

EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 25 DECEMBER 1982

This Study Group has completed its tenth year and what a year, the big freeze followed by a drought; it certainly sorted out the hardy species in the garden. Many people who wrote concerning frost damage to plants have been agreeably surprised to find all was not lost and many plants thought to be dead have regrown from the base.

G.N.

FROST

Ken Warnes

Following some of the lowest temperatures ever recorded in South Australia, I was loathe to even go and inspect my plantings for damage. However, to my surprise, damage was very light and only two species were lost. One was E. microtheca, a species which also was severely damaged last winter. The bark had been shattered at ground level, although foliage was not harmed. I lost E. leucophylla a few years ago in a similar way. So from my experience I would rate E. microtheca as frost susceptible. The other to die was E. willsii x E. goodwinii and it was totally desiccated.

Foliage damage was caused to E. obovata var. glabriuscula and to E. "barbata" (E550), both moderate, and E. serpens, light, but all have now made new growth.

This list of damage may be misleading, because I have seen heavier frosts here at Owen. At the time the ground was very dry and this may have prevented the formation of frost despite the low temperatures. I know other members suffered severe damage to a large number of species in a backyard situation. Perhaps the exposed nature of my plantation helped.

INSECT DAMAGE

Ken Warnes

Over a period I have made observations on the effect of various insect populations on my eremophilas. To date I would not list any attack as major, but a couple are worthy of comment.

Several Eremophila species are very prone to seasonal infestations of grey aphid, but apart from being a menace in the cutting frame they cause no harm to growing plants. E. serrulata in all forms is particularly favoured by this pest, with E. lehmanniana var. dentata, E. glabra (forms), E. calorhabdos, and E. laanii, also being regularly attacked.

Flea beetles probably cause more damage, especially to young plants. They are small round shiny beetles 2 x 3 mm that either fall off or hop away when disturbed. Infestations here are confined to Myoporaceae in October. Damage consists of holes eaten in the surface of the leaves and new shoots, and can really set a plant back in its first year. Generally the beetles only feed close to the ground and therefore first year plants are the main ones affected. The species most severely affected would include E. alternifolia, E. glabra (forms), E. denticulata, and most myoporums.

Apart from a few small grubs that eat out new shoots there appear to be no other pests. Curculio beetles are no problem on Eremophila, although they attack many other genera.

FURTHER NOTES ON EREMOPHILAS

Ken Warnes

Scented Species

As a rule we never consider scent when planting Eremophila, but I have noticed a group that can be quite sweet. This characteristic seems confined to those with a flower-like calyx and, of course, many of this group are very profuse in their flowering. Undoubtedly E. sturtii has the strongest perfume, but others include E. pachyphylla, E. dempsteri, E. dichroantha, E. mitchellii, and E. interstans. I have yet to grow E. virgata, E. paisleyi, E. falcata, and others with a petaloid calyx, although I have detected a perfume from fresh cuttings of E. virgata and E. paisleyi.

Spring Planting

On numerous occasions in the past I have failed to establish northern species from autumn plantings. Last September Dave Gordon brought me young plants of E. gilesii and E. bowmanii, and Ray Isaacson gave me plants of E. willsii and E. goodwinii. All were planted in early October and watered by drip irrigation through the first summer. E. gilesii is now 30 x 50 cm and E. goodwinii 50 x 70 cm and both flowered for nine months. E. bowmanii is in bud at present and E. willsii has survived and flowered, so perhaps this is part of the answer in establishing some of the northern species. Of course this winter has been very dry and this may have helped also.

Seeds

For the record, those E. gilesii seeds reported on in previous Newsletters did it again in autumn with 8 seedlings from natural rain, but no germination since. I am convinced that for those seeds at least, falling temperatures or shortening day length combined with natural rainfall is necessary. As usual all seedlings died when the cold days came—germination is the easy part!

Attractive Species

With the abnormal weather conditions of the past few months, it may be of interest to report on a few species that have been particularly attractive. In the past months we have had both record high and record low temperatures in Owen, and a wonderful autumn rain followed by less than 25 mm for July and August combined.

The following species and many more have received no water all all, but are making a great display, despite our fickle season:

Eremophila pterocarpa: My only plant of this species is in a very dry spot with very high pH, yet it has been flowering on and off for many months. Its almost white foliage dotted with bright pink flowers and flattened pinkish-grey fruit is a feature.

E. viscida: Flowering earlier than usual, the whole 2 m bush is covered with large lemon calyces and purple-spotted lemon flowers. Combined with the vivid green foliage it looks anything but a desert-lover.

E. oppositifolia: In all its forms it has again been covered in flowers for months. The colourful calyx gives an extended period of colour.

E. duttonii: My plant from New South Wales has vivid cherry-red flowers. The very large leafy calyces stand out well against the foliage, and as a result, the flowering season seems much longer than normal.

E. pachyphylla: Once again it is a mass of calyces and corollas from top to bottom, a distance now well in excess of 2 m, with a girth of 4 m. I guess eventually the low growth will die off to produce the typical broom-like shrub from Norseman, but in the meantime it is a shrub of great beauty.

E. dempsteri: My plant, grown from cuttings of the dense form from Cocklebiddy, is maintaining a dense rounded habit and is a mass of bud. It is certainly a better plant than the one grown from Norseman cuttings, and which is already going spindly.

E. "nivea": This has left the ground, somewhat to my surprise as it is in a very open position, but once again is a glory of lilac corollas and woolly grey foliage.

E. drummondii: As usual in August the bushes are packed with rich violet flowers.

MYOPORUM ACUMINATUM AS A GRAFTING STOCK

Harvey Shaw

At Sunnybank, Queensland, I have successfully grafted the following onto Myoporum acuminatum (previously known under the name M. montanum):

E. macdonnellii: Round ball about 0.5 m at present, and covered in flowers. I think this one is a Queensland form and is about two years old. Have other forms just grafted.

E. glabra: Several forms, one about 0.9 m, red. Others just grafted, but growing very well.

E. maculata: Several forms, doing as good as E. glabra.

E. denticulata: More open than others but flowers very well.

E. ionantha: About 0.9 m across, covered in flowers during October.

E. subfloccosa: About 0.5 m across, grafted about two years and flowered once. I thought, being a grey hairy leaf, I might have lost it in the summer owing to humidity, but it is still doing well.

PUBLICATION

R.J. Chinnock (1982). A new species of Eremophila (Myoporaceae) endemic to the Wongan Hills, Western Australia. Nuytsia 4(1)5-7.

This endangered species, E. ternifolia, is restricted to the Wongan Hills in Western Australia and belongs to the E. crassifolia group. It was brought into cultivation three years ago and appears to be quite hardy. Cultivated forms are rarely more than 15 cm high, although it grows to 50 cm in the wild. The spreading leaves are in whorls of 3; the flowers are small, lilac, and prominently bearded; the fruit is beaked and the two parts are unequal and free in the upper part.

