

**ASGAP AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
FOR CONTAINERS STUDY
GROUP**

NEWSLETTER



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Dear Reader,

You won't get this newsletter until April/May, but at least I started it in March! Ill health has hit me again, I've been battling Giardia since early February, and I haven't even been anywhere interesting to catch it! It seems to have caused me some ongoing problems that the medicos are having trouble sorting out. I had just bought a new computer, and started on all the transferring of data and setting up that that involved when the bug hit me, so this Newsletter and the APS SA Region website that I look after were in limbo there for a while, as of course also has been any gardening, potting and working!

Thank you for the excellent response to my questionnaire from the last issue. A big majority of members have returned them. If you haven't, there is still time, as I plan to collate and report on the information in the July NL, I will be concentrating on member's contributions in this one. The questionnaires have been really interesting reading, I particularly liked finding out what people's all time favourite container plants were, often having to look up ones I hadn't heard of. Please let me know if you need another copy.

I am having a good year with Banksias. I have in flower or bud Banksia robur, B. media, B. nutans, B. "Birthday Candles", B. "Giant Candles" and B. spinulosa dwarf, all in pots. I find the "Birthday Candles" in particular flower better in alternate years, and this is a good year! Scaevola "Purple Fanfare" as usual never stops flowering. I do however find it hard to photograph, the colour is washed out no matter what I try. I noted in Australian Plants Online, Ross Doig has an article on striking natives in water, and lists S. "Purple Fanfare" as one of the species that strikes readily. It is a brilliant plant for a hanging basket too. As it is now getting into autumn my Correas are really starting to flower, and again this seems to be a particularly good year for them. I have set my cutting box

up, and I am determined to put in lots of cuttings this year.

If you have received the March 2003 "Australian Plants", you will have seen that the entire issue is on Correas, and includes an article by me on Correas in containers. I have already had some comments on my remarks about vigorous root pruning. "I thought Natives didn't like to have their roots disturbed" were the exact words. Darwinias are about the only native that I don't root prune!

Hopefully the "bug" will soon depart, and I can catch up on my life. I still have tubestock bought in Autumn last year waiting to plant, let alone the hundreds of pots saying feed me, prune me, pot me on please!



Eucalyptus orbifolia from Linda Gowing's collection at the APS SA Region Autumn Plant Sale in April 2003.

New Members

Welcome to the following new members.

Ali Broome and Pam Orren run a business called "Blue-tongue Organics", in Healesville, Vic. They are "selling bushfood plants and products. At the moment we are becoming interested in growing the bushfood plants in containers as well as tubestock." I have a few bushfood plants in containers, mainly *Austromyrtus dulcis* and *A. "Copper Tops"* which I have had a lovely feed of berries from in the last month (tummy bug allowing!). I also have *Acronychia acidula*, *Backhousia citriodora*, *B. anisata* and *Tasmania lanceolata*. When you look through books on Bushfoods, you see such a wide range of plants, but I find very few of them available in the Nursery Industry in SA, even though they are regularly requested at the Nursery I work at. It would be interesting to hear from Ali which species they are growing, and also from any other members about Bushfood plants they grow in containers.

Hilary Merritt from the Canberra Region of APS writes "I have been interested in native plants for some time and over the years my husband John and I have developed what we think is a rather nice native garden on our rural residential block about 35 km north east of Canberra. Funnily enough, though, it is only over the last year or so that I have come to fully comprehend the benefits of pots to the native gardener.

I think that although we had a couple of decorative pots on the verandah and patio (obligatory lemon and bay trees) I somehow thought pot gardening was for those with smaller spaces than we have. Then in August 2001 one of our local member growers had grafted *Swainsona formosa* for sale and of course I just had to have one. We planted it with some trepidation into a mixture of half sand half potting mix and put it into as sunny a spot as we could manage on the verandah without sacrificing overhead cover (we get severe frosts through August). That plant turned out to be one of the most floriferous things we have ever grown, flowering without a break from November till August the following year. We were hooked from then on and, while we don't have a large number of containers (yet!), they have become an integral part of our outdoor living space. Certainly pots have greatly extended the range of plants we are able to grow by allowing us to manipulate all manner of things, from soil to moisture to frost protection and so on."

I think Hilary's comments, in the last sentence in particular, cover the reasons many of us grow native plants in containers.

Welcome also to **Jean Hancox**, from Bellevue Heights SA.



Potted Paradise from Pat Webb, Berwick, Victoria

August, 2002

"Some of you will know Maureen Schaumann in Melbourne, a founder member of the Australian Daisy Study Group in 1981. She has been involved with this Group in so many ways as a former Leader and one of the team of authors who produced the book "Australian Brachyscomes" and now the excellent new book "Everlasting Daisies of Australia".

I was delighted to visit her garden today and to see such a wealth of interesting and colourful Australian plants - but I particularly want to share with you some of her pots and other containers. Maureen is very artistic in her presentation, using a variety of ceramic and terracotta pots, pipes and baskets of many sizes and heights and displayed in attractive groupings. Her patio faces north and is quite sheltered with a U-shaped house and garage giving protection from strong winds.

My great joy today were her containers with the orchid *Pterostylis curta* - one shallow pot had at least thirty flower spikes. Maureen also has a most interesting collection of Lomandras in containers and in the garden - her pots gradually mingling with garden plantings - most effective. I was able to appreciate more fully what a variable taxon *Lomandra confertifolia* is, as she had three or four varieties. John and I were impressed with her pot of *L. confertifolia* ssp. *rubiginosa*, a plant with stout elongated stems and a bluish/grey foliage. Near Maureen's living room, John noticed a *Billardiera erubescens* two metres tall, planted in a vertical agricultural pipe and clambering around a drainpipe. Very clever.

Oh! These name changes! *Leionema phyllicifolium* (syn. *Phebalium phyllicifolium*) - Alpine Phebalium, is a delightful plant in a large pot about 0.6m high, full of pale yellow flowers. I understand it had been in the same container for years - it is flourishing.

Being a person who has not had success with hanging baskets, I enjoyed seeing Maureen's healthy ones. She has several hanging outside, and two indoors in her kitchen/living area. These two are *Davallia pyxidata* - Hare's-foot fern; they remain permanently indoors, coping with a gas heater. She says they get watered intermittently - they are too big to take down.

Outside the living area there is a hanging pot of *Grevillea depauperata*, a Western Australia prostrate with bright orange/red flowers. I'm sure the birds must love it. Another very pretty hanging pot contained *Dampiera trigona* also from WA with deep blue/violet flowers - quite spectacular.

Maureen is a most artistic gardener; her knowledge of plants is very wide and her use of containers in the garden, patio and house is most impressive. One very stylish ceramic pot near her French windows inside the living room had a *Brachyscome multifida* aff., flowering prolifically (it hasn't been outside for over a year). I loved the mulch on this plant - tumbled blue glass and ceramic tile chips taking up the blue tonings of the living area.

Those of you who have been around this Study Group for a while will remember me talking of one of my favourite container plants - *Lobelia membranacea* - a couple of years ago; it was Maureen who first gave me this plant and it was something of a relief to see hers also looks a bit sad at this time of the year!

As you can see, I came home this afternoon inspired - and I wanted to share my enjoyment with you".

Pat Webb

Thanks Pat, Maureen's garden sounds lovely, perhaps next time you are there you could take some photos and I could scan them into the newsletter for everyone to see. The Lomandras are an interesting group, I have recently



*bought *L. confertifolia* ssp. *leptostachya* which seems to have a much finer, darker green leaf than the other *L. confertifolia* I have, I'm not sure what sub-species that one is. I have also recently found a *L. "Aussie Blue Grass"*, which looks like a silvery/grey *L. longifolia*. *Lomandra "Little Pal"* is a very attractive container specimen, I think most of the Lomandras are, but I do find *L. longifolia* needs a LARGE pot! **This is a photo of my Lomandra "Little Pal", it's been in the pot for two years.***

While I'm on the subject of photos, please send me any that you think might be good in the newsletter. I can scan slides and photos, or you can email me .jpeg images. I wander around with my digital camera all the time, but I'd like to see some other people's pots! Nothing with too much black in it, the ink doesn't dry well in those reproductions.

Barbara Melville, from Wyoming, NSW wrote in September 2002 with some interesting thoughts on root pruning, watering and using Cactus potting mix:

*"Having recently learnt about long stem planting for bush regeneration, I thought the theory of growing the tube stock well off the ground might be worth a try on a small scale with my larger pots. (Barbara had had about 35 plants in pots, mainly for use in the Central Coast APS display at the Central Coast Flora Festival, she has now cut down to about half that number. She grows ferns, daisies, Lilly Pilies, *Eremophila nivea*, *E. glabra*, *Grevillea "Golden Lyre"* and *Rhododendron lochiaie*-photo of mine in flower April 2003 below- amongst others.) We purchased some terracotta pot feet and have lifted all the large pots off the ground. I have no idea if the roots will be air-pruned but thought that I'd give it a go. Last summer we had a beautiful display from *Buckinghamia celsissima*. After flowering finished we pruned it, lifted and trimmed a few roots which were growing through the base, mulched the surface and stood back. Unfortunately I think we did too much – it has also had to cope with a rare frost – it is not at all happy". I'm using pot feet a lot more having lost some plants to poor drainage.*

"For thirsty plants in summer have you thought of placing a juice/milk bottle near the plants? A couple of holes in the bottom usually suffice; partially bury or anchor the bottle and fill with water. It does work well for several days at least.

*I am also trialling a water-well insert in a large ceramic pot. Growing in it is *Syzygium wilsonii* with Maidenhair fern and *Viola hederacea*. All are thriving. My only problem is what to do with the spout when I know the plant should be receiving enough water. Turn it on its side? – difficult when we set it up to catch water. The other difficulty is knowing when the well has run dry. Ordinary large water well pots work well for me – easy to monitor and fill/empty when necessary".*

I didn't ask about water- well pots in the questionnaire, I haven't tried them myself. Have other members had much experience with them? Let me know your success/failures. Looking through back issues I found some comments by the Central Coast "Plants in Pots" group. I'll include these again later on. Barbara goes on to say she is happy to put small, tube size plants into 12"/300m pots, and that they thrive provided you don't let them become waterlogged. I must admit that I am a lot more comfortable doing this than I used to be, and it certainly saves on a lot of potting on.

Barbara is also experimenting with Cactus Potting mix. She plants identical plants in two pots, one with Amgrow Cactus mix, and the other In Amgrow Native Plant potting Mix. She writes:

*"I also did the same with *Darwinia taxifolia*. Once again the cactus mix produced the better looking plant early on but has stayed that way. It is a more compact plant with many flowers. The native mix plant is quite rangy but still with a similar number of flowers to its mate. I think the cactus mix won with this particular plant".*

Pat Webb started using Cactus mix with good results.



Rhododendron lochiaie, 3 years old



Jan Sked from Lawnton, just north of Brisbane, is the Study Group Coordinator. *She sent me a long letter in September 2002, I'll try and do it justice without having the room to reproduce the whole letter.*

"I started growing plants in containers when I began to run out of room in the garden. Also, it is the only way to grow some of the plants that come from our coastal wallum and mountain heath areas". *Jan describes her garden as mainly rainforest, with some eucalypts and heath understorey. It is 800 sq. metres, and the mature rainforest trees and eucalypts are up to thirty years old, "so there is little sunlight available and the roots of the trees take up most of the moisture needed for any new plants I try to plant in the garden. ...It is a habitat garden, not a decorative one." The drought and water restrictions have made the last few years very difficult for gardening. Jan paves areas of the garden for her containers to stand on. A very good idea with all those trees, the roots would come up through the drainage holes if she didn't.*

"In baskets hanging around in various trees I have a number of Hoyas – *H. macgillivraei* (2), *H. carnosa* variegated, *H. australis* (3 unidentified forms), *H. australis* ssp. *australis*, *H. australis* ssp. *oramicola*, *H. australis* ssp. *tenuipes*, *H. pottsii*, *H. 'Black Magic'* (black flowers with red centres – a cultivar of *H. carnosa*), *H. pseudolittoralis*, *H. sp. aff. holrunghii*, *H. sp. Bamaga*, *H. sussuela* and *H. purpurea-fusca*. Also *Tripladenia cunninghamii* and three *Zieria prostrata* which are flowering at present (Sept). There are two more *Zieria prostrata* in hanging baskets on the clothes line.

On a frame in the shelter of the rainforest I have baskets of *Tripladenia cunninghamii* (3), *Huperzia phlegmaria* (Tassel Fern), two *Elatostema reticulatum* (Rainforest Spinach – a bush tucker plant), *Lobelia trigonocaulis*, *Peperomia blanda* (2) and an unnamed *Peperomia* sp. I find these species do particularly well in baskets. I also have a large pot of *Elatostema* which I use in cooking. It has quite attractive foliage and makes a good pot plant. In various sized plastic pots up to 500mm are the rest of my collection. None of them gets full sun all day, as that is an impossibility in my garden. Some are in full shade all day. Most get partial sunlight. I have four *Angiopteris evecta*, the Giant Fern from Fraser Island in pots with saucers under them. They have to be kept like that as they just collapse if the pots dry out. ...I find if I plant them in the garden it is impossible to keep enough moisture up to them.

There is a *Rhododendron lochiaie* in a 500mm container. It is well over twenty years old and was grown from seed. It flowers beautifully every year and I have taken cuttings from it, but they are very slow to strike and make root growth. These plants I think are best kept in containers.....

I am very fond of the native raspberries, but they are a bit of a problem in the garden, as they send out runners and take over the area. So I am trying them as container plants. I have two *Rubus probus* and three *R. rosifolius* in 300mm pots. In smaller pots they were not particularly happy, but the bigger pots seem to suit them better. They need to be kept in positions where they are not able to reach out and grab passers by with their curved hooks. *P. probus* is the better tasting fruit, but both are delicious with sugar and cream. They used to grow on the edges of rainforest on my father's property and we would collect them by the bucket full when I was a child."

Jan also grows the following Queensland species:

"*Proiphys amboinensis* (Cardwell Lily) from North Queensland, which has huge rounded leaves and large heads of white flowers.... Our local species, *P. cunninghamii* (Brisbane Lily)....also does better for me in a container.

Prumnopitys ladei (Mt. Spurgeon Black Pine) is an excellent container plant from North Queensland. It has very attractive foliage, is slow growing and makes a very good indoor plant.....

Another northern species.... in a 400mm container is *Glycosmis pentaphylla* (Pink Lime)..... The fruit are globular, about 1.5 cm across, fleshy, translucent pink and taste a bit like sweet orange peel – quite pleasant. It belongs in the Rutaceae family.... *Scaevola taccada* (Sea lettuce or Cardwell Cabbage) is a coastal plant from North Queensland. I believe it can grow to 3 metres, but is only about 1 metre high so far.

Sambucus australasica (Native Elderberry) ...is so touchy about moisture... it has been retained in a container...as it wilts at the least sign of drying winds."

Jan is growing the following species from the mountains behind where she lives that have proved difficult to grow in the garden; Lasiopetalum macrophyllum, Pomaderris ferruginea, Ricinocarpos speciosus, and Sophora fraseri.

"Another very rare plant that I am containerising is *Corchorus cunninghamii* (Native Jute). It has practically disappeared in the wild, but SGAP members have been cultivating it for the last few years.

Around the edge of my Eucalypt and heath garden I have a number of shallow 300mm containers in which I am growing *Viola betonicifolia*, *V. hederacea*, *Mazus pumilio*, *Mentha satuireioides*, and unnamed *Mentha* species from southern Qld. and *Pseuderanthemum variabile*..... Along with the shallow containers are some 200mm pots containing *Artanema fimbriatum*, *Platysace 'Valentine Lace'* and *Dianella caerulea*.

Most of my orchids, which are flowering well just now (September), are attached to the trees. However, I have four large *Dendrobium speciosum* in upright hollow logs in the garden. Other hollow logs contain *Dianella caerulea* ssp. *assera* and *Dianella atraxis*".

Jan also has a dry rainforest species, *Everistia vacciniifolium* (prev. *Canthium vacciniifolium*) in a container, as it was too dry in the garden for it.

"I am using a commercial potting mix that is manufactured locally. It contains peat, water crystals and slow release fertilizer. It is quite good, but breaks down fairly quickly, so I add some washed river sand and coir peat to give it more body. I fertilize all my pots with slow release Nutricote at the beginning of September and again in March. Slow release Osmocote is also okay, but tends to break down more quickly in our heat and humidity. I think I am going to have to pave more area to take all these containers. The trouble is, there is not much area left to pave."



Thank you Jan for that wonderful description of your garden and container plants. Your climate conditions are so different to mine here in Adelaide, I certainly envy you being able to grow orchids attached to your trees. I have one **Dendrobium species attached to a log that I recently bought, (shown in photo with some Syzygiums and a Waterhousia)** I hope I have found the right spot for it with enough light but protection from the cold in winter and the hot summer sun.

Jan's letter had me scurrying for my books, I was familiar with a few of the plants she has, but I had to look up many of them. The books I find most useful for Rainforest species are "Australian Rainforest Plants"

Volume 1-5 by Nan and Hugh Nicholson, and "Gardening with Australian Rainforest Plants" by Ralph Bailey and Julie Lake. These books should be available anywhere in Australia, and are excellent references. I started dabbling in rainforest species a couple of years ago, I haven't had many flowers (apart from the *Rhododendron lochiaie* pictured on page 3, and a few *Syzygium*) but I find their foliage fascinating. Again, finding a sheltered spot for them is the problem, most are clustered outside our bedroom window, which is about the only spot in the whole garden that never receives any direct sun.

I do have *Dianella caerulea* growing in the garden, it's now starting to come up from seed. I love *Viola betonicifolia*, but find that it never seems to do well when I buy a plant of it. What does happen is that it comes up in other pots and looks beautiful, but not in the pot it originated from!



Penny Hislop from Claremont in Perth had just moved into their new house when she joined last year. In the July newsletter she talked about her plans for her small garden including three small courtyards. I had advised her about potting up *Banksias*, and recommended that she pot them on to the next size pot rather than into large pots straight away. As I mentioned earlier, I have reconsidered this school of thought, and luckily so did Penny! This is what she had to say in October 2002;

"I thought long and hard about what size pots to use..., and although Gill you had advised using smaller pots at first, and then to pot the plant on into larger ones as it grew, I finally decided to go with pots that were fairly large, and quite deep, as I was trying to imitate the situation where the plants are put into open soil, and can put down deep tap roots, which is the natural way for native plants to behave. So, I am experimenting I guess, and I'll just have to wait and see how things go! The pot sizes do vary a bit depending on the potential size of the plant if grown in open soil.

I have used terracotta pots throughout, to maintain a consistent 'theme' in my small courtyards. I sealed the pots thoroughly by coating the inside with a recommended sealant, and where necessary drilled extra holes in the bottom to maximise drainage. The potting mix I was advised to use by the native plant nurseries here was a 'standard premium grade' potting mix, of the type that they use themselves, of which contains very low amounts of phosphorus. I am pleased to report that all plants at this stage are looking very healthy and happy, and almost all have put on quite respectable growth in spite of a pretty cold winter here in Perth. With the current warm spring weather I expect an acceleration of growth to occur.

I'll mention what I have planted, and into what size pot, so that as time goes on we can all see how the experiment turns out!

Banksia media – pot 400mm w x 500mm h, *B. prionotes* – 500mm x 400mm, *B. 'Birthday Candles'*, 480mm x 340mm, *B. praemorsa* and *B. menziesii* 380mm x 600mm.

Three *Grevillea 'Superb'*- 380mm x 600mm (One in each courtyard for easy bird watching from the house – hopefully!).

Eucalyptus preissiana – 415mm x 515mm, *Melaleuca lateritia* and *M. fulgens* pink form in a large pot together. Careful pruning will be necessary to enable these to co-exist and look attractive. *Acacia merinthophora* – 380mm x 600mm.

Macropidia fuliginosa – 300mm x 300mm – this looks superb as I write, with a 1 metre spike in process of coming out into beautiful contrasting colours of lime green and black – I hope it survives – they are a bit difficult I believe, though seem to do better in pots.

Leschenaultia biloba – 450mm x 300 mm and *Chorizema cordatum* – 450mm x 300 mm.

I plan to set up a drip system to the pots in each courtyard, so we can go away without worrying about watering. It will be a challenge to prune the larger species effectively to maximise appearance and life of the plant, but I shall enjoy doing it and creating an artistic array of containers.

One of the most useful books I have found is called “Flowering Natives for Home Gardens”, by Denise Greig, published by Angus and Robertson. This book details each plant thoroughly, and notes those which will do well in containers. I referred to it a lot when selecting my own plants.

That is about all I have to tell at this stage. I will write again and possibly include some pictures when things are big enough to show well!”

It should be interesting to the Group to follow the progress of Penny’s container garden. I noted from the questionnaires that hardly any body relied on automatic watering systems for their containers, I certainly wouldn’t trust one for any length of time, particularly in summer, so Penny, test yours well before you rely on it during a holiday. I would recommend a friend still check your pots regularly.

Matching the size of the pot to the ultimate size of the plant is another interesting point. Think of bonsai, and what that can achieve with foliage and root pruning. I think the same principals can be carried in to general container growing. It is possible to restrict a 4 metre shrub to 1.5 – 2metres in a container with foliage and root pruning. To me, proportion and balance are very important; i.e. the container and plant (s) are in proportion, not top or bottom heavy.

This issue of potting on, and what size pot to move on to is an interesting one, and I find varying opinions in my reading and when talking to people. Study group member and author Gwen Elliot, in her book “Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers” feels that it isn’t necessary to pot on to the next size, that potting into large pots is okay, but that it is really a matter of personal preference. Alec Blomberry in “Growing Australian Natives in Pots Indoors and Outdoors” writes “When a small plant is grown in a large container, even with well drained soil, the roots grow away from the central part of the soil to the outer edges against the sides of the pot, where there is better aeration and drainage. Even with well drained soil, the middle of the container may become soggy with the plant producing few roots as conditions are conducive to root rot, and thus unsatisfactory for cultivation.

When small plants are grown in small containers with well drained soil, the roots, as well as growing towards the edges of the soil, grow downwards through the smaller soil mass as drainage can occur more freely. This form of root growth results in a maximum number of roots developing from an early stage, with plant growth reducing the possibility of root rot. It is thus important that plants should be started in small containers to produce the maximum number of roots; when repotting is carried out, the next sized container to that in which the plant is growing should be used.”

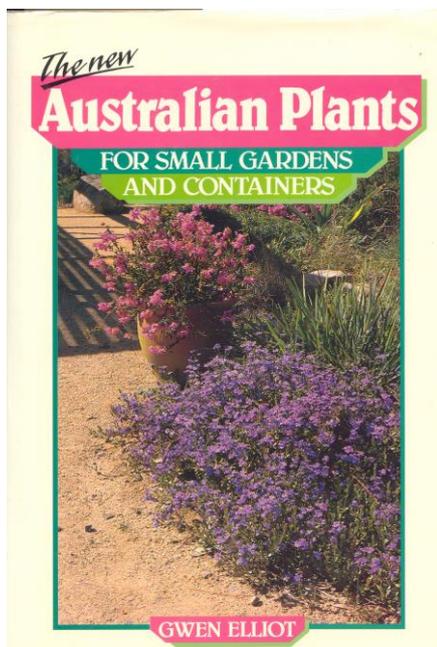
So you can see, opinions are varied! The excerpt from Alec Blomberry’s book was written in 1983. In his book “Growing Native Plants for Balconies, Courtyards & Townhouses’ (co-authored with Betty Maloney) published in 2000, he still subscribes to those ideas, and recommends that “Deep pots should be avoided. Ideally, the depth should be about two-thirds of the width to encourage free drainage.” Some of my best looking combinations are in tall, narrow pots, either with a plant trailing down, or continuing the narrow, upright shape.

The point I am trying to make is that growing Native plants in containers is very open to experimentation, with people having success or failures with a number of different methods. To me, the purpose of this Study Group is to share those experiences, and learn from them, and to do this people must be prepared to experiment, and contribute their findings.

Books

A few members have asked me to recommend books on container growing to them, and this would seem to be an appropriate place to include this information. I have mentioned the books I use for rainforest species, and Penny commented on Denise Greig’s book. Alec Blomberry’s book published in 2000 is the only book currently in print that is readily available. I find it orientated to the Eastern states, but it is still a useful little book. Some of the pictures are incorrectly captioned, which is annoying.

I contacted Gwen Elliot about her book, “ **The New Australian plants for Small Gardens and Containers**”, published in 1988, which Pat Webb had described as a ‘must have book’, a statement I would agree with. Gwen advised me that the book is no longer available from the publishers, Hyland House, but that copies can still be obtained from Kuranga Native Plant Nursery for \$29.95 plus postage of approximately \$6.00. Kuranga is at 393



Maroondah Highway, Ringwood 3134, Phone 03 98794076, Web site www.kuranga.com.au. Gwen also said to watch out for it in second hand bookshops. The following books are also useful, but out of print. I do see them popping up in second hand book shops (which I haunt frequently), so it is worth keeping your eye out for them. Members without easy access to such shops can try getting on the mailing lists, or placing orders with shops such as Garden Street Books, PO Box 1811 Geelong, 3220, Phone 03 52291667, email books@gsbooks.com, website www.gsbooks.com, or Florilegium, 145 St Johns Rd, Glebe 2037, Phone 02 95718222, email florlieg@ozemail.com.au. (Getting a new book catalogue can be almost as exciting as a new plant catalogue, and frequently more expensive!)

“**Australian Plants for Indoors**”, by David and Patricia Ratcliffe, published by Little Hills Press Pty. Ltd. in 1987, second edition “**Australian Native Indoor Gardening made easy**” published in 1991.

“**Native Gardens in Miniature, Australian Plants in Containers**” by Bill Molyneux and Sue Forrester, published by Kangaroo Press, 1986 and 1992. A very inspirational little book.

“**Growing Native Plants Indoors**” by John W. Wrigley and Murray Fagg, published by Simon and Schuster in 1992. This was from the Mount

Annan Native Plant Series, which included “**From Rainforest to Bonsai- Bonsai in Australian Native Plants**” by Len Webber. On checking my bookshelves I find I have two copies of “**Growing Native Plants Indoors**”, I’ll happily sell my second copy for \$15.00 including postage to any one who is interested.

Currently in print, and useful books are;

“**Gardening Down-under**” by Kevin Handreck, RRP \$39.95

“**Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants Vol 1-8**”, by W. Rodger Elliot and David L. Jones. Vol. 1 has good information on Container growing, and the other volumes have excellent descriptions of Australian species. Vol. 1 RRP. is \$110.00, the other Volumes retail at \$150.00 each. Volume 3 is out of print. There are five supplements as well.

“**Australian Native Plants , Propagation, cultivation and use in Landscaping**”, 4th Edition, by John W. Wrigley and Murray Fagg, RRP. \$59.95 has good, general information on growing natives.

“**Australian Plants for Year-round Colour**” by Angus Stewart, RRP. \$27.95 was published last year, and has a small section on container grown plants, but is particularly interesting with regard to mixing colours in your planting design.

I could keep going for the rest of the newsletter, my book collection is equal to my pot collection in numbers! You can find books on particular genera or families if you want to specialize, again, watch out for the out of print books in second hand shops. I find I am buying general books on container growing to get ideas on design, colour, maintenance etc., which I convert to native container growing.

There is a series of books put out by Murdoch Books titled “Success with”, and I have bought “Container gardening for large plants”, “Shrubs and trees in containers” and “Hanging baskets and containers”. They are only \$5.50 each. I was particularly hoping to find help with Darren Vandenberg’s question from Issue 30 of this newsletter on **rejuvenating plants growing in pots 50cm wide and larger**.

They didn’t help me very much, but they did have some useful ideas, though they are mainly for the Northern Hemisphere.

In the picture on the right you can see my husband’s *Stenocarpus sinuatus* (his only plant in the collection!). The pot it is in is 400mm w x 400mm h, the plant is 1900mm tall, and as you can see in need of repotting. The pot it is going into can be seen behind it on the right, it is 600mm w x 500mm h. We would have gone for a half wine barrel, but there wasn’t room between the shed door and my potting bench, and this is a perfect spot for the *Stenocarpus*. It was well protected from winds until it grew up taller than the shed, it blew over in a very strong wind a couple of weeks ago breaking a lovely glazed pot that was in front of it. So, time to bite the bullet and repot to make it more balanced. It will need both of us to do, and I think this will be it’s final potting on. I’ll let you know about any hernia operations!

Hilary Merritt had the following to say about large containers:

“I went to a lecture today about conservatory design and gardening history. In the course of the lecture mention was made of the gardeners at Versailles who grew huge plants in pots but instead of the usual terracotta pots in use at the time they built square wooden pots that were hinged on each side. Every spring the gardeners would open two of the hinged sides and with a sharp spade or other tool slice a good two inches off the roots and soil. The side was then done up again and fresh compost poured into the gap. Voila! As good as repotting without having to move the huge palms and things they were growing. The pairs of



doors were alternated each year.

I thought it might be possible to adapt this idea for some of the bigger things members like to grow. Have you heard of anyone doing something like this?"

I hadn't heard of this practice Hilary, but faced with some of my large pots I think it sounds great. The problem with the timber would be it rotting eventually, though I find wine barrels last for many years.

Back to some more member's containers. **Lyn Thompson** from Woodford, NSW is the Study Group Liaison officer for NSW, and she writes in December 2002: "Since my sister Merle and I took on more responsibilities in the Society – and in other organisations – we have spent less time in our own garden. Between the carport and the house is a small brick courtyard onto which plants are usually placed on our return from some trip on which we have illogically not resisted temptation. This can provide an attractive display but not conducive to easy watering.

There are permanent container plants there but they have their own drip system. We have done a lot of work with drip systems both with plant collections and bonsai plants but the plants need overhead watering from time to time which is sorely lacking naturally at present.

A few years ago in a drought I moved my "shopping" to a cooler spot in a fern garden behind the house. One of these was *Allocasuarina portuensis* from Sydney Harbour – one of the rarest plants in Australia in situ. Before I realised the roots had gone down into the soil and the plant had become established. Now I am trying to work out the best way to work it into the garden without disturbing its neighbours. Even if possible, to move it would attract a huge fine even though its placement was accidental. The experience hasn't cured me!

We have some interesting containers made from dead tree ferns. A Central Coast nursery had a licence to harvest them in Victoria. They had been killed in an earlier savage bushfire – in the Ash Wednesday fires they disappeared completely. They started off with groundcover hibbertias some of which are still flourishing but they are ideal for orchids.

We also have a significant part of Merle's conifer collection in pots but some are proving a little too enthusiastic to remain there and we are considering planting them out as a coniferetum on our acreage at Bogee on the north western rim of Capetree Valley. To restrain large trees in pots is possible – bonsai techniques can be applied to any size pot but it needs a lot of physical strength to grow plants regularly this way."

Thanks, Lyn, some important points there. Luckily my "shopping" area is on concrete, the issue of roots growing through into the soil can be a real problem. Paving areas as Jan has done is one solution, I also have a couple of large pots on bricks as "pot feet" in the garden. I haven't checked them for a while, this makes me think I should! My mother has a Ficus benjamina in a tub on paving and it has sent a root half a metre across the paving into the garden!

A comment from **Roger Hnatiuk** from Cook, ACT who is also the leader of the Australian Plants as Bonsai Study Group. Roger feels there is a degree of overlap between our two groups, and I agree with him. Many of you are probably members of both Groups. Roger says "The differences between our Groups seems to be mainly in the intense horticultural treatment for bonsai (root and shoot pruning), with a view to maintaining plant shape and pot life indefinitely, and in the focus on styling the plant to look like, or evoke the idea of trees and landscapes beyond the confines of the pot and garden. I'm sure that we will have many years of fruitful interaction between our Groups." *I hope so too, Roger. I recently "plant sat" some of Linda Gowing and Bruce Skinner's bonsai treasures, and found them really interesting. I'm not sure I have the time or patience to include bonsai in my collection at this stage, but I could be tempted by the right plant. Occasionally at work I'll find an old plant in a tube that has bonsai potential, so I'm sure it will happen soon.*

Liesbeth Uijtewaal from the Netherlands says she is having problems with *Banksia telmatiaea* and *B. occidentalis*. The leaves are dying back from the tips, and the *B. telmatiaea* died. Liesbeth wonders if this is a problem with narrow leaved Banksias. She also wonders if she may have over fertilized. If she lived in Adelaide, I'd say it was probably related to the salt content of the water! Do any other members have any ideas on what may be the problem?

A final word from **Jan Sked** about *Stylidium debile*, **Pat Webb** asked in NL Issue 30 if any one knew where it grew in the wild. Jan has found a reference to it in Vol 3 of "Native Plants of Queensland" by Keith A. W. Williams. "It is a plant that forms a small, bright green rosette about 5cm in diameter. These can form quite dense, spreading communities in very damp soils, generally along moist creek banks or where there are seepage areas. They sometimes extend into the water and form slender racemes up to 30cm high from spring to autumn. It is found in Queensland from Mackay to the NSW border and west to Roma and Emerald. It is also found in NSW.

Happy Potting, and fingers crossed the July Newsletter will be on time, Gill Muller