

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 40

March 1990

When the last newsletter was published in April 1989 I had no idea it would be almost a year before the next one would appear. Geoff and I were preparing one last November to get out before Christmas but unfortunately it wasn't to be, as Geoff passed away suddenly on November 29th. I visited Geoff two days before his death and we wandered through his garden and looked at some flowering eremophilas and I also spoke to him the following day concerning the publication of the Eremophila Study Groups newsletters.

For all of us who knew Geoff his loss has darkened our lives a little and on behalf of all Study Group members I extend our thoughts and sympathy to Vi, Cheryl and Yvonne and families.

It is fitting that Ken Warnes, our first Study Group leader relates Geoff's background and experience below. Ken knew Geoff for many years and in the early days of the Study Group they worked closely together.

Colin Jennings has stepped into the vacuum left by Geoff's passing and taken over the leadership of our group. He gives some background details on himself elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Bob Chinnock

GEOFF NEEDHAM

"Well, O.K., someone has to do it".

With these words, Geoff Needham, who passed away on 29th November 1989 assumed leadership of the Eremophila Study Group in 1976. A quiet man, devoted to his family and home he nonetheless involved himself with a great many activities, not least of which was following the fortunes of the West Torrens Football Club.

In his working life Geoff was highly regarded in the foundry industry. Some years ago he realised that few records of the early days existed, so again because "someone has to do it" he shared in the researching, writing and editing of a history of foundries in Australia. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to the foundry industry.

He had been researching the Needham family tree for several years and was looking forward in his retirement to follow his many interests.

A member of SGAP since 1964. Geoff served a two year term as State President in 1969-70.

Geoff came to Eremophila via the same route as many of us in those early days, viz chlorotic melaleucas, borer riddled acacias, and drought prone grevilleas and prostantheras. During my period as leader of the Study Group he was a very willing assistant, and in those early days it was Geoff who on many occasions

collected cuttings from such places as Adelaide airport and distributed them for propagation. He was a very effective propagator himself with his unique mixture based on coke breeze from the foundry.

It was during Geoff's time as leader that Bob Chinnock began his study of the genus and the two have worked closely together to their and our advantage. Despite flirtations with bromeliads, succulents and carnivorous plants (he was a highly respected speaker on the latter) Geoff saw the Study Group grow to 130 members growing over 120 species and eremophilas become relatively common subjects over a wide area.

Geoff, we miss your cheerful smile; thanks for everything.

Ken Warnes

STUDY GROUP LEADER

I have taken on this position at a time when we are all still trying to get over the shock of Geoff's death. One thing we can be sure of, is that Geoff, during his time as our Study Group Leader, put a great deal of time and effort into the group in all sorts of ways.

Since volunteering myself for the position I have had a few hours to look over the material which Geoff had accumulated, and I hope to have everything up to date by the end of March.

Some members of the group may have written to Geoff either just before or since his death, and have been wondering why they had not received the usual prompt and friendly reply. I hope to write to those people or groups as soon as possible, indeed by the time this newsletter reaches you those letters should have been received. If you have written and not received a reply please feel free to drop me a line and I will follow up whatever it is that needed attention.

In the past month Bob Chinnock and I have been through the documents and the Group bank account has now been transferred from the Torrenville branch of the State Bank of SA to the Highgate branch, which is close to my place of employment. Our current balance stands at approximately \$610.

I assume that a greater proportion of the members of the group are asking who this Colin Jennings is, and where I fit into the Eremophila picture.

In short, I have been an active member of SGAP (SA Region) for a number of years, with a particular involvement in propagating plants for the twice a year plants sales. My interest in plants of the semi-arid areas, and in particular eremophilas stems from a general interest I have had in Australian native plants since the early 1960's. My wife Myrnie and I have maintained our interest and enthusiasm in this area since that time.

It seems that many of the plant interests that Geoff had are shared by us, since we would regularly see him and his wife Vi at the local native orchid, cactus and succulent and carnivorous plant etc. shows held around Adelaide.

A little background about myself will help to fill in the picture a little more for you.

I have been a Senior Teacher, responsible for the coordination of chemistry and sciences at Urrbrae Agricultural High School in metropolitan Adelaide for the past twenty years. Prior to that I taught for two years at a high school in Alotau in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea, and for four years at Renmark in the Riverland area of SA and three years at Marion High School, also in Adelaide. I graduated from Adelaide University gaining a B.Sc., with majors in two branches of chemistry.

I have a wide range of horticultural interests, from native plants to species of orchids, begonias, hoyas and the family Asclepidaceae generally.

Our interest in eremophilas started approximately eight years ago and in the time since we have built up a fairly comprehensive collection of about 100 species in a garden which is still in the process of being developed to accommodate new acquisitions.

We have made a number of trips both within SA and interstate in an effort to purchase new plants as well as to observe and photograph them in the field.

It is my intention to continue the excellent work done by both Ken and Geoff in their capacities as Group Leaders, and to work in close collaboration with Bob Chinnock in the future to ensure that we are all able to learn more about this interesting and sometimes frustrating genus of plants.

I hope to be able to meet with as many of you as possible in the future, names on mailing list are rather impersonal.

If you have any ideas about our future direction, thoughts on ways we might all become more involved in the group, please let me know.

Colin Jennings

NOTES ON SEED GERMINATION

Its been a while since we have had any articles on seedlings so I thought I might make some comments on Myoporum cordifolium.

I had a large grafted plant of this species which decided to die slowly about two years ago so I collected fruits to try and obtain some plants from seed. (M. cordifolium is unique in Myoporum as it has small appressed triangular leaves about 4 mm long and in appearance has a plant form similar to E. gibbifolia).

I sowed the fruits on March 24th 1988 and 1 seedling appeared on 9th September, however, in late April - May 1989 following rains and mild weather when the temperature didn't drop below 14°C and we had a few warm days of about 28°C 17 seedlings appeared between May 1st and 4th, 29 were up by May 12th, 61 by June 19th. Records were terminated at this point and 48 seedlings potted up.

Incidentally, the seedling that came up in September 1988 flowered exactly one year later and by this stage was 30 cm tall with numerous branches from ground level.

Myoporum bateae is also easy from seed. Fruits sown in August 1987 started coming up suddenly in November after the first burst of hot weather including one 40°C day. Three seedlings appeared on November 3rd, 19 by November 10th and 70 by December 17th. Seedlings of this species also keep popping up in the cracks of my driveway, even though the parent shrub died two years ago.

During my travels collecting eremophilas I often scrape up rubble from under shrubs that I am collecting particularly if the species has very small fruits. This saves time in the field and I sort out fruits when I return to Adelaide.

Recently, I decided to "sow" two samples of rubble to see what would come up as many of the places I visit are remote and have all sorts of interesting species. In one pot a large number of succulent seedlings came up which have turned out to be a samphire (Halosarcia) but unfortunately no Eremophila have appeared. In the second pot I had more success - this sample of rubble was from an E. veronica locality S of Coolgardie. Seven definite eremophila seedlings have come up which are either E. veronica or E. caerulea and there are two large seedlings which may be a Dodonaea or Eremophila.

Bob Chinnock

ARTICLES ARE NOW REQUIRED FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER. PLEASE WRITE ON ALTERNATE LINES TO ALLOW FOR EDITING.

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NOTE TO *EREMOPHILA* STUDY GROUP

Eremophila Germination Research

Germination, ecology and propagation studies on *Eremophila* species are currently underway at the School of Environmental Biology, Curtin University, Perth. I am very interested in obtaining old *Eremophila* seed, so I can carry out viability testing of different aged fruits. I would be very grateful if anyone could send me fruits of different ages.

The list below outlines the main species I am working on, though any other species would be of interest.

Species of interest

E. maculata
E. longifolia
E. forrestii
E. margarethae
E. spectabilis
E. fraseri
E. scoparia

I would also be interested to hear from anyone who has carried out any type of germination treatment.

Finally, I am gathering information on insect attack and predation by wildlife on *Eremophilas* - can anyone help?

I can be contacted at:

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