ISSN-0811-529X

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 100

December 2010

THANKYOU TO ALL WHO HAVE PAID THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS YOUR RECEIPT IS ENCLOSED OR HAS BEEN FORWARDED TO YOU.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE IS UNCHANGED AT $5 PER YEAR – DUE JUNE EACH YEAR.

This issue is a significant one in that it is #100. I started as Study Group Leader with #40 in March 1990 when Geoff Needham decided that it was time for him to cease as Leader of the Group.

Since that time there have been a number of significant events and the membership has climbed to approximately 200 – I sent out 185 newsletters in the last mailing; many of the memberships are now dual subscriptions with, husbands, wives, partners as members.

When I started in this role I believe that there were approximately 140-150 recognised species eremophilas, with a few varietal forms and a few hybrids of somewhat doubtful parentage. Today we have approximately 220 species, plus some 40-50 subspecies. The number of hybrids has increased significantly; still many are with unknown parentage either from the field or from garden origin.

In 1990 grafting was in its infancy and results were somewhat speculative. Today due to the sterling work of Ray Isaacson, primarily, and others more recently many of the species are grown on graft stock and the results as garden plants has been especially rewarding. Many new species and better forms of existing species in cultivation, found in recent times, owe their existence in garden cultivation to the fact that as freshly collected material they have been sent to specialist growers, established as grafted plants, trialled and later distributed to other members of the Study Group and inevitably into the trade for sale at nurseries.

We are indebted to Dr Bob Chinnock for the amount of work he did in establishing the genus as a worthwhile plant for cultivation. He also made a significant study of the genus and his work in researching the genus was monumental. We are as a Study Group indebted to the amount of energy, academic knowledge and personal time which Bob has contributed to the better understanding and knowledge of the eremophilas. I can recall many occasions when Bob commented on the number of specimen sheets he had to look at in order to assist both amateur collectors, and professional botanists and field workers in the identification of vouchers received.

I do not intend to list here particular members of the Study Group who have made significant collections and contributions to the development of the genus within the Study Group and in the wider community. They all know who they are and so too do most members, especially those who have been active in the group for many years.

I have in recent months received approximately 10 applications for membership of the Study Group. Many of these people have indicated that they are impressed, even infatuated with the eremophilas and that they are most pleased with the way in which they have survived the recent drought conditions which have been so widespread through this great country while other genera, supposedly drought tolerant, have been destroyed by the conditions. Not all eremophilas are so tolerant of harsh conditions, but there is a selection that can be made which seems to be suited to at least some part of the country; even several Tasmanians have commented on the suitability of some eremophilas to their conditions.

I hope to be able to present the newsletters on a more regular basis in the coming year. Please accept my apologies for them not being as regular as they should have been in the past twelve months or so.

ADELAIDE BOTANIC GARDEN – EREMOPHILA GARDEN

The Eremophila Garden in the Adelaide Botanic Garden is looking great at the moment, with many of the plants reaching maturity and flowering well. It should be remembered that the majority of the plants were planted about 18 months ago and a selection of suitable species which would be both floriferous and attractive as garden plants was made. Plants were from both cutting and grafted origin and it seems as if each has been suitably adapted to the climate and conditions which prevail in the garden beds.

RAY ISAACSON

I received a call from Betty Isaacson to let me know that Ray has decided to 'hang up' his grafting tools and that he has 'lost his interest'. He has not been well and has decided that he needs to spend time on his other main love – minerals.

ANPSA CONFERENCE

The next National Conference will be held in Adelaide from the 8th -11th October 2011 at Westminster School, Marion – a suburb of Adelaide, about 10km from the city centre. The Theme is "Australian Plants in a Wondrous Web".

A selection of interesting local speakers has been made and we can promise registrants a range of presentations during the conference. Workshops covering a range of topics will also be available.

Full-day tours will be organised on the two days when presentations are not being made. These will include visits to natural reserves and gardens both north and south of the city.

Pre- and post-conference tours have been planned for Kangaroo Island, with a pre-conference tour of the Flinders Ranges and a post-conference tour of the Coorong-South East. These will be led by competent and knowledgeable guides. If the follow-up conditions are as good as those of this year the wild-flowers to be seen should be superb on all tours.

The weekend at the end of the Conference is also the Show & Plant Sale of the SA Region APS. This is always a very popular event with a huge range of plants on sale.

Planning is well in hand and already the first newsletter has been sent out to those expressing interest in receiving preliminary information. A second newsletter is planned for mid December.

We have planned for Study Group meetings to be held and for sites to be made available for leaders of Study Groups to present displays and/or educational posters etc.

We plan to have registration forms available from February.

If you are interested in attending the conference and have not already registered your expression of interest, please do so and get your name on the mailing list.

Requests can be sent to me – I have the job of convening the Conference

STUDY GROUP GET TOGETHER

Time available during the week of the conference is tight and it will not be possible to hold a meeting of interested members of the Study Group in that time, I am hoping that we might be able to meet after the conference week, but where and when have not been worked out yet. The weekend at the end of the conference is possible but many of our SA people might be tied up with the plant sales. Those going on the post-conference tours would also miss out.

I will have to wait and see what interest there is in such a gathering and also where we might be able to hold it, dependent also on the numbers interested in attending and accommodation nearby.

FROM YOUR LETTERS

T J McHugh, Newcombe Geelong, Vic

We have had a very wet spring and have lost a few eremophilas. I purchased about ten plants from Philip Vaughan when he had a closing down sale – this makes a total of about 108 eremophilas in the garden.

I have had about five successes out twenty five tries at grafting – very frustrating. I grow a lot of my eremophilas from seed. I grew *E. splendens* from seed and got two different cultivars – one was olive-green without hairs and the other had leaves about 5cm long and the normal colour; it is about 60cm high with normal flowers.

I have a lot of *E. glabra* (green leaf) and *E. maculata* as well. Also have *E. flaccida* and some that I cannot identify. Other seed has come from plants from Philip Vaughan and Ray Isaacson.

Bob O'Neill - Narre Warren North (Vic)

Dot & I have sold our property 'Katanga Gardens' at Wandin. Before leaving our old address we prepared about 1000 cuttings to take with us. The new property has a tennis court and is 4,000square metres in area. We plan to continue with a collection of eremophilas as well as correas, isopogons etc.

To start from scratch in a non-native garden in a much smaller area will be a challenge. We will fill in more details as things come to pass.

Bruce Grose – Eltham (Vic)

I enjoy the newsletters and many handy hints. I am afraid its hard for me to contribute these days as we, my wife & I have not been well. Also seconds are still ticking away which doesn't help either.

Phil Hempel was over at our home recently, going around the garden and found some eremophilas he hadn't seen. Some I know where I collected them, others I am not sure. I am sure that some came from between Whyalla and Port Lincoln (SA) and further inland. We stopped at a paddock with eremophilas growing in occasional clumps of half a dozen or more. They looked strong and healthy. The soil was loose and sandy and very hot.

I took my shovel and dug down six inches (15cm) and it was dry and war m. I put my hand in quickly and felt it cool and moist. From this I thought that this was the secret why in the hot areas there is a certain amount of moisture rising from below.

My property is on the side of a hill facing east and is very well drained, so much so I need to bucket grey-water most of the time.

I have a couple of eremophilas which grow really well and with the recent rains they have been flowering well with a lot more coming on. With the dry, then the rain I've lost some; whether it was too dry and the extra moisture was a shock to the system.

I have tried to graft onto Myoporum which came from a grafted plant which didn't work. I had bought a grafted plant and the eremophila died.

I'm considering if I should try *E. longifolia* which I collected while travelling the Newell Highway (NSW) near Narrandera. It grows tall, to about 8ft, but suckers and has never looked 'out of sorts'. I would, just once, like to succeed as I've tried so many times without success. The *E. longifolia* was growing in large swathes along the railway line.

I have a myoporum which has red flowers on some branches and white on others??

(Can anyone comment on the two-coloured myoporum plant to which Bruce refers? Ed.)

Barbara Henderson, Moore, Queensland

I don't know much about eremophilas or "Hairy Mufflers" as my husband calls them, except that I grow them more easily in this drier country situation than I could near the more humid coast in south-east Queensland.

Most of my plants have been purchased from the plant stand at the local IGA supermarket, plus a couple from our annual SGAP Flower Show in Brisbane. I can't put names to those which have survived except the easiest one to grow around this part of the country – *Eremophila maculata* (yellow).

I have learned that they do not like wet feet, which has been unavoidable over the past few months in what is usually a rather dry part of south-east Queensland. Moore is to the north-east of Brisbane in the upper Brisbane River Valley, a bit elevated with a drier atmosphere (usually) than the coastal areas north of Brisbane. That seems to give us hotter summers, you garden before 10am and after 4pm, and much colder winters with frosts.

Eremophilas can cope with the heat and cold but wet, heavy soils for prolonged periods have seen a few of my plants looking sick and possibly dead. So from now on I will be planting them on higher ground and save the lower, wetter places for melaleucas and I'll continue on my learning curve. Hopefully I'll be able to give you some informed, useful information in the future.

Some very interesting bits in the newsletter, especially about termites and eremophilas! I've grown up in south0easy Queensland and white ants have been a part of my life wherever I've lived; we just learn to be aware of their presence and what they can do to timber. But attacking eremophilas and myoporums, that is news to me!

Kaye Bartlett, Jervois, SA

While travelling on the road which circles Mount Augustus in WA we spent quite a bit of time watching and trying to photograph some bees, which is hard to do so since they fly in and out of their nests in the ground so quickly. The eremophilas noted as we travelled from Lyndon Station to Mount Augustus were *E. phyllopoda*, *E. cuneata*, *E. reticulata*, *E. exilifolia* and *E. forrestii*.

I took some notes from an article written by Professor John Alcock, Arizona State University, USA. J.alcock@asu.edu

'Dawson's Burrowing Bee'

Usually found burrowing in dry clay pans in the Gascoyne-Kennedy Range WA area in August to September. They are large, noisy, black & grey bees, Australia's largest. They are not aggressive but make a lot of buzzing. They burrow down forming mounds over the clay pans, in our case seen in the middle of the road circling Mount Augustus. The nest is in the middle of these mounds.

The females dig the holes with the help of a fluid soften the soil. Not known if just water or a mixture of a plant nectar and water. This is regurgitated. These bees have large mandibles to help with the digging. Holes go down about 20cm before a short tunnel is dug with a wax-lined chamber at the end. This is filled with a soupy mixture of nectar and pollen, being collected from eremophilas. Into the mixture an egg is laid and the cell closed with a mud cap., which dries and seals off. The bee then extends the tunnel and repeats the cell building. When the egg hatches the grub feeds on this nectar-rich mixture. The larva grows rapidly into a fat dormant grub. A new winter and an adult bee emerges from the soil with hundreds of others.

Peter Madden, Maffra, Victoria

I have been trying to purchase five eremophilas that are apparently in the 'rare' category.

I have contacted a number of nurseries and members of the Study Group but to no avail, I have tried the internet, also with no luck.

I wish to get plants of the flowing eremophilas: *E. aureivisca*, *E. caperata*, *E.* 'sulcata', *E. flaccida* and *E. falcata*.

Any help in obtaining these would be greatly appreciated. They can be grafted plants or I would be happy to try to get them started from cuttings.

Russell Wait, Natya, Victoria

In 2008 I had a *Calamphoreus inflatus* die and in the autumn of 2009 I burnt it and them watered it to try and get some seedlings to come up but this didn't happen until August when over a 100 came up and this year in August some more came up. I have sown the seed in February and had them come up.

Also I have had seedlings of the green leafed *E glabra* from Steep Point come up in August.

November 2009 was a wet month and I had seedlings come up of *E. maculata*, *E. malacoides*, *E. warnesii* and *E. strongylophylla*. The interesting thing was that most of the *E. maculata* seedlings were under one bush. This year with a lot more rain and over a longer period no seedlings so far.

I had three seedlings of *E. enata* sown February 2010 and one was flowering in November and all died within a couple of days in November. This year my *E. delisseri* flowered the best it ever has and for a couple of months and was like it was in the wild when we collected it.

Colin Jennings
Leader, ASGAP Eremophila Study Group,
4 Kinnaird Crescent, Highbury SA 5089

cje97694@bigpond.net.au