

## EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 22 DECEMBER 1981

## EREMOPHILAS FOR GROWING IN THE DRIER EASTERN MT. LOFTY RANGES

Brendan Lay

Though fairly familiar with some members of this genus in the field, I have had only limited experience in their cultivation. This has involved attempts at establishing seedlings or root-suckers dug up from northern South Australia and planted out on my block which is near Kanmantoo on the dry eastern side of the Mt. Lofty Ranges. The soils of this area are of a skeletal nature, and consist of micaceous sandy-loams of near neutral pH, and receive approximately 450 mm rainfall.

This limited experience has revealed to me the great potential the Eremophila genus has in cultivation, not just as garden subjects, but in general amenity plantings of a broad-scale nature, in which I am more interested. Their diversity in growth habit, and cultural requirements, also intrigues me; for example, it can be said that in general banksias are a more difficult group in cultivation than eucalypts, but one cannot generalize about eremophilas.

Just for the record, I have had greatest success with the following four local arid zone species: E. freelingii, E. serrulata, E. oppositifolia, and E. sturtii, the last being grown from seed. These plants were watered at planting, but have received no further attention since.

## EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP MEETING

Geoff Needham

The Eremophila Study Group met at the Adelaide Herbarium on the afternoon of Sunday, 19 July 1981. There was a good roll up with many from the country. Some members brought cutting material, including many recent introductions, and this would indicate that many of these plants have reached a reasonable size.

Brian Staker gave a demonstration of the techniques of grafting, the stock used being Myoporum insulare. This species is widely distributed and will grow in many places where eremophilas will not. Brian made the technique look easy, but I would suggest some practice on common plants would be required to obtain the necessary skills.

Bob Chinnock gave a resume of his current work with eremophilas, including his classification of groups, and problems yet to be sorted out. Following this talk a tour of the Herbarium was made and a selection of the pressed and tabulated specimens were on view, illustrating facts mentioned in the talk; altogether it was a very entertaining and educational afternoon.

## FIELD TRIP TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1981

Bob Chinnock

This year I spent five weeks in Western Australia working on eremophilas, myoporums, ferns, and Gunniopsis (Aizoon), and came across a number of interesting forms of Eremophila.

After driving to Eucla I went north to Forrest, which is on the transcontinental railway line. Just south of Forrest I came across a large depression in which there was a large population of E. maculata. The unusual thing about the population was the great amount of colour variation in the leaves of individual plants: from bright, light-green, to grey-green tinged purplish, and some in another variation to deep purplish-red. Unfortunately, it appears that all cuttings of the deep purplish-red form have rotted. Even the grafted one that my wife made for me died instantly.

In 1979 I found a new species of Eremophila near Neds Creek, north of Wiluna, but at that time it was vegetative and all I could find was a few old fruits amongst the rubble. This year it was in full flower and fruit and confirmed my suspicions that it was related to E. sturtii. The fruits were extremely hairy with long white hairs similar to those on the sepal margins of E. dempsteri.

I added another form of E. fraseri to my list. I had intended to divide this species into three subspecies and now have added a fourth. This form is restricted to the Yamarna area, east of Laverton, and has extremely narrow leaves, no more than 6 mm wide.

This year I sorted out a few more problems in the E. glabra group. The big difficulty with this group is the great degree of diversity from population to population as regards to habit, hair coverings, leaf shape, and fruits. So far I have divided the species into eight recognizable subspecies, but after this trip I intend to split one of these into two subspecies, and the blue-green flowered one, which has been around Adelaide for years, will be recognized as a distinct species.

At long last I have found the elusive E. serpens. It was on the north-western side of Lake King (W.A.) and was abundant on clay flats with samphires and under Melaleuca. It was growing in more saline solutions than its prostrate counterpart E. biserrata.

The most interesting Eremophila find as far as I was concerned was a freak form of E. racemosa in which the flower buds were lemon-yellow (like the yellow form of E. maculata) but the open flowers were white. The single plant was growing alongside normal plants and made a striking contrast. I am sure that this colour form will become very popular when it is established.

Two interesting myoporums were also collected. M. oppositifolium as the name implies has opposite leaves, with serrate margins and clusters of white flowers in the leaf axils. It is a small species growing to a metre high and will be a worthwhile addition to the cultivated species. The other Myoporum is unnamed and has terete leaves like Myoporum floribundum, except in this case the leaves are erect and the fruit pyramid-like. It has a peculiar growth habit in that it has a very slender single stem up to 3 m high with a dense tuft of branches near the top.