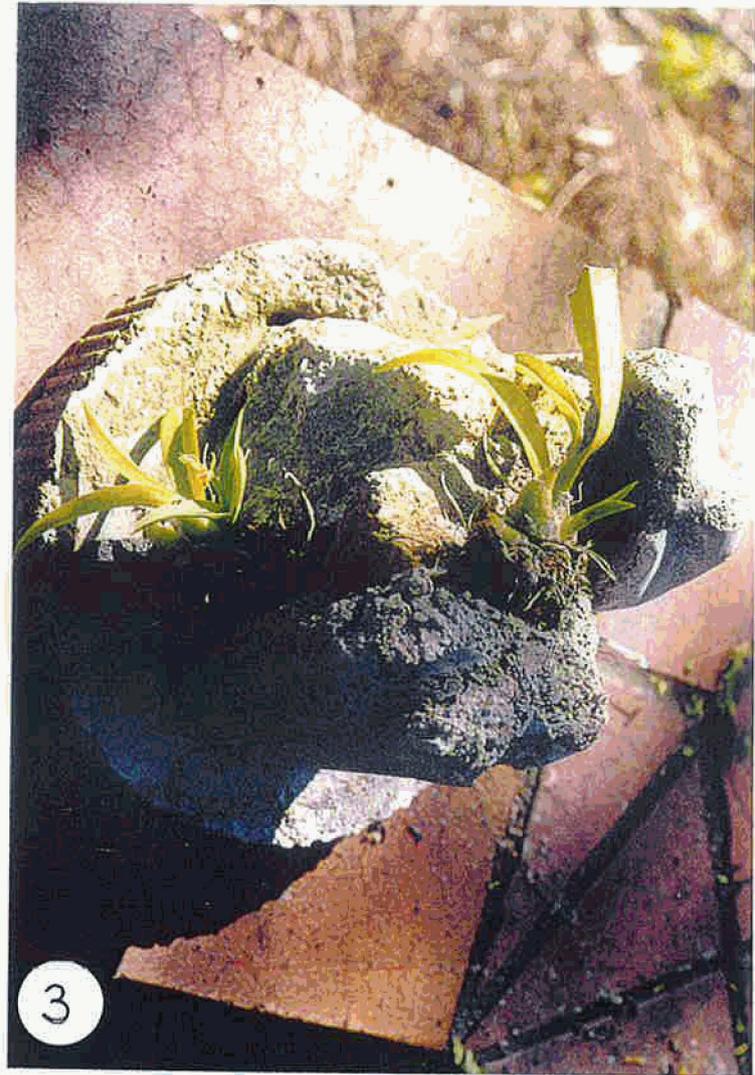
Wayne is licenced to send to Tasmania and West Australia.

from John Emms, Loch, Victoria

"The Power of Television"..... For twelve months I had a self-watering pot containing *Isolepis cernua* - Nodding Club-rush, situated near the back door and ignored by one and all and which was eventually mulched. Then in early October 2000, Jane Edmondson featured this plant on the ABC Gardening program under the title 'Fairy Lights' and my family asked "Why can't we have an attractive plant like that?" For the sake of peace I have set up a new pot.

Personally, I prefer my pot of *Sowerbaea juncea* - Rush Lily, which has some similarity to 'Fairy Lights' but also puts up mauve globular flowers during the spring.

My fascination with 'ball and stick' flowers also extends to various members of the Daisy family and *Epacris spp* such as the *E.breviflora*, all of which are in pots and, I think, flower a little better in this environment.





COLOUR PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS

I do appreciate the photos some members send me and I have an album for them. To share some with you I felt we needed to have some colour as plant photos in black & white are usually disappointing when photocopied. I thought it would be a cheerful addition for our New Year newsletter. If it wasn't so expensive I'd do it more often. Let me know what you think; perhaps we could make it an annual event.

1. This *Grevillea* "Ellendale Pool" is grown by Liesbeth in the Netherlands. She sent this photo in November 1998 saying "As you see, despite our very wet summer, it is flowering again".

2. This *Diplolaena angustifolia* "Yanchep Rose" is grown by John Emms in Loch, Victoria, in a container. It is grafted onto a *Correa glabra*.

3. Geoff Simmons, who often stretches our imagination, sent this photo showing the *Liparis reflexa* (Onion orchid) growing on one of his 'containers without walls'. From Geoff's letter "The common name is Yellow Rock Orchid" and because of this rather pale colour it is not a very good choice to place on light-coloured stones. Probably a black basalt type of rock would be better. There could be quite a challenge to grow some of the rock orchids in containers other than pots". This orchid is endemic in NSW, growing on rock faces and boulders in sheltered gullies. According to Elliot & Jones, this is an extremely hardy orchid with greenish-yellow flowers with an orange labellum. **BUT** - the flowers have a pungent odour like cat's urine! Sounds like a plant for not too close to the house.

4. *Lagarostrobus franklinii* (Huon Pine). My twelve year old plant awaiting root pruning, leaf pruning and repotting. You will note the massed pot-bound roots. In September 2000 I repotted my favourite plant and again took 1/3 off roots and branches, and repotted into the same container. I do not want it to grow any bigger. It is now November and it looks quite happy after this treatment - exactly two years since I repotted it last time.



Drosera in Pots

Did you see the ABC-TV *Gardening Australia* segment on 17 November on growing *Drosera* in pots? - a most interesting feature.

Droseraceae is a large genus with over 100 species worldwide in temperate and tropical parts. Of course, the southwest district of Western Australia has 40-50 species of its own. Apparently they are becoming an increasingly popular plant to grow in containers. There are now some nurseries that are specialising in tissue culture to grow these plants for sale.

The Pygmy Sundews are miniature plants with tiny dense rosettes, some of which have quite large flowers. These little plants are quite drought-resistant, requiring more moisture in the winter months.

Climbing, or Erect Sundews such as the *Drosera graniticola* can grow to 10-20 cm. In the wild this plant grows in granite outcrops - not often seen in cultivation. Another erect climber is *Drosera gigantea* growing 0.5 to one metre tall! This plant grows in coastal districts of SW Australia in wet sandy soils or peaty swamps. This plant can be grown in a pot with a mixture of peat, pinebark and perlite. Water well in winter but hold back in summer. I see in Elliot & Jones *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants* that the base of these plants may be immersed in water during the growing period.

Drosera whittakeri is a species which grows in many areas here in Victoria; a great favourite of mine when in the bush. According to Elliot & Jones, it makes a very pretty little plant in a shallow pot or saucer but can be difficult to maintain.

Are any of you growing *Drosera* species? If you are, do write and tell us how your plant is doing. Any tips you can pass on would be good to have. It was delightful to see this segment on *Gardening Australia*.

Follow up... *Kuranga Nursery in Ringwood do not grow or stock this species and were unable to advise where they are cultivated.*

Lobelia membranacea (ref Newsletter #24, July 2000)

Some of you may remember my "five star" container plant I wrote about in the above newsletter.

At the end of October this plant was looking very sad - what should I do about it? It looked ready for the compost heap. Early in November I received the following letter from Maureen Schaumann (Daisy Study Group) who had given me the plant originally. I quote from her letter.

"I was delighted to read how much you enjoy the L.membranacea I gave you last (1999) December when the Daisy Group visited your garden. I myself, love it. It is one little plant I can never bear to be without, and I did wonder how your plant was going and whether it was living up to expectations - 5 stars says it all. After flowering for about six months they do have a rest period over the winter and I sometimes lose one or two, but moving pots under the eaves to a warm spot seems to help protect them. They take on a new lease of life when I divide them up in early summer, potting them into fresh mix.

Have you tried Lobelia trigonocaulis? This is a lovely hanging-basket plant, for shade during summer. The flowers are a lovely pale blue, much larger and softer than L.membranacea, with heart-shaped, toothed leaves"

At the end of November I tipped out my pot and found four small, healthy-looking 'rooted plants' and potted them up in fresh mix. Now they are beginning to grow and look much happier and the first flowers have appeared. And now, in mid January, they are in full flower again. -ed.

"Waterwell Pots"

The Central Coast "Plants in Pots Interest Group" have discussed Waterwell Pots at several of their meetings and I am taking a few comments from past Minutes to pass on to you.

- Members feel that waterwell pots are not suitable for every plant.
- Watch for strong root systems growing into the well - these can dry out in hot weather.
- Waterwell pots should be emptied after heavy rain to prevent plants becoming waterlogged.
- One member has *Brachyscome multifida* and *Orthosiphon aristatus* (Cat's whiskers) growing well in these pots.
- Pat (me) did not have success with *Brachyscome segmentosa* - much healthier in an ordinary container and watered regularly.
- One member had success growing *Adiantum aethiopicum* in a waterwell hanging basket, watering only at the bottom and fertilised with blood and bone.
- A suggestion for a hanging waterwell - a prostrate *Syzygium australe*.



Always a talking point - POTTING MIXES!

The more I read and talk to people the more I feel that everyone has their favourite recipe (like making bread!) I am using an article from the Central Coast "Plants in Pots Interest Group" for you to read and think about - and then send in your ideas.

1. Use of commercial potting mixes is acceptable and simpler than mixing one's own. Ultimately it is a matter of personal choice.
2. If using commercial mix, factors to be considered in making a choice are:
 - a) Cost
 - b) Texture - the more open the mix, the better.
 - c) Conformity with Australian Standard - how important?

Use of Australian Standard Mark

Some potting mixes carry the Australian Standard mark on their bags guaranteeing that the mix conforms to the Australian Standard. To quote Kevin Handreck in his book *Gardening Down Under* "This mark guarantees that the mix in the pack has been produced with properties that conform with the Australian Standard for potting mixes. That guarantee is backed by Standards Australia which, unannounced, checks the quality control records at the factory and takes random samples for independent analysis. Feedback from the analyses ensures that quality is maintained from batch to batch."

There are two Australian Standard types of mix - Premium and Regular. A red Standard mark indicates the Premium mix, A black Standard mark, the Regular mix. The difference is that the Premium mix "must have a supply of nitrogen sufficient to give at least one month's good plant growth even when other fertiliser is not used". It is suggested that when Regular mix is used, controlled-release fertiliser should be added.

Some other mixes do not carry the Australian Standard mark but the bags state that "the contents conform to the Standard". The manufacturers of these mixes conduct their own testing and back the guarantee themselves, but there is no independent outside testing.

Other mixes make no claim to comply with the Australian Standard. Some may be very satisfactory, some may not. Some manufacturers mark their bag with "Premium", but unless accompanied by the Australian Standard mark, this gives no guarantee at all that the mix conforms with the Premium grade of the mix.

Naturally there is a difference in price - the Australian Standard mixes are the most expensive. Handreck recommends that one only buy those mixes which bear the Standard mark, but cost is a factor for us all. In discussion it emerged that many had used and found satisfactory the less expensive mixes. The quality of the mix was a matter of judgement - the important thing was that the mix was open and drained well. In time everyone settled on a mix that suited them, using their own additives and fertilising methods. There are simple methods that can be used to check texture, air-filled porosity etc., if wished. Consensus seemed to be that a good rule of thumb practice may be to use a mixture of cheaper and the more expensive mixes, and adding coarse sand, rice hulls, peat coco-peat etc., until the mixture seemed 'right' for the plant one was potting. On the other hand one could feel confident of the qualities of the mixtures conforming to the Australian standard if one decided to bear the cost. Mixes "conforming to the Standard" should also give satisfactory results.

Even using them, some may feel the need to add sand etc. to vary the mix for particular plants. Substances used to make a good open mix are:

Rice hulls, Perlite, Coco-peat, Vermiculite

Coarse sand - can be horticultural sand, coarse river sand, or propagating sand. **Sand should be washed before adding to your mix.*

Care is essential when using potting mix.

Mix should be moist when handled

Wear a mask. Work in an airy space.

Wear gloves and wash hands well after use.

PS I usually use a mix "Home Gardener" or "Gardener's Choice". Both have Australian Standard Regular marks. I have used Debco "Green Wizard" but find it very expensive and it still needs 'modifying' for some plants. I add Vermiculite or Perlite and coarse propagating sand to make a more open mix. -ed.

See comments from Jan Sked in Newsletter #25, page 8

Planting 'Pots and all' by Peter Olde reprinted from "Gumnuts" - ASGAP Online

I would like to bring you an experience that you will scarcely credit and I wonder if others have had a similar one. Lately, I have had good success with a few difficult species by planting them in the ground in their pot. Many years ago I grew a *Lechenaultia biloba* in the ground for about five years without any attention. There it flowered and grew happily but it eventually died during a particularly dry period. I was amazed that you could grow this plant even for

two years in Sydney. So I dug up the dead plant and noticed it was still in a 1" tube! Apparently I had buried it and watered it when we went on holidays some years before and had forgotten to dig it out.

Apart from that, I have observed over the years that difficult plants survive much longer in pots than if planted in the ground in the ordinary way. Indeed, they can become pot-bound and their roots grow through the drainage holes into the ground and still seem to survive quite healthily. This happens routinely in the Nursery situation and nurserymen regularly recommend growing difficult species in pots.

So taking this one step further, I decided to plant a few difficult species in the ground, **pot and all**. Of course, you have to keep up the water until the plants get some of their roots into the ground through the drainage holes and in dry weather. A watering system could be very useful here. Perhaps you could encourage even more roots by cutting off the bottom of the pot, but this may not be as successful. Even if the plants die using this technique, it is a simple matter to replace the dead pot with a live one.

I realise that ultimately the technique is less than ideal, but the time granted for difficult, small and showy species may be greatly extended. Grafting may not be necessary. I theorise that a large quantity of roots, sufficient at least to extend life, remain protected by the pot wall from any root pathogens. I am wondering if there are any other stupid people like me out there. I have had remarkable success with *Eremophila maculata* var. *brevifolia* and I wonder if Waratahs might respond to similar treatment, using say a large pot.

Epacris species in containers

I have grown *Epacris longiflora* in a containers successfully and am currently enjoying *E. microphylla* var. *gunnii* which I prune severely after flowering. I have the pots in dappled shade on our south-facing patio.

Gwen Elliot has given permission to reprint some notes from the Epacris Study Group newsletter on "*Epacris Cuttings*". I'd love to hear from any of you who are growing Epacris in a container. I believe John Emms grows some species.

Notes on Epacris cuttings - from Epacris Study Group newsletter

These can be challenging, particularly to newcomers to plant propagation.

Cuttings taken in late spring or early summer have the natural atmospheric warmth, and longer day length to help the cuttings develop roots.

The main criterion for the propagation of Epacris is to take cuttings when the plant material is at the right stage of development. Soft, floppy or weak growth will wilt and die; hardwood stems sit for months and months and not produce roots at all. The material in between provides the best results. This is young but firm growth which is pliable but not limp. The floppy tip should be removed and a cutting of the next 5-8cm of stem used. Stem cuttings, or side shoots which have been pulled or cut from the main stem, retaining the base of the side stem - which is referred to as the heel.

Garden-grown plants can be observed during growth periods until the material is suitable for cuttings to be taken.

Preparation of cutting. Remove the leaves from the lower 1/3 of each cutting, (the leaves can be pulled off by hand provided the bark is not stripped from the stem), or removed with sharp secateurs. Retain several leaves on the upper section of the cutting.

Growing on. Cuttings can be grown in a community pot or propagation unit - kept moist but not over wet, until roots are formed.

Potting on rooted cuttings. The roots of Epacris are very fine but not strong. They need to be handled with care. Newly-potted plants should be kept in a sheltered location for at least a week.

ENDPIECE - a thought provoking letter from Geoff Simmons, Elimbah, Queensland.

What type of plant to select for a container? The first thought may be on whether to choose an annual, perennial, ground cover, fern, bush or tree.

However there is another category to consider - is it to be a tamed or wild thing? By necessity, container-grown plants are single or used in limited numbers. Besides the obvious choice for flower or foliage, other factors may be important; for example - reliability or longevity.

There is little doubt that the commercial nursery trade has made advances in taming some Australian species and extensively used hybridisation to tailor a plant for the best sale. However Australian plant enthusiasts may well concentrate on wild forms and be content to risk failure. The process of using untried species is one aspect that increases the scope for growers of Australian plants. So what is the choice - a highly developed kangaroo paw or an untamed banksia?

Geoff adds in his letter: " There is no doubt that tamed plants may be more reliable, causing gardeners to avoid the wild ones - I hope this is not so of SGAPI/APS members".

I think it is great the way Geoff really does set us thinking and assessing what we are doing, and why, in our growing. He shares his knowledge and experience most generously.

A "wild, untamed" species I am enjoying in a large container is *Allocasuarina crassa* - great fun, always a talking point, and responds well to pruning. -ed.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Betty Denton, 22 Dale Avenue, Eltham North, 3095
John Emms, 3 Queen Street, Loch, 3945
Lorna George, 170 Glenning Valley Road, Glenning Valley, 2261
John Graham, RMB 1804, Cobden, 3266
Pat Kerrison, 67 Salamanca Square, Battery Point, 7004
Bev Kermond, 8 Glyndon Avenue, Brighton, 3186
Pam King, PO Box 458, Bairnsdale, 3875
Mollie Lau, 30 Falconer Street, Glen Waverley, 3150
Jennie Lawrence, 1 Franklin Street, Burnie, 7320
Barbara Melville, 83 Malison Road, Wyoming, 2250
Helen Morrow, PO Box 451, Bulleen, 3105
Leeanne Neal, 23 Beasley Crescent, Rankin Park, 2287
John Randall, 27 Woolard Road, Springfield, 2250
Kris Schäffer, 94 Morphetts Road, Neika, 7054
Lyn Thompson, PO Box 38, Woodford, 2778
Liesbeth Uijtewaal-de Vries, Dries 22, 6086 AW, Neer, The Netherlands
Pam Valentine, 3/150 Moore Street, Liverpool, 2170
Jean Vredereg, 115 Shailer Road, Shailer Park, 4128
Pat Webb, 99 Fiddlers Green, 57 Gloucester Road, Berwick, 3806 (from 23 March 2001)

ASGAP, PO Box 202, Mount Ommaney, 4074
APS Maroondah, PO Box 33, Ringwood, 3134
SGAP Canberra, PO Box 217, Civic Square, Canberra, 2608
APS New South Wales, PO Box 38, Woodford, 2778
SGAP Queensland, PO Box 41, Lawnton, 4501
APS South Australia, 2 Birdwood Street, Netherby, 5062
APS Tasmania, PO Box K1353, Hobart, 7001
APS Victoria, PO Box 357, Hawthorn Business Centre, 3122
Wildlife Socy. of West Australia, PO Box 64, Nedlands, 6009

A REMINDER -

- Next issue due in July
- Closing date: June 1st 2001
- Subscriptions for 2001-2002 will be due in July
- Please note my new address from March 23rd

**99 Fiddlers Green
57 Gloucester Avenue
Berwick, Victoria 3806**

I do need to hear from Members about what you are growing, any ideas, suggestions or comments. It is essential, to maintain a lively, useful and interesting Newsletter, that we do share our experiences with each other. Looking forward to your letter.



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Pat