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Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) (ANPSA)

Eremophila Study Group Newsletter No. 129

December 2020

***Eremophila cuneifolia* (pic Brian Freeman)**

Contents

Letter from the Editor

This is something of a bumper issue due to reports of the garden we visited at our meeting in September, which fortunately and somewhat accidentally was run in the two weeks that Queensland opened its borders to travellers in spring. Thanks again to all who showed their gardens – Pam and Darrell Fletcher, Barbara Reid, Laylee Purchase, Annette (Annie) Armitage, Lorelei and Matt Bartkowski and Peter Bevan with his Rail Trail. We are extremely grateful to everyone who generously allowed the group to visit. Those of us from the south are jealous of how well everything grows in Queensland!

I have the first short report from the *What are You Growing Survey* in this edition. This is based on my presentation at our Queensland event. I have also used the survey results to approach growers of our Feature Species (*Eremophila cuneifolia*) about their experiences. I am grateful for their prompt and detailed input for this article, and am also indebted to Andrew Brown, Bevan Buirchell and Bob Chinnock for helping me sort out the forms. More analysis of the survey is to come in future editions of the Newsletter.

Great news about emergence from lockdown around Australia – make sure you send pics of your Eremophila travels. Given the rain (down south at least), everything should be flowering!

Stay safe everyone

Lyndal Thorburn
Leader and Editor

Eremophilas in the News

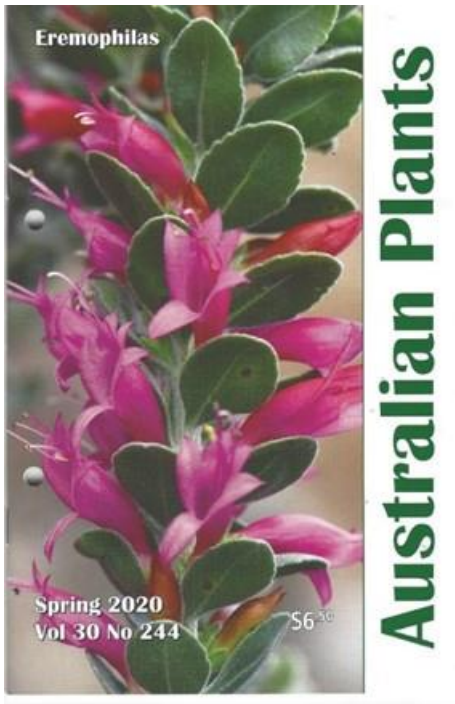
Gardening Australia's episode on 25 September (series 31 episode 28) – featured a native garden in Kenthurst – the item starts at 35:00 minutes.

Gardening Australia on 20 November also talked about cottage gardens with native plants (about time!). They showed an Eremophila 'Pink Pantha' as an example of something that is a "medium shrub" – I have seen some enormously wide examples of this variety, I hope people who buy it for their "cottages" don't get a nasty shock seeing how vigorous it is (see examples page 27)!

The proposal to maintain the name "*Eremophila*" for the genus, rather than *Bontia*, *Myoporum* or *Andreusia*, under the provisions of Article 14 of the International Code of Nomenclature for Algae, Fungi and Plants, has been published in the Taxon journal - https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/tax.12305.

What's New in the Study Group

We have had lots of great feedback about our September 2020 issue of *Australian Plants*. Members can order a copy from us for $6 + $2.40 postage – a total of $8.40. Deposit your funds into the SG bank account (details on last page), provide your surname as a reference, and email me to let me know you have done that. I will post it to the address you have given me for your membership (meaning, if you have moved, let me know!).



Please ask for a quote if you want multiple copies, as postage varies. I am also pleased the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Gardens is to stock some copies in its shop.

New members

Welcome to returning member Ian Evans (Vic).

Feature species – *Eremophila cuneifolia*

Eremophila cuneifolia (common name Piyuru) is a shrub up to 1.5m-1.8m high and 1-1.2m wide which is found inland from the Murchison region of Western Australia. It is mostly found around the Gascoyne/Murchison area through to the Pilbara. Then there is a disjunct population east of Wiluna out into the Gibson Desert. It grows in red sandy or clay soils and is associated with *Acacia* and spinifex. The photos below in the wild are by Phil Hempel.

Branches of *E. cuneifolia* are terete (circular in cross section) with dense hairs and resin. Leaves are wedge-shaped (blunt at the end and narrow towards the base) and are usually 16mm long x 14mm wide. The wedge shape gives the species its name (cuneous = "wedge").

Chinnock describes the flowers as made up of a straight pedicel up to 3.5mm long and a corolla from 16.5mm to 26mm long. The flower is deep to pale purple, but can also come in pink or cream, and is spotted purple inside. Sepals are irregular and enlarge after flowering to be larger than the flower itself and are either purple or are graduated from purple to cream.

Chinnock recognised two sepal sizes as distinct forms, but at the time of his monograph lacked enough information to be able to distinguish subspecies. Brown and Buirchell have since described a small-leaved eastern form which has uniformly reddish-purple sepals which are 7-10mm long and wide at the back and 4-5mm long at the front. Flowers are smallish (relatively speaking – they are larger than those of many of Eremophila species!), with a deep, burgundy-coloured calyx and a deep purple corolla (pics below by Andrew Brown).

The small leaved form next page is growing in Don and Chris Lill's garden in SA.

The larger western population consists of two major forms.

The calyces of the large-leaved form, which occurs more northern and western in its range (and is the Type form), are usually larger than the corolla. The colours can vary considerably, with the calyx lobes varying from white through to the normal *E. cuneifolia* purple as well as pale blue and peach.

The corolla of the large-leaved form also varies in colour and can be white, pinkish, pale purple, or purple (but not as dark a purple as that of the eastern form). It is also usually taller than the other form and the leaves are less compact on the stem. It is probably tetraploid. Pics below and next column by Bevan Buirchell.

The photo below of this form is from Andrew Brown.

The photo over of the large-leaved form is of a plant growing in the Illawarra Grevillea Park (Kevin Stokes).

And another from Andrew Brown, below.

The small-leaved form that is also growing in this area is not as uniform as the population in the east, and shows variation in the flower colour, e.g. paler pink/mauve combinations.

Horticulture

Flowering

E. cuneifolia is an excellent feature plant and flowers prolifically in spring and summer. The calyces provide colour after that. Neil Duncan (Vic) reports sporadic flowers from March to September. It doesn't usually get to its full size in cultivation.

According to Tim Wood, it loves summer rain and flowers substantially after any. He waters his monthly by dripper during summer, as his area (Kadina, SA) can be very hot. He lost 20% of his Eremophilas two years ago when they had no rain for 6 months. Lorelei Bartkowski also reports repeated flowering if she waters her plants, so this supports that theory.

Frost, cold and humidity

E. cuneifolia is reportedly hard to maintain in foggy or more humid areas e.g. Sydney and Ross Dawkins reports that he always has to remove dead leaves at the end of an SA winter.

Bernie Shanahan, formerly of Dunkeld (Vic), had a plant which was about 5 years old. He reports that lots of rain didn't affect it negatively, and neither did humidity, one hour from the coast. It was grafted on a raised bed and it went for a year, like his other plants, without additional watering but Dunkeld does get over 900mm p.a. in an average year.

Cold can also damage the plant – Glenda Datson reports that a -2^{o} morning in September, in a sheltered spot and hence no direct frost, still killed the buds. Marion Lang in Mildura reports leaf drop at the end of winter.

It seems to be quite frost-sensitive, but will re-grow. Below is a photo from Ken Warnes showing frost damage on his plant in Owen, SA and, over, is one from Don Lill, who lives in the Riverland of SA, showing a similar effect.

Lorelei Bartkowski reports -3º frosts in her Queensland location and no damage. However, Bernie Shanahan's large-leaved plant went through a few -4º nights and this resulted in blackened ends all over. However, new growth always appeared. This plant only reached 1 x 1m because of the frosts.

In Kadina's unusual -4º frost in 2020 (the first such frost in 20 years) Tim Wood's plant lost all growth tips and buds, and as a result did not flower in spring. With the advent of warmer weather, it is now starting to flower.

Christ Strachan in Melbourne reports different impacts on her various forms of *E. cuneifolia.* Her small-leafed form of *E. cuneifolia* was not affected at all by the cold in Melbourne (see below), her two *E. cuneifolia x fraserii* were slightly affected, and on her main plant the leaves all shrivelled and went brown.

Ross Dawkins has always kept his specimens in pots on the north side of the house to provide a micro-climate to reduce the potential impacts of too much cold or frost.

Longevity

The oldest plant reported by members was Tim Wood's plant which 8 years old and is 1.3m tall.

Pruning

Jan Glazebrook doesn't find any need for pruning on her plants in Queensland. However, pruning after flowering will encourage a bushy habit and Tim has also commented that the regrowth from his frost-damaged plant is close to the ground and he intends to try to prune it a little more than its usual post-flowering trim.

Chris Strachan decided she had nothing to lose, after the shrivelling experience reported above, by cutting back to bare wood and was thrilled about four weeks later in September to see tiny shoots appearing on both plants (below).

The photo below shows it coming along slowly in November.

Ross Dawkins also practises extreme pruning – he prunes off dead material and, when they get leggy, prunes his plants back to a lower limb where there is a new shoot to rejuvenate (see over).

Propagation

E. cuneifolia is best propagated by grafting and grafts onto *Myoporum*. Some report that soft scions can rot and harder scions may be reluctant to take. It is extremely hard to grow from cuttings.

The Walcotts report it is a great pot plant and have had one in a pot in Canberra since February 2018 – it has flowered well in spring and summer (pic below).

Pests

They don't seem to be affected by pests, except that the snails may like the new shoots. Marion Lang reports even the wingless grasshoppers leave them alone!

Hybrids

Five hybrids are known – all are from the wild.

E. cryptothrix x *E. cuneata*

This shrub has small leaves, flowers and unexpectedly small sepals given its origin. It is extremely sensitive to frosts. It forms a shrub 1m high x 1m wide (pic below by Russell Wait).

E. cuneifolia x E. fraseri

This is the most spectacular of all the hybrids. It forms a shrub 2m high x 2m wide and has large leaves, purple flowers with spotted throats, and very large pink sepals.

The photo below of this hybrid was taken by Bill Handke in the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens in September 2020.

The picture below is by Brian Freeman, and is of a specimen in his garden on the SA Fleurieu Peninsula.

This hybrid is known to be as sensitive to frost as its *E. cuneifolia* parent – Tim Wood's plant succumbed to a -4^{o} frost in 2020 and it lost up to 10cm off branches. It is now regrowing, and he has bought frost guard to protect it next winter. He thinks in SA it is better grown in large pots so it can be moved to protected areas if frost forecast.

E. cuneifolia x *E phyllopoda*

The hybrid with *E. phyllopoda* forms a shrub 1-1.2m high x 1-1.5m wide with greyish, pointy leaves and a lilac flower with smaller pink sepals. It is found near Meekatharra, WA. This is the one that Bob Chinnock originally described as *E. accrescens*.

The picture below is by Russell Wait.

It grafts successfully onto Myoporum but is extremely hard to grow from cuttings.

E. cuneifolia x E. reticulata

This hybrid looks similar to that with *E. fraseri* but has smaller leaves and a brighter corolla. It forms a shrub 1-1.5m high x 1-1.5m wide (pic Russell Wait).

It grafts successfully onto Myoporum and is extremely hard to grow from cuttings.

E. cuneifolia x E. tietkensii

While the parents of this hybrid are spectacular, the hybrid itself is disappointing, with a greyish leaves and a pale lilac flower. It has been found in the wild where the two parent forms grow together.

This hybrid forms a shrub 1-1.5m high by 1.5m - 2m wide. The photo below is by Kevin Sparrow.

Like its parents, the hybrid is hard to grow from cuttings and needs to be grafted as a means of propagation.

Know Your Eremophila – *E. racemosa* 'Peaches and Cream'

Ken Warnes

E. racemosa 'Peaches and Cream' (below, pic Lyndal Thorburn) was collected in the field and was named by Tony Clark from Nellies' Nursery at Mannum. Here in SA it is the more commonly seen colour, the "normal" orange bud and dark pink flower is much harder to come by.

I brought back the orange and pink version (next column, pic Jenny Backerra (FB)) from potted plants held in the Nursery at King's Park, one having broader leaves than the other.

We grew them as K.P.101 and K.P.102, the King's Park collecting reference numbers. The known population, then, consisted of 35 plants on the roadside at a cross-roads named as Forrestania, a failed eastern expansion of the agricultural districts. Presumably, this population was triggered by earth works. A subsequent fire resulted in a mass germination estimated to be in excess of 5,000,000 growing over a considerable area. These started to die out before a further fire resulted in another mass germination over an even larger area.

Bob Chinnock inspected the initial large population and he collected the white variant at the time, after first having seen it in WA shire plantings. I seem to recall the species as being in von Mueller's illustrated publication, but under which name I don't know, certainly neither the current *E. racemosa* or *E. bicolor* (Bob's name for it, because of the disparity between bud and flower). During his research he was shown a Type using the name *E. racemosa* and lodged in a Prostanthera file, from somewhere in Poland, I think. When correctly transferred to Eremophila, the name 'racemosa' had precedence and so we have our current species in Bob's revision, with 'bicolor' being over-ridden by the International Rules.

Note – the Study Group has recently submitted a cultivar application to the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority for E. 'Peaches and Cream'. We have no intellectual property rights over the name – it is simply widespread enough to try to encourage people to use the one name, rather than make up another one in the future.

Who's Growing What? – first results of the survey

Lyndal Thorburn

Here's the first analysis of the *Who's Growing What* garden survey. I had a look at the data from the perspective of rare plants, being suddenly aware of them from the Art Project for Threatened Species reported in the last Newsletter. The illustrations here were shown as slides for my presentation in Queensland, about our role in conservation.

According to official records there are 1,373 plant species in Australia that are threatened or extinct. Of those, 37 species are actually extinct (no Eremophila on this list!), 191 are critically endangered, 557 are endangered and 588 are vulnerable.

There are four critically endangered Eremophila, as shown below.

There are also 13 listed as endangered (below) and a further three vulnerable (next column).

This makes 20 in total, out of the 1,363, or 1.4%.

When plants are threatened in some way, governments create recovery plans, which include actions such as weed control, regeneration trials, fencing, protection from grazing, collecting and storing seed, surveying, fire management, map and protect habitat, promote awareness.

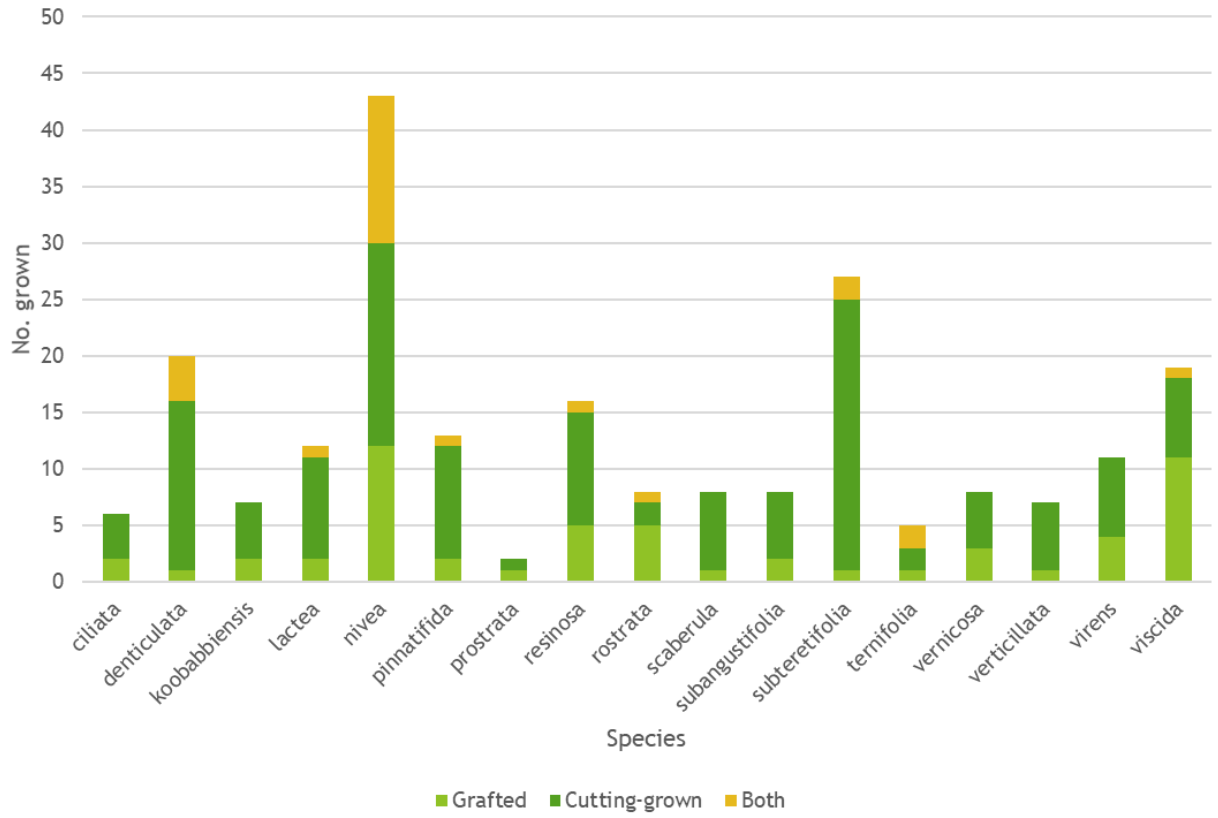
Taking *E. nivea* as an example, there was an 80% reduction in the population size and a decline in the occurrence overall, a decline in the area over which it is found (near Morawa, Three Springs and Perenjori, WA) and a decline in the quality of the habitat. As a result, it is declared as a rare plant of the Geraldton District, and there is an Interim WA Recovery Plan. These plans have resulted in an increase from 300 plants in 2001 to 927 in 2018.

However, many of our Eremophilas do not have recovery plans in place.

What can we do about this?

Well, as a Study Group, we grow plants. So, if we grow the species being threatened this will help maintain the species for posterity, and may even provide material from which a species can be re-established if it does disappear in the wild.

The graph over the page shows the Study Group members growing the 20 species I listed above – this ranges from 2 growers (*E. prostrata*) to 43 growers (*E. nivea*) (out of 60 respondents).



Our challenge, of course, is that many of our plants are grown from cuttings or are grafted and these may have only been brought in from the wild once. So, we need to increase (legally) our wild sources of these species so that we can get some genetic diversity amongst our "domesticated" plants. Those of us with collection permits, why not bring in some of these rarer species (if allowed), so we can increase the variety of forms we grow?

A second step is to devise more reliable propagation techniques. Some species don't last long in the garden even if they are grafted. Some are hard to graft in the first place. We need to maintain our efforts here so we can reliably keep the species going. Reporting on grafting and cutting successes, and seed raising, is of value here.

We also need to continue our efforts to raise awareness of the genus and its species amongst the growing public. The Facebook "gardening advice" groups, Gardening with Angus website, and our issue of Australian Plants Journal are all ways to do this. If you are a member of a local Facebook gardening advice group, why not promote Eremophilas among your group members?

Our arrangement with Native Plants Wholesalers (NPW) will also, we hope, help raise awareness and bring more species into the market – we can see the effect of bringing *E. nivea* into successful cultivation, and there are now several varieties available.

Finally, we can help by supporting research into threatened species. The funds we get from NPW will, I hope, build into a small fund that we can use to further understand the genus and help both its cultivation and existence in nature.

Queensland Garden Visits 1-5

Lyndal Thorburn

The following pages summarise the first five gardens visited during the recent Queensland trip. The sixth garden (Wockner) has been written up by Ros Walcott and follows this article. At the end of those is my summary of the Lowood Rail Trail wander.

Garden 1 - The Fletcher Garden

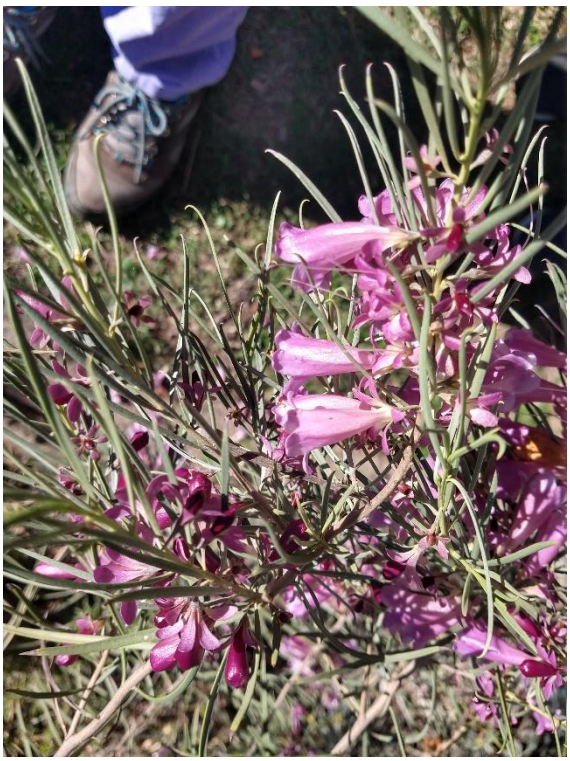
Darell and Pam Fletcher live on a large, sunny suburban block in Warwick, Queensland. They also grow plants for sale and have a mid-sized greenhouse in their yard plus a propagation setup.

All their plants were labelled. A large orange *E. maculata* in full flower greeted us at the entrance to the garden (below left). The next thing to catch my eye was an established *E. malacoides* in full flower (below right). This had been given plenty of room and hence was able to arch up and form a rounded shrub, with the flowers showing at the ends of branches.



Also, near the front gate, was a large *E. divaricata ssp. callawatta* (below left) – the leaves really hugged the branches. The plant was a good 1.2m high and almost as wide. It would have provided great cover for small birds. An *E. polyclada* was equally impressive, standing about 1.5m high and 1.2m wide (below right).


The Fletchers grow plants for sale locally and we also toured their greenhouse and were able to buy some plants from them. Outside the greenhouse was a magnificent *E. ternifolia* with striking, twisted foliage (over, left). We also admired *E. oppositifolia* in full flower (over, right).



We were very grateful to Darell and Pam for sharing this garden with us.

Garden 2 - The Reid Garden

As a second garden visit on Saturday afternoon, we went to Barbara Reid's place, also in Warwick. This is a standard suburban block which also has a well-established, mature garden. A feature of this garden is the standard Grevilleas, grafted by Barbara's late husband.

There were many Eremophilas in this garden, the standout being an enormous *E. longifolia* green form and a flowering *E. splendens* (right). Below is an overall view of the back garden.

Garden 3 - The Purchase Garden

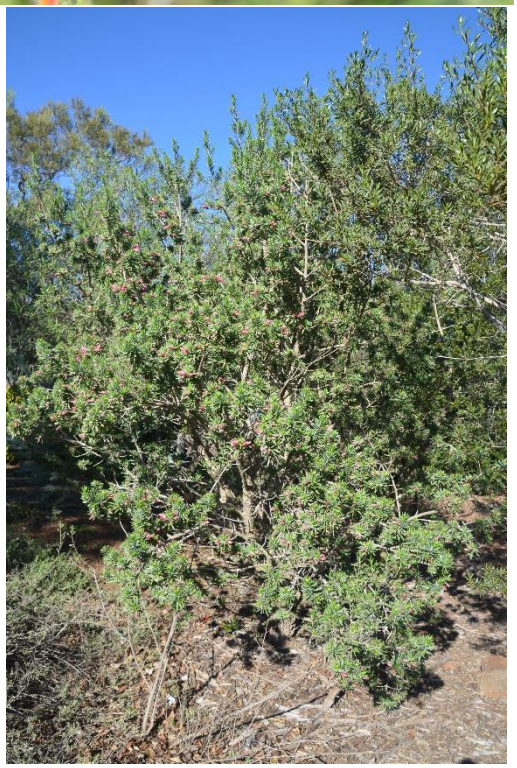
Laylee Purchase's garden was the first one we visited on Sunday 2 August 2020. Laylee lives on a large bush block at Darling Heights, near Toowoomba. The garden had lots of trees and large Grevilleas as well as plenty of Eremophila. Laylee is proud of the variety of plants, which include a leopard wood (*Flindersia maculosa*) and Acacia Peuce. Mown areas between the garden beds provide vistas to the north.

The past 8 years of drought have been hard and they lost over one third of all the plants in the yard, mainly Callistemon, Melaleuca, Acacia and Eucalypt. Two years ago, a friend gave them a fire-fighting trailer which holds 1,000 litres of water so since then, in late spring and summer they cart 5000-8000 litres to water the yard every 2-3 weeks. They have a reprieve from much of the watering through winter. Since we visited, the additional rain has given them a break!

At this garden we started off with morning tea on a grassy area at the back of the house. This area (below left) was near to an old, small dam, which had been creatively converted to tiered gardens (below right). At the bottom of this page is a section of the garden showing a large Grevillea Billy Bonkers

Laylee had a pinky-mauve *E. lehmanniana* flowering well (below left), and some spectacular *E. glabra* with enormous red-orange flowers (right). The locals call this form "Ripper Red".

There was also a lovely mauve *E. clarkei* (below left) in full flower and, right, an established pink *E.* miniata.



We also admired an *E. bowmanii ssp. nutans*, below left. Below right, organiser Jan Glazebrook with Lyndal at Laylee's garden.

Garden 4 - The Armitage Garden

From Laylee's we drove across towards Highfields, stopping first at Annette Armitage's in Kingsthorpe. This garden is on a double suburban block across the road from the railway and is open to the south and west. The area is rich black soil which develops deep cracks in very dry periods (something of a walking hazard), so Annie has created numerous pebble-covered paths so visitors can get around safely. Her garden is one of those visited each year during the Toowoomba Garden Festival in September.

The first striking thing about this garden was the numerous hedges of *E. maculata* on either side of the driveway (below; yellow flowers on left and orange on the right). These were full of honeyeaters the entire time we were there.

There was also a massive, old *E. bignoniiflora* hybrid (below)

The front of the garden, on the western side of the house, was divided into discrete beds with paths in between. These were full of a variety of *Eremophila* as well as daisies, *Melaleuca*, *Regelia* and other genera. The area was also full of potted plants and benches for relaxing while enjoying the

view. Of special note were a large *E. christophorii x nivea* (below centre) and an extremely large and vigorous *E. glabra x veneta* 'Augusta Storm' (below right) – the biggest I have ever seen.

There were also excellent colour contrasts e.g. grey-leave *E. mackinlayi* backed by large and vigorous *E. maculata* (below left). Our gracious host Annie is below right.

Garden 5 - The Bartkowski Garden

Lorelei and Matt Bartkowski welcomed us to their large garden at Glencoe after lunch on Sunday. This garden is on a south-facing slope and is approx. 2 acres in size. The Bartkowski's run the Highfields Nursery and their garden had a massive display of unusual Eremophila – we were all jealous and were tempted to take cuttings – but we were good and didn't succumb!!!!

The wonderment started even before we had stepped into the garden, as we admired established shrubs along the front of the property, facing the road. These included an *E. youngii ssp. lepidota*, sheltering an *E. phyllopoda* (left).

Inside the boundary of the garden there was a large bed along the front of the house with an established *E. willsii* (below left) and an enormous *E.* 'Pink Pantha' (below right).

There was plenty of stuff in pots – these are hand watered. The specimens included a peachy *E. tetraptera* (below), an orange form of *E. latrobei* (over left), a large red *E. glabra* (over right).

The garden has some areas divided into paths, with *Ptilotus* and *Scaevola*.

An established *E. debilis* crept onto one of the many paths (left) and an *E. cuneifolia* x *fraseri* (below) also drew attention.

The garden also had lots of *Eremophila* that I had seen in few other places, e.g. *E. jucunda ssp. jucunda* (below left), a bright pink form of *E. glandulifera* (below right) and *E. mackinlayi* (underneath).

Lorelei is a regular contributor to Facebook (Old Man Emu Bush and Australian Native Plant Enthusiasts' pages). You can follow her garden through the year on those pages.

Garden 6 – The Wockner Garden

Ros Walcott

We have just returned from the ANPSA Eremophila Study Group Conference held from Friday 31 July to Monday 3 August 2020 in Warwick and Toowoomba. We visited six different and interesting gardens and met many impressive gardeners, but I would like to focus on one particular garden, that of Gail and Adrian Wockner.

This garden is the retirement garden of some very knowledgeable gardeners, who have downsized from a larger country garden. Adrian said that he had been looking forward to gardening in the famous rich, red, basaltic soil of Toowoomba, but did not quite get that soil on his and Gail's Highfields block: more red clay. However, what they have achieved in ten years of gardening on this 2,624 square metre suburban block is quite remarkable.

I really appreciated the simple design of this garden, basically two very large rectangular beds, front and back, on a slope, with curved side beds, all filled to the brim with interesting plants. There is not a lot of shade, most plants are pruned comprehensively, and the garden is overflowing with flowers. This densely planted tapestry effect reminded me of visits to Western Australia where native plants crowd each other for space in the sun.

The Wockner's agricultural heritage is remembered by a collection of farm implements. The garden does not have a watering system, but Gail and Adrian mark new plants and make sure that they water these for a few weeks to settle them into the garden. After that, the plants are on their own.

They have a great collection of pots, with precious plants shown off to perfection. There is a collection of large flowered Grevilleas (sigh – Grevillea envy!), an array of Eremophilas, and some interesting small Eucalypts and Acacias, as well as many other special native plants. Gail's specialty is Grevilleas and Adrian loves Eremophilas. Gail gardens mostly in the front bed and Adrian in the back bed, but Gail assures me that they do garden together.

The house and garden are on high ground (below left) and the front garden has large-flowered Grevilleas and standard Grevilleas (below right – pics Ben Walcott).

Next page shows farm implements in the back yard (left), *Chamelaucium uncinatum* in a pot (right), a general view of the back garden (lower left – photos Ben Walcott) and Gail and Adrian on the day (lower left – photo Lyndal Thorburn).




Below: the side garden, a wonderful barbed wire hat and *E. maculata* (pics Lyndal Thorburn).



Garden 7 – The Lowood Rail Trail

Lyndal Thorburn

The last of our "garden visits" was to the Lowood Rail Trail. This has been developed by Peter Bevan. Peter runs Pete's Hobby Nursery, and his property runs along the edge of the rail trail. Peter started gardening the area when his daughter, whose property also abuts the old railway line, asked for some plants to screen her garden. At the time, the area was derelict and had been left to go wild after the rail line was removed in 1993 (the railway closed in 1989). It had become a crime area and his daughter was keen to screen her house from the weeds.

Peter started planting and soon extended his efforts towards his own garden, a few doors away. The Council became aware of it and was at first upset and planned to prosecute him for illegal planting. However, a number of local groups came to his aid and lobbied the Council, pointing out the tourist potential of the planted and cleaned up route. Today the Lowood Rail Trail is proudly promoted to tourists as part of the Somerset Region tourist attractions,[1] and is a section of a 161km Rail Trail route that runs through the Brisbane Valley (Australia's longest such route). We walked about 2km of the route, from Peter's nursery to Lowood, where we had the final lunch of our weekend.

We also raided Peter's nursery for plants! Peter does all his propagation in peat plugs (below), both cutting and grafting.

The Rail Trail itself is flat and is wide enough to drive a car along (below).

[1] https://www.experiencesomerset.com.au/brisbane-valley-railway-line/

Large shrubs of *E. maculata* and *E. glabra* lined the access track (below left and right). There were many large established shrubs of plants we knew well and which don't seem to grow nearly as well in Canberra, e.g. *E. drummondii* x *nivea* (underneath, left – with Tom Jordan!) , a 2 metre high *E. oldfieldii* (underneath, centre) and a very happy *E. fasciata* (underneath, right).

Unusual colour forms abounded, such as a "yellow" *E. longifolia* (green form) and a glorious yellow-haired *E. strongylophylla.* We bought lots of plants and took cuttings – hope they grow!

Eremophilas in Pots

Ros and Ben Walcott

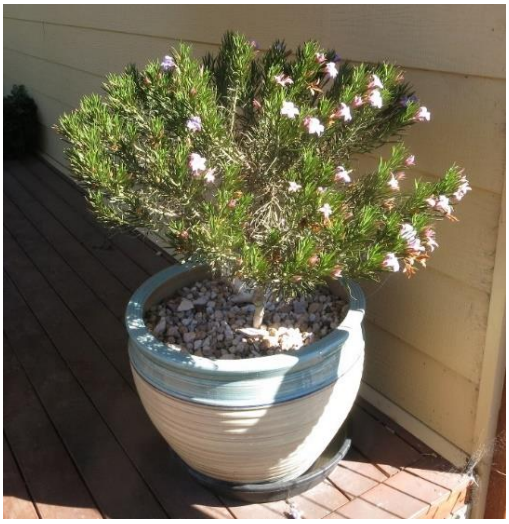
We have just attended the ANPSA Eremophila Study Group conference in Warwick, Queensland, from 31 July to 3 August. Thanks to great timing by the organizers, Lyndal Thorburn and Jan Glazebrook, we were able to slip through the Queensland border and back again without incident. Ben and I noticed that in every garden we visited there were Eremophilas in pots, even in the comparatively mild climate and deep soil profile of south-eastern Queensland.

Of course, there were plenty of Eremophilas in the ground as well, some growing to much larger size than we manage in Canberra, but it was significant that all the impressive gardeners we met also grew special plants in pots. If you need excellent drainage, if you need sandier soil than you have in your garden, if you want to shelter favourite plants from wind, sun, rain and frost, pots give you that flexibility.

In the Glencoe garden of Lorelei and Matthew Bartkowski (see also page 18) we noticed a variety of choice Eremophilas in pots. All these plants were growing and flowering well.

Above, L to R: *E accrescens 'Lavender Blue', E. gilesii* in closeup in its pot and *E. flaccida*

Below, L to R: *E. prolata*, *E glandulifera* and *E. punicea*



Victorian Sub-group Meeting September '20

Neil Duncan

The meeting was held by Zoom on 5 September. Twenty participants joined the meeting. The main topic was the soil pH and fertilizers.

pH

Most members did not know the pH of their soils, but of those that did know reported a wide range from acidic pH 5.6 to alkaline pH 9.

Many growers were on a heavy soil and some had brought in soil to get better drainage. These soils tended to be of a higher pH. Despite these wide-ranging pH results, the Eremophilas were still growing well.

Fertilisers

The topic of fertilizers was most interesting. The Neutrog product 'Bush Tucker' is promoted by APS Victoria and some members used this successfully on their garden plants. Norma Boschen offered a cautionary tale of giving her potted Eremophilas a special feed of Bush Tucker and killed them all, although her Correas fed the same product thrived. Bush Tucker is best applied in spring and autumn, just before rain.

Other members used a vast range of products. Another Neutrog product 'Seamungus' was used by Peter Lang, while Glenda Datson used it on her pots rather than Bush Tucker. Bob Blake used Cock and Bull (another Neutrog product) with good success. John Upsher uses urea, but others suggested the lush new growth may be more frost prone in inland areas. Kevin Sparrow also grows orchids so uses Strike Back on them, but then tried it on the Eremophilas with great success so now uses it for all his native plants. Merele Webb used Dynamic Lifter until switching to Bush Tucker. Native Osmocote was also used on plants in the garden and tubed and potted plants. Marion Lang uses Aquasol on tubestock with good results. John Upsher places a handful of Blood and Bone into the hole at planting.

Manures were also used with horse, sheep and old chook manure all being used successfully, particularly at planting. Worm juice diluted 1:10 is used by Merele on garden plants with excellent results, while Neil Duncan used it on his tubestock diluted at 1:20.

It seems Eremophilas are quite happy with a range of manures and fertilizers and can tolerate a wide range of pH, but good drainage and a low humidity are needed for success.

Other Discussion

Chris Strachan had black spots on her *E. cuneifolia*. After discussion, members through the most likely cause to be the cold wet weather of winter, although others in Melbourne did not have the same problem. Norma thought the small leaf form came from inland WA and would be exposed to frosts so would be frost hardy, but the large leaf form came from north of Mt Augustus and is not frost hardy (see page 5 for discussion under *Feature Species*).

Those members from the north of the state said their Eremophilas were flowering very well due to the excellent autumn rains but the south of the state is a couple of weeks later in flowering. David Pye said the frosts at Melton Botanic Gardens have wiped out all the northern Eremophilas although the southern ones are OK. He has trouble growing Eremophilas at his home in Bullengarook, which is higher and wetter, with *E. mirabilis* and forms of *E. glabra* the only successful ones. Cathy and Mike Beamish, from Gippsland, also struggle with Eremophilas apart from *E. maculata* and *E. glabra* as they have already had 800mm of rain this year. Kevin Sparrow grows his Eremophilas in pots so he can move them out of the heavy rain in Warrnambool.

Linda Jones had an *E. calorhabdos* that was tall and falling over and wanted to know whether to cut back or stake. After some discussion it was thought a hard cut back and regular tip pruning would keep it bushier and less need of staking. Bob Blake had a really good plant which was eaten out by white ants.

Members discussed the new Facebook group called Old Man Emu Bush for sharing information and photos of Eremophilas.

Future Meetings

The group planned to hold a Zoom meeting in November as well, but with the various stages of opening in Victoria and the excitement of being able to move around, this meeting didn't happen. The next meeting will be organised in 2021.

For more information please contact Neil Duncan on neilduncan61 (at) gmail.com.

From Your Letters

Charles Farrugia (NSW): An Eremophila Pink Pantha in my garden, the result of regular tip pruning.

Brian Freeman (SA): A photo taken in October 2020 of an unpruned Eremophila Pink Pantha plant in my garden. The shrub is around 2m tall and 3.5m wide (and growing).

Jan Glazebrook (Qld): I went out to western Qld for a week in September 2020, following good rain they had in August. We saw 16 Eremophilas and most were in flower, although it was late in the season. Found *E. goodwinii*, where we have not seen it the last two trips to the area, and *E. bowmanii ssp. nutans*, which we couldn't find on the last Eremophila excursion.

Covid restrictions are easing and we can have 30 at a meeting. It is very dry here and the flowering has finished in the garden. I have some plants in the nursery which are still flowering. The plants you gave to the group are all doing well and have flowered. We will decide how to distribute them at the next meeting.

William Handke (NSW): Wonderful newsletter again Lyndal. Jenny and I went up to Mt Annan Botanic Gardens in early September. It is looking magnificent. There are lots of Eremophilas in flower: the pick of those we saw in our brief time there must be the *E. muelleriana* (below) and *E. cuneifolia* x *E. fraseri* (see page 7). Well worth a visit.

Bev Rice (SA): Rain is forecast for tomorrow (1 October), which will be wonderful as we had our best rain for the year last week, no sub soil moisture to date, the cereal crops look wonderful as the rain that we have had has fallen just at the right time for the farmers.

It has been a disastrous year for severe frosts and some of the Eremophila that I had growing on the North side of the house – with pavers and gravel were blackened, although they had gone through other frosty years with no ill effects, however this year frost were severe. Some are showing signs of recovering and I must make a concise list of those that are reshooting now the warmer weather is here.

Ken Warnes (SA): Two seedling *E. goodwinii* brought back from east of Yanna as emerging cotyledons, two days after heavy rain in July 2019, have numerous buds. Seedlings which germinated here in Owen in April this year are already carrying well developed buds. Some are clearly hybrids. Precocious little so and so's.

A well-known local Nurseryman visited my Plantation a few weeks ago and was mightily impressed with the fruiting branches on *E. dempsteri*. He thought that the potential for the cut flower trade was unlimited. At about the same time, my daughter brought a friend who has a cut flower business to have a look around and she was of the same opinion.

The common, blue-flowered form seems the best, keeping its colour and fresh appearance for the longest of the four colours I have but the pure white is good also. The pink, while lovely in flower, doesn't look as good in fruit and the silver-blue is not good either. While many species look good in flower (*E. oppositifolia, E. psilocalyx, E. dempsteri* and *E. interstans* come to mind) the flowers don't hold that well as cut flowers; but the fruiting branches can be very attractive (below) and hold their appearance well.

A bit about *E. koobabiensis*

Bob Chinnock was one of only 7 people to report growing *E. koobabiensis* in our *What are you Growing Survey*. His plant has finally flowered for the season and he has sent the photo below (your editor has been badgering him for a pic for the image gallery).

Next Issue

The next issue of the newsletter will be ~May 2020.

I have been intrigued by Ken's contribution about *E. dempsteri* so we will make that the Feature Species for the next issue – there seem to be four colour forms and four hybrids – with *E. dichroantha, E. interstans, E. psilocalyx* and *E. scoparia.*

About the Study Group

The Eremophila Study Group aims to further knowledge about the cultivation, propagation and conservation of the 200+ species of Eremophilas, an endemic genus of Australian plants. It is one of several Study Groups which operates under the auspices of the Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) (ANPSA).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership is $5 per annum. Subscriptions for a financial year can be sent by cheque posted to **3 Considine Close Greenleigh NSW 2620** or (preferably) paid by direct deposit into the Group's bank account:

BSB: 105-125
Bank name: **Bank of South Australia**

Account No.: 013 751 340
A/c name: **ASGAP Eremophila Study Group**

Please put your surname and state/group membership in direct deposit details

ANPSA policy is that regional groups pay for two subscriptions in recognition that Study Group material will be used by several group members

New members, please download the application form from our website and send with your cheque/transfer (details below) http://anpsa.org.au/eremophilaSG/index.html

Study Groups allow members with specific interests to develop that interest to the fullest extent and to contribute in a practical way to the body of knowledge on the Australian flora. Active members collect information on the genus and send their observations to the leader who collates and publishes the information, in a newsletter or in other Society publications. The Study Group can record any aspect of cultivation, propagation and ecology of the preferred genus. Study Groups are expected to publish at least two newsletters per year.

In addition to paying annual fees, members must also be members of an ANPSA-affiliated regional society (http://anpsa.org.au/region.html).

This Study Group aims to study the cultivation and propagation of the genus *Eremophila*; to expand cultivation of *Eremophila* in gardens; and to examine the growing requirements of the various species to improve their reliability.

Leader: Dr Lyndal Thorburn, Life Member of ANPS Canberra. Contact her through lthorburn (at) viria.com.au or phone 0418 972 438. Address: 3 Considine Close Greenleigh NSW 2620

Honorary members: Ken Warnes and Russell Wait

Newsletters are available in Black and White by post and in COLOUR by email or CD.

For more general information about Study Groups, contact **Ms Jane Fountain** Coordinator, Study Groups, Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) (jlfountain5 (at) gmail.com)

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NEXT NEWSLETTER ~MAY 2021

(earlier if I have enough info to fill 24 pages!)