

## **EPACRIS STUDY GROUP**

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

### **NEWSLETTER No. 28**

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**OCTOBER 2009**

Greetings to all Epacris Study Group members,

Once again we have all had an opportunity to participate in an A.S.G.A.P. Biennial Conference. The 2009 Conference was in fact the 25th Biennial Conference and it was held at Geelong in Victoria.

The program included a wide range of very interesting speakers and there were also day excursions plus pre-Conference and post-Conference tours.

There were books, plants and other items available for sale and attendees also received a copy of the publication SGAP - THE STORY OF ARTHUR SWABY AND THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS researched and written by John Walter, to read as they returned to their homes across Australia and overseas.

Study groups participated with meetings and displays and the Epacris Study Group is delighted to welcome three new members who joined during the Conference.

This year's Conference also saw a change in the position of Study Group Coordinator, as Philip Robinson stepped down and Geoff Lay, Vice President of APS Maroondah in Victoria took over this very important role.

We are extremely grateful to Philip for his contribution and friendly leadership in the position in recent years, and say thanks so much, and very best wishes to you and to Moira in the future. Philip is will remain busy as the Editor of the Victorian APS Newsletter, 'Growing Australian'. We plan to include an introductory item regarding Geoff in our next Newsletter.

The 26th Biennial Conference will be held in 2011 and hosted by the Australian Plants Society, South Australian Region Inc. Watch out for further details in your State APS Newsletter and plan now to include a visit to South Australia in two years time.

2009 seems to have been a good year for the flowering of *Epacris* plants in many regions. Study Group members are continuing to record flowering times as an ongoing project and your efforts in this regard are much appreciated.

It was interesting to note an item in the Melbourne AGE newspaper on September 16th, featuring an article appearing in the 'International Journal of Climatology'.

Researchers at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh have been using data dating back to 1850 to develop a statistical forecasting model of when the first flowers of spring will appear and have found that by 2080 ornamental plants such as roses are forecast to flower up to 35 days earlier than they do now.

Researchers from Monash University in Australia and Scotland's University of Edinburgh have developed the model, based on the relationship between air temperature and first flowering data and have found that for every degree the climate warmed spring would begin about 11 days earlier in Scotland with fruit trees and grape vines most affected.

The rose is another example of earlier blooming already taking place. The assistant manager of grounds at Victoria's Flemington racecourse, who has worked there for 20 years, is quoted as saying that to have the roses blooming for the Melbourne Cup in November, they are now delaying their pruning by a couple of days each year. It is suggested that by 2080 the Melbourne Cup will have to be run before the AFL Grand Final in September if organisers want Flemington's famous roses to bloom on race day.

While fruit trees, grape vines and roses at Flemington are more likely to make an impact on public awareness of climate changes than the flowering of *Epacris* and other ornamental garden plants, the records we are keeping will certainly add to the pool of knowledge available in the future.

Warm greetings, and happy gardening,

Gwen E.

## News & Notes

### Welcome to new Study Group members -

A very warm welcome is extended to the following APS members who joined our Study Group at the ASGAP Conference in Geelong recently.

**Gwyn Clarke** of **Kungala** N.S.W. who is a member of the Canberra group

**Glenis Dix** of **Gerringong** N.S.W. who is a member of the Nowra regional group

**Kay Geeves** of **Port Huon** Tas. who is a member of the Tasmanian group

### Success with seed of *Epacris reclinata*

Study Group member **Faye Candy** of **Berwick** Vic., has kindly sent the following piece regarding her experience with seed of ***Epacris reclinata***.

“Very early in January 2009 I collected seed from *Epacris reclinata* growing in my garden. I had made a ‘sleeve’ from fine nylon fabric about 24 cm in length. This I had put over the stem of the plant using small garden ties to secure each end. I judged it to be seeding time. I neglected to record this date!

To collect the seed I had to remove the stem and carefully tip the contents into a brown paper bag. I sowed some of the seeds on 16th March 2009.

The first seeds germinated on 3rd May 2009, using commercial seed raising mix.

I have grown *Epacris* from seed before and although the small plants grew on slowly, seemed healthy and developed good root systems, the majority of the plants died.

When these plants are large enough to pot on I intend mixing some of the soil from around the parent plant with the commercial potting mix. So here’s hoping.

Faye Candy.      May 2009.

*Many thanks Faye. Information such as this is great to be able to include in our Newsletter. It inspires us all to ‘have a go’ and adds to the accumulation of knowledge which we are able to share through out Newsletters going to members and APS groups throughout Australia.*

### A segment including *Epacris* propagation - on ‘Gardening Australia’

The ABC television program **Gardening Australia** on August 8th featured an item which included the propagation of ***Epacris***. Jane Edmanson visited the Bayside Community Nursery in Cheltenham Victoria.

The nursery propagates and grows about 200 different plant species including trees, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers and climbers which are indigenous to the sandbelt area. Propagation material is collected by volunteers and friends groups from local remnant heathland reserves and the foreshore reserve managed by the nursery. These plants are then used in coastal reserves, heathland remnants and are also planted into public parks and gardens in the Bayside area.

The nursery has also been able to propagate a number of plants that were thought to be lost to the district including the pink-flowered form of *Epacris impressa*.

The pink form of ***Epacris impressa*** which is Victoria’s floral emblem had not been seen in the Bayside area for over 70 years and the nursery was limited to propagating the white form grown from cuttings. However, after learning that some plant seeds germinate more successfully following smoke treatment, they began propagating good quantities of their local *Epacris* from seed.

Propagation from seed has the benefit of offering genetic diversity which can lead to a throwback to other forms and this has happened with some of the *Epacris* seedlings throwing back to the pink form.

The Bayside Community Nursery hopes enough of this newly propagated pink form can be grown to re-establish the pink form in the area.

## News & Notes

### MORE ON *Epacris* SEED and CAPSULES

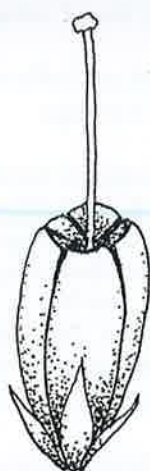
Some of the members of the former Australian Daisy Study Group, **Judy Barker**, **Maureen Schaumann**, **Peg McAllister** and **Faye Candy** are currently undertaking research on the propagation from seed of some of the smaller growing Australian plants, and this of course includes species of *Epacris*.

They have been assisted by a talented illustrator **Ailsa Campbell** who has done some excellent detailed illustrations of *Epacris purpurascens*.

*Epacris* Study Group founding leader, **Dr. Ron Crowden** of Tasmania, **Professor Anne Ashford** from the University of NSW and **Dr. Elizabeth Brown** of the National Herbarium of NSW have very kindly provided comments on the segments illustrated below.



An immature fruit still enclosed by the sepals & bracts (Actual size 10mm)



A fruiting capsule which has not yet opened to release the seeds.



Longitudinal section of the developing fertilised ovary, with seeds in 2 of the 5 compartments.



An individual seed. (Actual size 1mm)

**Dr. Ron Crowden** has also generously supplied the photos below

*Epacris purpurascens*



*Epacris impressa*.



*Epacris impressa*.



We look forward to hearing more of the work being undertaken by Judy, Peg, Faye and Ailsa, and sincerely thank Ron, Anne and Elisabeth for the extremely helpful information they supplied.

## **Special EPACRIS STUDY GROUP Garden Visit Day** **Tuesday September 8th**

A special Garden Visit Day for members and friends of the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP took place on Tuesday September 8th and was very much enjoyed by the 30 or so people who were able to attend. We were delighted that our Study Group was able to be joined by some of the members of the Australian Plant Society (Vic.) Foothills Daytime Group.

The day commenced at **Kuranga Native Nursery**, Mt. Evelyn Vic. where the **Evan Clucas** gave us a talk on Kuranga's **Epacris** collection, and aspects such as propagation and cultivation of the various species. We then enjoyed morning tea in the Paperbark Cafe.

There were over 20 species and forms of **Epacris** in the display assembled for our visit at Kuranga, and those in flower included *Epacris acuminata*, *E. barbata*, *E. coriacea* (in bud), *E. calvertiana* var. *calvertiana*, *E. calvertiana* var. *versicolor*, *E. exserta*, *E. gunnii*, *E. impressa* 'Cranbourne Bells', *E. impressa* 'Bega', *E. impressa* Late White, *E. impressa* Red, *E. impressa* Deep Pink Bushy, *E. impressa* Pink and White, *E. impressa* Double-flowered Pink, *E. longiflora*, *E. longiflora* (salmon form), *E. microphylla*, *E. mucronulata* (in bud), *E. 'Nectar Pink'*, *E. paludosa*, *E. purpurascens*, pink and also dark pink *E. reclinata*, *E. reclinata* Compact, plus 7 other species not in flower at the present time.

It was great to see so many species being cultivated and offered for sale by a major retail nursery. Several plants were also in the display gardens at Kuranga.

From Kuranga we moved on to **Katandra Gardens**, at Wandin North where we were greeted by **Bob** and **Dot O'Neill**. While we ate our lunches both Bob and Dot spoke about the property and its development from a cherry and plum orchard in 1975 to the magnificent garden it is today.

After lunch we set off in two groups, led by Bob and their very helpful friend Gordon Menzies.

Many thousand Australian native plants have been planted in recent years in the 8-acre garden, including large numbers of *Acacia*, *Correa*, *Grevillea*, *Banksia*, *Dryandra*, *Eremophila* and of course **Epacris**. In 2005 Bob was named as ABC Gardening Australia's 'Gardener of the Year'.

Bob is an active member of the Australian Plant Society, and for some years was Study Group Co-ordinator for Victoria.

Bob and Dot operate B & B cottages within their garden, and anyone seeking accommodation in the Dandenong Ranges area can contact them at 39 Hunter Rd., Wandin, Ph. 03) 5964 4523.

**Pat MacDonald** is the leader of the Victorian Australian Plant Society Foothills Daytime Group as well as being a member of the Epacris Study Group, and she agreed to supply the following notes on our next stop - a visit to the garden of Study Group member, **Shirley Carn** at Monbulk.

"Soon we re-assembled at Shirley Carn's garden. . . Shirley's garden is superb.

I gathered people together to thank Shirley on Gwen's behalf, presenting her with a gift before we started wandering, in case people left early.

**Epacris** plants were evident everywhere, some in plain sight and others tucked away in corners or under taller bushes. There was a beautiful white multi-stemmed *Epacris longiflora* tucked away in a side bed. An arching *Grevillea magnifica* with long 2 metre stems wafted in the breeze above our heads, holding mauve-green flowers. Other plants with a similar tendency to arch overhead were *Eucalyptus caesia* 'Silver Princess' with its pink flowers and the yellow-flowered *Eucalyptus preissiana*. Among the *Epacris* flowering were *E. coriacea*, *E. gunnii*, *E. impressa*, *E. exserta* and *E. reclinata*. A large *Epacris purpurascens* about 1 metre high had just finished what must have been an impressive display. Other members of the Epacridaceae family in evidence were *Woollsia pungens* and *Leucopogon ericoides*.

There were also eye-catching *Billardieras*, *Phebalium squamulosum*, *Chamelaucium* species, *Thryptomene*, *Hovea*, *Hibbertia* and *Tetratheca*. Finally, beneath a lovely *Acacia vestita* in full bloom there was a metre high mauve *Hovea purpurea* (previously *H. rosmarinifolia*).

I cannot do justice in describing Shirley's garden. She told me that she spends hours each day pruning and "pinching the tops off" and the care is obvious.

We were forced inside twice with really heavy rain and a touch of hail. When I left the downpour others were waiting with Shirley for another foray when the rain should clear."

This **Garden Visit Day** proved to be extremely enjoyable, despite the periods of rain and in fact most keen gardeners in Victoria have been delighted to get out coats and put up umbrellas, after the long dry periods of recent times. The birds are singing, the frogs are calling and the plants are loving it too.



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

## ***Epacris marginata*** Melville

Distribution - Tasmania

*marginata* = in reference to the thickened leaf margins

*Epacris marginata* is a rigid and erect shrub of about 30cm to 1 m tall. by 30 to 60 cm wide.

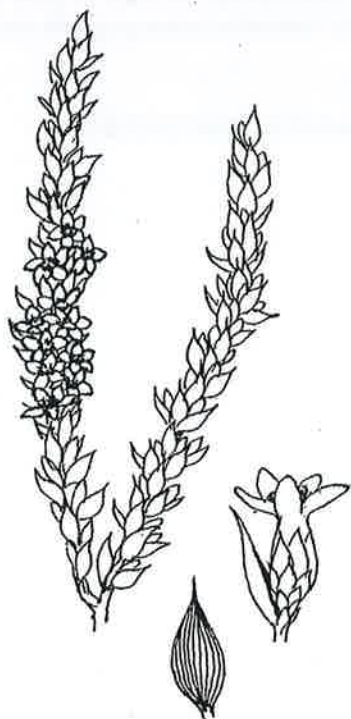
The slightly concave, ovate-cordate crowded green leaves are to 1.2 cm long and have a distinctively thickened margin which is somewhat transparent and glassy in appearance. This is a feature which distinguishes *E. marginata* from other closely related species in Tasmania. The leaves narrow to the tip, which is sharply pointed. The older leafless stems have raised scars where leaves were previously produced.

Flowering time varies in different locations. In its natural habitat plants flower during late summer and autumn while north of Tasmania they can bloom in spring with honey-honey-scented white flowers to about 1 cm across. The style is short but the anthers are on long filaments, and can extend beyond the corolla tube.

The fruit is a capsule which splits to release very fine seed.

Illustration © Trevor Blake  
 from Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants  
 Suitable for Cultivation, Elliot & Jones Vol. 3  
 Published: Lothian Books, Melbourne

Photograph © Dr. Ron Crowden  
 from 'Australian Plants'  
 Issue No. 167 - June 2001



## ***Epacris marginata*** Melville

### Natural Distribution

*Epacris marginata* is from southern Tasmania, in a few localised populations on the Tasman Peninsula, the Thumbs Range and on Maria Island. It grows in a range of soil types and in situations from full sun to shade, in sheltered gullies and also close to sea cliffs.

### Cultivation

*Epacris marginata* is not widely cultivated although it can be quite spectacular when in flower. Plants are being grown, or have been grown, by several Epacris Study Group members, but some report having lost plants for no known reason.

They would appear to prefer moist but freely draining soils, including clays and partial or filtered sun.

Until more is known about the tolerances of this *Epacris* under garden conditions, container cultivation is likely to provide greatest success.

### Propagation

*Epacris marginata* can be propagated from cuttings of firm young growth. Seed can also be used if available, see Newsletter Nos. 7 and 8 for Profile Sheets on *Propagation of Epacris from Seed* and *Propagation of Epacris from Cuttings*.

The botanist who named *Epacris marginata* and also *E. barbata* was Ronald Melville.

### **Ronald Melville, Ph.D., B.Sc., Ph.C., M.P.S.** (1903 - 1985).

Ronald Melville was born in March 1903 and in 1934 he began work as a botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

In Australia, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne has been strongly supported in a number of ways, since 1945, by the Maud Gibson Trust. In 1951 the Maud Gibson Trust Committee decided to invite a senior member of the staff at Kew to visit Australia for a year to work in collaboration with the staff at the National Herbarium, Melbourne, on Australian Flora. It was initially envisaged that this could perhaps be on an exchange basis, with Jim Willis of the Herbarium at Melbourne travelling to Kew, but this did not eventuate due to his heavy involvement at that time with preparation of the *Handbook to the Flora of Victoria*.

Dr. Melville arrived in Australia in 1952, spending periods in Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania in addition to his time in Victoria. He collected 5 sets of specimens of around 2500 different Australian plants. One set of specimens was sent to Kew, one provided to each of the Melbourne and Sydney Herbariums, and the remaining two sets sent to the appropriate herbariums in other Australian capital cities.

Ronald Melville left Australia in 1953 and returned to Kew, where he worked until his retirement with his botanical interests continuing well beyond that time.

The success of Dr. Melville's visit to Australia led to a reciprocal visit by Jim Willis in 1958 and in subsequent years an exchange scheme has continued, with botanists from across Australia exchanging with botanist from Kew, England.

Space for additional notes on *Epacris marginata* -







## EPACRIS STUDY GROUP ANNUAL REPORT to June 2009

### Australian Members

Dawn & Lyn Barr,	Swan Reach Vic. 3903
Sue Bendel,	Doncaster 3108
Winifred Bennett,	Greensborough Vic. 3088
Dr. Elizabeth Brown,	National Herbarium of NSW
Julie Brownell,	Fullarton, SA 5063
Dick Burns,	Penguin Tas. 7316
Faye Candy,	Berwick Vic. 3806
Shirley Carn	Monbulk, Vic, 3793
Chris Clarke,	Thornbury, Vic, 3071
Jeanette Closs,	Kingston Tas, 7050
Ian Cox,	Kenthurst NSW, 2156
Dr. Ron Crowden,	Kettering Tas 7155
Betty Denton,	Eltham Vic. 3095
Simone Disney,	Leichardt NSW 2040
Norma Duff,	Lower Barrington Tas 7310
Gwen Elliot,	Heathmont Vic 3135
Pat Emms,	Loch, Vic. 3945
Will Fletcher,	Ridgeway Tas, 7054
Wayne Griggs,	Acton Park Tas 7170
Margaret Guenzel,	Ocean Grove Vic. 3226
Bill Gunn,	Ocean Grove Vic. 3226
Helen Kennedy	Wheelers Hill Vic. 3150
David Lightfoot,	Surrey Hills 3127
Pat Macdonald,	Langwarrin, Vic, 3910
Dr. Max McDowall,	Bulleen, Vic 3105
John Mahoney,	Mt. Duneed, Vic. 3216
Barbara Nevin,	Saumarez Ponds NSW 2350
Malcolm Reed,	Epping NSW 2121
Jill Roberts,	Ulverstone Tas 7315
Barbara Rooks,	Montrose Vic 3765
Karen Russell,	Blackburn Vic. 3130
Kris Schaffer,	Murdunna Tas, 7178
Marion Simmons,	Legana Tas. 7277
St. Kilda Indigenous Nursery,	Port Melbourne 3207
Trish Tratt,	Emerald Vic. 3782
Phil Watson,	Mt. Rumney Tas 7170

### Overseas Members

Jeff Irons,	Heswall, Wirral, England
Mary Sue Ittner,	Gualala, California USA
Anthony Parry,	Würenlingen, Switzerland

Epacris Study Group Newsletters are also sent to the ASGAP Study Group Co-ordinator, State Secretaries and State Newsletter Editors of each State member body of the Australian Plants Society, as well as to Botanic Gardens and Universities where research on *Epacris* is currently being undertaken. Several regional groups of the Australian Plant Society are also affiliated with the Study Group and receive each Newsletter as issued.

### Epacris Study Group FINANCIAL STATEMENT for year 1.7.2008 - 30.6.2009

<u>STUDY GROUP BALANCE - as at 30.6.2008</u>		\$ 664.88
<u>Receipts</u>	Memberships,	\$ 180.00
	Credit Union interest	<u>\$ 16.90</u>
		\$ 196.90
<u>Expenses</u>	Newsletter printing -	\$ 118.50
	Postage,	<u>\$ 92.05</u>
		<u>\$ 210.55</u>
	Deficit for financial year 1.7.08-30.6.09	\$ 13.65
	BALANCE as per Maroondah Credit Union Statement	<u>\$ 651.23</u>
<u>Maroondah Credit Union Accounts -</u>		
S 1 - Access Account -	Balance at 1/7/2009	\$ 148.06
S 5 - Club Deposit Account -	Balance at 1/7/2009	\$ 503.17
	<u>Total Assets as at 30.6.2009</u>	<u>\$ 651.23</u>

**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.

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

Please make cheques payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender:

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135