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ASGAP Correa Study Group

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Newsletter No. 15

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Dear Members,

It is definitely that time of year again, when Study Group Newsletter editors throw their hands up in despair and wonder what they will write about this year. Fortunately, the job for me is not so hard, thanks to contributions that come in from various members from time to time.

I am still trying to finish my thesis, which has been delayed by very heavy work commitments, so that I rarely get a chance to settle down to some real writing. Coupled with some finicky supervisors, who never seem happy with my modest efforts, this has been a very frustrating year.

Many of my Kangaroo Island plants struck and are thriving. I'm particularly keen on developing a good Correa pulchella collection, as few people up here seem to have them growing. In fact, most people are able to grow the hybrids successfully but one wonders why C. pulchella doesn't seem to be common in gardens. Perhaps some of you may like to write to me and tell us your experiences.

This winter, I have redone part of my garden and have planted an extensive range of Correas in the garden. Hopefully, I shall have a living collection in the garden, which will be a good reference for others in the district. A nurseryman friend tells me that Correas are now being asked for by local gardeners, who realise their potential as garden plants. This was not the case a few years ago, so my efforts in promoting Correas locally must be bearing fruit.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the same pattern could happen in every other district, where it is possible to grow these lovely plants. If most people can grow roses, they can also grow Correas. For Correas will grow everywhere that roses can grow and they are more bird-friendly...and they don't have thorns.... or need spraying for black spot.... You get the drift.

Unfortunately, I don't think I'd be popular with rose-growers. Perhaps we could market them as good rose companion plants. Underplant your roses with the perfect companion, a Correa! While the

roses are bare for the winter, the correas will bloom and bloom! That's not bad...I'll have to work on that one. Incidentally, the idea is not as crazy as it sounds. I once had a brilliant Correa pulchella, which was the envy of every visitor. I swear, the reason my Correa thrived was the rose food, which I sprinkled liberally around the climbing rose behind it.

Unfortunately, my Correa succumbed to slow strangulation by Couchgrass. In trying to pull out the Couch, I damaged important roots and it started to die back. I then pruned it severely and that was the end of one famous plant.

In this newsletter, I shall focus on some Correa decumbens hybrids, start a great debate on Correa reflexa var. nummulariifolia and give you an update on the Flower calendar. Thank you to all those lovely members, who filled theirs in and sent it to me.

I shall be representing you all at the ASGAP Conference in Adelaide and should have a display similar to my last one, but this time focussing on Kangaroo Island. Hopefully, I'll be able to catch up with some of you at the Conference and we can have a chat. Perhaps we could even have an informal meeting one evening or over dinner/lunch/breakfast. We'll see.

If any of you are travelling by car, how about bringing along some flowering specimens. You may have to pack a few empty jars to put them in as well. We can have a permanent display, so a few jars of flowers or the odd potted plant would be great. In fact, if everyone contributed something, it would be a great display. I'll bring extra newsletters and some publicity material. As I'll be flying, I won't be able to bring much but shall pack some cutting material to share around. It should keep fairly well in a cool spot. If anyone has any other ideas, please let me know.

Well, that's it for now. Don't forget the Tasmanian expedition next winter. Planning will start soon. A few people have already indicated interest, so we should have a great time!

Cheers, Maria

From the Members

Bob O'Neill writes:

Garden-wise we have been busy. The cows have been removed from our bottom 4 acres and the area has been worked by tractor to smooth out the massive hoof-prints left behind. Since then we have planted 300+ indigenous eucalypts and a few other trees so that in essence we now have 8 acres of garden and parkland.

Having had the pleasure of visiting Bob's garden, I can visualise the area that he's talking about. If his new venture is anything like the older garden, it will be brilliant. Bob has had his garden entered in the Open Gardens scheme and is definitely spreading the Correa message. Well done, Bob! (Ed)

John Emms asks...

What is the longevity of *Correa decumbens*?

Good question, John. As I have only the experience of having grown one, I'm not much of an expert. My plant lived for about 3-4 years. Interestingly, the hybrid forms I have seem to be more long-lived. What do other members think?

Of course, there's always the variability of the garden and, dare I say it, the gardener. It would be good to get a range of ages. Few people are growing the species form according to the Flower Calendars, that I've received. Far more hybrids seem to be grown by members.

This probably reflects a certain unreliability of the species form in cultivation. There were very few plants left in the wild on KI and the species is regarded as threatened. I think all of us should attempt to grow a number of plants, in the hope of ensuring its viability as a garden specimen.

If anyone is successfully growing this plant, please write and tell us all about it. perhaps you might also be able to share a few cuttings with some of us. (Ed)

John also wrote about a *C. reflexa* with a deeply split corolla, which is similar to one in Bob O'Neill's garden (Avignon 357).

'Recently I came across a similar *Correa* for sale under the name *C. reflexa* 'Akio Star' from Ian Starkey's nursery at Leongatha Nth. Ian says that it's a natural variant of 'Clearview Giant'.

Does anyone have this growing, or any other Correas with split petals? I wonder how stable the condition is? Do you still have yours, Bob? (Ed)

Margie Barnett sent me this list of *Correas* in her garden ages ago. I know she's expanded her list considerably in the past year but this will be a start. She is willing to exchange cuttings or send cuttings of things you especially want. I've marked with * the plants which are large enough for cuttings.

- * *Correa pulchella* 'Sir Hans Heysen'
 - pulchella* orange
 - pulchella* pink
- * *pulchella* 'Pink Mist'
- * *pulchella* 'Dusky Bells'
- * *pulchella* 'Mannii'
- pulchella* minor
- backhousiana*
- * *alba*
 - alba* variegated
 - alba* prostrate
- * *alba* x *schlechtendalii*
- alba* pink
- * *calycina*
- * *glabra*
- * *glabra* SA form
- * *pulchella* - low form
- pulchella* 'Pink Mist'
- * *reflexa* 'Marian's Marvel'
- * *reflexa* prostrate
- reflexa* 'Yanakie'
- * *reflexa* 'Jewels' (from John Barrie)
- reflexa* yellow
- * *reflexa* K.I.
- * *reflexa* K.I. prostrate
- * *reflexa* 'Nelson'
- reflexa* 'Fat Fred' ?
- reflexa* 'Colray Giant'

Matthew Oxford comments on lignotubers and fire relations of *Correas*. He observed the following on a trip to Tasmania in 1992:

Walking along a track within the Remarkable Cave Reserve, I came across a small area of coastal scrub that had been burnt from a recent fire. *Correa alba* felt the brunt of the fire. In response, a strong and healthy growth occurred from what appeared to be a lignotuber.

We first noticed regeneration after fire with C. reflexa at Portland. In that situation, there were many seedlings sprouting up everywhere. I can't remember if there were any lignotubers sprouting as well with that population. Obviously, there must have been a fair bit of seed lying in the ground. For how long, is anyone's guess.

The second observation was on Kangaroo Island with C. pulchella. Here we noticed both seedlings and sprouting from ligno-tubers. We also noticed some very old plants, which were quite woody and bare in the centre and only leaf-clad around the perimeter. Fire may be important in the ecology of such plants. (Ed)

Cherree Densley reported on some *Correa* sightings on a recent trip to the Snowys.

C. lawrenciana - swarm - red, red and green, green - all mixed, located at the junction of Sawpit creek and Thredbo R. They were healthy 2 m high plants in full flower (Jan 6th), some in full bud. Stylish flowers!

C. reflexa - a very small swarm, about 12 plants on the river banks - about 6 m above the water. There were no buds or flowers but the plants had very hairy leaves and stems. Lower Swing Bridge on Goobarragandra R. at Sandy waterfall Reserve, on Hume and Hovell walking track (Thomas Boyd Trackhead).

Apart from these two areas, I didn't see any other *Correas* on our trip through Kosciuszko N.P. and environs.

Cherree sent another letter with two photos enclosed of a *C. reflexa* growing on the late Fred Rogers property. The plant was in full flower in the middle of January, and looks like it may have some *C. pulchella* in it. It's a stunner and one that we should bring into cultivation. Cherree said that Fred always talked about these rare plants but she didn't know if he'd tried to grow or distribute them.

On another walk on the Portland heathland with some members of the Warnambool Field Naturalists, Cherree found a 5-petalled *C. reflexa* red, which excited everyone and she has alerted the local Department of Conservation not to slash them.

My experience with 5-petalled Correas is that the condition is not stable, but plants often revert to their 4-petalled state. It would be interesting to experiment with this one. The same instability seems to occur with trifoliation. Some stems seem to have three leaves at each axil, rather than a pair. (Ed)

Trix Chambers of Kilsyth writes:

What a year for *Correas* here! The *Correas* here are brilliant after a very wet 1996. I lost my precious 'Western Star' which had grown very well in a new bed, also a few in pots drowned too.

However, the more established plants have done very well and are in full bloom and look set to continue on. *C. 'Mannii'* is blooming particularly well, although the plant can be very scrambly and untidy. I'm not drastic enough with pruning, I guess.

I planted out a cutting of *C. lawrenciana* (maybe *var. cordifolia*) and tip-pruned it regularly for five years. It is covered in bloom now and has put up numerous suckers from the base, also a mass of flowers seemingly sprouting from the ground. I'm not sure if I should leave them to grow on. What do you think?

Suckering is a curious problem. I find myself that if you have the room, it's best to let things sucker and spread. On the other hand, larger plants and trees drive me mad as they throw up shoots anywhere, spoiling my attempts to landscape. I usually pull the whole plant out and replant somewhere else, where it won't matter. Cutting off the suckering branch sometimes helps. These are usually found fairly close to the surface and are easy to cut through. I would welcome other thoughts on the matter. (Ed)

Alan Lacey has moved to his new home at Sandy Point and is discovering the delights of gardening on sand with no frosts. He writes:

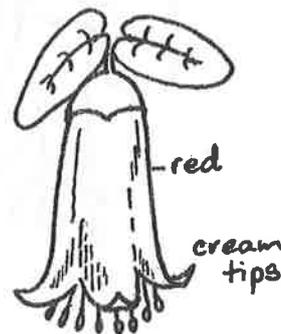
'I'm trialling the product CLONEX Gel as a hormone/stimulant rooting preparation - seems to be offering superior results than just straight IBA in alcohol solution, which has been previously used.'

I have been using CLONEX Gel for a year now and am very happy with results. Cuttings dipped in this establish strong root systems, far stronger than with powder or liquid. Keep the Gel in the fridge and pour a little in a bottle cap when you want to use it. Don't dip straight into the bottle of Gel, as you will contaminate it with water and other substances. A small bottle costs around \$5.00 and lasts me about a year and I do a lot of cuttings.

A local native nursery has also been using it with great success. How about anyone else? What do other people use? (Ed)



C. reflexa
Avignon 357
red/green



C. reflexa form
Fred Rogers property

Best of the best

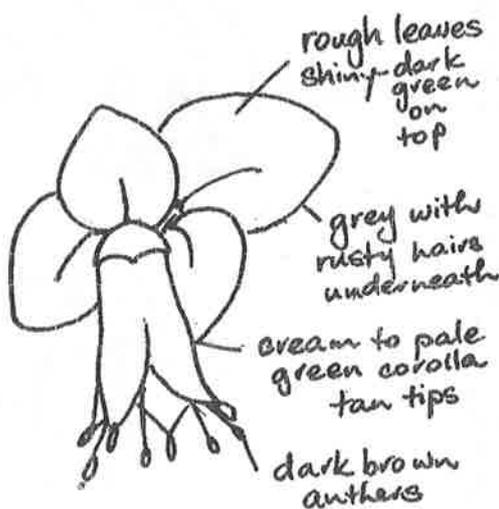
Diana Snape of the Garden Design Study Group would like to feature our best *Correas* in future newsletters. She writes:

'I have already asked the leaders of a number of Study Groups to write about the 'best' species of their genus (or family) - 'best' in terms of availability to gardeners (not necessarily SGAPers), reliability and attractiveness /usefulness.

Correas of course score highly on these but it would be helpful to have some notes on what you/ your SG consider the 'best of the best' to recommend to nurseries, landscape or garden designers, etc. I think it's important to promote the 'best' of our Australian plants'.

How about it? Which is your favourite *Correa*? Perhaps you have more than one which could be recommended to gardeners in your area. Write a description and why you think it's good. If you want to add a drawing or picture, even better. I will feature your selections in future newsletters.

In my case I would look at *Correas* which are frost and drought hardy, live longer than five years, require minimal maintenance and have an attractive shape (bushy, not sprawling everywhere). Groundcovers need to be dense enough to suppress weeds. A plant which fits all these criteria in my garden would be *Correa reflexa* Portland form, which is known in the trade as *var. nummulariifolia*. Here is my description, you can use it as a guide for writing up your own.



Correa reflexa Portland form
(known in the Nursery trade as
C. reflexa var. *nummulariifolia*)

Size: 0.3m x 1.5m

Origin: Grows naturally on west coast of Victoria
Age: 10 + years

Description:

This dense groundcover has greyish-green rounded leaves on long stems which may layer in contact with the ground. Flowers appear in late Autumn and winter and are short creamish-yellow and tan bells with dark brown anthers.

Landscaping:

The plant is ideal for banks, rockeries, groundcover under trees, foreground plantings or massed where a dense mat is required. It withstands harsh frost and occasional snowfalls. We sometimes get -12C ground temperatures in the middle of winter. It seems to grow well in sand or heavier soils, but it may not do well on waterlogged sites. It is also salt-tolerant, growing naturally on headlands.

This plant withstands strong sunlight and would be useful in landscape projects. Growth is fairly rapid depending on the conditions available. It could be recommended for town planting, in shopping centres, on roundabouts, in strip plantings near businesses or carparks, around flats and other buildings where maintenance is low. It may not do well in warm, humid areas because the dense foliage may be prone to mildew and is therefore better suited to cooler and drier conditions.

Maintenance:

Can be pruned to shape, but will spread into a rounded shape if left alone. Requires minimal watering, never needs spraying for insect damage and is pretty well maintenance free. The dense foliage suppresses weed growth after a few years. Fertilizing is not necessary but an occasional application of a slow-release fertiliser will keep it looking good.

C. reflexa var. nummulariifolia

There seems to be quite a lot of confusion over *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia*. In order to clarify matters, I looked up the revision again and shock! horror! realised that I've made a major error.

According to the revision, *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia* grows only on Kangaroo Island and other Bass Strait islands. The plant from the mainland, which is generally known as *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia*, isn't and shouldn't be called by that name! So the locals on Kangaroo Island were right and here I was trying to convince them that the name was wrong.

So how did the error occur? I'll start at the beginning and perhaps this will clarify matters.

As long as I have been growing *Correas*, the cream-belled form from Portland has been promoted as *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia*. Colour labels attached to this plant in nurseries are all labelled with this name. It has therefore become accepted as the correct name. Plant books have continued the error and I fell into the same trap of acceptance, without doing some thorough cross-checking.

What a dilemma! The best thing would be to share with you what the books say and I leave it up to you members to send in your comments.

Marian Beek consulted Black's Flora of S.A.

In 1948 Black named the Kangaroo Island form of *C. reflexa*, *C. rubra* var. *orbicularis* (which means round-shaped leaves) And in 1961 Paul Wilson renamed it *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia*. According to Black's Flora of S.A., it only grows on Kangaroo island and on the islands of Bass Strait.

Marian then consulted a friend in Adelaide, who is a 'Correa-nut' and who'd had a lot of contact with Robert Anderson (the botanist who started a new revision). He told her that all the Kangaroo Island *C. reflexas* are var. *nummulariifolia*! This means that all the *C. reflexa* plants we saw should bear that name, regardless of size and flower colour.

So let's look at what the Encyclopaedia says.

'Usually a dwarf shrub of 0.2-0.5 m x 1-2 m, occurring naturally on the western coast of Victoria and to some of the Bass Strait islands. The leathery leaves are round to oval, can be glabrous or hairy above, but are densely hairy below. The hairs often give a rusty appearance. Flowers are greenish-white, about 2 cm long, and very abundant. This variety is an ideal groundcover, and is extremely well suited to coastal conditions. it is available sometimes as *C. reflexa* prostrate form from south-west Vic. Another form in cultivation grows to over 1m tall.

In the revision, the form from Kangaroo Island, SA, is most likely to become a variety of *C. glabra*. The other forms may be absorbed into var. *reflexa*.'

So here is where the situation becomes complex. If you remember, we all sniffed a *C. glabra* smell in the leaves of the *C. reflexas* on K.I. Obviously, when Robert Anderson began the new revision, he noted the same feature and this must have influenced his intention as noted above.

When Rodger Elliott wrote up this section of the Encyclopaedia, he was no doubt aware of the impending name change and the error continued. Unfortunately, the revision was not completed and we really have to go back to the original name.

Geoff Sitch's booklet 'Correa' says:

'A population known as *C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia* is apparently confined to sea cliffs at the mouth of Parker R. near cape Otway in Victoria, some Bass Strait Islands and on Kangaroo Island, SA. It has rigid, broadly ovate leaves (finely and densely tomentose beneath) and narrow greenish-white corollas around 2 cm. long.'

I wouldn't call the flowers narrow, so perhaps Geoff is talking about a different plant again. Remember, in the Revision, this plant does not occur in Victoria.

John Wrigley ('Australian Native Plants') says:

'*C. reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia* has rounded leaves and smaller reddish flowers. It is an interesting foliage plant.'

It's hard to know which form John is talking about here. Certainly, it's not the one in the trade. So let's see what the Revision says.

Leaves broadly ovate, semi-orbicular or orbicular, coriaceous, glabrous or somewhat pubescent above, tomentose to pannose below. Flowers 1-3 at the end of short branchlets of 1-3 internodes. peduncle and bracts not differentiated. Pedicels 2-4 mm long; bracteoles linear, caducous, inserted near the base of the pedicel. Calyx ferruginous tomentose.

This variety varies considerably in leaf indumentum, texture and shape. The flowers also vary from cylindrical infundibuliform and from greenish yellow to red. Although this creates a polymorphic taxon, I am broadening Hooker's concept of the variety to include the form designated by J. M. Black as '*C. rubra* var. *orbicularis*' a name never validly published. In Kangaroo Island it appears to take part in a hybrid swarm between *C. pulchella*, *C. decumbens* and *C. reflexa* var. *reflexa*.

Distribution: From Flinders Is. to Kangaroo Is.

Propagation Corner

Here's one for the Chocaholics.

You will need to buy a packet of Arnotts Royals. They are chocolate covered marshmallow puffs, which come in a plastic hinged container.

Pig out on the biscuits but keep the container. It makes an excellent cuttings frame. Fill the lower half of the container with damp sphagnum moss. Prepare two cuttings and place them on top, one on each row of biscuit holes. Add more damp moss over the lower part of the stems and then close the container, securing with three rubber bands.

Stand the container up in a margarine or ice-cream container. You can probably fit three Royals containers into one ice-cream container. Leave the cuttings inside the house in a semi-shaded cool spot. Inspect every week or so for sign of roots. These should be visible through the plastic.

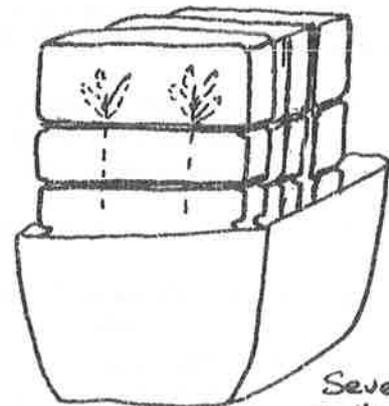
Note: Dry Sphagnum moss can be purchased in small bags. It contains a natural fungicide, so your cuttings shouldn't damp off. The Royals container should be tightly shut, so that it forms a mini-hothouse. I would recommend this method for people who have no professional set-up but would like to grow the odd cutting or two.

You could probably fit more than two cuttings into a container, but be careful as you don't want to crowd them with too much foliage. It's also a method that children could use. If anyone wants to have a go, let us know how you got on.

I promise, I don't work for Arnotts!



Cuttings in Royals container in bed of damp sphagnum moss



Several cuttings frames in an ice-cream container

Correa decumbens hybrids

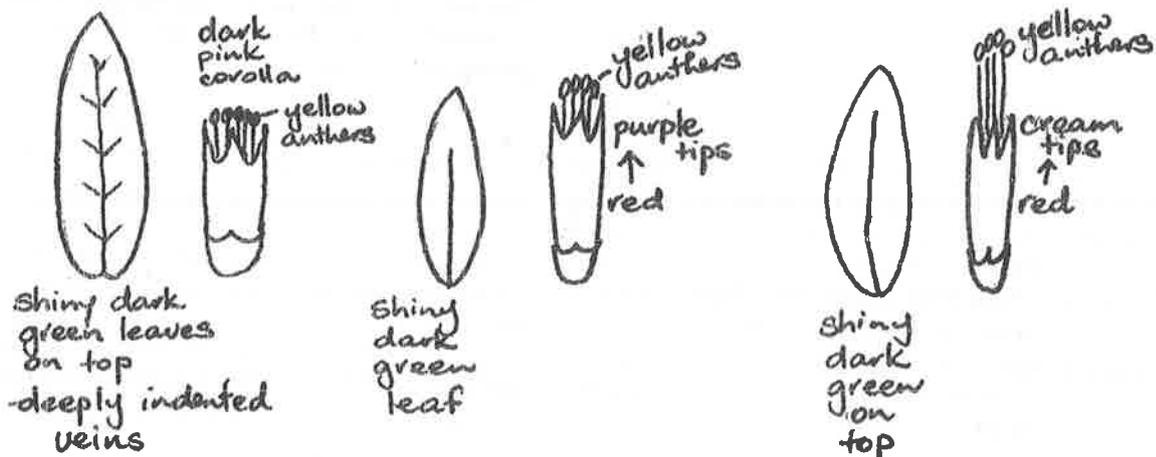
Here is a comparison of three hybrid forms.

All are growing in my garden. 'Ainslie' originated in a Sydney garden.

C. decumbens (unknown)

C. decumbens 'Ainslie'

C. decumbens 'Maria's Madness'



Correa Flower Calendar 1997		Districts: Loch, Kilsyth, Naracoorte, Dean's Marsh, Armidale						Please tick column if plant is flowering- add age and size	
Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Age of plant	Size (H x W)	
							- oldest	- biggest	
alba (NSW or Vic)	1	4	4	5	5	5	20 yrs	2m x 2m	
alba var. pannosa			1	1	1		2 yrs	0.1 x 0.3	
aemula									
backhousiana		1	4	4	4	4	33 yrs	3m x 2m	
baeuerlenii		2	3	3	3	3	2 yrs	0.8 x 1m	
calycina	2	3	3	3	3	3	10 yrs	0.6 x 0.6m	
decumbens	4	4	4	2	2	2	4 yrs	0.5 x 1m	
x reflexa	1	3	2	3	3	2	4 yrs	0.6 x 0.6m	
glabra	1	2	3	3	3	4	20 yrs	2m x 2m	
Wycheproof						1	1		
lawrenciana var rosea	1	1	1	2	2	2	5 yrs	2m x 1m	
lawrenciana var cordifolia			2	2	2	2	3 yrs	0.6 x 0.6m	
lawrenciana var. lawrenciana	1	1	1	1	1	1	4 yrs	3m x 1.5m	
pulchella - upright				1	2	4	11 yrs	0.2 x 0.2	
pulchella - prostrate		1	1	3	3	3	5 yrs	0.1 x 0.4m	
reflexa - green		1	1	2	2	4	11 yrs	1.3 x 0.6m	
- 'Cane's Hybrid'		1	1	1	1	1	10 yrs	1.5 x 1.5m	
reflexa - red (coastal Vic)			3	4	3	5	6 yrs	0.5 x 1m	
- pink	1	1		2	2	2			
reflexa - red (coastal SA)			2	3	4	4	6 yrs	0.1 x 1m	
- Brisbane Ranges						1	1		
reflexa var. nummulariifolia				1	2	3	20 yrs	2m x 2m	
schlechtendalii	3	2	3	3	3	3	12 yrs	1.5 x 1m	
x glabra	1	1	1	1	1	1	30 yrs	2m x 2m	
'Marian's Marvel'		3	3	4	4	4	28 yrs	3.2 x 3.3m	
'Marian Beek'			1	1	1		5 yrs	0.6 x 0.6m	
'Dusky Bells'	2	3	4	4	3	3	11 yrs	1m x 1.6m	
'Pink Mist'			1	2	3	2	4 yrs	0.6 x 0.6m	
'Mannii'			2	5	5	5	3 yrs	0.6 x 2m	
'Benera Bell'			1	1	1		1 yr	0.6 x 0.3m	
'Ivory Bells'		1	1	1	1	1	2 yrs	0.6 x 0.6	
'Poorinda Fantasy'						1			