

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 38

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This mid-year newsletter is restricted as only one article has been sent in, doubtlessly you are busy filling in the flowering chart! I also need information on the growth habit of grafted plants to compare with species growing on their own roots. Even if you have only one plant please send details to me.

Eremophilas in general have proved successful as garden plants. There are exceptions especially those originating from the very arid areas which do not respond very well to the combination of higher humidity and lower daytime temperatures during the winter months in more southern areas. Other species will fall into the above category due to the dense hair covering of vegetative parts and although some have adapted to a degree to the conditions in our garden they often die-off in a severe winter.

The majority of eremophilas having originated from dry areas prefer well drained soils and do not do well where there is an accumulation of surface water. Should this be a problem create a slight slope or low mound at the base of the plant. Whilst some of us have built-up a botanical collection and have separate sections for the growing and display of groups, eremophilas with proper selection will blend quite well with other native plants.

Obviously one must choose plants that have similar cultivation requirements so many melaleucas, hakeas and acacias will fit in well, in fact any plants from drier areas are suitable. The blending is up to the individual and what is available from the nursery or S.G.A.P. friends. Data on the growth habit is often given in garden books, additional information can be gained from 'Australian Plants' and previous newsletters. The plants that have been in cultivation longest are the best known and usually the easiest to obtain and grow but these are not necessarily the best species for your purpose. Some recent introductions have good garden potential but how they will perform over a period of years is yet unknown.

Many Australian plants require some pruning which does not mitigate against their use in the garden. It is often said that the best plants in the garden are those from which cuttings are taken indicating that tip pruning is probably the best method of avoiding that woody look. This will not work for all species as some do not regenerate such as E. macdonnellii, E. nivea and E. viscida. Others can be cut back hard with good regrowth e.g. E. alternifolia from low on the bush. No garden will remain static as some plants will die and others will not meet the expected requirements of the gardener in which case replanting of areas or replacing individuals may be necessary. This can also allow the planting of a more recent introduction.

Good growing,

Geoff. Needham

Our Jungle

by Joylene Noble

"Nan, your garden looks like a Jungle". This was the excited cry from my little granddaughter who hadn't been home for a school term. Whether she meant it as a compliment or insult I don't know. I took it as a compliment anyway, even though there were plenty of soursobs and rye grass. Anyway the statement made me think - three years ago when we came to Gawler from Eyre Peninsula I considered it a Jungle and it wasn't a favourable thought, with masses of

Salvation Jane and onion weed etc. everywhere. Now thanks to numerous plantings of eremophilas and other natives and pea straw mulching, the Jungle description doesn't sound too bad.

Most eremophilas are doing well here and although the soil doesn't look good it seems to suit most of them. Their favourite ingredients of full sun and good drainage are present. Many plants have only had three or four waterings since planting and a mulching of pea straw. The straw has other advantages besides providing moisture retention as it helps to keep the weeds down and hides the rocky soil.

With eremophilas do I start with as so many of them are my favourites? Maybe the traffic stopper, E. maculata var. brevifolia. I planted this by the slate steps going to the higher section of the garden. It is about 0.6 x 1 metre and is constantly trimmed. It flowers well, and is covered at the moment. If you don't look up, you still can't miss it, as the spent blooms drop onto the steps.

Guess I should mention that my plants have to gale proof as we have heaps of gully winds. So far only E. "rostrata" has been lost to the wind, being broken off at the graft. This was very disappointing as it was covered in flowers and is a real beauty which should be popular if it becomes widely available.

Eremophila oppositifolia did not grow well for me at Arno Bay, but here at Gawler it does. Three different shades are flowering at the moment. There's a cream one, a pink one, and a darker shiny pink which is especially dark in the bud. All are about 1 m high and very bushy.

A grey form of E. glabra (0.8 x 1 m) which appears to have a variegated edge to the leaves and green flowers always looks neat and flowers for several months. I planted several E. glabra "Murchison River" for their red flower contrast. E. nivea also contrasts well and is so attractive in flower, but it's disappointing that such a small percentage of cuttings strike, perhaps someone has the answer?

E. granitica, E. gilesii, E. willsii and E. clarkei are looking good and flower well. Several different shades of E. granitica are very bushy and about 1 m high, they seem to have several mass flowerings a year with a few stragglers in between. Both the Queensland and the South Australian forms of E. gilesii seem happy. The South Australian one is daintier than the Queensland one and has more impact. One E. willsii has quite fine foliage compared to the other and seems to have more horizontal type branch system. The wider leaved one being quite erect.

E. clarkei is clothed in pink flowers at the moment, a really nice one, the bees think so as well.

Each time one walks around the garden something else is flowering or growing and I can't write about them all without filling the whole newsletter. But I can't finish off without saying a couple of things about the Genus. About six months after planting I went outside one morning and it just hit me the pungent aroma so characteristic of eremophilas. I said to my husband it just smells like home. It was a lovely feeling.

The other is a thankyou to anyone who has had anything at all to do with the bringing of eremophilas into cultivation. Without them I know we couldn't have been able to collect so many species - about eighty in three years. In the beginning of our Study Group, if we were able to collect five or six in a year we were really excited. All we need now is a comprehensive book on the genus.

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