Liaison

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

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

NEWSLETTER

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March 2003

Greetings to all EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members.

What a summer it has been. Our thoughts have been, in particular, with Study Group members Dawn and Lyn Barr of Swan Reach in the Bairnsdale region of eastern Victoria. where residents spent several weeks almost surrounded by fires and with their emergency plans all ready to put into action if the situation became urgent. Victorian A.P.S. members can read more of the Barr's situation in the March issue of *Growing Australian*. It was encouraging to see that along with other 'treasures' to be saved Dawn had included some of their Australian plant reference books. The fire situation has by now eased, but as we are still having days of over 30°C it's still too early to say that it has passed. If any other members have suffered from fires etc., during the summer our thoughts are with you also.

In the midst of the heat and smoke-filled air in mid January *Epacris gunnii* was in full bloom in a container in our garden. What a gem!

In this Newsletter we have been able to include a report on forms of *Epacris impressa* currently being grown by our members. This should be regarded as a preliminary document at this stage, as undoubtedly there are some members who have not yet sent in information and who feel they could add to what is already in hand. It's not too late, so please put pen to paper and we look forward to receiving your notes.

It has also been great to be able to include on page 4, two items dealing with research currently being undertaken on *Epacris* and other Epacridaceae plants. One of these items includes information on research by Professor Anne Ashford from the University of New South Wales. Our October Newsletter included a request for seed of *Woollsia pungens* to be sent to Anne, who is an Epacris Study Group member, and we are pleased that seed of at least two different forms, one a pale pink and the other a deep pink-flowered form, were able to be sent.

We hope to be able to include a Profile Page on *Epacris hamiltonii* in a future Newsletter. This is a rare and endangered species from near Blackheath in the Blue Mountains of NSW. The Study Group has not received any information on plants of this species in cultivation, but if any members can supply details, or a photograph, this would be very much appreciated.

The year 2003 has certainly started with a degree of uncertainty worldwide, and our gardens offer a great opportunity for personal relaxation and renewal. It's good to be able to take time to *smell the roses* - or undoubtedly we should replace that with '*to hear the Epacris bells ring*' !

I trust you all receive some welcome rain and gain much enjoyment from your gardens over the coming months

With greetings,

Gwen E.

NEWS AND NOTES

New Study Group members

We are pleased to welcome to the Epacris Study Group **Sandra Hammond** of Eagle Point in Victoria. Sandra states that she is intrigued by *Epacris*, and we certainly hope that membership of the Study Group will add to her pleasures in this regard.

The Australian Plants Society at Menai NSW - **The Menai Wildflower Group** - has also joined our Study Group and we give them a warm welcome.

Membership renewals

Your personal renewal information is now included on your mailing label, so each member can know the time to which their Study Group membership is current.

If your membership is due for renewal, this information is contained on the back page of each Newsletter.

Best wishes for 2003

Faye Candy of Victoria is looking forward to better health and mobility in 2003 following a hip operation last year. Faye has written to express her thanks for the Newsletter, and in particular for the Profile on *Epacris celata*, which she previously knew very little about, in our October 2002 Newsletter.

We were also sorry to learn that **Jennie Lawrence** of Tasmania suffered a stroke which has required her to move from her beloved garden. We send our very best wishes for 2003 to both Faye and Jennie, and to all who look forward to a better and brighter year in 2003.

Some news and helpful hints from Jeff Irons in England

It's always good to receive correspondence from Jeff, as he is so thorough in his work with plants, in trying different methods and in keeping records of everything he does.

In a recent email, on January 21st 2003, he writes -

"Last June I received some *Epacris* seed. It had been stored in a fridge since collection earlier in the year. It was sown immediately. *E. lanuginosa* came up in September, when daytime temperatures had dropped from their summer levels. Early January brought the usual cold spell, and we are now in the warm period before the next cold snap, in mid February.

E. serpyllifolia has germinated. My conclusion is that its seed requires cold moist stratification.

Now that the sun is gaining strength the temperature in the greenhouse will reach 15 C on a sunny, windless day. If there is wind it will reach 10 C."

And on closely related plants -

"*Richea x curtisae*,* received last June, is now germinating. *R. gunnii* needed two winters before it came up. On the other hand *R. acerosa* did give immediate germination, as did *R. dracophylla*. Incidentally I notice that *Richea* come up all at once, whereas *Gaultheria* germinate over several years.

Sprengelia montana received last June and sown on receipt, has now given profuse germination. Again I presume that it requires cold moist stratification."

Many thanks to Jeff to taking the time to put 'pen to paper'.

* - In a subsequent email Jeff points out that he now believes that *Richea x curtisae* may be infertile, casting doubt on the correct identification of the seed he is germinating. He feels he will need to wait until his seedlings flower for a correct identification, by which time he'll probably be in his 90's.

If anyone would like to correspond with Jeff via email re growing epacrids from seed I'm sure he would be very pleased to hear from you on - jbirons@freeuk.com

You may also like to check your back issues of our Epacris Study Group Newsletter for Jeff's article on Growing Ericaceae and Epacridaceae Plants from Seed in Newsletter 8 - October 1999.

A.S.G.A.P. CONFERENCE - Tasmania, 2004

As many members will be aware the next ASGAP Conference is to be held in Launceston, Tasmania from January 9th - 16th, 2004.

There will be pre-conference tours from 5th-9th January and post-conference tours from January 17th-21st.

If you haven't visited Tasmania or are planning to revisit, this would be a great time.

Further information about the A.S.G.A.P. Conference can be obtained from APS Tasmania, P.O. Box 75, Exeter, Tas. 7275 or email: wwredwood@bigpond.com

Conference/Seminar

ASGAP

2004

Launceston, Tasmania

We have been invited to give a presentation on behalf of the Epacris Study Group at this Conference, so I am currently gathering together a collection of colour slides for this purpose. It is envisaged that from later next year the slide set and script will be available for groups of the Australian Plants Society to use if they wish.

If any members have slides of *Epacris* which they would like to submit for the Study Group Collection I would be very happy to receive them. They would need to be available as a donation to the Study Group, without copyright restrictions on their use, as once the slide set is allowed to be borrowed we would not be able to guarantee copyright protection. An accompanying note to borrowers would request that permission be obtained for any additional use.

It may also be possible in the future to use the material for other types of presentations - including Powerpoint. This is beyond my current area of experience, but there may be other members of the Study Group who would like to be involved in such a project.

Sustainable Gardening Australia

The year 2002 saw the launch of the program *Sustainable Gardening Australia* which aims to help every Australian gardener adopt environmentally sustainable gardening practices that are appropriate to their local environment.

It seeks to address issues such as Pesticides and Herbicides, Composting and Organic Waste Recycling, Water Conservation, Environmental Weeds, Indigenous Plants, Sustainable Purchasing and Sustainable Design.

It is a program which I feel most Australian plant enthusiasts would support very keenly.

Sustainable Gardening Australia has the backing of major educational institutions, a number of local Councils in Victoria and 12 pilot Garden Centres. Keynote speakers at the launch in December were Don Henry from the Australian Conservation Foundation, Dr. Greg Moore, Principal of Burnley College, University of Melbourne, and Jane Edmanson, the Patron of Sustainable Gardening Australia.

You can become an Associate Member of Sustainable Gardening Australia for no charge, and receive a free email newsletter providing information and tips on gardening in an environmentally sustainable way. There is also the opportunity for home gardeners to become Financial Members for $50 per year, which provides a number of additional benefits.

Further information can be obtained from Sustainable Gardening Australia, 6 Manningham Road West, Bulleen 3105, or from Mary Trigger at Environs Australia, 4/247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, 3000. The SGA website is - www.SGAonline.org.au

Flora for Fauna

Another program which you may have seen being promoted in nurseries and garden centres is FLORA FOR FAUNA. This is an initiative of the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia, 'encouraging Australians to plant appropriate native plants that attract and provide shelter for native wildlife, bringing their garden alive as a wildlife haven'.

Lists of plants are provided, with *Epacris longiflora* being among the recommended species.

Further information on FLORA FOR FAUNA is available from the Flora for Fauna Manager, Nursery & Garden Industry Australia, P.O. Box 907, Epping NSW 1710, or from the website - www.floraforfauna.com.au.

Epacridaceae Research

Two projects on Epacridaceae are this year receiving funding from the **Australian Flora Foundation**.

1) - The Effect of Provenance and Mycorrhizal Inoculum on Cuttings of *Epacris impressa.*

This research is being undertaken by Melanie Conomikes at the University of Melbourne, Burnley College with MAppSc supervisors Dr. C. Maclean (Burnley College) and Assoc. Prof. Anne Lawrie (RMIT). Two of the three years of this study will be supported by the Australian Flora Foundation and another sponsor.

The study will focus on ways of improving success in propagation of ***Epacris impressa.*** It will investigate colour variations and the possibility of different races within the species, by gene sequencing of samples from different locations. It will aim to develop a specific mycorrhizal inoculum to assist in propagation of the plant from tip cuttings in suitable quantities for conservation and horticultural purposes.

Finally it will monitor the success of struck cuttings when transplanted to various sites.

2) - Germination, Establishment and Mycorrhizal Synthesis in the Epacrid *Woollsia pungens.*

This research is being undertaken by Anne E. Ashford and John H. Palmer at the School of Biological Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of NSW.

Anne is an Epacris Study Group member and we have been able to supply seed of at least two different colour forms of *Woollsia* for her research.

Factors that may control seed germination and seedling establishment will be investigated during the next two years. Fungae such as mycorrhizae , about which there is already some genetic information, will be obtained from the hair roots, cultured and used to inoculate plants raised in controlled conditions. It is hoped this will clarify the influence of these organisms on growth and nutrient uptake, by comparing the results with those for untreated, non-mycorrhizal plants grown in the same conditions.

Undoubtedly all research done within the Epacridaceae family will be of benefit to those with a specific interest in *Epacris*, so we look forward to learning more about both of these research projects as they proceed during 2003 and in coming years.

From the Australian Network for Plant Conservation 5th National Conference - Geelong Vic. Feb/March 2003

One of the speakers at the above conference was Paul Black, from the Threatened Species Unit, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Tasmania.

His topic was THE ROLE OF *EX SITU* CONSERVATION PROGRAMS IN RECOVERY PLANS FOR THREATENED SPECIES IN TASMANIA.

Paul pointed out that *ex situ* conservation measures are an essential part of the recovery process for some species, particularly critically endangered species that are subject to habitat loss or threatening processes that are difficult to reverse.

Eleven *ex situ* conservation projects were reviewed. They vary widely in their objectives and outcomes but have the common ground in that the first step has been to establish an *ex situ* holding resident in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

Paul stated that 'This has largely been successful except for ***Epacris limbata*** which seems to strike readily from cuttings but suffers from drought effects in the nursery.'

He continued to state, 'In revue it becomes obvious that funds for some projects would be more effectively spent on additional surveys to extend the known range, number of populations and plants rather than in costly translocation programs. It is difficult to decide at the recovery planning stage whether to survey or translocate, but the ***Epacris barbata***, *Barbarea australis* and *Philotheca freyciana* projects demonstrate that, in hindsight, for these species more funds should be directed to survey rather than translocation programs. All three species are listed as critically endangered and have had the numbers in the wild increased by extension surveys.

It is great to know that studies are being carried out in regard to these and other species which are threatened in their native habitat. If EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members in Tasmania would like to contribute to the research at the Threatened Species Unit, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment I'm sure Paul Black would be very pleased to hear from you.

Thanks on behalf of the Study Group to my husband Rodger, who attended the above Conference and passed on this information for our Newsletter.

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP
Plant profile

Epacris robusta Benth.

Round-leaf Heath

robusta = robust

Distribution - New South Wales

Epacris robusta
Photo. © Rodger Elliot

Epacris robusta is an erect to spreading small shrub, growing about 50 cm - 1 m tall or rarely up to 2 m in height. It has a spread of about 0.5 - 1.5 m.

The branches are quite rigid, giving plants a very robust character.

The thick, blunt leaves are somewhat oval, to about 8 mm long, spreading horizontally from the branches.

The flowering period is mainly August to December with flowers also seen in April. They are white to cream, to about 7 mm long, with a sweet spicy fragrance, and produced in clusters near the branchlet tips.

Epacris robusta has some similarities to *E. obtusifolia* which has its flowers along the branches and has much narrower leaves.

(*Encyclopaedia of Aust. Plants*, Vol. 3 (1984) - Elliot & Jones, Lothian Books.)

Natural Habitat

E. robusta occurs mainly in south-eastern New South Wales, south of the Tinderry Mountains and is recorded also from Jenolan Caves.

It frequently grows in shallow soils, amongst granite or quartzite boulders and on rocky slopes.

Epacris robusta Benth. - Page 2

Propagation

Propagation method recommended for *E. robusta* is to use cuttings of firm young growth. Seed is also worth trying and germination may be assisted by the use of smoke treatment.

Cultivation

Epacris robusta is not a widely cultivated species. It has been grown in Botanic Gardens including the Australian National Botanic Garden, Canberra, and to a limited extent by enthusiasts. It appears to be best suited to well-drained soils in dappled shade or sun for just part of the day.

The Epacris Study Group has not received cultivation information from any members growing this species at the present time.

Are you currently growing *E. robusta* ?

Have you grown *E. robusta* in the past ?

Do you know where plants are available from nurseries at the present time ?

Please let us know.

This space is for your own cultivation records or other comments.

George Bentham C.M.G., LL.D. (Hon.) F.L.S.

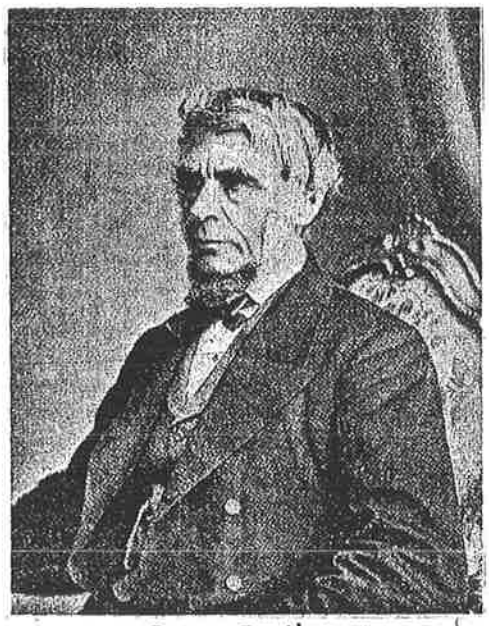
Epacris robusta was named and described by George Bentham, who also described *E. acuminata* and *E. reclinata*.

Bentham was one of the great British botanists, born in 1800 and dying in London in 1884. He never visited Australia but was the author of the seven-volume *FLORA AUSTRALIENSIS* (1863-1878). This work would not have been possible without enormous assistance from Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, who was given a simple acknowledgement for his contribution.

Bentham was responsible for a large number of original plant descriptions, with three genera having been named in his honour - *Benthamantha, Benthamia* and *Benthamiella,* plus numerous species of Australian plants.

From his early 30s Bentham was financially independent and from 1854 he worked almost daily at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, without payment.

For his work on *FLORA AUSTRALIENSIS* he received the award of C.M.G.



George Bentham
From *Botanists of the Eucalypts.* by N. Hall
Pub. CSIRO Melb. 1978

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP SPECIAL PROFILE PAGE

Epacris impressa - in cultivation.

A report on cultivation of *E. impressa* by Study Group members & friends.

Epacris impressa is the most naturally widespread species of the genus, with its natural distribution in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. A Profile Page on *Epacris impressa* was included in our Study Group Newsletter of October 1998.

Epacris impressa is also the most commonly cultivated species and is the State Floral Emblem of Victoria. There is considerable variety within the species, and numerous different selections are grown.

This Profile Page lists a number of these selections, following recent survey information provided by Epacris Study Group members.

Further information to add to this page will be very welcome for publication in future Newsletters.

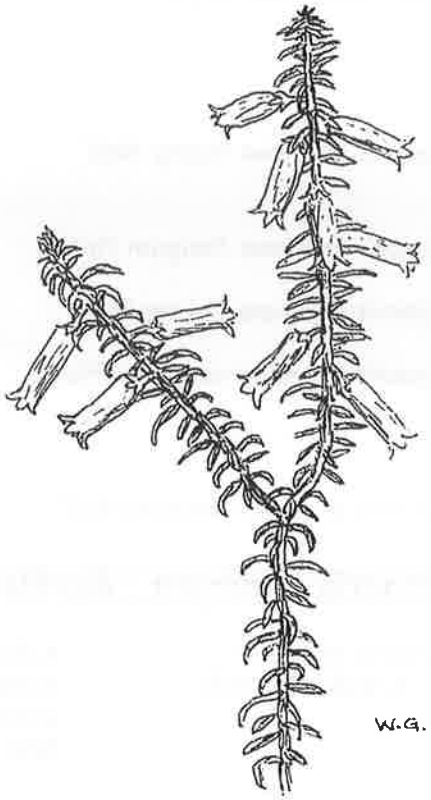


Illustration by
Epacris Study Group member, Bill Gunn

Epacris impressa - Selections with WHITE, PINK or RED FLOWERS

White flowers	Plants grow approx. 0.5-1.5m tall by 0.2-1 m wide. Flowering is mainly winter to early spring. Plants like moist but well-drained soils in semi-shade or partial sun. They respond well to pruning after flowering.
Pink & White Flowers	Similar description & requirements to White-flowered selections
Pink buds, white flowers	Similar description & requirements to White-flowered selections
Pale pink / Soft pink flowers	Several selections being grown, similar requirements to above.
Bright pink flowers	An attractive selection from Green Cape area, NSW
Dark pink flowers	Several dark pink selections grown, including one from Anglesea Vic.
Red flowers	Several red-flowered selections grown, including one from Portland/Nelson region of Vic.

See also Named selections - on next page.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP SPECIAL PROFILE PAGE

Epacris impressa - in cultivation.

Named selections & varieties of *E. impressa*

Epacris impressa 'Bega'	Selection from south-eastern NSW, with bright scarlet/red flowers. Has proved adaptable and reliable in cultivation. 50cm-1 m tall. Grows well without much pruning. Tolerates some dryness. Can flower well from autumn to early spring.
Epacris impressa 'Bushy Pink'	A registered cultivar with a bushy growth habit and strong pink flowers. Can grow to 2 m tall.
Epacris impressa 'Penguin Pink'	From Penguin, Tas. A dwarf selection with strong pink flowers.
Epacris impressa 'Spring Pink'	A registered cultivar with profuse pale pink flowers in spring.
Epacris impressa var. *grandiflora,*	A registered variety of *E. impressa* with large leaves & flowers. Occurs in the Grampians & Little Desert regions of Vic. Flowers white, pink or very deep pink.
Epacris impressa 'Western Red'	From Tasmania. Flowers slim, red. Stems also red.

Epacris impressa - double-flowered selections

Epacris impressa 'Cranbourne Bells'	A double-flowered selection growing about 50cm - 1 m tall by X 40 cm wide. Flowers white. This selection was discovered as a roadside plant at Cranbourne Vic., by members of S.G.A.P. Keilor Plains Vic. Now readily available. Also grown at Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne.
Epacris impressa 'Squeaky Point Double'	An excellent, very slow growing selection, with a height of only about 10 cm after 20 + years. Has short pink tube with whitish lobes. Parent plant discovered in Tasmania by Phillip Milner.
Epacris impressa var. *grandiflora* double-flowered form	A very showy, deep pink, double-flowered selection from the Grampians Vic. Plants upright to 2 m tall. Can be straggly. Responds well to pruning. One member ties up her plants. Appears more reliable when grown in containers.

Note: It is not uncommon for the flowers of all these double-flowered selections to be affected by *Botrytis* during times of overcast and humid weather.

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Selections and cultivars of *Epacris impressa* were extremely popular in England during the middle to late 19th-century.

Named selections with white flowers included *Epacris* 'Candidissima', *E.* 'Ceraeflorus', *E.* 'Her Majesty', *E.* 'Lady Panmure', *E.* 'Mont Blanc', *E.* 'Nivalis', *E.* 'Queen Victoria', *E.* 'The Bride' and *E.* 'Alba Odorata' which was reported to be highly fragrant.

Selections with pink or rose pink flowers included *E.* 'Diadem', *E.* 'Hyacinthiflora', *E.* 'Ignea', *E.* 'Lady Alice Peel', *E.* 'Model', *E.* 'Mrs. Pym', *E.* 'Princess Beatrice', *E.* 'Rose Perfection', *E.* 'Rosea', *E.* 'Rubella', *E.* 'Sunset' and *E.* 'The Premier'.

Epacris 'Butterfly', *E.* 'Lady Alice Peel, *E.* 'Lowi' and *E.* 'Vesta' had a combination of pink, salmon or scarlet with white in the flowers.

In the crimson and scarlet range were *E.* 'Ardentissima', *E.* 'Coccinea', *E.* 'Fireball', *E.* 'Fulgens', and *E.* 'Vesuvius'.

While some of these cultivars were natural selections, others resulted from deliberate cross-pollination. Further information on the above selections can be found in the *Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants Suitable for Cultivation*, Vol. 3, page 419, by Elliot & Jones. Pub. Lothian Books, Melbourne.

NEWS AND NOTES

For word enthusiasts !

In our Newsletter of March 2001 we included a crossword featuring Epacridaceae references which was warmly received by members.

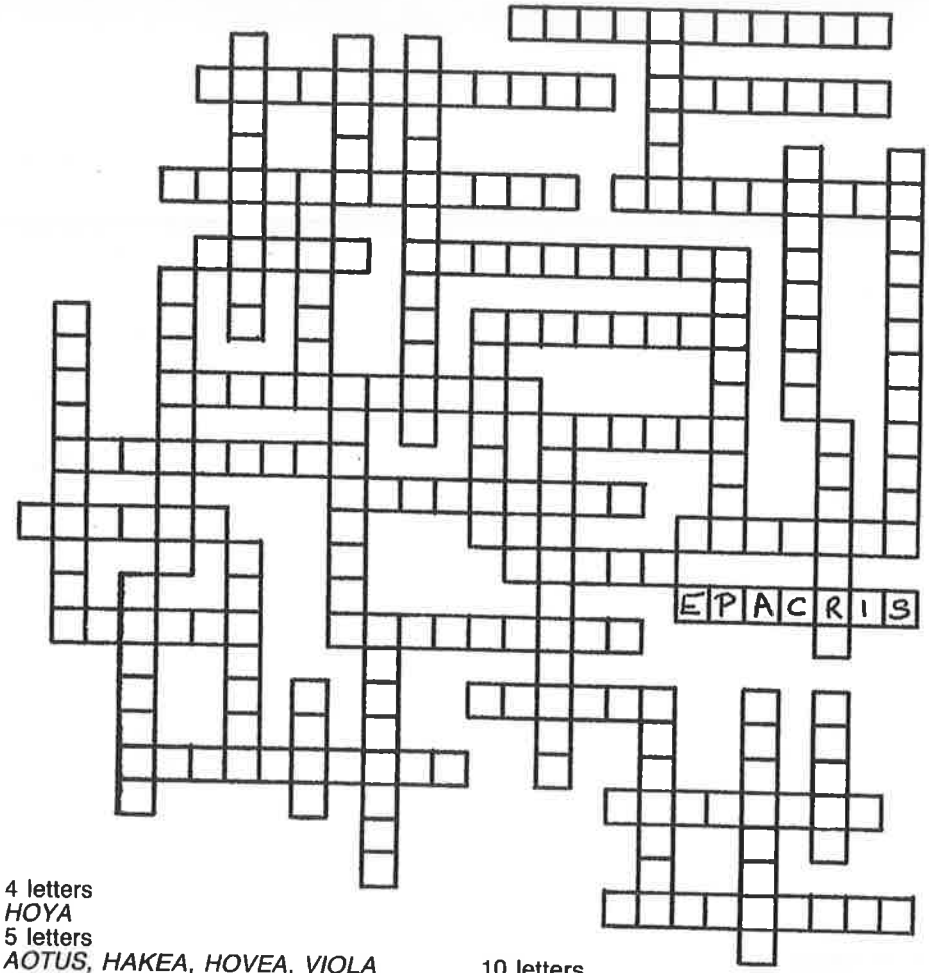
By chance I was looking through some copies of the S.G.A.P. - Victoria Newsletter of the 1980's and found the following puzzle, which is repeated here, with acknowledgement and appreciation to the author, Gwen Pascoe.

The Editor of the S.G.A.P. Newsletter at that time was Ross Field, whose note appears at the bottom of the puzzle, and as Ross states - the Solution will be printed in the next issue.

We will therefore include the solution in OUR next Epacris Study Group Newsletter. The word EPACRIS has been put in place, to help you get started!

NATIVE PLANT FILL-IN

By Gwen Pascoe



4 letters
HOYA
5 letters
AOTUS, HAKEA, HOVEA, VIOLA
6 letters
ACACIA, ACMENA, CASSIA, CORREA, CROWEA
7 letters
AGATHIS, BAECKEA, BANKSIA, BORONIA, CYATHEA, DROSERA, EPACRIS, OLEARIA, REGELIA
8 letters
ATRIPLEX, BAUHINIA, CALYTRIX, ISOPOGON, PANDOREA, RHAGODIA
9 letters
ACTINOTUS, ANGOPHORA, ARAUCARIA, ASTROLOMA, CHORIZEMA, GREVILLEA, HIBBERTIA, MACADAMIA
10 letters
BACKHOUSIA, CALECTASIA, EUCALYPTUS
11 letters
BILLARDIERA, CALLISTEMON, HYPOCALYMMA
12 letters
ANIGOZANTHOS, HARDENBERGIA, LEPTOSPERMUM, WAHLENBERGIA

You will sometimes have a choice between two similarly spelt plants. Check to see that no other plant will also fit in with the letters you have solved for a new plant. — Editor

Solution next issue.

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.
Membership renewal date is shown on address label of current Study Group members.
**** indicates that your renewal is now overdue and this may be your last Newsletter.
Memberships should be sent to P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135.
Please make your cheque payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender: Association of
Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP
P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135