

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

**EPACRIS STUDY GROUP**

Group Leader: Gwen Elliot, P.O. Box 655 Heathmont Vic. 3135

**NEWSLETTER**

**No. 13**

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**March 2002**

Greetings to all EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members. Many thanks to those who have written following our last Newsletter.

The first very welcome letter to arrive was from Jeff Irons who sent his listing of the *Epacris* he has grown in his garden in Heswall, England and also enclosed a photo of *E. myrtifolia* which is included this Newsletter.

Next came a great letter from Ron Crowden, former Leader of our EPACRIS STUDY GROUP and again with photos of *E. myrtifolia*, making this edition's Profile Page a very special one indeed.

As mentioned in our September 2001 Newsletter, the profile page for this issue has been prepared for us by Dick Burns, former Secretary of the STUDY GROUP. Thanks to all who have helped.

The genus of *Epacris* is not one in which we can readily exchange seeds or even cutting material but we can share information and learn from each other in regard to the various species and their cultivation. The Profile Pages in our Newsletters have therefore been designed to each occupy a double-sided page so that they can be removed and separately collated if you wish, to form your own set of reference information on the genus. The practice of getting the photographs commercially photocopied then pasted onto the page has been selected rather than simply colour-printing on computer, to achieve a better quality result at a reasonable cost. This system may of course change as technology advances.

Ron Crowden has also very kindly sent his most up-to-date list of *Epacris* species, so the Special Profile Page from Newsletter 12 has been revised and is again included here so that you can update your own information. I must admit that I included the page with some trepidation in the last issue, feeling that there would almost certainly be some aspects that may not in line with the latest botanical revisions, and I was delighted to receive Ron's letter.

We are of course all looking forward eagerly to the day when Volume 9 of the *Flora of Australia* which is to include *Epacris* becomes available.

In addition to the 46 Australian *Epacris* currently recognised Ron mentioned that *Epacris alpina* and *E. pauciflora* are native to New Zealand, with *E. pauciflora* being also possibly in New Caledonia.

This summer Australia experienced some extremely bad bushfires, particularly in New South Wales. Many thousands of hectares of natural vegetation were burnt, including regions where species of *Epacris* occur. It will be interesting to hear news of these areas as regrowth occurs. Our thoughts are also with those who lost their homes and home gardens. We can only be grateful that the losses were not greater, considering the very adverse weather conditions around the Christmas / New Year period.

I hope you enjoy the contents of this, our 14th Study Group Newsletter. Please keep your contributions coming in, so that we can continue to share our growing experiences with all members. Newsletter No. 15 will be a Spring 2002 edition, and it would be helpful if items could be received by the beginning of August. For some members, membership renewals are due at the end of June, so why not enclose a brief note with your renewal payment.

We trust that 2002 will be a happy and healthy year for *Epacris* Study Group members, and that you will be able to add some new species of *Epacris* to your cultivation list.

Warm greetings,  
Gwen E.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### **A.S.G.A.P. Biennial Conference 2001**

Several EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members attended the ASGAP BIENNIAL CONFERENCE held in Canberra last September/October and from all reports it was extremely enjoyable. Rodger and I had planned to attend, but unfortunately our plans were affected by the cancellation of all Ansett flights and we were not able to be there.

Helen Morrow of Victoria kindly took along the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP display material which had been prepared and local A.P.S. members also supplied fresh flowers for the display table. Sincere thanks to all who assisted.

### **Welcome to new Study Group Members**

Following the distribution of membership application forms at Conference we are pleased to now have two new Study Group members.

Betty Denton is from Eltham Vic, and is a member of the Maroondah and Yarra Yarra Regions of APS. Pam King is a member of A.P.S. Bairnsdale Vic.

In addition to being active members of their local regional groups, both Betty and Pam frequently attend state activities of APS Victoria, and are also members of other ASGAP Study Groups.

A warm welcome to both Betty and Pam, and we hope you enjoy your involvement in the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP.

### **Australian Plants - a very special issue - June 2001**

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members will be particularly interested in Issue No. 167 of AUSTRALIAN PLANTS magazine as the front cover features a stunning photograph of *Epacris impressa*, from the camera of Bruce Fuhrer and inside there is Part Two of the series on Tasmanian Epacridaceae by Ron Crowden and Yvonne Menadue - concentrating on EPACRIS, together with an article on Epacris - Cultivation in Tasmania, by Dick Burns.

Accompanying the text there are six full pages of colour photographs of Tasmanian *Epacris* species, illustrating *Epacris acuminata*, *E. barbata*, *E. corymbiflora*, *E. curtisii*, *E. exserta*, *E. grandis*, *E. gunnii*, *E. heteronema*, *E. impressa*, *E. lanuginosa*, *E. limbata*, *E. marginata*, *E. microphylla*, *E. mucronulata*, *E. myrtifolia*, *E. navicularis*, *E. obtusifolia*, *E. serpyllifolia*, *E. 'Strzelecki'*, *E. stuartii*, *E. tasmanica*, *E. 'Union Bridge'*, and *E. virgata*

This is certainly a 'Must Have' volume for all *Epacris* enthusiasts.

You can subscribe to 'AUSTRALIAN PLANTS' with your membership of S.G.A.P./A.P.S. For further information on this particular issue you can contact the Editor, W. H. Payne, at 860 Henry Lawson Drive, Picnic Point 2213. Thanks Bill for this great issue on *Epacris*, and appreciation also to Ron, Yvonne and Dick for making this information available for us all.

### **Epacris species - Cultivation survey**

As mentioned on page one, many thanks to those who have already responded to the survey enclosed with our last Newsletter. It is really interesting to see just how many species are being grown by our members and it looks like the majority are in cultivation. The information is being recorded on computer and will be the subject of a special Report in the near future. We have also been able to include member comments in relation to *E. myrtifolia* in this issue, and will continue to use extracts in future Profile Pages.

If you have not sent your Survey back, we would love to have it, so that the information can be included in Study Group records and future Newsletters. Some members are only growing 1 - 2 species, but it all adds to the total picture.

While we are vitally concerned with the preservation of these plants in their natural habitat there is also much value in also having cultivated plants, particularly if there is any threat to the preservation of their native environment from development, bushfires or other factors which may cause the *Epacris* to be destroyed.

### **Pleasures and frustrations for plant-enthusiasts**

There are many pleasures involved in the growing of our Australian plants, but there are also some frustrations out there to try those involved with plants and the environment. Study Group member Malcolm Reed has recently experienced the frustration of a site he was monitoring for seed germination having been bulldozed for a motorway.

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.  
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP      Plant profile

***Epacris myrtifolia*** Labill.  
**Thick-leaved Coastal Heath; Myrtle Heath**

*myrtifolia* = leaves similar to those of the *Myrtle* genus  
 Distribution - Tasmania

Special thanks to Dick Burns of Tasmania who has prepared the major part of this *Epacris* Profile, to photographers - Ron Crowden and Jeff Irons and to Alice Talbot for the illustrations.

Photograph - Ron Crowden

Photograph - Jeff Irons



*Epacris myrtifolia* generally forms a dense shrub, sometimes erect, sometimes spreading. In my garden, at Penguin Tasmania, it has formed a low mound about 40 cm tall but at Cape Pillar, Tas. plants in forest reach over 2 m tall.

Leaves are crowded on thick firm stems, spreading and generally elliptical-ovate in shape with varied degree of pointing at the tip. They are about 5 mm long, thick and dark green.

Flowering is profuse. The white flowers (to about 5 mm long) are shortly stalked and solitary in leaf axils towards the tips of stems. Because of the crowding the flowers appear to be in dense spikes. Sometimes the clustering appears corymbose.

The main floral display occurs in spring so that in November as you walk through a grove, the ground is white with fallen corollas. My garden specimen starts flowering in July.

ILLUSTRATIONS by ALICE TALBOT

Upper side  
of leaf



Underside  
of leaf



Leaf  
attachment



Leaf  
scars



Flower



Flower



Ovary,  
style and  
stigma



## ***Epacris myrtifolia* Labill.**      Thick-leaved Coastal Heath; Myrtle Heath

### Natural Habitat

In Tasmania all species of *Epacris* apart from *E. impressa* produce white flowers. There are currently 18 species named and listed as being endemic to the island with at least another 3 known forms awaiting description. Tasmania shares only 6 species with the mainland. Many of the endemic species have short tubes to their flowers (compared with *E. impressa* or *E. reclinata* for instance.) Their flowers tend to face up and the lobes are regularly large making an attractive plant with a delicate appearance. Some are proving difficult to propagate or establish in cultivation but there are a few, while delicate in appearance, that are hardy garden plants.

I have found *E. myrtifolia* the best of these species.

Many of the endemic species have a restricted distribution. *Epacris myrtifolia* has a wider range than some. It is mostly found on the Tasman Peninsula, the south-eastern tip of Tasmania, but there are populations on Freycinet Peninsula and Maria Island on the east coast, and on South West Cape.

It is clearly a low-altitude species. I have found it growing in coastal rocky outcrops just above the reach of the save splash of high tide. Inland it occurs in coastal heath, woodland and open forest. On the southern extreme of Tasman Peninsula it occurs in the Cape Pillar scrub, coastal heath that grows on top of cliffs rising 300 m out of the ocean.

Mostly *E. myrtifolia* grows in clay soil derived from dolerite (a rock with the chemical makeup the same as basalt), but it is also found in sandstone and granite country. 'The Student's Flora of Tasmania' by Curtis (our main botanic reference) states that this species grows in wet places, but I have found it in some very dry spots as well.

### Propagation and Cultivation

I grew my plant from cuttings, probably 20 years ago. I use a 3:1 sharp sand: peat moss mix, and at that time I was probably using powder hormone. With epacrids I have found it best to use separate tubes for each cutting because of the delicate roots. It is planted near a brick wall in poor clay soil that remains dry. The wall faces close to north, so the *Epacris* gets a lot of sun.

### Common Names

*Epacris myrtifolia* is sometimes known as Myrtle Heath.

The Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service botanists have assigned the 'common' name "Thick-leaved Coastal Heath" to this pretty plant, a not particularly useful appellation, and rather confusing. Does the name describe a plant or some community?

Dick Burns, August 2001

### *Epacris myrtifolia* Labill.

The botanist who described and named *Epacris myrtifolia* was Jacques Julien Houton de Labillardiere. Labillardiere was born in France on 28th October 1755 and died in Paris on 8th January 1834. He studied both medicine and botany and spent 18 months in England studying exotic plants, during which he became acquainted with Joseph Banks. In 1791 he was selected to go on the French expedition under Bruny d'Entrecasteaux and on this voyage he collected some 4000 botanical specimens, including material from south-western Australia and Tasmania. His name is sometimes written as La Billardiere and the genus of *Billardiera* commemorates his contribution to botanical research.

### Member comments on the Cultivation of *Epacris myrtifolia*

A robust shrub. - Ron Crowden & Yvonne Menadue in 'Australian Plants'

A very satisfactory garden plant. It thrives in my sandy loam soil at Kingston Tas, but also did well in a black clay loam when I lived at Tarooma. It survives for many years. The flowers are well displayed over many weeks and it is easy to keep the plants shapely. George Wade, (1998) -

Unfortunately George's plant died during the summer of 2001.

Grown with *E. marginata* in a rocky wall facing east. Flowered profusely every year, but died after about 15 years. These species seem to do well close to each other. Jennie Lawrence, Burnie Tas.

John Emms of Loch Vic planted *E. myrtifolia* in a tub with *E. mucronulata*. They flowered when in a sunny spot but were reluctant to flower in shade.

Likes a well-drained cool site - Plants of Tasmania Nursery, Ridgeway

Plants 10 years old. Grows well in a container. Has survived frosts and flood in the garden of Jeff Irons, U.K.

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EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

**Special Updated PROFILE Page - March 2002**

**Epacris species in cultivation.**

This page is provided for you to send to the Epacris Study Group for a record of species being grown by members or to copy and keep for your own records.

			C - Container-grown G - Garden plant	Approx year planted	Comments
<u>E. acuminata</u>	Benth.	Tas			
<u>E. apiculata</u>	A. Cunn.	NSW			This species has now been removed from <i>Epacris</i> and is known as <i>Rupicola apiculata</i> .
<u>E. apsleyensis</u>	Crowden	Tas			
<u>E. barbata</u>	Melville	Tas			
<u>E. bawbawensis</u>	- This name no longer recognised. Most probably - <i>E. paludosa</i>				
<u>E. breviflora</u>	Stapf	Qld, NSW, Vic, (not in Tas)			
<u>E. calvertiana</u>	F. Muell. var. <i>calvertiana</i> .	NSW			
<u>E. calvertiana</u>	F. Muell. var. <i>versicolor</i>	Maiden & E. Betche	NSW		
<u>E. celata</u>	Crowden	NSW, Vic			
<u>E. coriacea</u>	A. Cunn. ex DC.	NSW			
<u>E. corymbiflora</u>	Hook. f.	Tas			
<u>E. crassifolia</u>	R. Br. ssp. <i>crassifolia</i>	NSW			
<u>E. crassifolia</u>	R. Br. ssp. <i>macroflora</i>	NSW			
<u>E. curtisiae</u>	S. J. Jarman	Tas			
<u>E. exserta</u>	R.Br.	Tas			
<u>E. franklinii</u>	- Currently included in <i>E. mucronulata</i> but may be restored as a species in the future.				
<u>E. glabella</u>	S. J. Jarman	Tas			
<u>E. glacialis</u>	Gray	NSW, Vic			
<u>E. grandis</u>	Crowden	Tas			
<u>E. gunnii</u>	Hook. f.	NSW, Vic, Tas			<i>E. gunnii</i> has been included in <i>E. microphylla</i> by some botanists, particularly in NSW, but not by Willis in Vic.
<u>E. hamiltonii</u>	Maiden & E. Betche	NSW			
<u>E. heteronema</u>	Labill.	Tas (Not in NSW, Vic.)			This species may be subject to future botanical revision.
<u>E. impressa</u>	Labill.	NSW, Vic, Tas, SA			

E. lanuginosa Labill. Vic, Tas (? NSW)

E. limbata J. K. Williams & F. Duncan Tas

E. lithophila Crowden & Menadue NSW

E. longiflora Cav. Qld, NSW

E. marginata Melville Tas

E. microphylla R. Br. var. *microphylla* Qld, NSW, Vic,

E. microphylla R. Br. var. *rhomboidea* L. Fraser & Vickery NSW, (possibly Vic)

E. mucronulata R. Br. Tas

E. muelleri Sonder NSW

E. myrtifolia Labill. Tas

E. navicularis S. J. Jarman Tas

E. obtusifolia Smith Qld, NSW, Vic, Tas, (? SA)

E. paludosa R. Br. NSW, Vic,  
(possibly also on Flinders Island Tas, although this may be a new species)

E. petrophila Hook. f. NSW, Vic, Tas

E. pinoidea Crowden & Menadue NSW

E. pulchella Cav. Qld, NSW

E. purpurascens R. Br. var. *purpurascens* NSW

E. purpurascens R. Br. var. *onosmiflora* Maiden & E. Betche NSW

E. reclinata A. Cunn. ex Benth. NSW

E. rigida Sieber ex Sprengel NSW

E. robusta Benth. NSW

E. serpyllifolia R. Br. Tas (? NSW, Vic,)

E. sparsa R. Br. NSW

E. squarrosa = *E. tasmanica*

E. stuartii Stapf. Tas

E. tasmanica W. M. Curtis Tas

E. virgata Hook. f. Tas



## **Flora for Fauna**

Members may have seen or heard of the Flora For Fauna program which is currently being promoted through Australian nurseries. It is an initiative of the Nursery and Garden Industry and is supported by the National Heritage Trust. The aim of FLORA FOR FAUNA is to encourage gardeners to create a home for native birds, butterflies and other fauna, thus taking a strong step towards securing the biodiversity of the Australian habitat.

A list of recommended plants has been prepared and EPACRIS is recommended through the inclusion of *Epacris longiflora* which is said to attract both birds and butterflies.

Further information on FLORA FOR FAUNA can be obtained by contacting the Project Manager, Richard de Vos, at 68 Keldie St. Forestville NSW 2087 (Phone 02) 9972 7533), (Fax) 02) 9972 7833) or on the website- [www.floraforfauna.com.au](http://www.floraforfauna.com.au).

Undoubtedly EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members will have observed birds feeding on other species of *Epacris* also. Perhaps you would like to let us know which ones you feel are particularly bird-attracting - and which ones you have noticed as being attractive to butterflies or other insects.

## **A summertime warning**

A warning recently brought to my attention relates to the practice of using potting mix which has become dry and dusty. This can happen particularly if it has been stored in a hot dry situation. Most manufacturers of potting mixes now state on the bags that their products should be stored in a cool place. Potting mixes should ALWAYS be watered before use, to avoid the release of dust particles which be harmful to human health. Wearing a dust mask is also helpful and is particularly recommended for anyone with respiratory problems.

## **A new *Epacris* recently released**

The Spring-Summer 2001 issue of the 'Bush Telegraph' from Kuranga Native Nursery, 393 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood Vic, heralds the release of a new cultivar - *Epacris* 'Nectar Pink'.

The newsletter states - "This hybrid native heath has the beautiful *Epacris longiflora* as one of its parents. The tubular bell-like flowers are coral pink with white tips and cluster densely along the length of the stems. Each flower is nectar laden and irresistibly attractive to nectar-loving birds. This is a long flowering shrub with peak flowering throughout winter and spring. With a height and width of around 80 cm it is well suited to a basket, rockery, container or garden and will grow in any well-drained soil in full to filtered sun."

Kuranga does have a mail-order service, or if you are travelling some distance to the nursery you can ring and ask them to hold a plant aside for you. The phone number is 03) 9879 4076.

## **Summer care of *Epacris***

Most *Epacris* grow best in moist but well-drained soils. Some can tolerate waterlogging but they are generally not recommended for hot, dry situations. The species which do occur in regions of low rainfall are generally found in moist depressions, amongst rocks where their roots can gain protection in crevices, or growing in spots where they are sheltered by other low plants. We can look for similar situations when we position *Epacris* plants in our gardens. In cultivation plants can also receive good protection from fences and buildings.

Do you have any special tips for the successful summer care of *Epacris* which you would like to share with other study group members ? Do you have favourite mulches ?

Do you have special tips on frequency or style of watering ? Do you use soil-wetting products ?

Have some *Epacris* thrived, just survived, or perhaps died during this summer ?

We would love to hear from you.

## **Membership renewals**

Many members took advantage of the opportunity last year to extend their membership for two years for a fee of \$10.00, rather than paying \$5.00 annually, so all these people can now relax in 2002, in the knowledge that their membership of the Study Group is current through to next year.

A new system just introduced involves printing the date to which memberships are current in the top left-hand corner of our address labels.

If no date is printed, there is no need for you to take any action to continue to receive Newsletters. If there are asterisks (\*\*\*\*) on your label then you are NOT currently financial.

It can be difficult to remember just when subscriptions to groups and magazines are due, so I hope that you find this system helpful.

Our EPACRIS STUDY GROUP renewals fall due in July each year.

**Epacris Study Group - Membership information.**

Membership of The Epacris Study Group and other Study Groups of the Australian Plant Society / Society for Growing Australian Plants is available to all members of the A.P.S. / S.G.A.P.

Membership of any Australian state group, not necessarily that of the area in which you reside, entitles you to membership of one or more study groups.

You can join the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP for just \$5.00 for 1 year or \$10 for 2 years renewable in June. Overseas subscriptions - \$10 Aust. p.a.

Memberships should be sent to P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135.

Please make your cheque payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender: Association of  
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