EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 21 JUNE 1981

At this time of the year conditions are not the best for the growing of eremophilas. Many plants receive far more water than their requirements. Although there is no indication that heavy rain in itself is detrimental, it is the associated condition of drainage which is important; so check your plants to make sure water is not collecting at the base of the plant.

Those of us on the heavier soils are particularly aware of the problem of what must be rotting of the fine root hairs, especially in young plants which do not have an extensive root system. I, myself, make a small hillock when planting to avoid this problem.

Some of you have severe frost problems (see extracts from letter from Dave Gordon) which are extremely difficult to combat. Plants possessing furry stems and leaves which retain moisture can be badly affected, as can young succulent growth in other plants. Weeds and grass should be cleared away to allow as much air as possible to circulate around the plant, with a consequent drying action. Obviously the bigger the plant, the less the problem. Any mulch, including that naturally formed, should be cleared away from underneath the plant. Mulch is a heat barrier used by many gardeners to protect the roots of plants from extreme heat in summer and to conserve moisture. It is just as effective in preventing any warmth from the soil rising in the cool of the night. You will have seen frost settle on bags, staw, etc., but not on the bare ground. There may be other answers to this problem.

G.N.

FROST DAMAGE
(Extracts from a letter received from Dave Gordon)

The Eremophila Study Group Newsletters have dealt in detail with many problems arising from cultivation of the genus. However, I cannot recall any reference, except of an incidental nature, to the problem of frost damage. This may not be a hazard in South Australia, but it is a serious matter here at Glenmorgan, Queensland, where from time to time we have experienced disastrous losses, losing almost all of our young plants.

We have had vigorous young plants, a few years old and up to 60 cm high, killed outright. In May 1958, we planted out 63 strong Eremophila plants, comprising 28 species. A subsequent frost killed almost all of them. These had been raised the previous year by Alf Gray from seed collected mostly in the Eastern Goldfields and Upper Murchison regions of Western Australia during the summers of 1955/56 and 1956/57.

Following the 1958 losses we started planting in spring, but still there was no solution because of loss from the onset of summer before young plants became established.

And now I have come to the purpose of this letter. Do you or any of your friends know of a safe way of protecting young Eremophila plants from frost without undue time spent on the task? Frost is a serious problem for many growers of Australian plants, not only for the growing of Eremophila, but also for many other genera.

GROWING EREMOPHILAS AS POT PLANTS
Clinton Garrett

I have been growing some eremophilas in pots at Whyalla for about two years. I use black plastic pots which are approximately 40 x 40 cm. The bottoms of the pots are crocked with 2 cm of crushed slag. The soil is red drift sand to which has been added a small amount of peat moss in about 1:15 ratio. The species which I have tried are as follows:

E. calorhabdos. This plant is 0.7 m high and two years old. I allow it to flower and then grow on for a while, until the branches begin to snake about. At this point I prune it back to the first vertical shoot on each branch. The result is a fairly upright bush with a good amount of young flowering growth.

E. decipiens. This is a fairly compact form which I obtained near Coolgardie. The bush is about 0.3 x 0.4 m, having been pruned back lightly at the end of flowering. It makes good steady growth and flowers well.

E. glabra (ex Murchison River). Having survived being uprooted by my two year old when the plant was about three months old, it has gone on to be one of my best plants. It flowers frequently and has been kept to 0.7 x 0.6 m by occasional pruning.

E. dichroantha. Grew steadily for about one year until about 40 cm high, when it flowered profusely and died. I could find no cause of death.

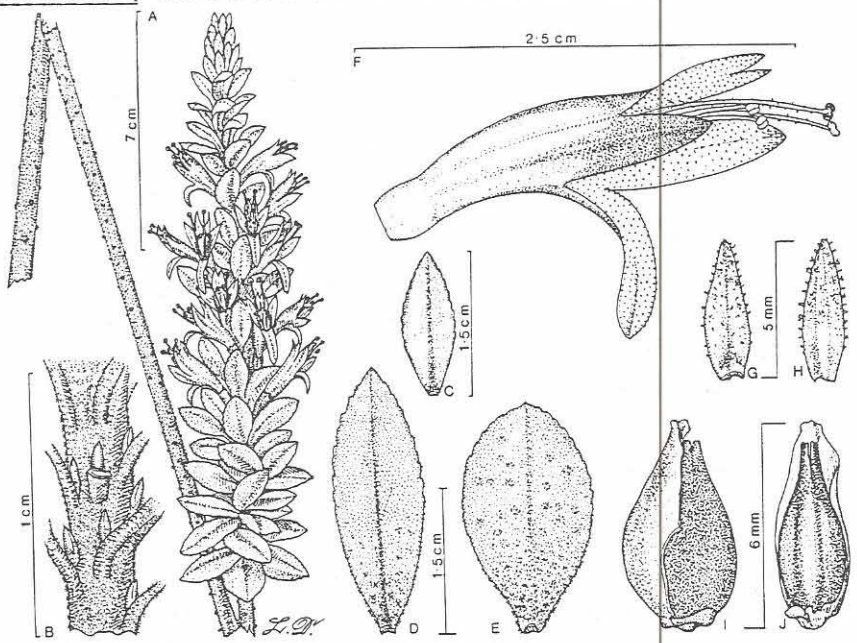
E. macdonnelli (Simpson Desert form). This plant grew and flowered well for about one year prior to being uprooted by my older son. While growing, it had the pleasing habit of cascading down over the sides of the tub.

E. racemosa. This plant is 1 m high after nine months. Although it is in good condition, it did not flower at the same time as the E. racemosa planted out in my garden.

E. youngii. This has grown into a well formed slender plant, approximately 0.7 m high. It flowers for 2-3 weeks, rests for about the same length of time and then flowers again.

All pots stand in positions where they are in the sun for about 80% of the day. In hot weather the pots are watered daily, while in cooler weather they are watered as the pot dries out. A small amount of blood and bone fertilizer is used about every six months.

For people living in flats or in confined areas, these plants would make suitable pot plants. They have all flowered well and, apart from minor pruning and an attack of aphis on E. calorhabdos, have been almost maintenance free.



Eremophila calorhabdos

A, habit; B, close up of branch; C-E, leaf variations; F, side view of corolla; G-H, outside and inside view of sepal; I-J, front and side view of fruit.