

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANTS SOCIETY (Australia) Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

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

NEWSLETTER

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OCTOBER 2011

Greetings to all Epacris Study Group members.

2011 is the year of the Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc. Biennial Conference, which was held from October 2nd to 7th at Marion in South Australia.

As plant enthusiasts we never stop learning. There is always so much to discover and it is a continual process of learning from each other, and from the plants themselves, as we watch their growth and development in our own gardens and also in their natural habitat areas.

APS meetings and conferences provide great opportunities for us to renew old friendships, make new friends and learn more about our Australian flora at the same time.

Apart from major lecture sessions some great discussions can be shared over morning tea or coffee or at meal times. We can pick up tips from other growers and also share our own stories of successes and failures in the garden. If you have had the opportunity to participate in discussions of this type and would like to pass on some of your experiences to other Study Group members, do send us a note and we will be very happy to include it in our next Newsletter.

Thanks to all who have sent along Study Group Renewals following our March Newsletter. Study Group memberships come up for renewal in June, so often the renewal slip sent with the March Newsletter is put into the "do it later" box, then before we know it October is here ! The months do fly by very quickly. A membership renewal date is included in the top left corner of your address label on this Newsletter, and a renewal form is included on Page 10. We of course always welcome new members as well as those who are renewing their membership.

As mentioned in our last Newsletter, I have had the pleasure and privilege of being the official leader of the Study Group since 1998 but I am wondering whether there is now another member who may like to take over this role in the future. If so I would be very pleased to hear from you by email at rgelliot@optusnet.com.au or at the address above.

I hope you enjoy this Newsletter and would welcome any items for the next issue which will be in March 2012.

Warm greetings, and happy gardening,



Gwen Elliot

News & Notes

Welcome to new Study Group members -

The latest new member of the Epacris Study Group is **Fiona Johnson** of **Fitzgeralds Mount, New South Wales**, and a warm welcome is also extended to **Philip Robinson** of **Mornington Victoria**. Philip will be known to most members as former National Study Group Co-ordinator for ANPS, and having now relinquished that position we are delighted that he has chosen to become an individual member of the Epacris Study Group.

Warm greetings to Study Group member, Jeff Irons in England

We are sorry to hear that Study Group member, **Jeff Irons** of **Heswell** in England is experiencing serious health problems at the present time. Jeff is a keen grower of many Australian plants including Epacridaceae species and has been a regular contributor to our Newsletters over many years.

Our thoughts and very best wishes are with you Jeff.

Australian Plants on show this year at the Chelsea Flower Show

Australian plants were prominently featured in one of the eight gardens on Main Avenue at the Royal Horticultural Society's CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW in London. The garden was presented by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne with the design being inspired by the Australian Garden at Cranbourne Vic., which as most APS members would know consists entirely of Australian native plants.

The plants included were species from most regions of Australia and they had either been grown specifically for the display from seed sent from Australia or had been sourced from nurseries in England and Europe. They included species and cultivars of *Adenanthos*, *Alyogyne*, *Anigozanthos*, *Brachychiton*, *Brachyscome*, *Callistemon*, *Chrysocephalum*, *Eremophila*, *Eucalyptus*, *Grevillea*, *Leucophyta*, *Livistona*, *Ozothamnus*, *Pimelea*, *Rhagodia*, *Scaevola*, *Stenocarpus*, *Swainsona*, *Westringia*, *Xanthorrhoea* and *Xerochrysum*. There were maybe even a couple of other genera which I've omitted to include. Sadly there weren't any *Epacris* or other Epacridaceae available.

My husband Rodger and I had the pleasure of being involved from the early stages of the display, and we were on site at Chelsea for 11 days prior to the opening day. It certainly was a once-in-a-lifetime experience which we will never forget. The landscape design was created by former Medal winner at Chelsea, Jim Fogarty and a huge number of people were involved in ensuring that everything came together successfully by the set time.

Fortunately all went well and the garden was awarded a Gold Medal. Perhaps even more important was the extremely favourable reception it received from the public who visited and from the international press.

It certainly was an excellent opportunity to promote Australian plants, and many visitors to the show saw plants they had never seen before at any time. They were quite excited by the experience, and reminded us that there is much to be excited about in our lovely Australian plants.

News & Notes

Growing *Epacris* in Canberra

Gwyn and Geoff Clarke now live in New South Wales, and Gwyn has kindly forwarded the following letter, with some wonderful information on their experiences with the growing of *Epacris* during their many years in Canberra. We are sure members will find it particularly interesting, and thank Gwyn very much for taking the time to jot down their experiences.

"My main experience growing *Epacris* was in Canberra where we lived for over forty years. Anything that particularly liked wet sites didn't like our block. Our soil was heavy clay which was improved by adding gypsum and compost. There were some raised beds which were made by mixing our clay with 10% washed river sand and compost. These beds were about 15cm above soil level and were level or slightly undulated. We saw many distressed and dead plants in gardens where narrow, raised beds had steep sides.

Species we did grow for long periods were *Epacris longiflora*, *Epacris longiflora* white form, *Epacris reclinata* and *Epacris microphylla*.

We did try *Epacris impressa* but it didn't like our dry site and we could only keep it going in a pot (which we did).

We found that *Epacris longiflora* enjoyed an east-facing site in either sun or part shade. This was always a very straggly plant which we pruned regularly to persuade it into a more compact habit. We were successful in persuading one plant to become quite a dense small shrub, but the other decided to become a climber and visitors were quite impressed with the *Calytrix tetragona* showing its own starry pink flowers and the red and white bells of *Epacris longiflora*.

After the plants were established watering was only done in very dry periods. They would be watered at six-weekly intervals when it did not rain regularly. All our plants were treated to a similar regime and during the long drought the plants demonstrated good survival rates.

We did not lose any of our *Epacris longiflora* during the long drought. They were pruned each year and cuttings were taken regularly for our nursery. The plants flowered for long periods and were opportunistic flowerers after rain. The showy red and white flowers were always impressive. Our garden was not very large and we had two plants of *Epacris longiflora* at all times. Life span for this species was about **twenty years**.

Our white form of *Epacris longiflora* was also grown in an east facing bed right beside the house. It was an upright, small shrub, not like its red and white close relation. It was about 25 years old when we left Canberra. We also propagated this for the nursery.

Epacris reclinata was planted in a raised bed in part shade. It grew into a small bushy plant which was a great winter-spring flowerer. It would flower from June until October. The flowers were pinky red and a welcome sight in winter. It did suffer stress during the long drought of 1999-2010. Some branches would die off. These would be removed and regrowth would follow, but it did not die and supplied cutting material each year. Both *Epacris reclinata* and *Epacris longiflora* were very popular with our customers. It was still alive when we left Canberra in 2009 and was about 15 years old.

Epacris microphylla was a local species which we decided to grow. It liked part shade in a raised bed even though it grew in damp sites locally. It was a late winter-spring flowerer and had showy white flowers. Surprisingly it was not as easy to keep alive as the other two, nor as easy to propagate. We always kept one in a pot for propagation purposes."

Gwyn has also supplied further information on the growing of Epacris in their current garden in NSW, plus details of propagation success with Epacris cuttings. These topics will be included in our next Newsletter in March 2012.

News & Notes

Future developments for the Epacris Study Group

It is planned that from autumn 2012 it will be possible for members of the Epacris Study Group to receive our Newsletters by email.

This will not be compulsory and you can still choose to receive hard-copy Newsletters by post, but there will be a considerable saving in the membership fees for those who do select to receive the newsletter by email.

As you can see by our annual financial statement in this Newsletter, the main expenses for the Study Group each year are incurred in the printing and posting of the Newsletters. These will be considerably reduced through making the newsletter available electronically. We will also be able to send copies without charge to regional groups of the Australian Plant Society who ask to be put on the mailing list as well as to botanical and educational institutions who are involved in research on Epacridaceae or Ericaceae.

The future membership fee for those receiving Newsletters electronically has not yet been decided, but will be set following discussions with other ANPS members, Study Group leaders and our Study Groups Co-ordinator. You can certainly expect that it will be a relatively small amount, with membership extending for a number of years to eliminate the need for members to renew annually.

One disadvantage may be that with members not needing to renew as frequently we may not receive as many notes for the Newsletter. On the other hand, people may send in snippets of interest more frequently - by email !

It will be up to each of us, as members of the Study Group, to ensure that our Newsletters continue to be supplied with items of interest and helpful information.

If you are interested in receiving future Epacris Study Group Newsletters electronically, you are asked to send a brief email to the Study Group at
rgelliot@optusnet.com.au
and you will be included on the mailing list for our first email Newsletter in March 2012.

If we don't hear from you we will still send the hard-copy Newsletter as usual.

The current proposal being considered is that all who are financial members of the Study Group as at June 2012 and choose to receive future Newsletters by email, will have their membership extended through to 2015 at no extra cost.

The March 2012 Newsletter will then contain full details of the new subscription rates which will apply from June 2012.

Any comments on the above proposal will also be very welcome.

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANTS SOCIETY (Australia) Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP Plant profile

Epacris muelleri Sond.

Mueller's Heath

muelleri - after Ferdinand von Mueller, first Government Botanist, Vic.

Distribution - New South Wales

Epacris muelleri is a dwarf shrub, growing to about 20 - 50 cm tall with a width of 50 cm to 1 m. The thick narrow leaves are elliptic to elliptic-oblong and 1.5 - 5 mm long with a blunt tip.

The white flowers of 4 - 6.5 mm diameter are produced near the branchlet tips during late spring and summer.

Seed is produced in a very small capsule about 2mm long.

This species occurs in only a small region and is listed as an endangered species in New South Wales. It grows in the Blue Mountains and the Wollemi National Park where it is usually found in damp, sheltered locations on sandstone.

It is not common in cultivation, but can be grown in moist, well-drained soils in semi-shade or dappled sun. Plants are tolerant of light to moderate frosts. They respond well to light pruning and are suitable for container cultivation.

Epacris rigida Sieber ex Sprengel is very similar to ***Epacris muelleri***.

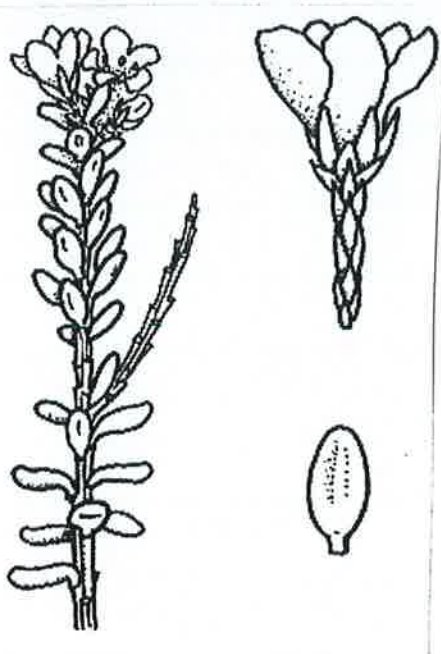
Both species occur in the Blue Mountains region.

E. rigida is usually an erect plant to about 60 cm tall. It has the common name of Keeled Heath due to the fact that the leaves are flat to concave with a prominent midrib on the lower surface.

Its flowering period is from early to late spring.

Epacris muelleri

Illustration from
New South Wales Flora Online



Epacris muelleri

Photograph by Rodger Elliot



AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANTS SOCIETY (AUSTRALIA) Inc.**EPACRIS STUDY GROUP****ANNUAL REPORT - Year ended 30.6.2011**

The Epacris Study group produces newsletters in spring and autumn, each with a print run of 80 copies. These are sent to Study Group members as well as to the ASGAP Study Group Co-ordinator, State Secretaries, Study Group Liaison Officers and State Newsletter Editors of State member bodies of the Australian Plants Society. Two other ASGAP Study Groups exchange Newsletters with the Epacris Study Group.

A further eight Newsletters are sent to Botanic Gardens and Universities where research on *Epacris* is currently being undertaken. Five regional groups of the Australian Plant Society are affiliated with the Study Group and receive each Newsletter as issued.

Our March 2011 Newsletter didn't feature the usual *Epacris* species Profile Page, but instead included a two-page tribute to Study Group member Bill Gunn, who sadly died in December 2010 at the age of 95. Back in 1999 Bill generously provided the Study Group with a folio of line drawings of *Epacris* species and twelve of these illustrations were included as a special tribute to Bill.

Study Group Members have for some years now been recording of flowering times of *Epacris* both in their natural habitat and in cultivation. It has been interesting to note that the cream-flowered *Epacris calvertiana* and the pink-flowered *Epacris calvertiana* var. *versicolor* from NSW are recorded as flowering in every month of the year

I have enjoyed the pleasure and privilege of being the leader of the Epacris Study Group now for thirteen years and would like to offer someone else the opportunity to take over as leader. Anyone interested in receiving further information can contact me by email at rgelliot@optusnet.com.au or contact our National Study Group Co-ordinator, Geoff Lay at gjmk.lays@bigpond.com

Gwen Elliot

FINANCIAL STATEMENT for year 1.7.2010 - 30.6.2011

<u>STUDY GROUP BALANCE - as at 30.6.2010</u>		<u>\$ 687.50</u>
<u>Receipts</u>	Memberships,	\$ 218.00
	Credit Union interest	<u>\$ 8.97</u>
		\$ 226.97
<u>Expenses</u>	Newsletter printing -	\$ 97.41
	Postage,	\$ 103.20
	Credit Union fee	<u>\$ 10.00</u>
		<u>\$ 210.61</u>
	Surplus for financial year 1.7.10-30.6.11	\$ 16.36
	BALANCE as per MECU (Credit Union) Statement	<u>\$ 703.86</u>
<u>Maroondah Credit Union Accounts -</u>		
	S 1 - Access Account - Balance at 30.6.2011	\$ 183.68
	S 5 - Club Deposit Account - Balance at 30.6.2011	\$ 520.18
	<u>Total Assets as at 30.6.2011</u>	<u>\$ 703.86</u>

Epacris Study Group Membership Renewal form.

Individual membership of The Epacris Study Group and other Study Groups of the Australian Plant Society / Society for Growing Australian Plants is available to 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.

A.P.S./ S.G.A.P. members, households or regional groups, Educational and Research Institutions and Libraries can belong to the Epacris Study Group for just

\$5.00 per year (or \$10 for 2 years) renewable in July each year

Your current membership expiry date is listed on the top left corner of your address label.

Please see Page 4 of this Newsletter re proposed changes for electronic membership in 2012.

Membership Form -

Please also send in this form for any change-of-address advice.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....POSTCODE.....

Phone.....

E-mail.....

Region of SGAP Membership

Payment enclosed \$

Please make cheque or money order payable to **Epacris Study Group**
and post to Mrs. Gwen Elliot, P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135