

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS INC.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

*Epacris navicularis*

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NEWSLETTER

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G'day everyone,

For those that live way beyond Epacrisland (Tasmania), you may not know that we had our first field trip last November. We went to Bicheno, on the East Coast for a weekend. With our Leader, Ron Crowden along to find epacris and teach us how to distinguish different species, it was a most rewarding trip. On the Saturday, we were taken by Ron to *Epacris apsleyensis*, *Epacris limbata*, *Epacris tasmanica* and *Epacris grandis*. For all of us the last-mentioned must have been the highlight. The plants were in full flower with spikes of large white tubular flowers on stems 3m tall reaching over our heads. Cuttings have struck, so I live in hope.* On the Sunday we walked a small section of the Douglas Apsley Track and found *E. gunnii*, *E. impressa*, and *E. tasmanica*. The last-named species is in the books as *E. exserta*, but it was in flower and Ron explained to us why it must be *E. tasmanica*; the find was important for Ron because it extended the known northern boundary for that species. We searched the swamps for *E. limbata*, with no success. We hope to have another field trip this summer, in the Tasmanian highlands.

Over summer, I took my car over to the mainland with all sorts of intentions, including catching up with a few of our Brisbane-region members. However on the way, a local driver thought I should be travelling faster (I was stopped at the time) so I had to buy a replacement car. No trip to Brisbane. But I still had three weeks so I visited Western NSW, spent a week in Canberra and the Kosiusko region with SGAP(Canberra), and met up with member Bob O'Neill in Melbourne. I managed to add more species to the Herbarium including *Epacris microphylla*, *E. glacialis* and *E. paludosa*.

I've had a couple more trips back to the East Coast since, and each time have picked up cuttings of strong red forms of *Epacris impressa*. In a recent phone conversation, Bob told me that he picked a multiplicity of colour forms of that species on a trip through south eastern NSW.

Apart from the Field Trip, Ron's big activity for the summer was the Epacridaceae Conference held in Hobart in February (see below for Ron's report).

We've had a fairly wet winter so most plants in the garden are quite happy right now. I've an *Epacris impressa* that has been covered in pink-and-white flowers for weeks and weeks. Also flowering is a white bush of the local form with masses of blooms across as well as down the stem. It's the first year of the brick red Bega form, thanks to Bob. *E. reclinata* is just starting for the year.

PLEASE NOTE

There has been a long break between newsletters, partly due to a change in jobs for me, and more importantly, because I didn't have sufficient material to put in a newsletter. One of the problems with the new school is that I haven't been able up till now to find the Study Group files; they use a different program here and my computer skills don't go far beyond what I'm doing now.

At least I now live and work at the Centre of the Universe. (I had a letter from the ABC addressed correctly the other day.)

I know that there is a rule that Study Groups should publish two newsletters a year, but if I had tried to do that, all you would have received would have been a letterhead with "hello good-bye" on it.

Because of this, and because I expect that the next newsletter will be some time in coming -

SUBS ARE NOT NOW DUE

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY THIS YEAR!

Some time next year, Ron will be taking over the editing and the treasury. I'll be keeping the books until that time, so why not be the first person to send in a specimen for OUR herbarium.

*Kris Schaffer Jan Hayhurst report on having struck *E. grandis* as well.

I have 42 specimens collected so far, and the species represented are: *Epacris - apseyensis*, *corymbiflora*(2), *exserta*, *glacialis*, *grandis*, *gunnii*(4), *impressa*(4), *lanuginosa*(5), *limbata*, *longiflora*(3), *microphylla*(3), *myrtifolia*, *obtusifolia*, *paludosa*, *petrophila*, *reclinata*, *serpyllifolia*, *tasmanica*(3), sp Northern Rivers(3): *Archeria - eriocarpa*, *hirtella*: *Woollisia pungens*.

Mixed up with the newsletters that come my way are catalogues, invitations etc., most of which you would hear of through your State newsletter. One that you may find interesting is from Australian Academic Tours. This group organises tours that are oriented towards the natural scientist and visit most parts of Australia. They organise long and short trips with some of our most eminent communicative scientists such as Tim Flannery, Alex Ritchie, Mary White and David Roots.

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FROM THE NEWSLETTERS

ASGAP Newsletter No 15, Sept '94

It contains a by-line that says something about how networks such as ours should work. Merle and Lyn Thompson contacted me originally through their love of conifers and gave me some *personias* (my great obsession). They called back to Penguin some ten years later. Their gifts are still growing and I was so pleased to be able to show them to Merle and Lyn.

They asked me about getting articles for the ASGAP Newsletter. Apparently I "implied that if you don't write it, you don't have it."

STUDY GROUPS' NEWSLETTER, Feb 24, '95

Helen Morrow, our Co-ordinator is concerned about insurance cover for Study Group members on field trips and at meetings. ASGAP's Public Liability Insurance only covers SGAP members.

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS, Sept '94 suggests a number of projects for 1995 through the Australian Flora Foundation, seeking funding. Among the projects is one to investigate the propagation of *Epacridaceae*, including *Epacris* and *Richea*, with particular reference to *Mycorrhizas*.

NATIVE PLANTS FOR NSW, Dec/Jan '94/95

On a trip to Wanganderry Tablelands (near Mittagong), Ian Cox reported finding *Epacris coreacea* and *E. muelleri* growing in exposed locations on rocky outcrops (I assume on sandstone).

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL NESS GARDENS NEWSLETTER, Autumn '94

Member, Jeff Irons sent this one. I've mentioned Ness Gardens before. This newsletter does not talk about *Epacris*, but Jeff has an article on *Correas* growing in his Wirral garden. In the 1970s plants had to cope with frosts down to 10°F (-14°C). Jeff says that two *Correas* survived, both from Tasmania. How would *Epacris* have coped?

WALLUM STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER, Aug'94

Barbara Henderson reports that in her own Wallum plantation, *Epacris obtusifolia* was flowering in August on a stem with just over 100 individual flowers. Barbara lives in the Brisbane region.

SEMINAR PAPERS from the 1993 ASGAP Conference, held in Sydney

What a feast of information this book contains on the flora of NSW! In a paper on Australian plants cultivated in England between 1771 and 1825, we learn that close to 700 species were grown in that period. *Epacris* species tried were - *exserta*(1812), *heteronema*(18?), *impressa*(1824), *longiflora*(1803), *microphylla*(1822), *mucronulata*(1824), *paludosa*(1825), *pulchella*(1804), *purpurascens*(1803/23). The numbers are the years of cultivation.

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

Bill Gunn also knows my correct address (COTU).

Bill's success with cuttings is extremely varied, especially *E. impressa*.

He is trying the following idea for growing from seed. Surround a flowering *Epacris* with pots of seed mix so that as seed is shed, it falls into a welcoming brew.

Marion Simmons says that her *E. impressa* is a reliable striker, but at Legana (near Launceston) the species only lasts in the garden for a year or so.

Much longer lasting for Marion is *E. reclinata*. It has been a prolific flowerer for years, with one plant in the full sun, one in partial shade. The plants are growing in dry conditions.

George Wade has had to leave his old established garden, but took with him *E. sp*(Mt Cameron), *E. longiflora*, *E. gunnii* and *E. myrtifolia*. The Wade's new home must back into the bush, because George reports "the bush around is ablaze with *E. impressa* (Sept).

George tells of a walk to South Cape Rivulet (near Hobart). Along the way, he saw *E. heteronema* and *E. lanuginosa*.

Malcolm Reed sent me some seed of *E. pulchella*, but despite my using Malcolm's recommended method, I had

zero germination.

Faye Candy, a new Victorian member has the same sort of success with seed. Faye has 8 species in the garden, namely *E. impressa*, *E. reclinata*, *E. gunnii*, *E. brevifolia*, *E. longiflora*, *E. microphylla*, and *E. pulchella*.

Bob O'Neill gave me the following report that he had prepared for his local group's newsletter.

SGAP Maroondah has been very good to me in giving support to establish a comprehensive epacris collection. After Rodger Elliot gave me a real kick start, I have received further material from John Armstrong, Alan Lacey, Brendan Stahl and Joe Wilson. It seems only reasonable that a brief account of how things are panning out may be given.

After a doubtful start, results from propagation are now quite promising. Dick Burns from Tasmania sent across a range of material. After a few dried cuttings were removed, suddenly matters looked up. Seventeen out of twenty *Epacris petrophila* struck, as did some *E. myrtifolia* and two other unknown species.

Our observant members may recall the specimen of *E. impressa* "Canterbury Bells", a double white form, at the September meeting. So far two cuttings have done the right thing and a few more seem almost certain to do so as well. Additionally, I've had success on a small scale with *E. microphylla*, *E. brevifolia*, *E. gunnii* and a number of *E. impressa* forms.

The best time to propagate epacris by cuttings is after flowering has finished, probably around now, when there is sufficient new growth developed for cuttings to be taken. Nip off the very soft tip and trim off the leaves on the lower stem (I am advised that gets better results than stripping the leaves), then use full strength striking hormone before inserting into the striking mix. I use a sand - peat moss mix with only one cutting per tube so as to minimize damage to the fragile fibrous roots when repotting. I find it easier to put struck cuttings complete with ball of striking mix directly into a four inch or so pot as I find smaller containers too difficult to work with.

I find that to maintain a collection of any magnitude, it is much easier to keep at least one specimen of each form in pots, then plant out any extras into the garden. With pots you have the comfort of easy surveillance, a source of cutting material and usually losses are very light if you are reasonably methodical in your approach.

In due course most of the excess young plants will be made available free to anybody interested in joining the Epacris Study Group. At the moment I am reasonably comfortable with the progress made. Patient perserverance in all areas of the collecting game is now the current state of affairs.

In general I find these plants a little difficult to obtain and then to propagate, but after that they seem to be quite hardy in my situation. In the process I have enjoyed the challenges met and friendships made.

Bob O'Neill's collection of *Epacris*, in pots or in his garden were, when I visited him:- *impressa* (Bega and double Cranbourne forms), *microphylla*, *gunnii*, *gunnii* (double), *longiflora*, *petrophile*, *myrtifolia*, *exserta* (Gowrie Park), *apsleyensis*, *reclinata*, *limbata*, *tasmanica*, *brevifolia*, *navicularis*.



The journal *Annals of Botany* organised a conference in Hobart last February on the "Biology of Epacridaceae". The intention was to bring together specialists to give them the chance to exchange ideas. Here is Ron Crowden's contribution to the conference. It is followed by an update on the Epacridaceae garden in the Hobart botanic gardens.

1. Epacridaceae Conference. A national (international?) conference on the Epacridaceae, organized by Professor W. Allaway, University of Sydney, was held in Hobart during February 1 - 5 of this year. Twenty One speakers (including 1 each from Italy, England and the USA) presented papers on a diverse range of Epacridaceae topics. There were three major themes, - conservation, mycorrhizal associations and taxonomy. Conference papers are to be published in a special edition of the International journal "Annals of Botany".

Amongst the taxonomy papers, one dealt with the genus *Epacris*. This paper, by Ron Crowden and Yvonne Menadue, discussed a reappraisal of the NSW species *E. crassifolia*. This species, which is found in damp sheltered sites on sandstone around Sydney and in the Blue Mountains, has a number of forms, ranging from soft, lax, prostrate specimens to hard, woody, erect forms and there are two different flower types as well. After examinations of all herbarium specimens held at Hobart, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, and type material from The British Museum and from Geneva, as well as field studies, it was determined that the "complex" of *E. crassifolia* was in fact a mixture of 3 clearly identifiable species. We can now recognise,

- *E. crassifolia* ssp *crassifolia* R.Br. stat. nov., which is the common lax, prostrate form with small flowers (corolla tube < 10mm long).
- *E. crassifolia* ssp *macroflora* Crowden and Menadue ssp. nov., mostly prostrate, more woody form with large flowers (corolla tube > 12mm long).

In both these sub species, the flowers are few to many and scattered, the corolla tube is 2X or > the length of the lobes.

- *E. pinusoides* Crowden and Menadue sp. nov., an erect much branched woody form, flowers few and clustered near the branch tips, the lobes = or > than the corolla tube.

- *E. lithophila* Crowden and Menadue sp. nov., an erect sparsely branched (from the base of the stem), woody form with flowers similar to *E. crassifolia*, but usually numerous and arranged in long spikes. *E. lithophila* further separates from *E. crassifolia* by its blunt elliptical leaves with a distinctive venation.

2. Epacridaceae garden at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

The landscaping and stonework for this area is completed and planting has commenced. The garden is sectioned by the stonework to provide discrete areas of different rock and soil types, drainage, shade etc. There are more than 70 species planted to date and some infilling with normal cohabiting species. Planting is a very slow process. Only provenanced material is being used and only from nursery propagation to avoid introduction of *Phytophthora* and other diseases. As expected there have been some problems and more than a few losses, but many are thriving and as our experience grows we are getting better at both propagation and planting out. Mark Fountain (Nursery Supervisor at the RTBG) is to be commended for the dedication and effort he has put into this garden. By next news letter I will prepare a full list of specimens successfully transferred to this garden, together with propagation and husbandry details from Mark, and another list of our lesser successes and failures. This latter will be accompanied by a plea for assistance from members who may have been more successful than we. We would also be interested to receive any (provenanced) cuttings or seed from members, together with advice of their techniques. Such material can be sent to me at Kettering, or directly to Mark at the RTBG, Hobart, 7000.

Thank you to all who have supported me with the newsletter through sending material, or asking for plants

Dick Lewis