

**ASGAP AUSTRALIAN PLANTS  
FOR CONTAINERS STUDY  
GROUP**

**NEWSLETTER**



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Dear Reader,

I'm finally putting the proverbial pen to paper and writing the Newsletter. There has been a lot of setting up that needed doing, and I felt as if I would never actually get to write something! Reading through the previous Newsletters is an ongoing job, in one way I don't want to cover the same subjects, but so many issues are ongoing and changing. When I look at the first Newsletter from September, 1984, I see that none of the members then are current members, so going back over some earlier issues won't be repetitious to you.

Pat has done such a good job with her newsletters, I have found them easy to read and very relevant, I have decided to not change the format too much. Since my letters have appeared in the different State's Journals we've had a number of new members join, so I thought I would introduce all those members and their questions, and hope that some of the existing members will help me to answer them.

When I actually start writing, I find I have so much to say, and so many ideas I'll have to spread them out over future newsletters. I definitely want to include more pictures in the newsletter, so please get busy with the cameras and send me lots of photos. I'll write a bit about myself and my pots in each newsletter, but I am really looking for contributions from members.



Wahlenbergia "Bonne Belle", flowers all summer, then I cut it back hard in winter, and feed it in spring. It has been in this pot for about 5 years, it originally shared the pot with a Brachyscome "Blue Eyes", but that died off, and the Wahlenbergia took over.

**“A Pot allows you to take complete control of the root zone”**. Neville Passmore, Gardening Australia Magazine, May 2002.

## New Members



**Darren Vandenberg**, from West Preston, Victoria writes that he wishes someone would write about “how on earth you rejuvenate plants in 50cm wide pots. I am growing quite a few things (still only fairly young) in that size pot, but which will eventually be 2-3 metres tall. After a couple of years you are meant to ‘pot-on’, because the mix has been spent, but at this size, it is nearly impossible to manhandle a plant out of a pot without the risk of damage (to the plant and your back). Any experiences with this sort of thing would be good to read about.”

*Darren goes on to say “I have over a dozen large (almost wine barrel size) pots down the side of my house. Which only receive direct sun in spring/summer. It’s early days, but I have *Backhousia citriodora*, *Correa* ‘Marion’s Marvel’, *C. glabra*, *C. calycina*, *C. lawrenciana*, *Anopterus glandulosus*, *Leptospermum macrocarpum*, *Acacia drummondii* ssp. *elegans*, *Acacia verticillata*, *Grevillea shiressii*, *Prostanthera rhombea*, *P. lasianthos*, *Pomaderris aspera*, *Eucryphia lucida* and *Bursaria spinosa*. I am sure I will have a pruning nightmare down there in a few years, but for now it’s lots of fun to imagine what will happen.”*

*I have a number of half wine barrels and very large pots with various combinations of plants in them. I find the biggest problem is the settling of the soil over a period of time. In one of the wine barrels with a beautiful *Melaleuca pentagona*, the soil must have dropped 20cm. It has been in there for 13 years, and I have never topped up the soil. I hope, with John’s help, to lift the *Melaleuca* and get some fresh soil under it this winter.*

*I was talking to a friend who has a large number of established plants in big terracotta pots (can’t convince her to join the Study Group), and her theory is to use the best possible quality potting soil. She has an *Araucaria bidwillii* in a large terracotta pot that is now taller than her gutters, and all she ever does is top it up with a couple of centimetres of fresh potting soil mixed with slow release fertiliser and a wetting agent once a year.*

*What I often do is use an old pruning saw, and cut down into the soil and remove roots and old soil from around the edge with a trowel, (if it is too hard to remove the plant) and replace it with fresh potting mix, then give the pot a good soaking of Seasol. What do other members do when confronted with this problem?*

*I’m a bit willing with the pruning saw, I often remove a plant, saw off the sides and bottom, and pot it back into the same pot. *Darwinias* are about the only plant I won’t do this to. Are other members ruthless with roots?*

**Heather Daley** from East Blaxland, NSW writes, “I enjoy propagating Australian plants, and consequently end up with more than I can plant out. These ones end up living in pots for sometime so I’m interested in discovering better ways of maintaining these and new plants in pots long term.”

**Penny Hislop** from Claremont, WA says, “We have just moved into a newly built house, in Perth, and we shall be planting a native garden over the next few weeks. Only a small garden, with 3 small courtyards as well, hence the keen interest in container grown plants! We are particularly keen to plant some banksias into pots- do you have any advice or cautions that would be useful to us?”

*My email reply to Penny was “My main caution with banksias is to go very lightly on fertiliser, and don’t overpot them. Mine get quite potbound, and seem to thrive on it. I use Osmocote for Natives at half strength, I’ve lost a few by being heavy handed.”*

*Penny then asked, “What size pot would you suggest for *Banksia prionotes*, *B. menziesii* for instance?”*

*I replied “The big Banksias like *B. prionotes*, *B. menziesii*, *B. speciosa* etc should probably ultimately be in a half wine barrel size pot. My point is that if you buy one in a 140mm pot, only pot on into a 200mm or 250mm pot next, then 300mm etc, and only when the plant has really filled out the pot. Other species, particularly *Callistemons* and *Melaleucas* can be potted into larger pots without problems.” I see that Darren has planted directly into large pots with a range of species. I’ll discuss this issue in more detail later in the newsletter.*

**Gunter Hormann**, from Vale Park, SA writes, “I have just joined the APS and know a bit less than a little about Australian plants! I am trying to establish an Australian native plants garden with mixed success. Since I am also having some plants in hanging baskets etc. I think it may be a worth while idea to join your study group. Perhaps you can learn form my innocence! So, as you may have noticed, my motive of joining is purely selfish. But although I am already 72 years young there may yet be a time to come where I can make a small contribution.”

*Gunter has *Eremophila glabra prostrate burgundy*, *E. subteretifolia* and *E. glabra prostrate yellow* in hanging baskets facing North-East. He emailed a photo, and they look great, but unfortunately the photo didn’t reproduce well for the newsletter.*

*Gunter, I hope we will hear from you regularly as your knowledge of plants in pots expands.*



**Margaret Basso**, from Brookfield, Queensland writes, "At this stage I would be a complete beginner, but certainly find that a lot of plants don't like our heavy clay soil, so pots make sense. Humidity and fungi also kill a few such as Geraldton Wax (*Chamelaucium uncinatum*) despite a raised bed and imported soil. (Grafted versions are coming I'm told, with hardier roots)."

**Lorraine Haig** from Richmond, Tasmania e-mails, "It has been very dry here for a while and combined with our clay soil I am having a difficult time keeping my garden thriving. I grow everything from seed or cuttings and become very attached to the little things as they grow and thrive in their pots. The disappointment begins when I plant out. All my previous attempts to grow container plants have ended in my planting them out due to concerns about wind blowing them over and watering them when we go away. At the moment though I have *Eucalyptus caesia*, 2 ½ years old and covered in buds in a pot, also *Regelia inops* and a Huon Pine (*Dacrydium franklinii*) all doing well. Looking forward to hearing about others experiences and to gain some knowledge on the subject of Australian Plants in containers."

*Lorraine, I don't know that we will be able to allay your concerns about watering your pots when you go away, that's always a difficult one. I solve it by never going away! I'd like to go to Tasmania in summer, 2004 for the ASGAP conference, but I'd have to leave John at home to water! Do other members have watering systems for their pots?*

Other new members are **Linda Gowing**, Aberfoyle Park SA, **Gemma O'Callaghan** Taroona, TAS, **Sylvia and Syd Oats** from Elizabeth East, SA, **Gordon McNeill**, Dalwallinu, WA and Elaine Pilgrim, Ipswich, Qld, who also has concerns about which plants can and can't be root pruned.



**Liesbeth Uijtewaal** is a long term member from The Netherlands. She had been having a problem with root aphids, I asked her how it was going, and also what she had flowering now, and if she had any *Correas*. I also asked about Australian Plants as 'potted colour' on the European Market. She replied,

"...Anyway, it's summer indeed now. We had exceptionally nice weather with some rain and clouds over the last four days. Good for the garden, and plants in pots as well, to adapt to the world outside the green house. Most flowers have gone by now, but still in flower are: *Kunzea ambigua*, *Darwinia citriodora*, *Calothamnus quadrifidus*, *Correa reflexa* (tall and squat form), *C. baeuerlenii* (I'm so happy to have it at last!), *C. 'mannii'*, *Anigozanthos flavidus*, *Grevillea 'Robyn Gordon'*, *G. johnsonii*, *G. 'Ellendale Poole'*, *G. mucronulata* hybrid, *G. 'Superb'*, *G. juniperina*, *Leptospermum polygalifolium* (came from a packet of *L. epacridoideum* seed but doesn't look a bit like one), *L. rupestre*, *L. lanigerum*, *Melaleuca thymifolia*, *M. linariifolia*, *M. nesophila*, *M. hypericifolia*, *Astartea fascicularis*, several late flowering *Callistemon* like 'Little John', *Brachyscomes*, *Wahlenbergia ceracea*, *W. akaroa*, (Liesbeth, I can't find any reference to this one, is it an Australian *Wahlenbergia*?) *Sollya heterophylla* (pink and blue), *Acacia retinodes*, *Chamelaucium uncinatum*, *Pandorea jasminoides* and *Billardiera scandens*. As you see, I do grow *Correas*, and have some 13 different forms or species.



The root aphid problem still hasn't gone, I simply didn't have time to treat all plants yet. Still busily potting on the plants that I did treat and watering which does take a lot of time during warm periods, you'll know all about it!

...As far as potted Aussies in Garden Centres go here, *Callistemon citrinus* and some *Brachyscomes* (as annual bedding plants) are quite common. In spring *Acacia paradoxa* is sold, later in the year *Pimelea ferruginea* and *Eucalyptus gunnii* turn up. *Prostanthera cuneata* is quite common too and is often planted out in the garden since apparently it's quite frost hardy. ...I once saw *Grevillea 'Clearview David'*. By the way, I never throw any plants away when flowering is finished.

...I found buds in my *Banksia serrata*, *B. ericifolia* and *Eucalyptus ssp. Magna*. ...They're all 3 year old seedlings."

This picture is part of Liesbeth's collection in June, 1997. On the right are some NZ *Metrosideros*, but *Grevilleas*, *Acacias* and *Callistemons* are all there too. I like the grouping, and the wooden containers, which are made by a friend of Liesbeth's.

You can see from this that Liesbeth has a sizeable collection. I can't get over *Acacia paradoxa* being sold as 'potted colour'! Must be one of the most vicious *Acacias*! I work in a Native Plant Nursery in the Adelaide Hills, it is an indigenous plant through the area, and we sell lots of them. They are a horror to pack in to boxes, especially dispatch boxes for freight! The plants are set out in categories, then alphabetically in the Nursery, and the *A. paradoxas* are on the end of an aisle, and I can tell you they are lethal. I love all the plants, and often run my hand over them as I walk past, I keep forgetting these devils and have the scratches to prove it!



## Pat's Pots

"This summer, John (*Pat's John, not Gill's John, this could get confusing*) and I have been away twice and left behind my pots/containers. A neighbour kindly offered to water them, but she is not a gardener and is a stranger to Aussie plants in pots! So I put them into two groups - ones that really needed keeping damp - my bonsai, ferns, *Syzigium* and *Lobelias*; the others not to be watered so frequently were put in the shady corner of the patio and on the south side of our unit. I put my bonsai and small plants into two polystyrene veggie boxes, (now painted green and looking much better) lined with newspaper on small pebbles, then placed the pots in them with sphagnum moss in between. This kept a moist atmosphere and was particularly good for the bonsai which I had thought might have died.

After a year in our new home, I feel at last that I've got the mix of plants about right – am focussing on shape and texture rather than colour. Of course green is a colour, and varied too. We enjoy the new growth orange tips of the *Acmena smithii*. The *Cordyline stricta* has been repotted into a larger (32x26cm) pot and makes a good statement in our porch with two ferns close by – *Adiantum aethiopicum* and *Pellaea falcata nana*.

In February, I caught up with Maureen Schaumann who kindly gave me another plant of *Lobelia membranacea* (which I had lost last winter), and a lovely new plant in a hanging basket – *Lobelia trigonocaulis* (Forest Lobelia). I do not have a good spot for a hanging basket so I put the container in an agricultural pipe which stands 40cm high and allows the prostrate stems to hang down. It is a delight; the flowers are about 1 cm long, a delicate blue and provides much enjoyment as I sit looking out of our study. The plant is apparently common in rainforest margins of SE Queensland and NE NSW, growing in moist sheltered spots. I see that it can be damaged by frost, so I may need to keep it on our porch over winter or take into our communal green house. ( Ref. *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants*- Elliot and Jones Vol. 6)

A new addition to the family is *Stylidium debile*. Have found no references to it in any of our books and would love to know more. It is a tiny, tiny plant, the leaves in basal rosettes and the pink flowers, about ½ cm across are on 1 cm alternate pedicels on a 7cm stalk. Does anyone know where it grows in the wild?"

*I had hoped to help you there Pat, by chance I have just been given a copy of "Triggerplants" to review for the APS SA Journal. When I looked it up, it doesn't mention Stylidium debile! I did track it down in "Census of Australian Vascular Plants", by R.J. Hnatiuk, 1990. There is no description, but it is found in SE Queensland and NE and Central Coast NSW. I don't have much in the way of books from those areas (I do in the APS SA library, but I won't access that again till late July). Perhaps other members know of it, and are growing it. I grow Stylidium bulbiferum and S. adnatum, which seeds all over the garden and in my other pots. They are beautiful plants in flower, and long flowering, I would encourage other members to try growing this Genus, so I'm including a short review of the book.*

*I'll also comment about the Lobelias, I have L. quadrangularis, L. trigonocaulis and L. alata all in pots and they all get eaten regularly by possums! And I mean eaten back to the bare soil.*

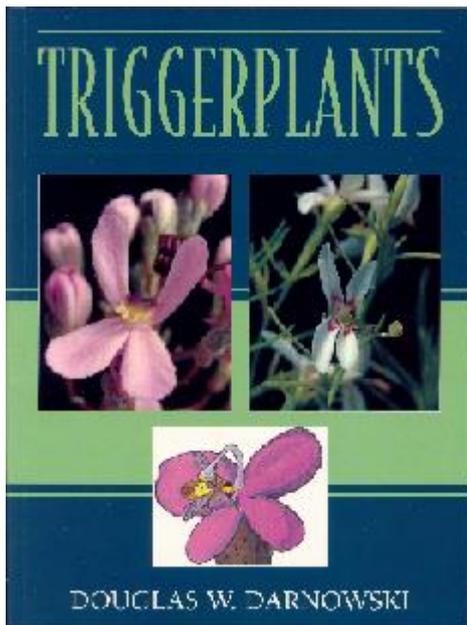


**Book Review – "Triggerplants", by Douglas W. Darnowski, Published by Rosenberg Publishing. RRP. \$29.95. Reviewed by Gill Muller**

Douglas W. Darnowski is an American author with an obvious passion for Triggerplants (*Stylidiaceae*). His first chapter starts with an evocative, detailed description of a Triggerplant in action. He goes on to describe that they are not endemic to Australia, but they reach their greatest diversity here. They extend to India, China, Japan and Papua New Guinea, but of the nearly 200 identified species, the vast majority are found in Australia.

They range in Australia from the Alpine areas to Darwin. "Some appear with the rains, setting seed and dying within a few months, while others last year after year. The greatest number of species are found in Southwest Western Australia".

The Family *Stylidiaceae* includes the genera *Levenhookia*, *Phyllachne*, *Oreostylidium* and *Forstera*. Of these *Levenhookia* is the only other genus to strike insects during pollination.



Douglas considers that Triggerplants comprise about 1% of the vascular flora of Australia, and that they deserve much more attention than previously given.

Chapter 2 is devoted to a detailed description of the physiology and anatomy of Triggerplants, while Chapter 3 gives good ideas and descriptions on where to find Triggerplants in the different States. Twenty three species are described in detail in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 is titled "Triggerplants in Horticulture". It mainly deals with propagation, breeding and tissue culture, with only limited information on growing Triggerplants in pots and in the garden.

The final chapters include one on whether Triggerplants are Carnivores, which makes interesting reading, and a conclusion exhorting more people to experiment with Triggerplants.

The three appendices include a very good glossary, using smoke to assist propagation, and a list of seed and plant suppliers.

Douglas stresses throughout the book the importance of conserving plants in the wild, buying plants and seed rather than collecting them from the Bush.

On the whole I found the book interesting. I was looking for more general cultivation details, the *Stylidium*s I grow always die back after flowering, and reshoot in early to mid winter. This wasn't really covered.

I also found some of the photography to be out of focus and of poor quality, there were however many good photos.

As Rica Ericson's 1958 book "Triggerplants" is the only other detailed reference, this book certainly adds to the available knowledge on Triggerplants. I am still looking forward to the release of *Vol. 9* of the *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants* by Elliot and Jones, it should describe all the Australian species of *Stylidium*. It probably won't be available until 2004!



### **The Melbourne International Flower Show, report from Pat and John Webb.**

"The Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show was held last week, (11-15April). The Australian Plants Society, Victoria, had a display inside the Old Exhibition Buildings. John and I 'manned' the display for a few hours on the Friday. In the midst of a very crowded, very commercial Show it was good to see some Australian Flora amongst lots of exotica. This stand certainly caused much interest and comment too. The Australian Daisy Study Group put on an excellent display linking their specialty with a wider variety of plants. An attractive water feature and two large floral arrangements by Norma Rathie using many *Banksia* species, woody pear and some large and lovely branches of *Hakea* fruits – most spectacular and causing expressions of delight, especially from overseas visitors.

In particular, I'd like to mention three container plants which were used in the general display and looked particularly good; these also inspired many enquiries. *Acacia cognata* was used around the pool; the graceful, pendulous habit was most attractive (deceiving some people into thinking it was a grass). Two *Adenanthos* species – *A. cuneatus* and *A. sericeus* are both plants which have highly ornamental foliage. I have grown the latter plant (dwarf variety) in a container over three years – it sits near my front door and gets many admiring comments and of course, the soft feel of the foliage is a delight. All three are great plants for container growing; they were well used in the APS display in the Exhibition Buildings."

*Thanks Pat. Did you mean the dwarf form of Acacia cognata, the cultivar 'Green Mist'? I find that and A. cognata 'Limelight' are excellent container plants, particularly in lower, wide pots. Both forms are sold in the Nursery where I work, and yes, lots of people ask for the name of that 'Grass'! The true A. cognata is a lovely, graceful tree, I have tried it in a pot, but it got straggly so I planted it into the garden, where it is doing very well. Many of the Adenanthos do well in pots, the two you mentioned are particularly striking. A. sericeus is used as a Christmas tree, though I use my A. cunninghamii for that, I'll put a picture of it in a later Newsletter. A. argyrea, A. cygnorum, A. elliptica, A. linearis, A. meisneri, A. macropunctatus and A. obovata are all doing well in pots for me. Their flowers are tiny, but the birds love them, and the foliage is a feature of all of them. As with most of the Proteaceae that I grow in pots, I find they don't mind being a bit pot bound.*



**Book Review – Everlasting Daisies of Australia- Identification, Propagation and Cultivation, by The Australian Daisy Study Group. RRP \$49.95. Reviewed by Pat Webb.**

“On June 29<sup>th</sup>, at the APS Victorian Quarterly meeting, this new book by the Australian Daisy Study Group was launched. Warm congratulations to the many people who have worked so hard to produce this book. I am sure it will be of great interest to many people – not just APS folk, but the wider community also. It is full of information and is also ‘user friendly’. Many line drawings and over 129 colour illustrations are interspersed through the text. The book is B5 size (245 x 176mm), 196 pages with a soft cover. It is a comfortable size to handle and read. For those of us who enjoy growing plants in containers there are many ideas about some of the lesser-known *Asteraceae* family suitable for this purpose. How colourful they are too.

The chapter on propagation from seed covers all aspects including direct sowing, sowing into punnets, some causes of poor germination and hints and ideas about combating these problems. There is a comprehensive list of daisies suitable for small, medium and large containers and hanging baskets.

Many of us have grown *Rhodanthe anthemoides* “Paper Cascade” in our gardens and containers. What a lovely genus this is, and reading the book you will want to try growing another of this species in your garden. Botanists and naturalists are still finding new species. *Rhodanthe corymbosa* is a new daisy for cultivation which sounds very suitable for containers. It is a dainty annual suited to morning sun or semi-shade; this would be good for my current living.

Do look at this book soon – I am sure you will be tempted to own one. And it would make a great gift for another enthusiastic gardener”.

*Thanks for the review Pat, I haven't seen a copy yet but am looking forward to it. The Daisy group do grow very well in containers, I'm sure existing members have tried them, and they would be good plants for the new members to try. I love them in low bowls, or tucked in to large containers around the base of larger species.*

**A bit more about me!**

My first native plant in a pot was *Melaleuca densa*, I remember it having pride of place in flower on my backyard paving (which was also the dance floor for my 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday) in my first house after leaving home. My mother had become interested in native plants when I was about fourteen, and my interest grew from there. I worked for the Federal Public Service for 22 years, and escaped 5 ½ years ago. I worked in a small native production and retail nursery which was great, but it was 100 km away! I made that 200km round trip regularly for 2 years, then sense prevailed and I got a job with State Flora Nursery at Belair, which is 3.6 km away! It is a State Government nursery, and has a huge production site at Murray Bridge, 75 km from Adelaide, I occasionally work there in the retail section, but I am normally at Belair, which is only a retail site.

The Nursery grows a huge range of plants in tubes for revegetation, forestry, salinity control, etc. and specialises in SA species. We also buy from other nurseries, and have a large range of natives for general gardening as well. I order the plants from the other nurseries, and as you can imagine that is a horrible job, perusing catalogues, looking over stock on delivery trucks, looking up new species when they appear on a catalogue, and then inspecting the new stock when it arrives. I also order the books for sale in our shop, another horrible job. All in all, it's pretty hard to go to work, the Nursery is in the middle of the Belair National Park, we are surrounded by Bush; the rosellas, honey eaters, kookaburras, magpies, ducks, eastern spinebills, sulphur crested cockatoos and Yellow tailed Black cockatoos make very different companions to those I had working for Centrelink all those years.

I'm not the pottery buyer, but as with the plants and books it is available at staff prices, hence the overflowing book shelves, a garden full to overflowing with pots and plants, and a poor suffering husband who really would like me to work somewhere else and bring some money home!

We ran a small business for a while selling natives in pots, more about that in another newsletter.

I have decided to include a fact sheet that I wrote last year with Linda Gowing, we made it available at the APS Spring Flower show, when the theme was ‘Cottages, Courtyards and Containers’. It is particularly directed at Adelaide gardeners, but some of the new members may find it useful, and others may find issues for discussion. I said on Page 2 that I would discuss the issue of potting on and the size of the container. I have always potted up into containers 1 or 2 sizes larger than the original, but I know there is a lot of differing opinions on this. Gwen Elliot says in her book “The New Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers”; “Small plants can be successfully potted directly into large containers if desired. It is not necessary to re-pot plants progressively from small to medium pots over a period of time before finally placing them in containers of larger size, although some growers prefer this method.” I would like to hear members views on this issue, and the other questions I have raised – rejuvenating plants in large containers, root pruning, large Banksias for pots and watering systems. If I get lots of responses, the next newsletter should be huge!

I hope people will think about these issues and ask more questions too. I'm sure we can all learn a lot from each other's experiences.

Happy Potting, Gill Muller