

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

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

NEWSLETTER

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Greetings to all Epacris Study Group members.

Welcome to another year and very best wishes for a healthy, safe and successful one.

At last it seems that most of our politicians, both State and Federal, have realised that there is such a thing as 'global warming', there are changing patterns in our weather and in particular our rainfall, and that we need to make some changes in our lifestyles if we wish to care for planet Earth and our human survival.

Water is certainly going to be one of the major issues we need to face in coming years. It is a precious resource, and not something we can use as much as we wish, simply by "building more dams".

Many Australian plant enthusiasts are already aware of these facts, and have chosen gardens with indigenous plants or other native species which require little or no supplementary watering during dry periods. It is good to be able to share some of our experiences with others who are just discovering that gardening success is possible without using thousands of litres of precious drinking water.

There are also now many products which can assist us all in saving water, both in the home and in the garden. More on helping *Epacris* and other plants to cope with dry conditions is included on page 4 of this Newsletter.

There is no doubt that gardening is a very healthy pastime. Being close to nature renews us all mentally, and a some physical exercise is also usually very beneficial. Concerns have recently been expressed that people have been suffering back problems through carrying 10-litre buckets filled with water from the bathroom or laundry to the garden. A full bucket can be quite heavy and efforts are usually made to avoid spilling the water. Space can be limited when moving through passageways and doorways and movements can sometimes be awkward. It is strongly recommended that buckets be only half-filled with 'grey water' before they are taken into the garden. One half-filled bucket in each hand is much better than a full bucket being carried in one hand only.

Another problem with watering restrictions sometimes extending into late evening when it is dark is that people can easily trip and fall in the garden. These aspects may sound somewhat trivial, unless they happen to you of course.

Do take care. Think through the best methods in regard to everything you do in the garden, and problems such as these will be minimal.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter, and would love to hear from you in regard to your challenges, successes and even failures in the growing of our native Heath plants.

Best wishes for a wonderful year,

Gwen E.

Welcome to new Study Group member

A warm welcome to **Sue Bendel of Doncaster Vic**, who has recently joined the Epacris Study Group. Sue has a keen interest in *Epacris* and is a member of the Yarra Yarra and Maroondah regional groups in Victoria.

News & Notes

It is with sadness that we report that Study Group Member **George Wade** passed away at the age of 88 in during last year. George was one of the original members of the Epacris Study Group, having joined in 1992 when the group was first formed.

He was born in Melbourne and worked for some time with the Victorian Department of Agriculture. In 1947 George and his wife Margaret moved to Tasmania and he then worked with the State Agricultural Department there. He later became inaugural Professor of Agriculture at the University of Tasmania and held that position until his retirement in 1982. George was a valued member of the Australian Plants Society in Tasmania and was President of SGAP Tasmania from 1986-88.

George and Margaret had three sons, Ian, Neil and Peter. We thank Ian for the letter he sent to the Epacris Study Group and send our warmest greetings to all members of the family.

The Australian Plant Society celebrates its 50th Birthday.

The Australian Plant Society is now 50 years old, celebrated with a special weekend hosted by the APS South East Melbourne Region at Bentleigh, Vic. on March 17-18th, 2007 and with the launch of John Walter's book on the history of SGAP/APS.

Our organisation, Australia-wide, has made an enormous contribution to the understanding and knowledge of Australian plants, yet it does appear that currently memberships are falling rather than increasing.

Steps are underway to try and rectify this situation, and any suggestions you may have can be sent to your own State Secretary, or will be forwarded on if sent to the Epacris Study Group address.

A Gift for Study Group Members - with October Newsletter

All financial members of the **Epacris Study Group** and State Secretaries of ASGAP will receive with their October 2007 Newsletter, a complimentary copy of the 1977 A4 publication, '**EPACRIS**'.

This booklet was written and illustrated by S.G.A.P. member, Alice Talbot and the Australian Plant Study Group and published with the assistance of S.G.A.P. Maroondah Region, Victoria. All copies are numbered and signed.

Full A4 page illustrations are provided for several species, and some of these illustrations have been included in our Profile Pages over the years with the kind permission of Alice.

A collection of these booklets was recently discovered, and we thank the Australian Plant Study Group and APS Maroondah for making them available to Epacris Study Group members.

Your membership expiry date is listed on the address label of this Newsletter. Details re Membership Renewals are included at the top of the back page. Make sure you are financial by September, and a copy of this publication will be on its way to you with your spring Newsletter.



News & Notes

A newsy note from **Jeanette Closs** has let us know that she & Don have now moved to a new home, still in Kingston Tas, and with the same phone number as previously. Undoubtedly this will mean a new garden, which will involve new and exciting challenges. We send very best wishes to them both in their new Redwood Village location.

Checking up on *Epacris* pollinators -

We have recently received two separate requests for information in regard to **the pollination of *Epacris impressa***. The questions asked actually related **insects** as possible pollinators for *Epacris*.

It is quite common to see some of the small nectar-feeding birds such as Spinebills visiting *Epacris* flowers, but we would be very pleased to hear if you have also seen insects visiting your flowers.

If the easiest method of communication for you is by email - please send any relevant information to The *Epacris* Study Group, at email - rgelliot@optusnet.com.au

Fire and *Epacris*

A second interesting series of questions was received late last year from Wendy, a member of the APS NSW Parramatta & Hills group.

"I am interested in the fire response of Sydney Shale and Sandstone *Epacris*, specifically *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* and *Epacris pulchella*. In West Pennant Hills the former is declared 'Vulnerable' under the NSW TSC Act, with clearing, changed water conditions and runoff, and frequent fire listed as its key threatening processes. The recommended fire regime is an interval of 10 - 15 years. The latter one is similar looking and growing in similar places.

I am concerned that three populations of the *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* are to be burned in a hazard reduction operation, and may not recover. The populations are probably about 5 years since fire at least (the fire history at the exact sites is not well known) but I know that further north, in Kenthurst, *Epacris pulchella* seedlings took 2 years (after a hot October fire) to appear and *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* seedlings have not emerged on one property 3 years after a cooler spring burn. So these plants may be only 2 or 3 years old.

Does anyone know how long the juvenile period is for these plants?

How long after flowering is seed set ?

Do *Epacris* mind a medium intensity burn ? (ie. will some survive?)

Do you know if more survive a cooler burn than a hot summer fire ?

What are the triggers for germination ? "

Wendy goes on to say "Any answers to these questions would be greatly appreciated. . . We would like to be sure the proposed fire will not harm plants of *Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* or *Epacris pulchella*."

Due to the urgency of the situation with the proposed burn imminent, an interim reply was sent to Wendy, but she has raised some very interesting questions and it would be great if some of our members could throw some light on these aspects.

How much do we know about the effects on fire, in regard to various species of *Epacris*.

Unfortunately this year we will have had plenty of opportunity to undertake a study on the subject, with extensive bushfires in many parts of Australia.

We would therefore like to ask all members to take a notebook, camera or other recording equipment on bushwalks in the coming months to check up on how species of *Epacris* are coping or not coping in your region.

Maybe you already have thoughts on the questions provided above.

Please let us know. This is one of the real values of having APS plant Study Groups.

Our special PROFILE PAGE in this Newsletter features *Epacris purpurascens*.

Helping *Epacris* (and other plants) to cope with dry conditions.

Large regions of Australia have experienced lower than average rainfall during recent months - or even years now. Many areas now have restrictions on water use, which are likely to be in place permanently.

Gardens are an extremely important part of our lives, and we want to do all we can to ensure that our plants survive, while at the same time recognising that we need to conserve the extremely precious resource of water.

What then are some of the methods we can use, and tips we can follow.

- Supplementary watering is best done early in the morning or in late evening, to reduce evaporation. These are the hours stipulated in many water restrictions, for this reason.
- A good deep watering is preferable to frequent light sprays which encourage root production in the upper layer of the soil - which is the area which dries out most quickly.
- Group together those plants which require regular water, and in the major part of the garden select plants which are suited to your soil and climatic conditions and need very little extra help in dry periods.
- Mulching will help to retain moisture and reduce evaporation from the soil. The soil should be moist when the mulch is applied. Do not spread organic mulches too thickly or subsequent water will be absorbed by the mulch without reaching the soil and plant root area.
- Make use of the water-retaining granules and liquids which increase water penetration into dry soils.
- Seaweed products will also assist plants to survive times of stress, including heat and frost.
- Do main plantings in autumn, giving plants time to become partially established before the next summer. Recently planted plants do need regular checking during extended dry periods.

For *Epacris* puzzle enthusiasts

For those who tackled the puzzle in our October 2006 Newsletter, the clues are repeated below, and the solution is also provided.

The aim was to fill in the answers to the clues in a clockwise direction, spiralling towards the centre. The last letter of each word became the first letter of the next word

CLUES

- The family to which EPACRIS belongs.
- A Tas. species with stamens & stigma extended beyond the floral tube
- The pollen-bearing part of a stamen
- The species name of NSW Sandstone Heath
- Of or relating to high mountains.
- Restricted to a particular region
- All of the petals
- A plant which completes its life cycle within 12 months
- The species name of Fuchsia Heath
- Borne at different levels in a straight line
- EPACRIS

START →	1	E	P	A	C	R	I	D	A
	5	A	L	P	I	N	6	E	N
		T	N	G	I	F	L	O	E
		A	O	P	A	C	R	R	M
		N	4	L	11	E		I	10
		I	A	T				S	7
		L	U	A	N	R	E	T	O
		C	N	N	8	A	L	L	O
		E	9	R	E	H	T	N	3

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP PLANT PROFILE

Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens R. Br.
Epacris purpurascens* var. *onosmiflora Maiden & Betche
 Common name - **Port Jackson Heath**

Distribution - New South Wales

purpurascens = becoming purple

onosmiflora = bearing flowers similar to those of *Onosma*, a non-Australian genus in the Borage family

Epacris purpurascens is an extremely showy species from around Sydney to the Blue Mountains area. There are two varieties, which differ to a minor degree in regard to their leaves and flowers and in their areas of natural distribution.

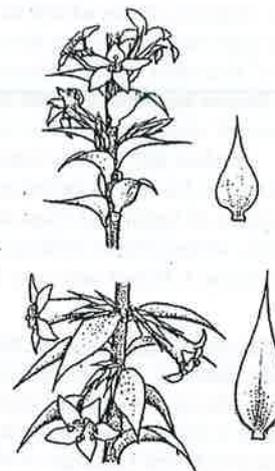
E. purpurascens is an erect shrub of 1 - 2 m tall with leaves of about 7-21 mm long by 4.4-9mm wide. The flowers produced during winter to spring can be pink to deep pink or white tinged with red. They usually have 5 lobes but can have 6 or 7, as seen in the photograph of *E. purpurascens* var. *onosmiflora* below. The fruit is a small capsule to 2.5mm long, which splits to release the seed.

Epacris purpurascens var. *purpurascens*

This variety occurs in moist sclerophyll forests on the Central Coast of NSW, in the Gosford and Sydney districts. The pointed leaves have entire margins, without a small fringe of hairs near the base. The corolla tube of the flowers is 4 - 6mm and shorter than, or as long as the sepals and the lobes are 4.5-5mm long.

Epacris purpurascens var. *onosmiflora*

This variety occurs in moist to wet sclerophyll forests in the Blue Mountains area. The leaf margins have a fringe of hairs near the base and the leaf-stalk can have a covering of fine hairs. The corolla tube of the flowers is 6 - 7.7mm long, and longer than the sepals and the lobes are 3.5-4mm long.



Illustrations © David Mackay
 The Flora of NSW -1992
 University of NSW Press.

Epacris purpurascens var. *purpurascens*
 Photograph © Rodger Elliot

Epacris purpurascens var. *onosmiflora*
 Photograph © Rodger Elliot



***Epacris purpurascens* var. *purpurascens* R. Br.**

***Epacris purpurascens* var. *onosmiflora* Maiden & Betche**

Cultivation

Epacris purpurascens is currently only cultivated to a limited extent, despite the very attractive flowers of both varieties.

Plants like soils which are freely draining but moist for most of the year. They do well in partial or dappled sunlight and are able to tolerate light to moderate frosts.

Well suited to cultivation in containers.

Pruning after flowering encourages bushy growth and abundant flowers in the following season.

Propagation

Epacris purpurascens var. *purpurascens* and *E. purpurascens* var. *onosmiflora* are propagated from cuttings of firm greenish young growth, which strike fairly readily. Seed can also be used if available but some variation may occur, particularly if plants of both varieties are cultivated in close proximity where the seed is collected.

Epacris purpurascens var. *purpurascens* was named by Robert Brown.

Robert Brown, D.C.L. (Hon.) LL.D (Hon.), F.L.S, F.R.S, (1773-1858) was born in Montrose, Scotland. He studied medicine and became a surgeon in the army in 1795. In 1798 he visited London where his enthusiasm and ability in the area of natural history led to Sir Joseph Banks offering him the position of naturalist to Matthew Flinders coastal survey of Australia on The Investigator. They arrived in Western Australia in 1801 where Robert Brown became involved in intensive botanical studies, collecting almost 4000 plant specimens of which more than half were new to science.

Flinders left for the return journey to England in 1803, but Brown stayed in Australia with his highly talented draughtsman, Ferdinand Bauer, now regarded as among the greatest of botanical illustrators. They travelled to eastern Australia including Tasmania, where Brown collected many more plant specimens before returning to England in 1805. Robert Brown was one of the great botanists of his time.



Epacris purpurascens var. *onosmiflora* was named by Maiden & E. Betche.

Joseph Henry Maiden I.S.O, F.L.S., F.R.S. was born in England in 1859 and studied science at the University of London. He was unable to complete his course due to poor health and a long sea-voyage was recommended. He arrived in New South Wales in 1880. He was appointed first Curator of the Technological Museum, Sydney and in 1896 became Government Botanist and Director of the Botanic Gardens. When Maiden accepted this position the State had no herbarium, museum or library of botanical publications. He quickly set to work to remedy this situation and became one of the great botanists in the study of Australian plants. J. H. Maiden retired in 1924 and died during the following year.

Ernest Betche was born in Germany in 1851. He came to Australia in 1881 and joined the Botanic Gardens, Sydney as a collector. In 1897 he became a botanical assistant and held this position until his death in 1913. Ernest Betche had an extensive knowledge of the flora of New South Wales and was joint author with Maiden of the Census of New South Wales Plants (1916).



J. H. Maiden
from *Botanists of the Eucalypts*,
by N. Hall, Pub. CSIRO Melb. 1978

This space is for your own comments relating to *Epacris purpurascens*

Flowering times of Epacris species in cultivation

This page is provided to assist in the recording of flowering times of *Epacris* species being grown by Epacris Study Group members.

It is suggested that a solid line be used to indicate good flowering, and a dotted line when plants are coming into flower, finishing flowering, or just producing odd blooms.



Illustration - *Epacris reclinata*
© Bill Gunn

<i>Epacris</i>	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments											
<i>Epacris</i>	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments											
<i>Epacris</i>	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments											
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<i>Epacris</i>	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
.....
Any extra comments											

Epacris Study Group - Membership or Renewal Form

Membership of The Epacris Study Group is available to all members of the Australian Plant Society / Society for Growing Australian Plants. 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.)
The membership renewal month and year for each member is printed on your address label.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....POSTCODE.....

Phone/ e-mail

Region of SGAP Membership

Payment enclosed \$

Please make cheques payable to Epacris Study Group and post to Mrs. Gwen Elliot, P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135